

# The General Conference Inquisition

## (The General Conference versus the Historic Adventists)

Ralph Larson pub.2000

Inasmuch as we believe the General Conference has launched an Inquisition, which may result in the separation from the church of several thousand believers, it will be necessary for our response to be couched in unvarnished terms and expressed with unmistakable clarity. We would prefer to not do this, but the circumstances make it necessary.

### The Apostasy Begins

Let us take a moment to explain the background and to 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 Calvinistic doctrines were being brought into our church's theology. We endeavored to alert our church leaders regarding the problem, in full confidence that appropriate corrective measures would promptly be taken. To our surprise and dismay, our warnings were ignored, and we were dealt with as "troublemakers" 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 General Conference leadership has decided that the time for that surgery has come. Hence the Inquisition. An Inquisitorial Committee was set up, which did its work and published a report in the *Adventist Review* and in *Ministry* magazine. It is this report that is the subject of this response.

### The Inquisitorial Committee

This group is represented as being most august, qualified and competent, but this cannot be taken seriously. "*By their fruits ye shall know them.*" (See Matthew 7:20.) The committee has testified to its own incompetence and unfairness by the report that it has produced and is now spreading around the world by every possible means. The report is filled with accusations against historic Adventists, which range from the *utterly* false to the *outrageously* false. There is absolutely no way that a competent, fair and factual investigation could have produced such a report as this.

### The Inquisitorial Procedure

The procedure consists of three parts: an "investigation" (see above), some meetings, and the issuance of an ultimatum. According to the ultimatum, the accused historic Adventist leaders are being given twelve months in which to "repent" and bow to the authority of the Inquisitors or suffer the

## General Conference Inquisition

consequences. There is no hint that there will be any fair trial in which the accused might be given an opportunity to defend themselves. They must simply accept the judgment of the Inquisitors as infallible—all of which reminds us of the Catholic Inquisition in Spain.

A word about the "meetings" referred to above. They may be represented as "fair hearings," but they were nothing of the kind. They were only occasions in which the historic Adventist leaders had to spend time responding to barrages of false accusations. Their concerns about apostasy in the church were never considered. Nothing remotely resembling a fair and factual hearing has ever occurred.

### The Inquisitorial Falsehoods

Inquisitions work with falsehoods and misrepresentations. This is their stock in trade. Unfortunately, the General Conference Inquisition is no exception to this rule. The process begins with a seemingly innocuous statement in the introduction:

...they affirmed agreement on *many* of the major elements of the Seventh-day Adventist faith. *Adventist Review*, August 2000 (Emphasis supplied.)

A totally truthful statement would have said *all*, not *many*. Using the word *many* prepares the reader's mind for the assertion to come later, that the historic Adventists are holding and promoting some theological ideas that are simply their own private and peculiar opinions. *This is absolutely and unconditionally false*. We have originated no part of our teachings. We are not promoting our own opinions. We are defending the faith that we were taught when we joined the church, that we were taught again in Adventist schools, that we read in Adventist publications until the 1950s, and that are now set forth in the official statement of faith, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*. And the accusations get worse.

### The Inquisitorial Ultimatum

In the Inquisitorial Ultimatum it is alleged that we have added a "new fundamental belief" to the doctrines of the church 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. *Adventist Review*, August 2000.

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.

### Research Proves Us Right

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 His divine nature our fallen nature, yet without sin. These statements

## General Conference Inquisition

were published between the years 1852 and 1952 in the church's 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 Dr. J. R. Zurcher, a noted Adventist scholar of Switzerland, details how and by whom this was done.

Who were the authors of these 1200 published statements that Christ took upon His divine nature 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 of the Times*, *Review and Herald* 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 400 of the 1200 statements? *They were written and published by Ellen White, God's chosen messenger to the remnant church.*

### **False Reasoning and Misrepresentations**

So what of the allegation that this is only *our own particular view*? Do you see now why I wrote (above) 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 400 were from the inspired pen of Ellen White, and it advances the ludicrously false accusation that the idea that Christ took upon His divine nature 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 Calvinistic 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 unscrupulously followed by the teachers of false Calvinistic doctrines among us. Their writings abound in self-contradiction, false reasoning, and outright misrepresentations. I have written elsewhere about these matters, and so will not restate them here.

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

### **Continuing and Authoritative Source of Truth**

If you will secure a copy of the 1980 statement of our faith, which is called "*Seventh-day Adventists Believe—27 Doctrines*," (SDAs Believe), 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.)

## General Conference Inquisition

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 400 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 400 statements by Ellen White, *why was this not included in the statement of faith?* It certainly should have been.

A statement of faith is a *report*. It is supposed to tell us what a group believes. The only certain way of getting this information is to examine what the group members have *written*. This provides evidence that cannot be challenged. To add to it something that the church has not believed would be most improper. To leave out of it something that the church *has* believed would be equally improper. That would make it a false report. In view of the enormous body of written evidence that our church believed that Christ took upon His divine nature the human nature of fallen man, to leave that out of the statement of faith was in itself a misrepresentation. And we continue.

(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 pass this test with flying colors.)

### Turning the Accusation back on the Inquisitors

One of the more significant of the Inquisitorial accusations against the historic Adventists 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 the Inquisitors. There is an abundance of evidence.

What did the church leaders do with the 400 Ellen White statements that Christ took upon Himself the human nature of fallen man, that I researched out and sent to them? *They simply ignored them.*

What did they do with her more than 2000 statements that, by the power of God, man can stop sinning (which Calvinism denies), that I researched out and sent to them? *They simply ignored them.*

What are they doing right now with her clear and Scriptural testimony against law suits between church members? *They are simply ignoring them*, while they continue to launch more and more lawsuits against members. (They try to cover up by having the members expelled from the church before the suits, so that they can claim that they are not suing members.) This technical charge may serve to mislead church members, but will it mislead the God of truth and righteousness? What do you think?

What are they doing right now with her writings 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:

### Christ Calls for Unity Based upon Truth

I urge our brethren to unify upon a true, Scriptural basis. *17 Manuscript Releases*, vol. 17, 306.

"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." *Selected Messages*, Book 3, 412.

## General Conference Inquisition

"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." *Notebook Leaflets*, vol. 2, 164.

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

"...harmony and co-operation must be maintained without compromising one principle of truth." *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 79.

### **The Ostrich with its Head in the Sand**

*Thus there can be no unity between Adventism and Calvinism.* Several vitally important principles of truth are being grievously compromised at many levels 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 sounding the alarm, we will suffer the consequences. 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?

### **"Duly Constituted Church Authority"**

Another Inquisitorial accusation against us is that the historic Adventists refuse to submit to "duly constituted church authority," unless it agrees with "their own particular views." *This is wholly false.* We believe in "duly constituted church authority" as firmly as anyone does. *But we do not put church authority over Bible authority.* No true Seventh-day Adventist does. And we emphatically do not advance our own particular views as to the meaning of the Scriptures. We accept the statement of faith in *SDAs Believe*. But if we are forced to choose between Scripture and the authority of men unsupported by Scripture, we will without hesitation take our stand upon the Scripture. No true Seventh-day Adventist would do otherwise. We reject as *unconditionally false* the following Inquisitorial accusation:

Hope International and associates appear to have taken the position that *their interpretation* of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy is the final arbiter over the Church... *Adventist Review*, August 2000 (Emphasis supplied.)

We say again, in response to this recurring allegation, that we are doing no such thing. We are defending the faith of our fathers, not our own interpretations. Every point of our faith is on record in the book *SDAs Believe*. To call this our own interpretation is emphatically to bear false witness against us. We protest against this misrepresentation and call upon all fair-minded persons to protest with us.

### **You Be the Judge**

There is only one of the main Inquisitorial accusations against us that is partially true. Most of us have testified that *there is apostasy in the church*. Some others have become so appalled and disheartened by the kind of thing that we are examining here, and other similar things, that they have gone further and said *the church is in apostasy*. Who has it right? I submit that there is room for honest and reasonable men to disagree on this point. When we look at the false Calvinistic doctrines

## General Conference Inquisition

being preached in so many of our churches, being taught by so many teachers in our colleges and seminaries, being published in so many of the magazines and books coming from our presses, it is hard to avoid a sense of profound discouragement about the church. Yet we are warned by God's messenger that there will be a great apostasy in the church in the last days. In *Testimonies*, vol. 8, 41, we read of a great last day interchange, when "companies" will leave us and "tribes" will take their place.

How does it all fit together? When our concerns seem to overwhelm us, we may benefit by looking at this statement:

*God has a church. It is not the great cathedral, neither is it the national establishment, neither is it the various denominations; it is the people who love God and keep His commandments. 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.'* (Matthew 18:20). *Where Christ is even among the humble few, this is Christ's church, for the presence of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity can alone constitute a church.* *The Upward Look*, 315.

### **We Can't Do it with Theology**

By this time there must surely be some large questions forming in your mind. Why all of this shadow boxing? Why are the historic Adventists continually being accused of doing so many things that they are not doing? In order to help you understand, let me tell you about a personal experience of mine.

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 us ask some questions:

**1. Why are the historic ministry leaders being accused of being rebels?**

*We have to stop them, but we can't do it with theology.*

**2. 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.*

**3. Why are they being called troublemakers?**

*We have to stop them, but we can't do it with theology.*

**4. Why are they being accused of being critical?**

*We have to stop them, but we can't do it with theology.*

**5. Why are they being accused of starting another church?**

*We have to stop them, but we can't do it with theology.*

**6. 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.*

**7. Why can't you stop them with theology?**

## General Conference Inquisition

*Because there is nothing wrong with their theology.*

### **8. 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.*

So the dog chases its tail, around and around and around. 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.

### **Dust in the Air**

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 into 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 teachers of false doctrines have no authority. They believe in "duly constituted church authority" as firmly as anyone else does. But God has never authorized 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." How much authority did the high priest Caiaphas have over Christ? Absolutely none. How much authority did the Sanhedrin have over Stephen and Paul? Absolutely none. How much authority do teachers of false doctrine have over us today? Absolutely none. Consider this quotation: "We see here that the men in authority are not always to be obeyed, even though they may profess to be teachers of Bible doctrine." *Testimonies to Ministers*, 69.

### **You Cannot "Balance" Truth with Error**

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 do not 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.

Several references have been made in this article to the false doctrines of Calvinism that have invaded our church. How has this been done? *By skullduggery*.

## General Conference Inquisition

When the book *Questions on Doctrine* was published in 1957 its *secret authors* put in it a statement of the false Calvinistic doctrine that Christ came to this earth in the human nature of the unfallen Adam, rather than in fallen human nature, as believed and taught by Seventh-day Adventists. A ludicrous attempt was made to show that even Ellen White believed the false Calvinistic doctrine, in spite of her 400 published statements to the contrary. This is how they misused one of her statements in order to accomplish their purpose:

On pages 650-651 of *Questions on Doctrine* the secret authors presented a passage on the nature of Christ over which they placed this heading:

### **"TOOK SINLESS HUMAN NATURE"**

On pages 497-499 of the book *Movement of Destiny*, which was published four years later as a follow-up to *Questions on Doctrine*, L. E. Froom presents a similar statement over which he places this heading:

### **"TOOK SINLESS NATURE OF ADAM BEFORE FALL"**

Both headings are followed by a series of brief quotations from Ellen White, including this line: "He did not in the least participate in sin."

If you look at those three lines for a moment, you will surely have some questions. What sin was there in the sinless nature of Adam before his fall in which Christ might have participated? None whatever. There was no sin of any kind in Adam before his fall. Why, then, did Ellen White write such a senseless statement? What was the matter with Ellen White? Deeply perplexed, we go to the source, and discover that as Ellen White wrote it, the statement actually looked like this: "*In taking upon Himself man's nature in its fallen condition*, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin." *Selected Messages*, vol.1, 256. (Emphasis supplied.)

## **Secret Writers Violate Context**

The secret writers of *Questions on Doctrine* cut her sentence in half, laid the first half aside and put in the last half beneath their own contrary headings. We gaze at this in disbelief. This is the *ultimate* violation of context. The writer has been represented as having said *the exact opposite* of what she actually did say. This was done by a scholar with a Doctor of Philosophy degree, a seminary professor. And this is not an isolated example. It is typical. In my book, *The Word Was Made Flesh*, I devote 33 pages to exposing, point by point, the wrongful manipulations of evidence in the paragraph presented by Dr. Froom. I also present conclusive evidence that the statement given to Walter Martin that our church had never believed that Christ came to earth in the human nature of fallen man was a methodological monstrosity and a historical fraud. How could it happen? In common parlance this is called *skullduggery* (underhanded or unscrupulous behavior.) That is how the false doctrines of Calvinism were brought into our church, and that is how they have been maintained and promoted ever since.

What has been the result of this gigantic fraud being perpetrated upon the Adventist people? Confusion, dissension, strife, and plummeting church standards. Our colleges and university Bible departments are in a free fall. The falsities of higher criticism are being taught, and the teaching of evolution is being

urged. A videotape has been sent out from the headquarters of the North American Division of the General Conference, giving ministers detailed instructions as to how to convert all of their churches into centers for celebration worship (read Satan worship).

The teaching of a false doctrine about the nature of Christ has made an *enormous* difference. If Christ came to earth in the unfallen human nature of Adam, He could not have been tempted as we are tempted, and it would be altogether unfair for us to be called upon to live like He lived. That would be impossible. He could not be our example, but only our substitute. Thus this false doctrine of Calvinism leads directly to the second false doctrine of Calvinism, that Christians can never stop sinning, even through the power of God.

## Amazing New "Doctrine" Appears

The two false doctrines are inseparably linked together. Where one goes, the other goes. Within a remarkably short time, as theological trends go, Adventist congregations all over the country were listening in astonishment to sermons affirming as truth the false Calvinistic doctrine that Christians cannot stop sinning, even through the power of God. A very highly placed theologian at the theological seminary at Andrews University became so enamored with this false doctrine that he actually began to teach *that Christians sin because God wants them to sin*. Here are his exact words: "It is by the wisdom, not by the impotence of God that no believer is ever perfect here below. The Lord *SO conducts* the saints in this life that *there should always remain something* to give them freely when they ask, or to *pardon them* mercifully when they confess to Him.—From notes that he wrote and passed out to a class of ministers. (Emphasis supplied.)

The Inquisitors allege that the historic ministries are supporting "dissidents" in other countries of the world. We have no way of investigating this claim, and we are hindered by a credibility problem. If we cannot believe what the Inquisitors write about this country, why should we believe what they write about other countries?

## Love for the Pure, Unvarnished Truth

The lowest point in the list of Inquisitorial false accusations is reached in the statement that it is criticism of the church that keeps the historic ministries going. This unchristian slur is entirely unjustifiable. It is grossly false. Nothing could be further from the truth. What keeps the historic ministries going is the love and devotion of the historic Adventist people to the pristine purity of the true Seventh-day Adventist faith and their desire to preserve that faith undefiled by the false doctrines of Calvinism and Liberalism. It is the steadfast and stubborn refusal of church leaders to recognize this that is a large part of the problem.

This is why we are confronted today with the appalling spectacle of a large group of high ranking church leaders sitting down together to concoct a list of totally false accusations against church members, whose only crime is that they will not accept the apostasy that is sweeping through the church. Thus the leaders align themselves with the apostasy. The grossly false accusations that the Inquisitors have prepared and published would compare favorably with the work of the Catholic Inquisitors in Spain.

Do I expect that this rebuttal will cause the Inquisitors to turn back from their folly? Not really. Once men have rebelled against truth in its purity and embarked on a course that can only be maintained by monstrous misrepresentations, it is unlikely that evidence of any kind will dissuade them. Ellen White

## General Conference Inquisition

wrote in *Selected Messages*, Book 2, 393: "*I question whether genuine rebellion is ever curable.*"

I have written this rebuttal for the church members. Many of them have been so deceived by the false accusations, along with the firm refusal to recognize that the present problem is a theological problem, that they are bewildered and confused. I trust that this article will help clarify the situation in their minds.

### **"Reform," is Our Cry**

One of the most frequently repeated false accusations against us is that we are wanting to start a separate church. Nothing could be further 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.

"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." *The Desire of Ages*, 232. (Emphasis supplied.)

It has been said that those who cannot learn from history are condemned to repeat history. We had hoped and we had prayed that this would not prove to be true in our church. We had shared the hope expressed by Ellen White in these words: "*We hoped that there would not be the necessity for another coming out.*" *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, 357. (Emphasis supplied.)

### **Spiritual Suicide**

But with the General Conference Inquisition moving in on us, what shall we do? Should we tremble in fear and agree to accept the false authority and the false doctrines if they will just let us stay in the church?

God forbid! That would be spiritual suicide. We will stand firmly on this truth:

"God has a church. It is not the great cathedral, neither is it the national establishment, neither is it the various denominations; it is the people who love God and keep His commandments. 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matthew 18:20). Where Christ is even among the humble few, that is Christ's church, for the presence of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity can alone constitute a church." *The Upward Look*, 315.

The Lord who inspired those words is watching over us and saying: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake: Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. ..." Matthew 5:11, 12.

## The General Conference Inquisition

### Like the Most High

#### Part 2

By Ralph Larson

If I were to ask you, What is the similarity, the likeness, between a bank president and a town drunkard, what would you say?

If I were to ask you, What is the similarity between a bartender and a college professor, what would you say?

And, if I were to ask you, What is the similarity between a thief and a scientist, what would you say?

What about a gambler and a college president? What is the similarity between them?

I think I know what you would say, and I think I know what you are thinking right now. I believe you are thinking, "Ralph, those are dumb questions. There is no similarity at all between those people."

But I would respectfully have to disagree with you. I believe that there is a point on which these people are not only similar, they are practically identical. It is on the point of *self-idolatry*, which Ellen White describes as "the foundation of all sin." *Testimonies*, vol. 9, 27.

### Self-idolatry lies at the foundation of all sins.

When we hear the word "idolatry" we think of idols and images, things carved out of wood or stone, before which people bow and pray, and even offer sacrifices. In Honolulu I lived for awhile across a narrow street from a Bhuddist temple where the people bowed and prayed before an image of Bhudda. In Japan, I visited a temple of a thousand Bhuddas. There were actually a thousand idols there, standing on their feet in order to use less room than the more familiar seated Bhuddas. Sri Lanka, the island kingdom to the south of India, is a land of many idols and images. Idolatry is not always practiced with images of wood or stone. In Manila I watched a man and a woman walk with bare feet across a bed of hot coal, and afterward bow before the fire and pray to it.

I have seen idols and images of many gods, but I have never seen an image or idol of the god "self," have you? Yet self-idolatry must be very common, if it lies at the foundation of all sin. We may remember that Lucifer laid the original foundation, as we read in Isaiah 14:12–14: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."

When we read these words, we think that surely this was the ultimate insanity, for a created being to think that he could put himself above his own Creator. Such craziness could happen only once in the history of the universe, we feel sure. But actually, this *self-idolatry* is happening every day, all around us. People on every side of us are daily saying, "I will be like the most High; I will make my own rules; I will be my own god." Why do they do this? Because of a grim reality that we do not often think about but should. We remember that in Genesis 3:15 the Lord said to Satan, "...I will put enmity between thee

## General Conference Inquisition

and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." Let us look carefully at some Spirit of Prophecy comments on this verse:

The Lord says, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman.' The enmity does not exist as a natural fact. As soon as Adam sinned, he was in harmony with the first great apostate and at war with God; and if God had not interfered in man's behalf, Satan and man would have formed a confederacy against heaven, and carried on united opposition against the God of hosts. *Signs of the Times*, July 11, 1895.

"There is no natural enmity between evil angels and evil men; both are evil through transgression of the law of God, and evil will always league against good. Fallen men and fallen angels enter into a desperate companionship." *Youth's Instructor*, October 11, 1894.

Note carefully—the evil in both men and angels is defined as *transgression of the law of God*. That would include everyone in the world, except sincere Christians, for they are all transgressing the law of God. This is the basic point in their similarity. Do you see now why I said there is a point in which the people I mentioned are not different at all? We may divide them into two separate groups. We would put the bank president, the college professor, and the scientist in one group and the drunkard, the bartender, the thief and the gambler in another group and say that the two groups are completely different, but we would be wrong. Except for the few Christians who might be found in the first group, they are all alike in their transgression of the law of God. On this point there is no difference between the drunkard and the bank president or the thief and the scientist, or any of the others who were mentioned. They are all practicing self-idolatry. They are all saying, "I will be like the most High." In their rejection of God's Law they are rejecting God, and putting self on the throne, just like Lucifer did.

They are also alike in their association with fallen angels. There is no enmity between them, and they are in a "desperate" companionship, although they may not realize it. And what of their relationship with Christians?

### **Evil will always league against good.**

If you question that statement, just read the newspapers for awhile. They will convince you. I used to read the well-known statement by Ellen White, which calls for men who, among other things, are not afraid "to call sin by its right name." (See *Education*, 57.) I would wonder then why calling sin by its right name should require courage, but I do not wonder any more. People are being criticized, denounced, and even sued for calling sin by its right name in our time. The "bad guys" are declaring war on the "good guys" all over the country. Even the Bible is being attacked because it clearly states that certain practices are an abomination to God.

Add it up. There is no enmity between fallen angels and fallen men. Fallen angels and fallen men are in a "desperate companionship." Fallen angels and fallen men are alike in their transgression of God's Law. Fallen angels and fallen men are united in a league against good, for *evil will always league against good*.

Once we get this picture clearly in our minds, we are better able to understand some of the peculiar things that are being done around us by highly trained and highly educated persons. I once hired a university student to help me do some work on my evangelistic equipment. As we worked, he told me about some of his classes. One of his professors, he said, made a point of telling the students, every few days, that Christianity is dead. "He must be a frightened man," I said.

## General Conference Inquisition

"Why? What do you mean?" the student asked.

"If you really believed that a man was dead," I answered, "would you go back and stick your knife into him every few days? It looks to me like your professor is afraid that Christianity is not dead."

I digress to make a point of which you might not be aware. You have probably understood that Christianity must not be discussed in public school classrooms. This is only partially true. You may freely discuss Christianity in the public school classrooms as long as you are putting it down, discrediting it. If the professor mentioned above had taken time, every few days, to tell his students something favorable about Christianity, he would soon have been in trouble. *Evil will always league against good.* We must not draw the conclusion that highly educated men are exceptions to this rule. They are not. On this point they are not different from the drunkard, the gambler, or the thief.

### Getting Away with Murder

I read with astonishment how a highly respected judge, on the Raphael Perez case, (The General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists of Silver Spring, Maryland vs Raphael Perez and the Eternal Gospel Church of Miami, Florida, Case #98-2940-CIV-KING) let the lawyers for the General Conference "get away with murder," to use a familiar statement, in the first few minutes of the trial. The first witness that they called to the stand was a Seventh-day Adventist lawyer named Clark Floyd. The questioning went approximately like this:

"Do you have any degrees in theology?"

"No."

"Are you a member of any theological society?"

"No."

"Do you subscribe to any theological journals?"

"No."

"Your honor, I move that this witness be dismissed because he is not qualified to testify in this case."  
Ibid., *Court Transcript*

*And the judge dismissed him! And he dismissed the second witness in the same manner. What a mockery of judicial procedure!*

What should the judge have done? He should have addressed the lawyer and said to him very firmly, "Counsel, this is not a theological court, it is a court of civil law. We are not dealing with questions of theology; we are dealing with a matter of civil law. You will please confine your questions to matter of civil law, and say no more about theology." But the judge permitted theological questions all the way through the trial. How are we to understand this? *Evil will always league against good.* Was the judge consciously trying to do evil against Raphael Perez? Possibly not. He may not have even been aware of what he was doing, but the wrongful trial and the wrongful decision make us keenly aware that Bible Christians cannot expect justice from worldly courts.

This is underscored by the results of the appeal to a higher court. The last report that reached me was that this court was trying to settle the matter through arbitration, whereas they should have declared it a mistrial because of the mixture of theological matters with matters of civil law. This is contrary to the

## General Conference Inquisition

constitution, which guarantees our freedom of religion. But we should not be surprised. *Evil will always league against good.*

Most Americans are familiar with the tragic story of Aaron Burr, who challenged Alexander Hamilton to a duel because of some small matter, and shot and killed Hamilton, while Hamilton, who did not believe in duels, fired his shot into the air. But public opinion turned strongly against Burr, and his life went downward and downward until he finally committed suicide. Most Americans know that story, but few people know of the experience that lies behind it. While Burr was a student at Princeton University, an evangelist came to town and preached the gospel. Burr attended several of the meetings, and felt a strong conviction that he should become a Christian. Feeling the need of some advice, he asked the President of the University what to do. The President said: "I cannot tell you whether you should be a Christian. You will have to decide that for yourself. But I would advise you to wait until the meetings are all over, and the evangelist has gone on to his next appointment, then think it over and make your decision, by yourself, as to what you want to do."

Burr accepted this advice. He ignored all of the evangelist's appeals, and waited until the meetings were over. Then one night, while Burr's fellow students were studying in their dormitory rooms, they heard a sudden noise. Looking out, they saw that Burr had thrown open his dormitory window, and was leaning out and looking up at the sky. He looked for a long moment, and then the other students heard him say:

"Goodbye, God. I have made my decision."

That is the experience that lies behind the tragic story of Aaron Burr. We know that the president was not a Christian, because no Christian would ever give that kind of advice to anybody. The president may have thought that he was giving Burr good advice, but he was a fallen man in league with fallen angels, whether he realized it or not. *Evil will always league against good.*

### **Put not your trust in princes.**

We have to face it, folks. We cannot put our trust in princes of science, or in princes of education, or in princes of industry, or in princes of politics. *And we cannot put our trust (are you ready for this?) in princes of the church.* Let us go without further delay to the very heart of the problem.

The August 2000 issues of the *Adventist Review* and *Ministry* magazines present a report to the church regarding the activities of such independent ministries as Hope International, led by Ron Spear; Hartland Institute, led by Colin Standish; and Remnant Ministries, led by Russell Standish. It proposes that 12 months will be given to them in which they may either submit to the authority of the church or suffer the consequences. *The report is filled with grossly false allegations.* I have written a firm rebuttal of the false allegations, which is in the November issue of LandMarks magazine, and so I will not repeat them here. But it is my painful duty to point out that *these false allegations were concocted and published by princes of the church.* It is an appalling, unbelievable, spectacle, but we must face it. As in all times of trial, we go to the inspired writings for guidance. Here is a sampling of what we find there:

As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the Third Angel's Message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. *Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren. The Great Controversy, 608.* [Emphasis supplied.]

## General Conference Inquisition

The "men of talent and pleasing address" may well be princes of the church. And carefully consider this:

Through his evil angels, Satan contrives to form an alliance *with professedly pious men*,...He knows that if he can induce men, as he induced the angels, to join in rebellion, *under the guise of servants of God*, he will have in them his most successful allies in his enterprise against heaven. *Under the name of godliness*, he can inspire them with his own accusing spirit, and lead them to *charge God's servants with evil and guile*. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, 1142. [Emphasis supplied.]

Would you like to sample a foretaste of what she was writing about? Roy Adams, associate editor of the *Adventist Review*, provides us with a sample. In a book that he wrote called *The Nature of Christ* he uses the following words to describe historic Adventists and their leaders:

Sour, festering, self-appointed, infected with the virus of judgmentalism and suspicion, disease, martyr complex, seasoned controversialists, spirit of accusation, outraged, aghast, scandalized, pathetic, self-confessed expert, misguided, wrong-headed, steeped in their cherished position, impenetrable to any theological logic, irresponsible, almost dishonest, deluded self-appointed gurus, disgruntled, pious self-appointed prophets, turncoats, charlatans, and scoundrels, like Jim Jones and David Koresh. *The Nature of Christ*,

He then describes our reasoning and our writings in these terms:

Mumblings, innuendos, broken faith with the church, specious theology, perfectionistic agitation, picayune, disgusting, speciousness, repetitive, exasperating, subtle spin, overblown, vacuousness, subtle legalism, anger, irritation, anger to new heights, radical articulation, fuss, ingenious theological gymnastics, willfulness, mischief, dishonesty, far-fetched explanations, artificial and contrived, totally fabricated, thoughtlessly, narrow, shallow, facile admonitions, simplistic pietism, shrill, provincial, manipulate, dogmatism, trap of perfectionistic legalism, heated, quoted piously, specious reasoning, vehement, inordinate insistence, maliciously accusing, sharpened tongues, navel-gazing, and self-flagellation. *Ibid.*,

Look again at what Ellen White predicted. The devil will inspire *professedly pious men* with his own accusing spirit, and *they will charge God's servants with evil and guile*. Did she know what she was writing about? Need we wonder what part Adams will take in the court procedures against true Adventists who are on trial for their faith? And how can we doubt that Ellen White was inspired? You would think that she had been shown a copy of Adams' book. And the book carries on its back cover recommendations from Adventist scholars and from then General Conference President, Robert Folkenberg. Make no mistake about it, dear friend. The report and the ultimatum to historic Adventists that were prepared by princes of the church and published in the *Adventist Review* and in *Ministry* magazine, with all of their grossly false accusations, are not to be taken lightly. They are obviously inspired by the same spirit that inspired Adams.

As for the theology that Adams recommends to his readers, here is a sample. In his argument against the idea of character perfection, Adams says that some sins, called *chata'ah* in Hebrew, cannot be overcome, that they are not counted against us, and that they have nothing to do with our fitness or unfitness for heaven (See *Ibid.*, 97). Let us therefore go to the Old Testament to see what kind of sins are there defined as *chata'ah*. The list includes:

- The sin of adultery into which Potiphar's wife tried to lure Joseph. Genesis 39:9.
- The selling of Joseph into slavery by his brothers. Genesis 50:17.
- The sin of idolatry. Exodus 23:33.

## General Conference Inquisition

- The rebellion of Korah against Moses, for which he died. Numbers 16:22.
- Eli's sons' rebellion against the Lord, for which they died. I Samuel 2:25.
- The planned murder of David by Saul. I Samuel 19:5.
- The multiple sins into which Jereboam led Israel, which caused God to reject Israel. I Kings 14:16.
- The sins of Manasseh, who filled Jerusalem with blood and caused Israel to do worse than the heathen. II Kings 21:9, 16.

These sins, according to Adams, cannot be overcome, are not counted, and have nothing to do without fitness or unfitness for heaven. Need we wonder what spirit is inspiring all of this? *Put not your trust in princes*, not even the princes of the church.

### **So How Shall We Relate to These Horrifying Circumstances?**

*Rejoice.* The evidence shows that the end is near; thank God that we have been given ample warning in advance through the precious writings of the Spirit of Prophecy. Marvel again at the uncanny accuracy of Ellen White's words: Professedly *pious* men *will charge God's servants with evil and guile.*

*Do not Panic.* The God who was able to tell us in advance about the great apostasy in Adventism is well able to bring us safely through that apostasy and the great time of trouble that will follow it.

*Do not Retaliate.* Bitter as it is to be betrayed by church leaders, and to see our beautiful truth trashed by persons in high church office, we must not return evil for evil. Jesus was calm and undisturbed while being falsely accused, and by His grace we may do the same. It may be that some of the false accusers and truth trashers will yet repent and be saved.

*Stay Close to the Lord.* Read, read and reread the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Guard carefully your prayer program, and cultivate the habit of talking to God while about your daily affairs.

*Keep Your Guard Up.* Put no blind confidence in *anyone*. We can no longer take it for granted that persons in high church office will be truthful with us, either in their words or in their writings. The situation is grave now, and it will certainly get worse as the end draws near. But we have read "the last pages in the book," and we know how it is going to end!

*Courage in the Lord!*