

# **NONE DARE CALL IT APOSTASY**

## **Part two: Dr. Ralph Larson.**

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#### **Introduction**

Since many have asked, the following is a statement that was prepared by Elder Ralph Larson to present to the "Prex-Ad" Council of the Pacific Union Conference on February 18, 1992. This is a group of about twenty administrators of conferences, colleges, hospitals and ethnic groups who consult together before meeting with the Union Committee.

Although Dr. Larson had been told that he would be given thirty minutes and had prepared his paper accordingly, he was cut off when fifteen minutes had passed and was told that the administrators could read the rest of the paper later. Yet the council made their decision to affirm their denial of his honorary ministerial credentials after Dr. and Mrs. Larson left the room, apparently without waiting to read the paper, a tragic lack of due process.

This information is being shared, not for purposes of malice or revenge, but so that others may understand what actually was said and what they may possibly encounter when placed in similar circumstances. Our trust must be wholly in the Lord and in His truth, and we must firmly resolve to stand for the right though the heavens fall.

## **Part two: Dr. Ralph Larson.**

We come before you today because we understand from the Lord's counsels that this is our Christian duty. We are sure all would recognize that a hearing conducted after judgment regarding my credentials has already been made, would not be described as justice in any judicial system in the world. We find this principle expressed in the question put to the Pharisees by Nicodemus: "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" John7:51.

In our situation, the answer would appear to be, yes, it does. More troubling still, to those who are concerned about the principles of fairness, is the fact that this group is not the proper body to either conduct a hearing or make judgment regarding my case. Proper procedures would have required a hearing before the Union Conference Committee, which has been empowered to issue credentials, and that such a hearing have been conducted before judgment was made.

We would do well to remember that in every judicial proceeding, not only is the accused on trial, but the court is also on trial.

And there is yet another cloud over these proceedings. Elder Castillo wrote to me: "At our past Union Executive Committee, it was voted to deny your honorary ministerial credential."

Yet, four members of the committee have stated that my name was not mentioned in their meeting, and so was neither discussed nor voted upon. Elder Mostert, while conceding that the minutes contain no record of an action denying my credentials, told me over the phone that my name *was* placed before

the executive committee and the reasons for denying my credentials were fully explained. He suggested that the four committee members might have all happened to be out of the room at that particular time.

In any case, it would seem that basic principles of fairness would require that if a minister who has given his life to the service of the church, whose life and character have never been questioned, whose theology and preaching is the same as that presented in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, and whose ministry has resulted in more than five thousand persons being added to the church by baptism, is to be denied honorary ministerial credentials, this should be properly done by a duly authorized body, and the action and reasons for it should be fully and specifically stated in the committee records and announced to the church. This would, of course, require that a hearing be conducted *before* a decision is made, and that the accused be provided an opportunity to face his accusers and respond to their accusations.

This proper procedure has not been followed. Yet the editors of *Ministry* magazine have quickly seized upon the action that was taken, and in spite of the grievous irregularities, announced to its world-wide constituency that my credentials had been denied. Since no reason has been given, speculation is now arising as to whether I have been found guilty of financial fraud or gross immorality.

Questions of this nature are reaching us and are very troubling, not only to us but also to our two children who are workers in God's cause. We do not believe the Lord appreciates this manner of dealing with one who has rendered Him a lifetime of service and whose present problem is simply that he has been found defending the principles of our faith as set forth in the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*.

We would do well to remember that in every judicial proceeding, not only is the accused on trial, but the court is also on trial. We do not believe that you gentlemen have served yourselves well by the manner in which you have dealt with this case. Neither have you served well the church or the Lord. We believe this group has a moral responsibility to set this matter right, and it should be done now, not after my death, as in the case of Elder M. L. Andreason.

We believe I am entitled to a fair trial regarding my theology and ministry before the Union Executive Committee. If that committee, after a fair trial has been conducted, votes to deny my credentials, we believe a full statement of the specific reasons for that action should be made, and the statement published in *Ministry* magazine.

But now may we suggest that we lift our eyes from the individual tree we have been examining and spend a few moments considering the forest as a whole, it is apparent that there is division in the church. We would like to offer a few thoughts regarding:

### **Division: Its Nature, Its Causes, and Its Cure.**

Division is most easily defined as the opposite of unity. We all believe that unity in the church is precious. It is priceless. Unity was the great burden of the last recorded prayer of Jesus for His disciples (John 17). Unity was what made possible the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Unity was one of the major factors that gave power to the Seventh-day Adventist Church as it emerged from the Millerite Movement.

*What is the basis of this precious unity?* Paul calls it “the unity of the *faith*” Ephesians 4:13. He further describes it as “speaking the *truth* in love,” verse 15, and indicates that those who have this unity of the faith will not be “carried about with every wind of doctrine” verse 14.

Ellen White describes the search for unity in 1844: “We would come together burdened in soul, praying that we might be *one in faith and doctrine*; for we knew that Christ is not divided” TM 24. [All emphasis supplied.]

Their prayers were answered. They did become one in faith and doctrine, and they bestowed that legacy of unity upon us. Our church has enjoyed a phenomenal degree of unity throughout most of its history. We who have spent years in soul-winning work have found it an enormous advantage to be able to tell our converts they were uniting with a worldwide church that had a oneness in faith and doctrine over all the earth.

“No one has any Independent authority apart from Christ and His word” *SDA’s Believe* 146.

But notice how God has warned us through His messenger that unity *must* be based upon faith and doctrine:

“Christ calls for unity. But He does not call for us to unify on wrong practices. The God of heaven draws a sharp contrast between pure, elevating, ennobling truth and false, misleading doctrines. . . . I urge our brethren to unify upon a true, scriptural basis” 1 SM 175.

“We are to unify, but not on a platform of error” *Series B, “Freedom in Christ”* 47.

Our church has not unified upon a platform of error, but upon a platform of truth. Our doctrines have been the foundation of our unity, but if wrong doctrines are introduced, causing the foundation of truth to crumble, we will struggle in vain to preserve our unity. The wise man does not build his house upon the sand.

At various times in the history of Christianity, there have arisen tensions between Christians who had differing views of what constitutes sound declines. Instead of meeting this problem on the theological level, church officials have sometimes tried to resolve it on the basis of church authority. This has never been and never will be successful. Ecclesiology must be derived from theology. Theology cannot be derived from ecclesiology, lest it degenerate into ecclesiolatry.

Our doctrinal book states:

“Christ exercises His authority through His church and its specially appointed servants, but He never transfers His power. *No one has any independent authority apart from Christ and His word’* *SDA ‘s Believe* 146.

“Whatever the church does *that is in accordance with the directions given in God’s Word* will be ratified in heaven” 7T 263.

“*The church . . . must say about sin what God says about it. She must deal with it as God directs, and her action is ratified in heaven*” DA 806.

This brings us immediately and specifically **to** the heart of our present problem. There is a wide-spread and rapidly growing conviction among many church members, especially in the North American Division, Australia and Europe, that some of our church leaders are emphatically *not saying about sin what God says about it*, but rather are saying that we will all keep on sinning until Jesus comes, at which time He will miraculously fix us so we will never sin again. This makes our sanctuary doctrine nonsensical and invalidates the Spirit of Prophecy, which repeatedly endorses the sanctuary doctrine.

These concerned church members recognize that this strange new doctrine is out of harmony with our historic faith, out of harmony with the Scriptures, and out of harmony with the Spirit of Prophecy in which there are literally thousands of statements affirming the reality of victorious Christian living, and at least forty-eight warnings against the idea that Christ will change our characters when He comes. (See *our Tell of His Power.*)

This is manifestly a theological problem, and it needs **to** be dealt with on a theological level. Church members do not see this as a minor issue. They see it as one which vitally concerns their eternal salvation. But when they question or challenge this strange new doctrine and ask, "Why is the church not saying about sin what God says about it as stated in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe?*" they often find, to their bewilderment, that they are accused of being divisive trouble-makers who are attacking the church.

More tragically still, the response of church officialdom **to** questions, appeals, and protests, consistently reflects a desire **to** ignore the theological dimensions of the problem and **to** issue appeals for unity, supported by stern admonitions about the authority of the church. Within the last thirty days I received a letter from a conference president which said frankly, "Most of my response will be from a practical point of view, rather than a theological approach," yet the matter **at** hand was theological in nature.

Thus we see a tension between a concept of truth and a concept of church authority. When the disciples of Jesus were summoned **to** appear before the Sanhedrin, they went gladly, anticipating an opportunity **to** express their convictions of truth about Jesus. They found, however, that the Sanhedrin proposed one question only, *Do you submit to our authority?* Result—the church was split.

When Martin Luther and his companions were summoned **to** appear before the emperor, they also went gladly, hoping for a discussion of the principles of scriptural truth. But they were confronted with the same question, *Do you submit to our authority?* Result—the church was split.

Today we find ourselves caught up in a similar situation, and we may well reflect about the past. It has been said that those who cannot learn from history are condemned **to** repeat history. Surely the lesson of history is clear that theological questions *must* be given theological answers, and that unity will result if the theological answers are sound and persuasive because they bear up well under scriptural investigation.

There is a wide-spread and rapidly growing conviction. . . that some of our church leaders are emphatically not saying about sin what God says about it.

The introduction of false doctrines into our platform of truth cannot but bring division. Fair-minded people everywhere will judge that the division is caused by those who introduce changes in our theology, not by those who prefer to maintain our historic theology unchanged.

It cannot be denied that, in a certain sense, truth is divisive. Note the words of Jesus on this point: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" Matthew 10:34-36.

When truth and error meet, division may be the result, but should we blame the division on those who teach the truth?

This leads us to the questions of responsibility and guilt Jesus unquestionably created division when He came to this earth. But was this wrong? Should He have stayed in heaven in order to avoid creating division? Would the unity that might have resulted been desirable?

Clearly the apostles created division wherever they went. But again we ask, Was this wrong? Would it have been better for them to have hushed their voices for the sake of unity?

One of the most bitter accusations hurled at us as a people has been that by preaching the Sabbath we created division among Christians. But has this been wrong and has not the accusation of divisiveness been hurled at all reformers? We read in *Signs of the Times*, January 28, 1886: "Reformers of the present day will meet with the same discouragements as did their Master."

Neither is there anything new about the same, strange misjudgment we meet today: "When controversy is awakened, the advocates of truth are accredited with causing disturbance" ST, 10-17-95.

The following counsel is timely: "Now as in former ages, the presentation of a truth that reproves the sins and errors of the times will excite opposition.... Elijah was declared to be a troubler in Israel, Jeremiah a traitor, Paul a polluter of the temple. From that day to this, those who would be loyal to truth have been denounced as *seditions, heretical, or schismatic*.... This spirit will increase more and more. . .

"In view of this, what is the duty of the messenger of truth? Shall he conclude that the truth ought not to be presented, since often its only effect is to arouse men to evade or resist its claims? No; he has no more reason for withholding the testimony of God's word, because it excites opposition, than had earlier Reformers" GC 458-459.

When truth and error meet, division may be the result, but should we blame the division on those who teach the truth?

Several months ago we received an urgent request to conduct a seminar in a church in this Union. The people there had many questions, which we answered from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. As we were leaving, they gave us a tape and suggested we listen to it on the way home.

The tape turned out to be a message that had been presented to them by their conference president a few weeks before our visit. On several points, he had told them the exact opposite of what we had shown them. Here is a sampling of the president's opinion regarding perfection of character.

"Is it not extremely discouraging to us to discover, as we look back through the annals of history, to discover [*sic*] that no one except Jesus has ever reached that perfect standard, at least so far as we know? If Jesus is the only one so far who has reached that perfect standard, it doesn't give us a great

deal of encouragement, does it, to be able to accomplish what the great spiritual giants of the past were not able to accomplish.”

We, of course, had known nothing about this, so we had walked right into trouble. We had shown them our research report entitled *Tell of His Power*, which contains 2,500 statements from Ellen White’s writings, all of which strongly affirm the possibility of character perfection through the power of Christ. Worse yet, we had shown them a chapter in our book which records 48 warnings from Ellen White that there will be no change of character when Christ comes. We had also shown them a chapter which contains 37 statements from Ellen White regarding persons who have achieved character perfection. Jesus was not the only one, according to the Lord’s messenger. Her list of champions includes the patriarchs, the apostles, Enoch, Elijah, Joseph, Daniel and John. She writes:

“*Souls* that have borne the likeness of Satan have become transformed into the image of God” AA 476.

“*Thousands* have set the Lord before them, and by beholding have been changed into the same image” COL 133-134.

“*Some few in every generation from Adam* resisted his (Satan’s) every artifice and stood forth as noble representations of what it was in the power of man to do and to be—Christ working with human efforts, helping man in overcoming the power of Satan” RH 3-3-74.

“In every phase of your character building you are to please God. This you may do; for Enoch pleased Him though living in a degenerate age. *And there are Enochs in this our day*” COL 332.

This is only a sampling. We had shown them many other Spirit of Prophecy passages that could not be harmonized with the opinions of the president. As we were driving along and listening to the tape, Jeanne turned to me and said, “This is it, Ralph. This is going to cost you your credentials.”

So—on that day we began to prepare our minds for the experience through which we are now passing. Yet, what else could we have done? Should we have withheld the truth from the people in order to protect our position? No doubt the president’s visit, followed by ours, created some division of thought in that district. Who is responsible for that division? What would be a fair judgment? And what would be God’s judgment?

Elder Mostert wrote me a letter which began with these words: “I despair with you over the fact that so many of our church members are finding it necessary to turn to independent ministries in order to hear basic Adventist teaching.”

We are not suggesting that this is the only dynamic working in the situation. We had earlier incurred the displeasure of the officers of the Division. Elders Bradford, Crumley and Dale had asked Dr. Frank Holbrook of the Biblical Research Institute to prepare a theological rationale to be used against independent ministry leaders. This paper was then sent to Ron Spear, along with warnings that he must submit to the authority of the church.

But, unfortunately, Dr. Holbrook had spread his net in such a manner that the first victim would have been Elder Bradford himself. After comparing independent ministry leaders with the rebel Satan and the rebels Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Dr. Holbrook had set forth two theological aberrations that called for

disfellowshipping members from the church, views we historic Adventists hold regarding 1) the human nature of Christ, and 2) righteousness by faith.

When this paper came into my hands, I wrote to the Division leadership, pointing out that on November 16, 1988, Elder Bradford had written a letter to me containing the following lines: “. . . my views on the human nature of Christ are almost identical with some that you and others have expressed. I have preached them at large gatherings and camp meetings around the world.”

This is precisely the fault for which Dr. Holbrook had recommended disfellowshipping—holding a “wrong” view about the human nature of Christ and disturbing church members in other countries about it. He had also argued that our view regarding righteousness by faith is not in the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*. It is actually stated in that book 140 times!

I pointed these things out in a letter to the officers of the Division, and they were most displeased. Therefore, when Elder Mostert told me that the Division officers were in favor of denying my credentials, I was not surprised.

This paper by a member of the Biblical Research Institute may be taken as a sampling of the incredible theological confusion that exists in the church today. It is beyond question a theological problem which urgently needs to be dealt with on a theological level. The longer this is delayed, the greater will be the damage to the church. Our people have historically had an orientation toward truth. Many have left other churches and united with our church for the sake of truth. They have recognized that placing confidence in church leaders above devotion to the truth is a danger to be avoided. They have accepted the principle of individual responsibility for studying and knowing the truth and have turned away from the concept that the church is the interpreter of Scriptures. They have accepted Ellen White’s statement that: “The Bible with its precious gems of truth was not written for the scholar alone” ST 331.

Therefore, it is a serious mistake to meet their urgent questions and concerns about our “truths that have been held sacred” with evasions and dissimulations. Suggestions by leadership that historic Seventh-day Adventists think they are the only ones in the church who know the truth, or that they are setting themselves up to be the judges of the church, or that they consider themselves to be the only holy ones, are recognized by many church members as simply throwing dust into the air. These tactics have a disastrous effect upon their confidence in leadership.

The historic Adventists, numbering in the thousands, are most emphatically not a group of crackpots and weirdos. They are not a group of malcontents and fanatics who turn to independent ministries simply as an expression of their rebellious spirit. They are, for the most part, loyal, steadfast church members who have faced Sabbath tests, endured opposition from families and friends and have persevered in their devotion to the Lord and His sacred truth in the face of formidable odds. They turn to the independent ministries for a reason that has been well stated by our own Union president, Elder Mostert. On May 1, 1990, Elder Mostert wrote me a letter which began with these words:

“I despair with you over the fact that so many of our church members are finding it necessary to turn to independent ministries in order to hear basic Adventist teaching.”

Where will they go to hear basic Adventist teaching when the independent ministries have been destroyed, as seems to be the intention of the present church leadership? No doubt you have heard of the addresses given by our General Conference president at such places as the camp meeting in Hope, British Columbia, in 1991, which seemed to be a declaration of open season on the independent

ministries and those who support them. I have tapes of those messages, and some of the statements are as awesome as they are inaccurate, intemperate and inflammatory.

But these messages have apparently set the pace, and in response, equally inaccurate and intemperate tirades have already been published by two Union presidents in their Union papers. I am finding it increasingly difficult to persuade the church members to whom I minister that these false accusations are made in ignorance and not in malice.

If the independent ministries are successfully destroyed, what can we expect to happen then? Can anyone seriously suppose that those church members who, as stated by our Union president, have had to turn to independent ministries in order to hear basic Adventist teaching will then meekly submit to authority and give their support to those who have destroyed the independent ministries? Can we expect them to just forget that their theological questions have not been answered? And, are we remembering a fact that was expressed to me recently by a retired Union Conference president: "I hope that our brethren will remember that our conservative members are the financial backbone of our church."

Which leads us inexorably to the question of tithe.

As I have testified that the historic Adventists are not weirdos and crack-pots who support independent ministries simply as an expression of their rebellious spirit, I also wish to testify that neither do they send tithe to independent ministries because they prefer to do so. They would much rather send their tithe through church channels but feel they cannot conscientiously support the preaching of false theology.

I wish to address myself to an enormous misunderstanding that I regard as one of the major factors in our present problem. We hear much talk and many accusations about the independent ministries *soliciting* tithe. No independent ministry of my acquaintance has ever solicited tithe. Brethren, I plead with you to believe me when I say that the independent ministries do not solicit tithe, because they do not *need* to solicit tithe. It comes to them unsolicited, unbidden, unrequested. It is freely and voluntarily contributed by church members who are trying to relieve their consciences of a heavy burden.

This is the effect. What is the cause? The cause is the lack of preaching basic Seventh-day Adventist truths in their home churches and often supplanting them with either empty pabulum or errors borrowed from Babylon. The cause is emphatically not the eloquence and trickery of a group of skillful con men who are leading independent ministries, as some seem to believe. To suppose that crushing the independent ministries and leaving the problem in the churches unresolved is a fearful mistake.

It was in response to the many urgent questions of such church members that I researched the matter and published my findings in the September, 1991 edition of *Our Firm Foundation*, in an article entitled, "The Tithe Problem, Who Is Responsible?"

This article was a straight-forward and factual report of my findings on that subject. I stand ready to modify or correct my conclusions at any time evidence is presented to me that would justify such a modification or correction.

Unfortunately, some of the responses to that article have been something less than straight-forward and factual, so much so that the office of the White Estate has made clear that the article on tithe



published in the *Review* was a private project of Roger Coon, done entirely independent of either the White Estate Board or the White Estate staff. Of the many problems in the Roger Coon article, I would mention two. Coon argued that when Ellen White used the word "means," this generally referred only to offerings and not to tithe. We are presently aware of 168 occasions when Ellen White went into print using the word "means" in a way that included tithe. Why did an officer of the White Estate not know this?

Again, Coon faults those who make reference to the "Watson letter," since Ellen White had stated she did not desire her diversions of tithe to be widely advertised. This overlooks the fact that the entire relevant portions of the Watson letter were published by the White Estate itself in 1981 (see *Ellen G. White, The Early Elmshaven Years, 395-396*), and again in 1987 (see 2MR 99-100). Why did an officer of the White Estate not know this?

***"God has a church. It Is not the great cathedral, neither Is it the national establishment . . . It Is the people who bye God and keep His commandments " UL 315.***

In summary, may I quote the second sentence of the letter written to me by Elder Mostert on May 1,1990: "Obviously, one of the most unmet needs in the church at the present time is the lack of opportunity for leaders to dialogue with members in a meaningful way that does not create further frustration."

I agree with and heartily applaud this statement. It echoes the cries we hear from hurting and bewildered historic Adventists all across the continent: Why will not our leaders talk to us? Why will they not listen to us? Why will they not investigate our condition to determine whether our appeals are valid? Why are we considered trouble-makers because we are holding to the doctrines that are set forth in the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe?* Can our leaders not recognize that antagonistic doctrines are being preached in many of our pulpits, taught in many of our schools, printed in our publishing houses and circulated in the *Review*? Is it their intention to support these false doctrines?

Further, they ask, Why do our leaders identify us as evildoers and enemies of the church when we finally give up appealing to them and turn in despair to places where our historic faith is being defended? Why do they use their power and authority against a minister who is widely known as a defender of our historic faith, while the facilities of some of our largest churches remain open to one who is equally well-known as an enemy of our historic faith?

Jeanne and I are presently ministering, by their invitation, to thousands of historic Adventists in this country and in other countries. In the year 1991 we spent forty of the fifty-two weekends conducting seminars in defense of our historic faith. (We pause to mention that we receive no remuneration whatever for conducting these seminars. The people pay only our expenses. We are sure you can understand how perplexed the historic Seventh-day Adventists are when they read in a Union paper that we are doing this for our own financial benefit.) We are presently fully booked for 1992 and into 1993.

We are able to report to you that the conviction is spreading among these historic Adventists that they are going to be hounded out of the church. They feel this is the only possible understanding of the inflammatory tirades that are being published against them. They are observing closely those situations in which illegal church discipline is being applied and disfellowshipping has already begun in flagrant disregard of the provisions in the church manual. One of the most evident characteristics of these actions has been and is continuing to be a lack of "due process."

The historic Adventists remember that when Dr. Desmond Ford launched a vigorous assault against our sanctuary doctrine, the principles of "due process" were carefully followed. Every effort was made to ensure his case was dealt with in a fair and prudent manner, and rightly so. The historic Adventists are also noting that even though Dr. Ford is now attacking much more than our sanctuary doctrine and contributing very largely to the present apostasy in the church, the facilities of some of our largest churches remain open to him.

They are contrasting this with the fact that in a *Pacific Union Recorder* of 1991 an announcement stated Ralph Larson would conduct a seminar in the Beaumont Church on July 26 and 27 entitled "In Defense of the Sanctuary." Before six weeks had passed, he had lost his ministerial credentials, without due process. *This speaks volumes to the historic Seventh-day Adventists.* Why, they are asking, is there so much patient tolerance toward those who attack our faith and so little toward those who defend it?

These developments are causing historic Adventists to consider carefully the proper relationship between the truth, the church and church authority. They are asking, Is it a valid theology of church authority that requires us to surrender the truth and accept false doctrines or is this a misuse and abuse of church authority? Is it a valid theology of stewardship that requires us to give financial support to the preaching of false doctrines? Is it a valid theology of church order that brands the preaching of truth as "divisive," while tolerating the preaching of untruth? And, in the ultimate sense, what is the church? Let the Lord through His chosen messenger provide us with the answer:

**The present division in the church is a tension between our true historic faith, as described in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, and the incompatible doctrines of modern Calvinism.**

"God has a church. It is not the great cathedral, neither is it the national establishment . . . it is the people who love God and keep His commandments." *UL* 315.

We are directing your attention to the reality that the present division in the church is a tension between our true historic faith, as described in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, and the incompatible doctrines of modern Calvinism. We hold that it is unreasonable and unfair to charge this division upon those ministers and church members who wish to cling to our historic faith. The responsibility for division should be laid at the door of those who are promoting the false doctrines of Calvinism among us.

We believe that every administrator has a sacred obligation to encourage and support those who are defending our historic faith and not let himself be manipulated or maneuvered into an attitude of opposition toward them by camouflaged accusations of divisiveness, etc.

We are presently hearing that Dr. Desmond Ford is broadcasting that many of our scholars and administrators are now accepting his theology. This charge cannot be well met by silence and inaction, which will cause people to conclude that the allegation must be true.

Kenneth Sample, successor to Walter Martin, reports that when he took a survey of fifty-six ministers in a single conference in this Union, fourteen admitted to disbelief in the biblical basis of our sanctuary doctrine and thirteen more passed by that question while answering the other questions in the survey.

Thus, about half of those surveyed could not bear a positive testimony in regard to the doctrine of which Ellen White wrote:

"The correct understanding of the ministration in the heavenly sanctuary is *the foundation of our faith*" Letter 208, 1906; EV 221.

Surely it is time for the officers of this Union to resolutely lead the way in ascertaining what persons, in the classrooms of our schools and the pulpits of our churches, are teaching the doctrines described in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, and what persons are substituting for those doctrines antagonistic and incompatible doctrines.

And it is time for a thorough investigation of my particular case, and a full and fair trial to be conducted by the Union Conference Committee. At that trial I will submit evidence that:

1. I have appealed to our church leaders and scholars to recognize our theological problem by an investment of much time, many written appeals, and several thousand dollars worth of our two major research reports, *The Word Made Flesh* and *Tell of His Power*, that have been distributed among them.

2. I have sought no speaking appointments anywhere, but have simply responded to urgent requests for help from the suffering historic Seventh-day Adventists.

3. The evidence presented in our research reports has not been challenged by biblical or Spirit of Prophecy evidence from anyone. It *has* been met by sneers, jeers, and arguments against the man.

4. My theology is precisely the theology that is set forth in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*.

Therefore, those who oppose my ministry and our doctrinal book are the ones who are divisive.

*We are to unite, but not upon a platform of error.*

Subject: Ralph Larson letter Appaling! Shocking! Horrifying!

8-18-00

Dear fellow believer:

This is appalling; it is shocking; it is horrifying. We did not think it could happen.

Let us take a moment to explain the background and establish the context of the present situation. Several years ago certain of us who were Seventh-day Adventist ministers with many years of experience in the work of the church and in proclaiming the truths of the Bible, became aware that some utterly false non-Adventist doctrines were invading our church's theology. We endeavored to alert our church leaders regarding the problem in full confidence that appropriate corrective measures would be taken. To our surprise and dismay, our warnings were ignored, and we were dealt with as "trouble makers" who were disturbing the peace of the church.

We eventually began to warn church members ourselves by whatever means we could. This gave rise to

a number of ministries, programs, publications, (both books and magazines) schools, etc. But administrative resistance to our work increased, and hardened into bitter hostility. A book called "Issues" was published by the leaders of the North American Division, which, along with other absurdities, alleged that we were trying to "force" our own peculiar ideas on the church. It described us as a "cancer" on the body of Christ which needed to be cut out. This, remember, was because we were warning church members about the invasion of false doctrines into our church and were defending the historic Seventh-day Adventist faith in its purity.

Now the church administration has decided that the time for that surgery has arrived. A grim letter of warning has been sent from the General Conference to certain historic ministry leaders advising them that they will be given twelve months to stop- what they are doing, and submit themselves to the authority of the church leaders, or they will be dealt with as enemies of the church.

This, in itself, does not greatly surprise us. God's messenger, Ellen White, has given us ample warning about the last-day apostasy in the Church. And has told us that our worst enemies will be those who once walked with us. What does astonish us is the boldness and brazen audacity of the misrepresentations and falsifications that are being used against us. It seems that it is being assumed that since most people have no way of knowing the truth on certain matters, no care or caution regarding truthfulness or accuracy need be exercised. I present exhibit A.

In the letter of warning it is alleged that we have added a "new fundamental belief" to the doctrines of the church and that: "Such change illustrates an independence from the church in doctrinal matters as they constitute their own particular views into tests of faith, independent from the remainder of the church.

The alleged new doctrine is that Christ "took upon Himself our fallen nature." The claim is set forth that this is only our own particular view and that such a statement has never been part of the Seventh-day Adventist baptismal Vow or of official statements of fundamental beliefs.

Note that the allegation has two parts. First, the idea that Christ took upon Himself our fallen nature is simply our own particular view. This is not only false, it is outrageously false. It is an insult to the reader's intelligence.

While serving as chairman of a department in the Far Eastern Theological Seminary I engaged in research on this subject. I found in the historical literature of the church a total of 1200 written statements that Christ took upon Himself our fallen nature. These statements were published between the years 1852 and 1952 in our journals and books. The testimony of the church to the world was clear, consistent and wholly uniform during this time. But in 1957 the infamous book Questions on Doctrine was published. This book totally repudiated the long standing position of the church concerning the nature of Christ, and used utterly disgraceful methods to introduce a new view that Christ took upon Himself the unfallen nature of Adam. A recent volume, Touched With Our Feelings, by J. R. Zurcher, a noted Adventist scholar, details how and by whom this was done.

And who were the authors of these 1200 published statements that Christ took upon Himself our fallen nature? Eight hundred of them were written by Adventism's first line of leadership. The list includes General Conference presidents, vice presidents and secretaries; union and local conference presidents

college presidents and professors; Signs, Review, and other magazine editors; and other ministers and writers." See my book, *The Word Was Made Flesh*, for a chronological listing of them all.

What of the other four hundred of the-1200 statements? They were written and published by Ellen White God's chosen messenger to the remnant church.

So what of the allegation that this is only our own particular view? Do you see now why I wrote (above) that that this allegation is not only false, but it is outrageously false? It ignores the testimony of Adventism's first line of leadership in 1200 published statements, of which a full four hundred were from the inspired pen of Ellen White, and advances the ludicrously false accusation that the idea that Christ took upon Himself our fallen nature is only our own particular view. Can misrepresentation be greater than this?

I pause here to point out that this kind of misrepresentation has been a consistent characteristic of the apostasy from its very beginning. When the book *Questions on Doctrine* was published in 1957 it led the way with a grossly false statement about the nature of Christ. From then until now that example has been scrupulously followed by the teachers of false doctrines among us. Their writings abound in self contradictions, false reasoning, and outright misrepresentations. I have written elsewhere about these matters, and so will not restate them here.

The teachers of false doctrines, of course, are very anxious to cover up their wrongdoing and keep the church members from discovering that they are being deceived. For that reason they try to maintain the fiction that no doctrinal differences are involved, but that the problem is only the rebellious actions of some "rebels" who are unwilling to submit to "duly constituted church authority." That is why we are never permitted to have a fair hearing for the purpose of examining the doctrinal problems, despite our many appeals. In such hearings as have occurred, we have had to spend the time answering a barrage of false accusations, rather than studying the doctrinal issues. We believe that this is because the false teachers are well aware of the desperate weakness of their position, and that in a fair trial they would not have a chance.

I invite any and all persons who are concerned about this problem to try to prove me wrong. Go to your conference officials and try to arrange for a fair hearing for us. If you succeed, I will happily proclaim your success in another article. But I won't hold my breath.

This leads us to the other allegation, that the statement that Christ took upon Himself the fallen nature of man has never appeared in any official statement of our faith.

If you will secure a copy of the 1980 statement of our faith which is called "Seventh-day Adventists Believe--27 Doctrines," and which was made official at the General Conference of that year, and turn to page 216, this is what you will find:

Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Emphasis supplied)

If Ellen White's writings are thus officially described in our statement of faith as a continuing and authoritative source of truth, and she wrote four hundred times that Christ came to this earth in the human nature of fallen man, how can it be said that this has never been a part of any statement of faith? And the more meaningful question is this: In view of the fact that our doctrine of the nature of Christ had been testified to in our publications 1200 times by Adventism's first line of leadership, including four hundred statements by Ellen White, why was this not included in the statement of faith? It certainly should have been. (Do not misunderstand or misapply the reference to the Bible as "the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested." Ellen White's writings passed his test with flying colors.)

Actually, I was there when the statement of faith was voted, and I think I can explain. The apostates were there also, working strenuously to get their false doctrines into the statement of faith. If they could have, they would have eliminated the reference to Ellen White's writings as a continuing and authoritative source of truth.

` In the "27 Doctrines" treatment of the subject "God the Son," (chapter 4), we find ten usages of Paul's words "the likeness of sinful flesh" to describe the human nature of Christ. To eliminate all doubt as to the meaning of these words, this definition is presented:

He was made in the "likeness of sinful flesh," or "sinful human nature," or "fallen human nature," (cf. Romans 8:3)

The subject is enlarged on in several pages with unmistakable clarity. There is no reason for doubt or confusion. I submit that the allegation stated above is less than candid, and is very, very misleading.

Some may feel that my language in this article is too strong. I feel that it is not strong enough. When I consider that the apostates in our church now think that they are powerful enough to throw the true believers out, and are willing to resort to falsehood and misrepresentation in order to do it, and that church administration is willing to help them in their evil work, my soul is filled with revulsion and horror. My horror is not only for the victims of the persecution, but for the persecutors. How will the God of holiness, truth, and justice deal with them? I don't like to think about it.

(To be continued)

Ralph Larson

Dust in the Air

August 26, 2000

I was standing at the door of a room where all of the Union presidents of the North American Division were in council. I had an appointment with them, and I was waiting for my proper time to step into the room. As I stood and waited, I heard one of the presidents say to the others:

We have to find some way to stop Ron Spear, but we can't do it with theology, because there is nothing wrong with his theology.

Please read those words again, slowly and thoughtfully. Say them out loud. Do it several times. When you have these words firmly fixed in your mind, you are prepared to understand the strange things that are happening in the increasing tension between the church organization and the historic Adventist people and their ministries. Let's ask some questions:

Why are the historic ministry leaders being accused of being rebels? We have to stop them, but we can't do it with theology.

Why are they being accused of refusing to submit to church authority? We have to stop them, but we can't do it with theology.

Why are they being called troublemakers? We have to stop them, but we can't do it with theology.

Why are they being accused of being critical? We have to stop them, but we can't do it with theology.

Why are they being accused of starting another church? We have to stop them, but we can't do it with theology.

Why are they being faulted for doing things that other groups are not faulted for, such as printing, publishing, meeting separately, etc.? We have to stop them, but we can't do it with theology.

Why can't you stop them with theology? Because there is nothing wrong with their theology.

If there is nothing wrong with their theology, why do they need to be stopped? Because they are rebels, critics, and troublemakers, who refuse to submit to our authority.

More could be added, but perhaps this is enough to give you the picture. Obviously there is something strangely wrong here. What is it? Bear in mind, dear reader, that it is all about theology. The questions that the Historic Adventist people and their ministries are raising are theological questions. Their concerns about the false doctrines being preached in our churches and taught in our schools are theological concerns. Many of the Historic Adventists recognize these false doctrines as the very ones they left behind when they came out of Babylonish churches to join the Adventist church.

Theological questions require theological answers. Exercises of church authority will not do. Evasive answers will not do. They are simply throwing dust in the air. They are applications of the ancient

principle that "those who have evidence will present their evidence, while those who do not have evidence will attack the man." The Historic Adventist ministry leaders are not evil men. They are not rebels, critics, and troublemakers. They are dedicated and sincere men who have given their lives to the service of the church. They have brought thousands of people in to the church, and they have a right to be concerned when they see those people being fed the soul destroying poison of false doctrines.

And they are entirely correct in their position that false doctrines have no authority. They believe in "duly constituted church authority" as firmly as anyone else does. But God has never and will never authorize anyone to teach false doctrines. No teacher of false doctrines could possibly have "duly constituted church authority." And neither could any church administrator who supports and protects a teacher of false doctrines have "duly constituted church authority."

A General Conference vice president wrote to me that my messages should be more "balanced." I answered that I could understand how two truths, such as law and grace, can be kept in balance, but I saw no way that truth could be balanced with falsehood. I don't think we would like to hear a man say, "I have been telling the truth all morning. This afternoon I must tell some lies in order to stay in balance." In similar vein, another high ranking church official alleged that when a church member stops giving his financial support to the church, he is violating his baptismal vow. This overlooks the fact that the baptismal vow, like the marriage vow, is a reciprocal vow, not an individual vow. The church vows to tell the truth about God. The member vows to give financial support to that truth-telling. If the church breaks its vow, and starts telling untruths about God, it no longer has any right to claim the member's financial support.

One of the more significant charges against the Historic Ministries is that we use the writings of Ellen White "selectively," quoting passages that seem to support our views, and ignoring other passages. We are going to have to turn this false accusation very firmly and very forcefully back on its authors. There is an abundance of evidence.

What did the church leaders do with the four hundred Ellen White statements that Christ took upon Himself the human nature of fallen man, that I sent to them? They simply ignored them.

What did they do with her more than two thousand statements that, by the power of God, man can stop sinning, that I sent to them. They simply ignored them.

What are they doing right now with her warnings against a false unity that is based on false doctrines? They are simply ignoring them, while they continue to publish her appeals for unity. Look carefully at these quotations: 17 Manuscript Releases, PG 306

I urge our brethren to unify upon a true, Scriptural basis. *Selected Messages Book 3*, PG 412 We have a testing message to give, and I am instructed to say to our people, "Unify, unify." But we are not to unify with those who are departing from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.

*Notebook Leaflets, Vol. 2*, PG 164 Christ calls for unity. But He does not call for us to unify on wrong practices. The God of heaven draws a sharp contrast between pure, elevating, ennobling truth and false,



misleading doctrines. He calls sin and impenitence by the right name. He does not gloss over wrongdoing with a coat of untempered mortar. I urge our brethren to unify upon a true, Scriptural basis.

*Testimonies for the Church Containing Messages of Warning and Instruction to Seventh-day Adventists*, PG 55. We are all to unify on the proper basis of unity.

*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, PG 79 . . .harmony and cooperation must be maintained without compromising one principle of truth.

Several vitally important principles of truth are being grievously compromised in many parts of the Seventh day Adventist church today, and we who have pointed this out have been called troublemakers. We are now being told that if we do not stop our warnings we will be disfellowshipped. Consider this comparison: A ship is traveling through the ocean, and a crewman discovers a dangerous leak in the hold. He rushes to notify the captain, and is met with a stern rebuke. "Keep quiet," the captain says. "You are disturbing the peace of the passengers." The crewman persists, and so the captain orders him thrown overboard. Will this save the ship? What do you think?

One of the most frequently repeated false accusations against us is that we are wanting to start a separate church. Nothing could be farther from the truth. We are trying to reform the church that we have loved and served all of our adult lives. But it is sobering to compare our situation with that of the Reformers. Neither Luther nor Calvin nor Wesley wanted to start a separate church. They all wanted to reform their own churches. But the stubborn resistance and opposition of authoritarian church leaders made reformation within the churches utterly impossible.

*The Desire of Ages*, PG 232 When the Reformers preached the word of God, they had no thought of separating themselves from the established church; but the religious leaders would not tolerate the light, and those that bore it were forced to seek another class, who were longing for the truth.

It has been said that those who cannot learn from history are condemned to repeat history. We hope and pray that this will not prove to be true in our church. We continue to appeal to our leaders to stop throwing dust in the air with their barrages of false accusations. We continue to appeal to them for a fair and factual consideration of our evidence that the church is being invaded by some grossly false doctrines. This is no task for a small temporary committee. It should be done at an Annual Council or its equivalent. Please join us in prayer that this will be done.

Ralph Larson