



METRO NEW YORK WORLD MINISTRY
ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL CONTRIBUTING NOTES
For the week of August 16 – August 22, 2014
Lesson #8: The Church

In this week's study, the Sabbath School Quarterly focused on unity. It says in the quarterly on Monday's lesson that "He [Jesus] knew that the greatest danger for the church would be a spirit of rivalry and division." It seems to mean that the greatest danger facing the church is sin. Sin is the transgression of the law. It was disobedience that led to Lucifer being cast out of heaven. It was disobedience that expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden. It was disobedience that led to the Flood. It was disobedience that led to Israel's captivity. And it has been our failure to embrace the power of the Holy Spirit to obey all that God commands that has kept us in this old world.

Sin brings disunity. Error brings disunity. We must be unity on truth. And we must speak the truth in the love of Jesus. If we walk in the Spirit, put on Christ each day, and follow all that God asks, there will be unity in God's remnant church. But as long as we are choosing to live in sin and replacing God's blueprint for one of man's devising there will be disunity and delay.

It seems to me that it would be better to focus on our mission that God gave to our church. Part of our disunity today is due to our failure to fulfill the role that God raised us up for. In addition to the mission God gave to us, God also handed us a blueprint for success. By adhering to the mission and the blueprint we will have the greatest unity possible. So in our study this week, I would like us to study a number of issues. First, we will affirm the Seventh-day Adventist Church as the remnant church of Bible prophecy. As that remnant church we have the particular commission to preach the Three Angel's Messages to prepare the world for the soon return of Christ. Second, we will affirm what the Bible says about the church, namely, that it is the body of Christ. Third, we will look at the role of the local elders. We will discover that the elders in the early church were responsible for teaching the congregation and shepherding the flock. This is an important issue for preparing our own people for Christ's return. Fourth, we will look at the role of the pastor. What we will find is that he should be functioning much like the work of the apostles in the early church. But now consider our dilemma. If today's pastors are functioning more like the elders of the early church, then what is the role of the elder today? And, who is going to fill the role of an apostle? Fifth, we will consider the issue of authority in God's church. Why should we study such a topic? I fear that for some, they believe that unity comes from do all that the leadership tells us to do. Let me give you an example. I asked a leader in the local church what he would do if the church leadership told us to wear purple shirts on Friday and to also eat fish on Friday. Do you know what he said? He said that he would if the church leaders told him to. That is a tragic understanding of church leadership and unity. So let us begin our study by affirming the Seventh-day Adventist Church as the remnant church.



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Part I: The Remnant Church of Bible Prophecy

The identifying marks of God's remnant church clearly point to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Consider the following identifying marks:

Keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 12:17
God's last day church are identified as keeping the “commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 12:17

There are not too many churches that keep all of God's commandments, including the fourth, the seventh-day Sabbath. The body of believers encompassing the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the largest Sabbath-keeping body in the world. There are over two hundred other Sabbath-keeping groups.

Another identifying mark is that they “have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” According to Revelation 19:10, the “testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” Clearly Ellen White fulfills this identifying mark for these last days.

They are a worldwide church proclaiming the Three Angel's Messages

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive [his] mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here [are] they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”
Revelation 14:6-12

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is the only church that I know of that is worldwide and is proclaiming the Three Angel's Messages. Our unique message that “judgment is come,” is derived from our understanding of the sanctuary service, which few Christian bodies in the world have taken the time to study.



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There are several other identifying marks, but the few that we have mentioned already point to the SDA church as God's remnant church.

Part II: The Church as the Body of Christ

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:" Philippians 2:5

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself." Ephesians 5:25-28

If we put these two verses together we will love the church as Christ loved the church and we will give ourselves to the church as Christ gave Himself to the church.

Now the church is the Body of Christ. Christ is the Head. To be part of the church would mean to be connected to Christ. The reason for being connected to Christ is to manifest Him to the world.

Therefore, membership in the church, comes not by belonging to the church in order to belong to Christ, but belonging to Christ in order to belong to the church. So to belong to the church, we must first belong to Christ. This is important, because a person can belong to the church yet not be connected to Christ.

Consider these words of Sister White, "Profession alone is nothing. Names are registered upon the church books upon earth, but not in the book of life. I saw that there is not one in twenty of the youth who knows what experimental religion is." 1T 504

Did you catch that! Not one in twenty of our youth know what it truly means to walk with Jesus. How can that be? Consider this: If families are not having family worship, and the schools are not taking the enough time to prepare the students for usefulness in God's work, and the church is simply entertaining our youth, then it should be of no surprise that most of our youth remain unconverted.

It is important to understand that the church is the body of Christ and that each member is an important part of the body. Each person has unique gifts and talents. Some function as a hand or an eye. But too many of our people feel like wisdom teeth, feeling that they are not truly needed. But the church really needs the involvement of every member. When we study of the role of the pastor, we will see that it is his primary duty to train the members for works of ministry.



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What kind of church did Jesus leave for us?

Soon after His resurrection, Jesus had a Spirit-filled church of 120 members.

“And, being assembled together with [them], commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, [saith he], ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Acts 1:4-8

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Acts 2:1-4

For further study on the Holy Spirit, I would like to encourage you to study some of our previous Metro Sabbath School Notes, especially the study on the Holy Spirit, which was our lesson for July 12-18, 2014

Part III: The high-calling of the local elder

So let us begin our study on the role of the elders, which the Bible refers to as shepherds and teachers.

Let us first look at the Greek word “poimenas” which is translated 17 times as “shepherd.”

4 times it is used of literal shepherds caring for literal sheep.

8 times it refers to Jesus as the Great Shepherd.

4 times it refers to leadership of true believers, as either true or false leaders.

1 time it is used of an office in the church

Only once is the word “poimenas” translated as “pastor,” which occurs in Ephesians 4:11, “and some, pastors and teachers.” Many understand the phrase “pastors and teachers” as referring to one office, namely, a pastor/teacher, or as the word “poimenas” is generally translated as “shepherd/teacher.” This suggests that someone has the primary role to serve as a “shepherd/teacher” in the church. But should that role belong mostly to today’s pastor or elder? What was God’s original purpose for the elders?



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The most important reference of the word “poimenas” is to Jesus. “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. . . and I lay down my life for the sheep. . . .that I might take it up again. . . .I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” John 10:11,15, 17, 18. Jesus is clearly the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for us all, and has risen to intercede for us in the heavenly sanctuary.

What else can we draw from these verses? We can draw from these verses and the usage of the word “poimenas,” that the “Good Shepherd” expects his shepherd-teachers in the local church to be self-sacrificing in their service to both God and man. And the Good Shepherd will help them be effective shepherding-teachers to the flock.

Let us consider the following two passages together, namely, Matthew 9:36 and Mark 6:34. In these passages the crowds following Jesus are described as “sheep without a shepherd.” But there is no reference as to who the shepherd would be.

In Matthew 9:37, 38, Jesus adds these thoughts, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.” In these words of Jesus, we may assume that the “shepherd” in verse 36 is referring to the laborers in God’s vineyard reaching out to precious souls.

What can we conclude? The shepherd/teacher not only teaches but is a laboring soul-winner looking out for souls in the highways and byways.

Now consider this very important point! According to Acts 20:28, these shepherd/teachers are the elders of the local church. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves [the elders], and to all the flock [the church members], over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you [the elders] overseers, to feed [by teaching the Word] the church of God, which he hath purchased with His own blood.”

The Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who purchased us with His own blood, has sent out the “overseers” to look after the flock (or sheep) of God.

According to verse 17, Paul goes to Miletus to visit with the “elders of the church.” He refers to them as “overseers” in verse 28. These elders clearly are responsible for the care of the local church.

In 1 Peter 5:1-4, we have Peter referring to the “elders” as having the responsibility to “feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof.” The Greek word of “oversight” is “episkopeo,” meaning bishop or overseer. The elders are to be the overseers or bishops of the congregation of sheep.



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They do so willingly because of the supreme sacrifice made on the part of “the chief Shepherd.” The elders are the delegated extension of Christ’s ministry as the Shepherd.

So far it would seem that the office of shepherd/teacher found in Ephesians 4:11, is the same as the overseers and bishops found in Acts 20 and 1 Peter 5.

Before we consider the charts below, I would like to point out an interesting repetition between Jesus being referred to as the Shepherd and the local elders as those who feed the flock.

In 1 Peter 2:25, Jesus is called “the Shepherd” and “Bishop.” So in Jesus, we have tied together Shepherd “Poimen” and Bishop “Episkopos.” In like manner, the elders are commissioned to feed the flock like a shepherd (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1, 2) and have the title of bishop or overseer (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5, 7). This tells me that the Shepherd/Bishop, Jesus Christ, will strengthen his shepherd/bishop/elders to take care of His sheep.

Let us now consider the following charts on the titles referring to the elders as the overseers/shepherds/stewards of God’s local church.

Terms referring to an Elder and where they are found

	<u>Elder/ Presbyter</u>	<u>Overseer/Bishop</u>	<u>Shepherd/Pastor</u>	<u>Steward</u>
Acts 20:17, 28	x	x	x	
Titus 1:5, 7	x	x		x
1 Peter 5:1, 2	x		x	

What do these terms/titles mean?

<u>Term/title</u>	<u>Greek</u>	<u>Application</u>
Elder/Presbyter	Presbureros	Experience
Overseer/bishop	Episcopos	Oversight
Shepherd/pastor	Poimen	Teacher, Protector
Steward	Oikonomo	Trustworthy
Eldership	Presbuterion	Equality, Unity

The verb form of “poimen” is “poimaino,” which means, “to act as a shepherd,” is used 11 times in the NT. “Poimaino” is translated “feed” 7 times and as “rule” 4 times in the KJV. Therefore, elders rule by



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feeding God's people with the Word. If the members are not grounded in the Word, how are the elders to lead? If the elders themselves do not know the Word, how are they to feed and lead others?

Of course the shepherd does not so much as "feed" the sheep as he leads the sheep to pasture. He also guards them and brings them into the sheepfold.

I would understand this analogy to mean that the elders (shepherd-teachers) are to lead the sheep to understand truth for themselves. After all, sheep have to eat for themselves, but they are led by the shepherd to the pasture. As elders, we are to help the flock of God to study the Word for themselves.

"A bishop [elder] then must be apt to teach." 1 Tim 3:2

"For a bishop must be holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." Titus 2:7, 9

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves (elders), and to all the flock (the members), over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers ("episkopoi" or bishops), to feed (teach) the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Acts 20:28

So the elders (shepherd-teachers) were to teach the flock the Word of God.

How are the Elders to teach the Word? 2 Timothy 2:15

John 5:39 Teach them how all Scriptures points to Jesus.

Ephesians 3:8, 9 Teach the members how to have fellowship with Jesus.

2 Timothy 2:15 Teach them the principles of Biblical interpretation.

1 Timothy 4:6, 7 Teach them how to defend the faith.

Acts 2:42, 47 Teach them how to be soul-winners with the Word.

Elders (plural) of the local church

Now notice that elders (plural) are appointed for every congregation (Acts 14:23), receive the monies (Acts 11:29, 30), and are involved in all church disputes, discussions, and decisions (Acts 15:2, 6, 22, 23; 16:4).

"And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." Acts 14:23

"Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul." Acts 11:30



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“When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. . . . And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. . . . Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. . . . And they wrote letters by them after this manner; the apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. . . . And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.” Acts 15:2, 6, 22, 23; 16:4)

The Authority of the Elders

The elders gave instruction to the apostle Paul to follow. Acts 21:21-26. This shows that the elders had local authority even over the highest position in the church, namely, an apostle. “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers (the elders), after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” 1 Corinthians 12:28.

This does not contradict the words of Paul found in 1 Corinthians 12:28, saying that apostles are first, prophets are second, and teachers (the elders) are third in the order of the church. What it does mean is that elders are in charge at the local level. As Paul also wrote, “Let the elders that RULE well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.” 1 Timothy 5:17 “Rule” comes from the Greek word “prostemi,” which means “to stand before; hence to lead (like a shepherd); to attend to (indicating care and diligence).”

As we have already read, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves (elders), and to ALL THE FLOCK (the members), OVER THE WHICH the Holy Ghost hath made you OVERSEERS (“episkopoi” or bishops), to FEED (teach) the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Acts 20:28. Elders are over the entire flock of God. They are to teach and feed all of God’s children.

Elders are to work together

“I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.” 1 Timothy 5:21

“Is any among you sick? Let him call the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” James 5:14



What are the qualifications of an elder?

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Titus 1:5-9

In closing, the role of elder/shepherd/teacher is critical to the growth of the local church. God had a perfect order in mind when He ordained these various offices and gifts of the Spirit. It is up to all of us to search the Scriptures and follow the Words of the Lord in doctrine, in holy living, and the structure of our work.

Part IV: The role of today's pastor

Let us begin our study with 1 Corinthians 12:28, which reads, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers (elders), after that miracles, then gifts of healings (medical missionaries) helps, governments, diversities of tongues."

This is very similar to Paul's list of offices in Ephesians 4:11, which reads, "And he gave some apostles, and some, prophets, and some, evangelists, and some, pastors [Greek "poimem," the word for "shepherd"] and teachers."

In our study on the role of the elder, we discovered that a great responsibility falls upon the elders to teach the members in the local church. The term "poimem," translated as "shepherd" is used in reference to the elders feeding the flock of God. See Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4

These offices were established "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Ephesians 4:12.

These gifts were to continue "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God; unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Ephesians 4:13

As I look at these various parts in the body of Christ, according to 1 Corinthians 12:28, we have at the top "apostles." I would like to submit that the apostolic role today would be best fulfilled by the pastor.

We have secondarily "prophets." No doubt Sister White successfully fulfills that role.

Thirdly, we have teachers. As mentioned before, I believe the teaching role fails heavily, not exclusively, upon the elders of the local church.

In Ephesians 4:11, we have "evangelists" listed among the apostle, prophets, and shepherd/teachers. There is the role of an "evangelist," and there is the gift of "evangelism." The gift of evangelism can be



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place upon any one in the local church by the Holy Spirit. Is it the special gift of leading people to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

But let us come back to this role of “apostle.” If today’s pastor does not fulfill the office of an “apostle,” then who would? The role of an “apostle” is that of starting new work, raising up churches, and training the laity to take them over. Then the apostle goes to another location to start yet another church and yet again begins the training of the members. Consider these statements from the Spirit of Prophecy:

“Ministers should work earnestly and devotedly, opening new fields and engaging in personal labor for souls, instead of hovering over the churches that already have great light and many advantages.” 7T 255

Sister White also wrote, “To fasten a minister to one place by giving him the oversight (overseer/elder) of business matters connected with the work of the church is not conducive to his spirituality. To do this is not in accordance with the Bible plan as outlined in the sixth chapter of Acts. Study this plan, for it is approved of God. Follow the word.” 7T 252

From these statements we understand that pastors are not to be settled into one location as they are today. They are to be trained to go out and start new work. In so doing, we will be out on the frontlines looking for Bible studies and giving Bible studies. They will take members with them to be trained that the members may take over the work in that area.

This is how our church functioned in the early years of our denomination. To even be a pastor in Sister White’s day, you needed to show that you truly had the calling to be a pastor. And what was that proof? You had to show that the Holy Spirit was leading you to get Bible studies going for the purpose of starting new work. If you showed that you did not have these abilities to get things started, then you were not called to be a pastor.

Sadly today, many are in our pulpits simply because they said they felt called to the ministry and then they went to one of our schools and earned a degree in religion. Today, they are saying that you need a Masters degree. Hence, we have many pastors in our pulpits who do not know how to start new work. They are not very good at getting Bible studies going, nor are they spending time training our members. In a Biblical sense, they are not really pastors. And in Sister White’s day, they would not have been a pastor. But they are today, and this is part of our challenges. We have pastors who chair the committees, hold prayer meeting, preach a sermon, and may visit a few members during the week. What I have just described is the work of the local elders, not the pastor. So we have this dilemma of paying pastor for doing the work of elders, and who is doing the work of an apostle?



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Let us take a close look at the apostolic role in the NT. Before the 12 become apostles, they were first disciples (disciplined followers). They walked with Jesus and He trained them.

This would mean that our apostle/pastors need a very practical training of how to (1) be a follower of Jesus. There should be extensive training on the life and teachings of Jesus. (2) They need training that will allow them to go out as missionaries. This would include colporteur, bible worker training, and medical missionary training. It would also include working with an evangelist in holding an evangelistic crusade. They may even be asked to go on a mission trip overseas. All these things will give the young apostle/pastor exposure to the various lines of soul-winning. Their training should consist of going out two by two as Jesus trained His disciples as missionaries. Mark 6:7, 12, 13

Before the disciples began their apostolic role they were to wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Acts 1:8. In like manner, apostle/pastors need to understand the conditions of receiving the Holy Spirit every day. Without this, their efforts will not be in the power of the Spirit. What is all this training worth if we simply go forth in the weakness of our fallen natures?

With this baptism of the Holy Spirit, their commission was to take the gospel to the whole known world, beginning in Jerusalem. The title, “apostle,” means “one sent forth.” While the elder stays local and teaches the local church, the apostle/pastor breaks new ground by going forth and teaching. Romans 15:20; Colossians 1:23

There are generally five identifying marks of an apostle.

First, he is the take the gospel to unreached areas. Romans 15:20. If our apostle/pastors settle over the local churches, who will break new ground? If they settle over the local churches what happens to the role of the shepherd/elders? Concerning the former, members are not inspired to help with breaking new ground if the apostle/pastor is not doing it. Concerning the latter, the role of the shepherd/elder gets watered down if the apostle/pastor simply preaches to the choir.

The second identifying mark of an apostle, is that he helps to lay the foundation of starting new churches. 1 Corinthians 3:10, 11. Tragically, our pastors are not trained to be apostles. They are trained more like chaplains to simply settle over the local church and take care of church members. This misdirection of the role of the apostle/pastor has hurt our churches. But if our apostle/pastors were trained to begin new work, it would always afford opportunities for our members to exercise their gifts and talents to reach out to precious souls.

Apostle/pastors are not only responsible for starting new churches, but it may be necessary for them to return to a church they have start to make sure it does not go in the wrong direction. Galatians 1:6-10;



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3:1-3; Revelation 2:1-5. This means that apostle/pastors should not lose contact with the work they have had a part in starting.

Third, he helps to appoint and train the elders of the local church. Acts 14:21-23; Titus 1:5. As the apostle/pastor has received training, he must duplicate himself in the elders of the church. During this training process it will become evident who should be appointed as shepherd/elders of the local church.

Fourth, he doesn't control the local churches, but he helps them through doctrinal problems. The enemy of souls is very busy stirring up problems, heresies, and the like. The apostle/pastor could help the shepherd/elders handle challenges with local church disputes and controversies. 1 Corinthians; Romans. This means that the apostle/pastor should be very familiar with the content of the *Testimonies for the Church*. Herein is wisdom to handle the various problems facing our churches.

Fifth, he helps to promote networking through the churches to meet various needs. Because he is not settled in one local area like the shepherd/elders, he can have a larger vision of the work going forward. Acts 11:27-30; Romans 15:25-27; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9.

As I consider the above description of the apostle/pastor, it helps me to understand why our ministers are not to be involved on committees. Consider these statements from the Spirit of Prophecy:

“Those who are employed to write and to speak the word should attend fewer committee meetings.” 7T 247

“It is a great mistake to keep a minister constantly to work in business lines, going from place to place, and sitting up late at night in attendance at board meetings and committee meetings.” 7T 250

“Not a few ministers are neglecting the very work that they have been appointed to do. Why are those who are set apart for the work of ministry placed on committees and boards? Why are they called upon to attend so many business meetings, many times at great distance from their fields of labor? Why are not business matters placed in the hands of businessmen? The ministers have not been set apart to do this work.” 7T 254, 255

Since an apostle/pastor is not to be settled over any particular church or church district, he will not chair any meetings, but will serve in an advisory capacity. I am of the opinion that apostle/pastors should not even attend any committees unless their expertise is called for. Because they are to be breaking new ground they are not to be encumbered or burdened with committee meetings. Their work is very clearly defined. “Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy



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Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” Acts 6:3, 4.

“Your work is not the management of financial matters. It is not wise for you to undertake this.” 7T 246

“Special instruction has been given me in regard to our ministers. It is not God’s will that they should seek to be rich. They should not engage in worldly enterprises, for this disqualifies them for giving their best powers to spiritual things.” 7T 250

“They are not to take up duties that conflict with the work that God has given them.” 7T 250

“Our ministers should learn to let business and financial matters alone. Over and over again I have been instructed that this is not the work of the ministry.” 7T 252

“But some of our ministers are little disposed to take upon the burden of this work [in new fields].” 7T 254

“Ministers should work earnestly and devotedly, opening new fields and engaging in personal labor for souls, instead of hovering over the churches that already have great light and many advantages.” 7T 255

“In counseling for the advancement of the work, no one man is to be a controlling power, a voice for the whole.” 7T 259

As we look at the role of the pastor, he should be (1) breaking new ground for the furthering of Christ’s kingdom, (2) he should not be assigned to a local church and settle over the local churches, (3) he should not be chairing any committees, and should be attending but few, if necessary, (4) he should be working with the members to help them be involved in reaching precious souls, and (5) he should be fully dedicated to the work of ministry and to no other enterprises.

It is my firm belief that we should hold pastors accountability for the salaries that they receive. Every Sabbath, wherever the pastor may be attending, he should give a report of his work that week. It is so discouraging for local congregations when they have no idea what the pastor is even doing.

Part V: Church Authority

In the local church, I have heard the statement made that the conference is the voice of God, and that we should unquestioningly obey church leadership. I have heard individuals even express that the Church Manual is the charter of the local church. I would like to address these two issues.



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So what does it mean when some say that the conference represents the voice of God? Does this mean that conference leaders are demi-gods? Certainly not. They are finite and fallible human beings as us. The conference is the voice of God when and only when they are in agreement with the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. And as long as they follow the blueprint laid down in Inspiration they will receive the affirmation and blessing of God. But if they are not following God's blueprint are they still the voice of God?

So how should we respond to church leadership if they do not run things according to God's blueprint? Should we despise their positions and show disrespect? Sister White wrote, "At times, when a small group of men entrusted with the general management of the work have, in the name of the General Conference, sought to carry out unwise plans and to restrict God's work, I have said that I could no longer regard the voice of the General Conference, represented by these few men, as the voice of God. But this is not saying that the decision of a General Conference composed of an assembly of duly appointed, representative men from all parts of the field should not be respected." 9T 260,261 While we are to be respectful to leadership positions, in the church and in the government, we would understand that when church leaders restrict the work of God by their man-made policies, they are not the voice of God.

Some have suggested that it would be easier just to start a new organization. The Lord's servant writes, "The Lord has declared that the history of the past shall be rehearsed as we enter upon the closing work. Every truth that He has given for these last days is to be proclaimed to the world. Every pillar that He has established is to be strengthened. We cannot now step off the foundation that God has established. We cannot now enter into any new organization, for this would mean apostasy from the truth." 2SM 390

By being respectful to leadership is by no means an endorsement of their decisions. Nor is the refusal to start a new organization an endorsement of their leadership. What we are to do is to proclaim the truth for these times. We must take comfort that while many of the denominational leaders are in direct rebellion to God's blueprint, we are to strengthen the pillars and proclaim to the world the foundational truths that God has given us.

Without question, every man-made policy that runs contrary to the principles of God has delayed and hindered the work. Some will be lost that should have been reached. Yet God, because He is God, is able to carry the work forward.

Sister White wrote, "There is no need to doubt, to be fearful that the work will not succeed. God is at the head of the work, and He will set everything in order. If matters need adjusting at the head of the



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work, God will attend to that, and work to right every wrong. Let us have faith that God is going to carry the noble ship which bears the people of God safely into port.” 2SM 390

The prophetess is not suggesting that apostasy and worldliness in the church is okay. She is not suggesting that godly leadership is not necessary. She is not even suggesting that the wrongs have already been righted. She is saying that God is able to finish the work by overriding our past history of mistakes. In other words, our mistakes will not prevent God from finishing the work. Even when the church structure as we know it appears to fall, God will finish the work gloriously.

The Lord’s servant wrote, “Under the showers of the latter rain the inventions of man, the human machinery, will at times be swept away, the boundary of man’s authority will be as broken reeds, and the Holy Spirit will speak through the living, human agent, with convincing power.” 2SM 58, 59.

All human machinery, in and out of the church, will be swept away. The church will appear to fall just prior to the close of probation. But God will still have an organization, for God is a God of order. God will take the work into His own hands. And He will use the “human agent” to give the last gospel call to the world. But things as we now know will be swept away.

A terrible ordeal is coming to God’s beloved church. Consider these words found in *Maranatha*, July 13: “As trials thicken around us, both separation and unity will be seen in our ranks. Some who are now ready to take up weapons of warfare will in times of real peril make it manifest that they have not built upon the solid rock; they will yield to temptation. Those who have had great light and precious privileges, but have not improved them, will, under one pretext or another, go out from us. Not having received the love of the truth, they will be taken in the delusions of the enemy; they will give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, and will depart from the faith. But, on the other hand, when the storm of persecution really breaks upon us, the true sheep will hear the true Shepherd’s voice. Self-denying efforts will be put forth to save the lost, and many who have strayed from the fold will come back to follow the great Shepherd. The people of God will draw together and present to the enemy a united front. In view of the common peril, strife for supremacy will cease; there will be no disputing as to who shall be accounted greatest. No one of the true believers will say: ‘I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas.’ The testimony of one and all will be: ‘I cleave unto Christ; I rejoice in Him as my personal Savior.’”

Notice that a terrible storm of persecution is coming. Many will leave our ranks. The remnant will not fight over leadership positions. As we will see in our next statement, an entire new entity of leadership will God raise up.



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In 1908, Sister White related the following message in the presence of her secretary (Sister McInterfer), Elder D. E. Robinson (the husband of her granddaughter Ella White), and W. E. Ross. Here is the message as related by W. E. Ross.

“About 1908, with Sr. McInterfer (her secretary) and Brother D. E. Robinson (her granddaughter’s husband) present, and myself, Sister White told us that a terrible storm of persecution was coming, like a windstorm that would blow down every standing object. Not one Seventh-day Adventist was to be seen. They, like the disciples, all forsook Christ and fled. All who had sought positions were never seen anymore. After the storm there was a great calm. Then the Seventh-day Adventist’s arose like a flock of sheep, but without shepherds. They all united in earnest prayer to God who answered by helping them choose leaders of their number who had never sought positions. They prayed most earnestly again for God’s Holy Spirit, which was poured upon them, making them fully ready for service. They then unitedly went forth ‘as an army with banners’ fearlessly and full to give the message to all the world.”

Dear friends, a windstorm is coming like a great tempest. God will permit this terrible ordeal to purify the church. Malachi 3:1-4 states that He “will suddenly come to His temple. . . like a refiners fire, . . . and He shall sit and refine.” In this terrible storm, God’s people will not be found, much like the disciples who forsook Christ and fled. All who had sought positions were never seen any more. But one by one, God’s true and faithful will arise and shine. A new leadership will emerge. There will be an organization as led by heavenly agencies.

Sister White wrote, “The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place.” *Maranatha*, July 14. The structure as we know it will change. The remnant within the remnant church will carry the work forward. The ship that goes through is not the brick and the mortar, rather it is the remnant of the remnant church, namely, the precious wheat. New leadership will carry the last work under the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who currently seek for positions now will not be found.

These statements from the Spirit of Prophecy and many more like them, remind me of the message in the book of Amos. Amos was the eleventh prophet when Israel was in apostasy. Tragically Israel did not see her spiritual poverty, much like Laodicea. God tried to gain Israel’s attention through calamities, famines, drought, crop failures, defeat in war, and epidemics. Amos 4:6ff. But Israel paid no heed. In fact, the response of the leaders was that God had chosen Israel and God will overlook her transgressions.



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But Amos tells Israel that she does not have any advantages (9:7, 8), and that God will judge you because you are elected (3:2). So the terrible ordeal comes to Israel and she loses ninety percent of her people (5:1-3). Israel survives. But it is the precious wheat that is left. With only ten percent of her previous numbers, business cannot continue as usual. The tribes that will be coming in at the eleventh hour are coming in to help finish the work, not to prop up a structure destined to tarry another 150 years. At this point there is only a short time left before the close of probation. Clearly God will be taking things into His own hands.

The purpose of Amos' message was to provoke Israel to revival and reformation. Amos 5:4-6, 14, 15. As the Israel of today, we too are to "seek" and "live." We must ourselves seek good and not evil. We are to hate evil and love good. We are to establish justice. In short, we are to seek God's counsel and follow it. But if we do not follow God's counsel we will not love what God loves, nor will we hate what God hates. Neither will we exercise justice among the saints.

There was a time when the Lord's servant felt that the General Conference did exhibit the voice of God as inferred by the following statement: "The voice from Battle Creek, which has been regarded as authority in counseling how the work should be done, is no longer the voice of God." *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 17, 185. When she says that the conference "is no longer the voice of God," is to infer that at one time it was.

We need not guess when the General Conference spoke as the voice of God. Sister White made the following statement in 1875: "I have been shown that no man's judgment should be surrendered to the judgment of any one man. But when the judgment of the General Conference, which is the highest authority that God has upon the earth, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be maintained, but be surrendered. . . God has invested His church with special authority and power which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising, for in so doing he despises the voice of God." 3T 492, 417. Remember that she wrote that in 1875.

In the earlier years of our movement, the pioneers did more closely follow the leading of the Lord. There was a dedication, sanctification, and teachableness then, that we have lost years ago. When leadership is going in the right direction why exercise private independence? Why refuse to work together when things are following the blueprint? But when leadership exchanges the blueprint of God for one of man's devising, then the people should still listen to the voice of God.

But then where is the true voice of God?

"Only he who receives the Scriptures as the voice of God speaking to himself is a true learner." COL 59



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“We should make the Bible our study above every other book; we should love it, and obey it as the voice of God.” FE 133

“Through the Holy Spirit the voice of God has come to us continually in warning and instruction, to confirm the faith of the believers in the Spirit of Prophecy.” 1 SM 41

“Tell them that God made every spire of grass, and gave the beautiful tints to every flower. Tell them that here is the expression of God’s love to you, that this is the voice of God speaking to you that He loves you.” Te 290.

Even though Sister White could refer to the Conference as the voice of God in the pioneer days, she could no longer do that prior to the turn of the century. Consider the following statements from Inspiration:

In the year 1895: “I do not find rest in spirit. Scene after scene is presented in symbols before me, and I find no rest until I begin to write out the matter. At the center of the work matters are being shaped so that every other institution is following in the same course. And the General Conference is itself becoming corrupted with wrong sentiments and principles.” TM 359.

In the year 1896: “The same work that has been done in the past will be carried forward under the guise of **the General Conference Association**. The sacred character of this association is fast disappearing. What will then be respected as pure, holy, and undefiled? Will there be any voice that God’s people can regard as a voice they can respect? There certainly is nothing now that bears the divine credentials. Sacred things are mixed and mingled with earthly business that has no connection with God.” PM 142.
In the year 1898: “It has been some years since I have considered **the General Conference** as the voice of God.” *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 17, 216.

In the year 1901: “O, my very soul is drawn out in these things! Men who have not learned to submit themselves to the control and discipline of God, are not competent to train the youth, to deal with human minds. It is just as much an impossibility for them to do this work as it would be for them to make a world. That these men should stand in a sacred place, to be as the voice of God to the people, as we once believed the General Conference to be,—that is past. What we want now is a reorganization. We want to begin at the foundation, and to build upon a different principle.” *General Conference Bulletin*, April 3, 1901 par. 25.



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Between the years of 1901 to 1903, there was a reorganization of sorts. But a mere shuffling of this or that does not make an organization holy. The key is to speak the words of the Lord, not to Lord it over others. One of the tragic results of not following God's counsel is the development of kingly authority. In the year 1895: "None are to exercise their human authority to bind minds and souls of their fellowmen. They are not to devise and put in practice methods and plans to bring every individual under their jurisdiction.

"Those who know the truth are to be worked by the Holy Spirit, and not themselves to try to work the Spirit. If the cords are drawn much tighter, if the rules are made much finer, if men continue to bind their fellow-laborers closer and closer to the commandments of men, many will be stirred by the Spirit of God to break every shackle, and assert their liberty in Christ Jesus. If men would act toward their fellow-men as to those whom Christ loves, if they would obey the commandment to 'love thy neighbor as thyself,' there would be sweet harmony among the brethren." RH July 23, 1895.

In the year 1896: "As things now exist in Battle Creek, the work of God cannot be carried forward on a correct basis. How long will these things be? When will the perceptions of men be made clear and sharp by the ministration of the Holy Spirit? Some there do not detect the injurious effects of the plans which for years have been working in an underhand manner. Some of the managers at the present time are walking in the light that they have received, and are doing the best they can, but their fellow workers are making things so oppressive for them that they can do but little. The enslaving of the souls of men by their fellow men is deepening the darkness which already envelops them. Who can now feel sure that they are safe in respecting the voice of the General Conference Association? If the people in our churches understood the management of the men who walk in the light of the sparks of their own kindling, would they respect their decisions? I answer, No, not for a moment. I have been shown that the people at large do not know that the heart of the work is being diseased and corrupted at Battle Creek. Many of the people are in a lethargic, listless, apathetic condition, and assent to plans which they do not understand. Where is the voice, from whence will it come, to whom the people may listen, knowing that it comes from the True Shepherd? I am called upon by the Spirit of God to present these things before you, and they are correct to the life, according to the practice of the past few years." Pamphlet 80, 19.2, *Special Testimony to the Review and Herald Office*, Battle Creek, Michigan.

In the year 1909: "My soul has been so burdened that I have not been able to rest. What line can we dwell upon that will make the deepest impression upon the human mind? There are our schools. They are to be conducted in such a way that they will develop missionaries who will go out to the highways and hedges to sow the seeds of truth. This was the commission of Christ to his followers. They were to go to the highways and the byways bearing the message of truth to souls that would be brought to the



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faith of the gospel. I felt deeply in earnest as I saw how much needs to be done in the places I have recently visited. We must stand in the strength of God if we are to accomplish this work.

“In his labors each worker is to look to God. We are to labor as men and women who have a living connection with God. We are to learn how to meet the people where they are. Let not such conditions exist as we found in some places when we returned to America, in which individual church members, instead of realizing their responsibility, looked to men for guidance, and men to whom had been committed sacred and holy trusts in the carrying forward of the work, failed of understanding the value of personal responsibility and took upon themselves the work of ordering and dictating what their brethren should do or should not do. These are things that God will not allow in his work. He will put his burdens upon his burden-bearers. Every individual soul has a responsibility before God, and is not to be arbitrarily instructed by men as to what he shall do, what he shall say, and where he shall go. We are not to put confidence in the counsel of men and assent to all they shall say unless we have evidence that they are under the influence of the Spirit of God.

“Study the first and second chapters of Acts. Light has been given me that our work must be carried forward in a higher and broader way than it has ever yet been carried. The light of heaven is to be appreciated and cherished. This light is for the laborers. It is for those who feel that God has given them a message, and that they have a sacred responsibility to bear in its proclamation.” RH, July 1, 1909
One of the greatest evidences of kingly authority is the Church Manual. Our pioneers rejected the whole idea of a church manual because it would (1) lessen our dependence upon the Word of God for direction, (2) would lessen the spirituality of the workers and the church as a whole, and (3) would eventually be used to punish innocent believers within the church.

Back in the early 1880's a few individuals felt a need for a church manual. At the General Conference of 1882 a committee was appointed to prepare a manuscript for a manual which was to be presented at the General Conference the following year. The year book for 1883 and the Review and Herald of November 9, 1883 tell us what took place regarding the question of putting out a manual. Some of the key portions of the minutes of the meetings dealing with the question are contained in the following extracts:

“Fourth Meeting. After prayer by Elder H. W. Decker, the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. At the last annual session of the Conference it was recommended that a manual of instructions to church officers be prepared, and a committee was appointed to consider the matter and report at this session. W. H. Littlejohn, the chairman of the committee, reported at this meeting that the committee had prepared a series of articles containing instructions to church officers which had been printed in the Review first, in order to give opportunity for examination and criticism before the matter should come up for final action at this session. After further remarks upon the subject by Elders S. N. Haskell, George I. Butler, H. A. St. John and Brother W. C. White it was 'voted that the chair appoint a



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committee of ten to act with General Conference Committee in the examination and consideration of the Church Manual.’ This committee was announced as follows: W. C. White, H. Nicola, J. H. Cook, S. H. Lane, O. A. Olsen, M. H. Brown, R. F. Andrews, J. B. Goodrich, A. H. Hutchins, W. H. Decker...

“Seventh Meeting: the committee appointed to consider the matter of the Church Manual, made in substance the following report.

“It is the unanimous opinion of the committee appointed to consider the matter of the Church Manual that it would not be advisable to have a Church Manual. We consider it unnecessary because we have already surmounted the greatest difficulties connected with church organization without one; and perfect harmony exists among us on this subject. It would seem to many like a step toward the formation of a creed or a discipline, other than the Bible, something we have always been opposed to as a denomination. If we had one, we fear many, especially those commencing to preach, would study it to obtain guidance in religious matters, rather than to seek for it in the Bible, and from the leading of the Spirit of God, which would tend to their hindrance in genuine religious experience, and in knowledge of the mind of the Spirit. It was in taking similar steps that other bodies of Christians first began to lose their simplicity and become formal and spiritually lifeless. Why should we imitate them? The committee feels, in short, that our tendency should be in the direction of the policy and close conformity of the Bible, rather than to elaborately defining every point in church management and church ordinances.”

“On motion, this report with reference to Church Manual was accepted. It was then also Voted, that the President of the General Conference be requested to write an article for the Review, explaining the action of the Conference on the subject of the manual.” Review and Herald, November 20, 1883; Year Book, 1883, pp. 33-36

Elder Butler’s article, a copy of which follows, was printed in the Review of November 27, 1883.

Title: No Church Manual

“The writer was requested by the recent General conference to make a brief statement through the Review of the action taken in reference to the proposed manual. Four or five years past, there has been with some of our brethren a desire to have some manual of directions for the use of young ministers and church officers, etc. It was thought that this would lead to uniformity in all parts of the field, and afford a means of instruction to those who are inexperienced, and be very convenient in many respects. Steps were taken several years ago to prepare a manual, but for a time it was left unfinished. Last year at the Rome Conference the matter came up for consideration, and three brethren were appointed a committee to prepare a manual, and submit it to the Conference this year for its approval or rejection. During the past summer the matter they have prepared has appeared in the Review, and had doubtless been well considered by its readers.

“At the recent Conference a committee of thirteen leading brethren were appointed to consider the whole subject, and report. They did so, and unanimously recommended to the Conference that it was not advisable to have a Church Manual. Their reasons were briefly given in the report of Conference



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proceedings given in last week's Review. The conference acted upon this recommendation, and quite unanimously decided against having any manual. In doing this they did not intend any disrespect to the worthy brethren who had labored diligently to prepare such a work. They had presented much excellent matter, and gave many valuable directions concerning church ordinances, holding business meetings and many other important questions, and had done as well, no doubt as any others would have done in their place. The reasons underlying this action of the Conference were of a broader character. They relate to the desirability of any manual whatsoever.

“The Bible contains our creed and discipline. It thoroughly furnishes the man of God unto all good works. What it has not revealed relative to church organizations and management, the duties of officers and ministers, and kindred subjects, should not be strictly defined and drawn out into minute specifications for the sake of uniformity, but rather be left to individual judgment under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Had it been best to have a book of directions of this sort, the Spirit would doubtless have gone further, and left one on record with the stamp of inspiration upon it. Man cannot safely supplement this matter with his weak judgment. All attempts to do this in the past have proven lamentable failures. A variation of circumstances requires variation in acting. God requires us to study important principles which He reveals in His word, but the minutiae in carrying them out, he leaves to individual judgment, promising heavenly wisdom in times of need. His ministers are constantly placed where they must feel their helplessness and their seeking God for light, rather than go to any church manual for specific directions placed therein by other uninspired men. Minute specific directions tend to weakness rather than power. They lead to dependence rather than self-reliance. Better to make some mistakes and learn profitable lessons thereby, than to have our way marked out for us by others, and the judgment have a small field in which to reason and consider.

“When brethren who have favored a manual have even contended that such a work was not to be anything like a creed or a discipline, or to have any authority to settle disputed points, but was only to be considered as a book containing hints for the help of those of little experience, yet it must be evident that such a work, issued under the auspices of the General Conference, would at once carry with it much weight of authority, and would be consulted by most of our young ministers. It would gradually shape and mold the whole body, and those who did not follow it would be considered out of harmony with established principles of church order. And really, is not this the object of a manual? And what would be the use of one if not to accomplish such a result? But would this result, on a whole, be a benefit? Would our ministers be broader, more original, more self-reliant men? Could they be better depended on in great emergencies? Would their spiritual experience likely be deeper and their judgment more reliable? We think the tendency all the other way.

“The religious movement in which we are engaged has the same influence to meet which all genuine reformations have had to cope with. After reaching a certain magnitude, they have seen the need of uniformity, and to attain it, they have tried to prepare directions to guide the inexperienced. These have grown in number and authority till, accepted by all, they really become authoritative. There seems to be no logical stopping place, when once started upon this road, till this result is reached. The history is before us; we have no desire to follow it. Hence we stop without a church manual before we get started.



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Our brethren who have favored such a work, we presume, never anticipated such a conclusion as we have indicated. Very likely, those in other denominations did not at first. The Conference thought best not to give the appearance of such a thing.

“Thus far we have got along well with our simple organization without a manual. Union prevails throughout the body. The difficulties before us, so far as organization is concerned, are far less than those we have had in the past. We have preserved simplicity, and have prospered in so doing. It is best to let well enough alone. For these and other reasons, the church manual was rejected. It is probable it will never be brought forward again.” -- Written by G. I. Butler 1883 General Conference President

As you can see, when our leaders were the voice of God they rejected the whole idea of a church manual. They believed in the inspired Word and the Spirit of Prophecy as evidenced in their following the blueprint of God at that time.

The Church Manual was created (in the 1930s) when the leaders were no longer the voice of God. The Manual itself shows a lack of faith and understanding of God’s Word. In addition, it has been used to punish those who do not adhere to it. Brother Loughborough also predicted persecution against those who did not agree with having some official church creed.

During an early organizational meeting, Loughborough referred to an article that he had written for the

Review:

“The first step of apostasy is to get up a creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And fifth, to commence persecution against such. I plead that we are not patterning after the churches in any unwarrantable sense in the step proposed.” RH April 20, 1897.

Later in the same meeting, James White made this comprehensive statement, entitled, A Creed and the Spirit of Prophecy:

“I am convinced; not by what the brethren have said, for I was convinced before. I wish to say a word now in favor of the resolution. I prefer that the brethren should be uniform in this thing. This would tend to unity in the church. Let us set a right example here, and let it go out from this meeting. This is one reason why I would vote for this covenant. On the subject of creeds, I agree with Brother Loughborough. I never weighed the points which he has presented, as I have since I began to examine the subject myself. In Ephesians 4:11-13, we read, ‘And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets,’ et cetera. Here we have the gifts of the church presented. Now I take the ground that creeds stand in a direct



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opposition to the gifts. Let us suppose a case: We get up a creed, stating just what we shall believe on this point and the other, and just what we shall do in reference to this thing and that, and say that we will believe the gifts, too. But suppose the Lord, through the gifts, should give us some new light that did not harmonize with our creed; then, if we remain true to the gifts, it knocks our creed all over at once. Making a creed is setting the stakes, and barring up the way to all future advancement. God put the gifts into the church for a good and great object; but men who have got up their churches, have shut up the way or have marked out a course for the Almighty. They say virtually that the Lord must not do anything further than what has been marked out in the creed. A creed and the gifts thus stand in direct opposition to each other. Now what is our position as a people? The Bible is our creed. We reject everything in the form of a human creed. We take the Bible and the gifts of the Spirit; embracing the faith that thus the Lord will teach us from time to time. And in this we take a position against the formation of a creed. We are not taking one step, in what we are doing, toward becoming Babylon.” Arthur L. White, *The Early Years*, 453–454.

Sister White wrote, “The work is before us individually. Our moral identity cannot be submerged in any human being. We shall be called of God to do our work according to our several ability. The vineyard is large and requires every jot of moral power everyone has had entrusted to him or her. Partition walls will be broken down. Everyone who will hear the message and believe the truth will no longer be confined, bound to creeds, but will take the Bible as his guide, as the very creed of life, as the waters of salvation. The very intensity of the light shining from heaven makes men messengers of truth and salvation. They cannot hold their peace. They have accepted the truth and emerged into the light, the light shining in these last days.” *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15, 223–224.

One of the great dangers of the Church Manual is that it creates a box. It is a man-made box. The box, the Church Manual, represents the limitations of man’s wisdom. On the other hand, the Word and the SOP represent an endless expansion of truth and potential personal growth in the knowledge of God and in the operations of God’s church.

The problem with this man-made box is that many times God is not allowed to get within the box. Man makes his decisions out of the box that he creates. And if the box is greater than God or if God is not allowed in the box, then men are only following men.

In these last days, God’s people must not be encumbered by the control of men. It is the Holy Spirit that must lead. It is the Word and the Spirit of Prophecy that must be the charter of the church. It is the people that must be about their Father’s business, commissioned by Christ, empower by the Holy Spirit, and accompanied by the angels, to go forth and further the kingdom of Christ.



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“But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.” 1 John 2:27.

“In the commission to His disciples, Christ not only outlined their work, but gave them their message. Teach the people, He said, ‘to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.’ The disciples were to teach what Christ had taught. That which He had spoken, not only in person, but through all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament, is here included. Human teaching is shut out. There is no place for tradition, for man’s theories and conclusions, or for church legislation. No laws ordained by ecclesiastical authority are included in the commission. None of these are Christ’s servants to teach. ‘The law and the prophets,’ with the record of His own words and deeds, are the treasure committed to the disciples to be given to the world. Christ’s name is their watchword, their badge of distinction, their bond of union, the authority for their course of action, and the source of their success. Nothing that does not bear His superscription is to be recognized in His kingdom.” DA 826.1

“Let our churches be guarded. Let our people work intelligently, not under the rule of any man, but under the rule of God. Let them stand where they can follow the will of God. Their service belongs to Him. Their capabilities and talents are to be refined, purified ennobled.” *Spalding and Magan Collection*, 308.

Sabbath School Notes prepared by Pastor Jeff Wehr.