

AN EVALUATION OF THE MODERN CHURCH IN LIGHT OF THE  
EARLY CHURCH: THE CASE OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST  
CHURCH IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

by

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### A. BIBLICAL BOOKS

#### Old Testament

<u>Books</u>	<u>Abbreviations</u>	<u>Books</u>	<u>Abbreviations</u>
Genseis	Gen		
Exodus	Ex		
Leviticus	Lev		
Deuteronomy	Deut		
Jushua	Josh		
Judges	Judg		
Ruth	Ruth		
1 Samuel	1 Sam		
2 Samuel	2 Sam		
1 Kings	1 Kings		
2 Kings	2 Kings		
1 Chronicles	1 Chron		
2 Chronicles	2 Chron		
Ezra	Ezra		
Nehemiah	Neh		
Esther	Ester		
Job	Job		
Psalms	Ps		
Proverbs	Prov		
Ecclesiastes	Eccles		
Song of Solomon	Song		
Isaiah	Is		
Jeremiah	Jer		
Lamentations	Lam		
Ezekiel	Ezek		
Daniel	Dan		
Hosea	Hos		

Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obadiah	Obad
Jonah	Jon
Micah	Mic
Nahum	Nahum
Habakkuk	Hab
Zephaniah	Zeph
Haggai	Hag
Zechariah	Zech
Malachi	Mal

**New Testament**

<u>Books</u>	<u>Abbreviations</u>
Matthew	Matt
Mark	Mk
Luke	Lk
John	Jn
The acts	Acts
Romans	Rom
1 Corinthians	1 Cor
2 Corinthians	2 Cor
Galatians	Gal
Ephesians	Eph
Philippians	Phil
Colossians	Col
1 Thessalonians	1 Thes
2 Thessalonians	2 Thes
1 Timothy	1 Tim
2 Timothy	2 Tim
Titus	Tit
Philemon	Philem
Hebrews	Heb
James	Jas



1 Peter	1 Pet
2 Peter	2 Pet
1 John	1 Jn
2 John	2 Jn
3 John	3 Jn
Jude	Jude
Revelation	Rev

#### **B. Other Abbreviations**

D.R.C.	Democratic Republic of Congo
G.C.	General Conference
Ibid.	<u>Ibidem</u> , "in the same place
Id.	idem; the same
NIV	New International Verstion
NKF	North-Kivu Field
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
RAV	Rabbinic Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
SDAE	Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia
UNILUK	University of Lukanga, D.R.Congo
e.g.	<u>Exempli gratia</u> , for example
ed.	edition ; edited by ; editor
et al.	<u>et alii</u> , and others
etc.	et cetera, and so forth
n.d.	no date
n.p.	no place; no publicher
p.	Page (plural, pp.)
vol.	volume (plural vols.)
B.C.	be

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God bless you all.

## Summary

One of the concerns of the modern Christian church and dissident groups is to ensure that the Church's fundamental doctrines, leadership, women's ministries and religious practices conform with the early apostolic church teachings.

In this study the writer offers a comprehensive and detailed evaluation of the modern church in the light of the early church. The case of the modern Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and worldwide is examined and compared, basing its survey on numerous published and unpublished documents from a combined use of primary, secondary materials and individual statements.

Setting the early history of the SDA Church within the religious context of nineteenth-century America, the writer describes how SDA doctrines, leadership, women's ministries and religious practices link with those beliefs and practices in the early apostolic church, showing whether the SDA Church has departed from the early apostolic church's Biblical, timeless principles or not.

Several pertinent issues however have stirred up as much controversy in recent years within the Adventist dissident groups as that of the women's ministries in the church, the righteousness by faith doctrine, the monarchical leadership, and various religious practices. Nevertheless, in the light of the early apostolic teaching, some enlightenment has been achieved, and several critical accusations from dissident groups were illuminated and confirmed.

The accusation regarding the deterioration of Biblical doctrines appears not to have been confirmed by the Biblical evaluation and the lifestyle of the SDA believers. Rather, concerning this issue, it is confirmed that in the DRC and worldwide, the SDA Church has not departed from the fundamental doctrines of the early apostolic church.

Moreover, the need for a balanced interpretation and application of Biblical teachings with regards to the role of women in the church is addressed. Research has shown that while the early church excluded women from the representative role of elders and apostles, women still played a very prominent role in the ministry of Jesus and this church.

Finally, in the light of the findings of the study, some integrative values and spiritual behaviour were recommended to both the SDA Church and certain dissident groups. To the SDA Church, a non-confrontational approach towards dissidents was recommended in order to seek dialogue, and the reintegration of breakaway groups, while a continued study of Scripture and commitment to God was recommended to the members of dissident groups in order for them to be led to a more complete understanding of the truth and prevent any falling into extremism and misunderstanding.

## **DEDICATION**

This Thesis is dedicated to Mrs Kavira Nzondero Mithimbo, my loving and supportive wife, and all my fellow brothers and sisters who faithfully serve the Lord in Churches and Institutions of the East Central Africa Division of the SDA.

# INTRODUCTION

## TOPIC

AN EVALUATION OF THE MODERN CHURCH IN LIGHT OF THE EARLY CHURCH: THE CASE OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO.

## 1. AREA OF INVESTIGATION

### 1.1. Problem Statement

Since 1990 there has been a crisis of dissidence in several Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Churches all over the world, particularly in Africa, including the Congolese churches. Three major problems are cited by these dissident groups which argue that since the said church has departed from some of the doctrines and practices of the early apostolic church, it has fallen into apostasy and thus it should be reformed:

(1) the modern SDA church has departed from some of the fundamental doctrines and practices of the early church, especially the lack of strict observance of the holy Sabbath;

(2) the church should reform its leadership organization and roles of office because of its monarchical and authoritarian leadership which also differs from the leadership style of the early churches;

(3) the development of actual women's ministries, leadership and worship liturgy in the church are not in harmony with those of the early Christian church.

Consequently, some SDA churches are perturbed and confused by these contradictory declarations. In others, there is disorder in their worship, revolt and disobedience against the clergy, and the existence of women's ministries. Many pertinent inquiries are posed: why should a woman preach in a divine service on the Sabbath? Why should there be a need to ordain women? Should the church leave women to be quiet, silent and with their heads covered in a worship

service? Should believers always kneel every time they pray during a divine service? Should believers of local churches elect leaders at all the levels of the church organization? Why should there be authoritarian leaders in church administration? Finally, are there scriptural assets or historical linkages between these modern concepts and practices? It is because of these pertinent problems that this thesis will draw heavily on the evaluation of the modern SDA Church in the light of the early church with regards to the following aspects:

- (1) the fundamental historical development of the SDA doctrines: the Sabbath observance is emphasized;
- (2) the truth regarding a historical development of representative leadership from the early apostolic church to the modern SDA church;
- (3) the historical comparison of the actual women's ministries, leadership and worship liturgy with those practised in the early Christian church.

The aim of this thesis is to assist both the dissident groups, the church and other readers to comprehend the problem of the lack of understanding of the positive historical link between the modern teachings and practices of the SDA church (1960-2000) with those taught and practised in the early apostolic church in order to avoid confusion and discord in the church.

## **1.2. Area of Investigation**

The investigation will be undertaken especially in the following areas:

- (1) The modern SDA Church (1960-2000): the background to this period of the church (1863 onwards) will be examined in order for the researcher to be well acquainted with the genesis and development of the SDA doctrine, leadership and practices of the church. In addition, in view of this historical development the worldwide church in general will be considered; however, the primary investigations will focus on the dissident group crisis in the territory of the East Congo SDA Church.



(2) The early Christian church (1<sup>st</sup> century): this period will serve as the canon of evaluation of the modern church:

- The teachings and doctrines of Jesus Christ;
- The biblical teachings and practices of the apostles;and
- The practices and social life of the church apostolic fathers

It should also be pointed out that this study will look at the patristic period but only briefly.

### **1.1. Delimitation**

The field of evaluating a church in terms of the historical development of its teachings, leadership and religious life is an issue to be analyzed here in a limited way. It is not possible to carry out exhaustive coverage of every detail of doctrine, leadership, social and religious life oriented work and all the views expressed and held by the Adventists within the scope of this dissertation.

Owing to the extensive literature on the subject throughout the period in question, the present writer has not engaged in a detailed examination of the patristic church, or of the church of the Middle Ages and of the Reformation. The mainstay of this study is based on the fundamental aspects of the modern SDA church historically evaluated only in the light of the fundamental teachings of the early apostolic church.

The need for dissident Adventist groups to understand the truth of a positive link between the teachings and practices of the modern church and those of the early apostolic church will be stressed. The focus will fall on an understanding of the firm foundation of doctrines, social and religious practices and leadership expressed by the SDA church in the light of the early church.

It should also be pointed out that this study will describe and evaluate the historical development and theoretical foundations of the SDA teachings and leadership, but will not inquire into the practical administrative conduct of the

church business. The geographical scope will be defined by the churches of the East DRC territory.

## 2. JUSTIFICATION

The SDA church also needs the blessing that its adherents will preserve its identity and unity as regards biblical doctrines, leadership and religious practices in respect of the light given in the scripture concerning the early church. This is fundamental for the church in general because the believers have been chosen by God as a peculiar people, who by the great light of the truth given from the early church by its Divine Founder, are called to be united and sanctified by His truth (Jn 17:17). "Hatred and divisiveness among church members should be disapproved because He [God] has made them [believers] His representatives and has called them to be ambassadors for Him in the last work of salvation."<sup>1</sup>

According to this statement, the historical evaluation of the truth is necessary and should be recommended to the world church in general. The lack of historical discussion of modern leadership, doctrines and practices in Christian churches in the light of the early church's truth has precipitated apostasy and fragmentation. This is also important to the discipline of church history and theology in general. The specific contribution of this research is intended for:

- the modern Seventh-day Adventist church:
  - to assess its own evaluation of fundamental doctrines, church leadership and religious practices and eventually to correct certain incompatible practices.
- the dissident groups:
  - to be well informed about the positive link between actual teachings, leadership and practices of the modern SDA Church and the early apostolic church;
  - To avoid confusion, misunderstanding,

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<sup>1</sup> E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Boise: Pacific Press, 1974), Vol. 7, p. 138.

divisiveness and quarrelling in the church;

- To be well informed about truth on church unity and be encouraged to rejoin the church community.
- church history discipline and theology
  - to encourage sound historical research into the actual doctrines and practices in the light of the early church;
  - to reaffirm the pertinent importance of returning to the fundamental roots of the early Christian teachings, leadership and religious practices.
  - to emphasize the historical development of the theology of truth in order to avoid modern false doctrines.

### **3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

How well do the doctrines, leadership and religious practices of modern Seventh-day Adventism influence an international community of approximately ten million believers? Reflection on this question has stimulated the present writer's interest in the topic.

Therefore, the concern of this dissertation will be the following:

- to record the teachings and doctrines of the modern SDA church with particular attention given to her influence on leadership, religious life and practices;<sup>2</sup>
- to assess negative critical statements from the dissident groups against the SDA church, its leadership, organization, doctrines and practices;<sup>3</sup>
- to record the fundamental roots of doctrines and practices of the early Christian community as given by Jesus Christ the Founder of the church.

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<sup>2</sup> John 17:17, NIV 2. E.G White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 Vols (Boise: Pacific Press, 1974), 7:138.

<sup>3</sup> For membership statistics, see the Session of the General Conference, Toronto Canada, 2000.

- to assess the historical development of SDA teachings in comparison with the early church, arguing in favour, or not, of the criticisms from the dissident groups; and
- to evaluate the compatibilities and differences, offering suggestions to solve the problems, ultimately in the interest of the unity and purity of the believers and the reintegration of the dissident groups within the church.

## **4. RESEARCH METHODS**

### **4.1. Combined Use of Primary and Secondary Sources**

Wherever possible, a combined use of primary and secondary material sources was attempted. In the case of the SDA doctrines, numerous books produced by Adventist scholars and church manuals since her establishment in 1863 have served as the main secondary source of information: for example, the books of J.N. Andrews, A.Vaucher and others.<sup>4</sup>

With regards to the historical development of SDA teachings, several secondary sources such as books by P. Gerard Damsteegt, L.E, Froom, Webster Eric and others, were explored.<sup>5</sup> Plantak Zdrako, Lourrde, E. Morale, Heinz Daniel and many others served as useful guides to the social and religious practices in the SDA church.

In view of the historical record of the fundamental roots of doctrines and practices in the Early Christian church, perhaps the most important sources are Francis D. Nichols, Raymond, F.Cottrel et al., Bird Herbert, E.G. White, Robertson John and many others.<sup>6</sup>

Finally the most important primary source used in this dissertation was a questionnaire prepared for members of the different dissident groups in order to

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

assess and record critical statements made by them.<sup>7</sup> The analyses were objective and conformed to the scientific method of representative group selection over seven dissident groups for about 200 members.

## **4.2. Questionnaire Method**

Two types of questionnaires were used for selected dissident group members in the Lubero-Butembo-Beni areas, They were interviewed at a personal level. Type I interview questions were designed to find out why these members had dropped out of the SDA Church. These were then evaluated in the light of Scripture and the early apostolic church's understanding.

In this manner, the said questions were examined in order to determine whether dissident members are aware of and understand Biblical doctrines, teachings and church leadership as they are practised in the Modern SDA Church compared with the early apostolic church. A total of seven interview questions were administered to each interviewee.<sup>8</sup>

The Type II interview questionnaire was designed to determine why women's ministries and practices in the Modern SDA Church have been the cause of dropping out of the church many dissident members.

An appointed research agent distributed copies of this questionnaire to the dissident members of different groups during their meetings at the end of 2005 and subsequently.

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<sup>7</sup> See questionnaire, Appendix A and B at the end of the document.

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix A at the end of the document.

### 4.3. Presentation of Population

The present writer sampled respondents among approximately 600 dissident members from seven groups selected at random as presented in the following table:

Table 1:

**Approximate Population**

<b>N°</b>	<b>Groups</b>	<b>Approximate population</b>	<b>%</b>
1	Kayna area	96	16
2	Mupo area	58	9.7
3	Butembo area	106	17.7
4	Nguva area	76	12.7
5	Maboya area	60	10
6	Beni area	154	25.6
7	Mavivi area	50	8.3
	Total	600	100%

Specific Source: Data collection, May 2005

As explained above, this table represents the approximate population of the followers of the dissident groups in the mentioned areas. Other areas of the North-Kivu Province, such as Walikale, Rutshuru, Masisi, Mangurejipa, could not be reached because of the unrest there. Nevertheless, some of the evangelists and pastors from these areas were interviewed at Lukanga in June 2008.

### 4.4. Limitations of Data Collection

It was difficult to establish the statistics regarding dissident groups, that is, the number of groups and adherents, because they are often located in distant relatively inaccessible places. In many groups, no written statistics are available and often the questionnaire was administered to some people who were not actually present in the group gathered for the occasion. Also, the number of members was frequently only communicated orally since the group did not maintain any records of membership. Furthermore, some of the dissident

members did not easily accept the questionnaire as individuals because of a fear that they would be exposed which restricted their behaviour.

#### **4.5. Sample Selection of Respondents**

Dissident groups further afield in the North-Kivu Province were not included in this study on account of the unrest in the area. The collection of data was limited to 200 members selected from the Lubero-Butembo-Beni areas representing a population of approximately 600 dissident members within the North-Kivu Province, representing 33% of the population.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to this population sample 200 SDA Church members were also interviewed utilising the same questionnaire in order to evaluate both points of view. That is, those of dissidents and church members.

The opinion was first sampled at random among 200 dissident members from seven groups without any distinction of age (youth and adults), gender (male or female), or level of education. This allowed all the respondents to freely give his/her opinion about the issue without any of the restrictions often manifested among adherents of dissident groups.

The following service records of respondents were registered in the seven selected groups.

**Table 2**

**Number of Respondents**

<b>N°</b>	<b>Groups</b>	<b>Sample of Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
1	Kayna area	33	16.5
2	Mupo area	14	7
3	Butembo area	38	19
4	Nguva area	23	11.5
5	Maboya area	15	7.5

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Syatimwa, chief dissident group at Beni, March 2007.

6	Beni area	67	33.5
7	Mavivi area	10	5
	Total	200	100%

Specific Source: Questionnaire distributed in May 2005.

Table 2 indicates the number of respondents in each dissident group as well as the percentage of the members interviewed. The Beni area groups furnished the greatest number of dissident members with 67 respondents (33.5%), followed by those in the Butembo area with 38 respondents (19%), the Kayna area (16.5%) and others as shown.

In terms of sample size, it is interesting to note that since the year 2000, the number of dissident members has increased in the Lubero-Butembo-Beni areas. This phenomenon has drawn the present writer's attention to study the reason for this.

## **5. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The research methodology applied in this thesis is based on a literature survey of historical and theological works and others with regards to social issues and leadership, with a particular focus on doctrines, church leadership and women's ministries in the Christian church.

### **5.1. Related Literature Review**

Extensive literature relating to the present thesis was surveyed. An attempt has been made to study the subject in order to evaluate the conformity of the present issues with the early church's background and history. The main works surveyed are grouped according to the topics as outlined above. and include: (a) issues facing the modern SDA church, (b) issues of leadership and organization (c) issues in the women's ministries, (d) issues in historical development of the Christian church, (e) issues facing the early Christian church and finally (f) social



and political issues in the church. Furthermore this literature has been supplemented in the quest for meaning and definition, that is encyclopedias, dictionaries and commentaries have been consulted.

In short, available literature consulted on the modern church revealed that many writers have contributed to the study of church history and theology,<sup>10</sup> others reflected sound Biblical scholarship and lessons learnt from Scripture,<sup>11</sup> an understanding of the doctrines and historical development of prophetic interpretation,<sup>12</sup> sound leadership and enormous spiritual strength,<sup>13</sup> wisdom and good will of women.<sup>14</sup> All this literature emphasized the good-spirited teachings and behaviour of the modern church as heir of the early apostolic church, but at the same time this was criticized by the dissident groups as apostate. This remarkable contrast has led the researcher to review literature on the early apostolic church's teachings and behaviour<sup>15</sup> as the criteria for evaluation of the modern church<sup>16</sup> which is further discussed in the following chapters.

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<sup>10</sup> P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundation of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 3-335.

<sup>11</sup> Havy Leonard, J.N. *The Man and the Mission* Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press 1985, pp. 1-221. See also Herbert S. Bird, *Theology of Seventh-day Adventism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 1961), pp. 1-270.

<sup>12</sup> As Dudley M. Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*. See also Jones Frr; Louis M. Tablot, *What's Wrong with Seventh Day Adventists?*, L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, 4 Vols (Washington D.C. Review and Herald Publishing Assn, 1946-1954).

<sup>13</sup> Norman Douty, *Another Look at Seventh-day Adventism, with Special Reference to Questions on Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1962), pp. 1-148. Ted W. Engstrom, *The Making of a Christian Leader: How to Develop Management and Human Relation Skills* (Oshodi, Lagos; Maranatha Foundation Publishing, by special arrangement with Zondervan, Grand Rapids Michigan 1976), pp. 1-160.

<sup>14</sup> M. L. Philips. *Reaching Women* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Book, a division of S.P. Publications Inc. 1982), pp. 3-185. Lourdes E. Morales Gudmundson, *Women and the Church: the Feminine Perspective* (Berrien Spring MI 49104 -1700 Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1995), 1-257.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Bacchiochi, *Women in the Church: Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church* (Berrien Springs, Michigan,: Biblical Perspective, 1987, Fourth Printing 1995), pp. 3-144.

<sup>16</sup> John Norman D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. London: Adam and Charles Black; Edinburgh: R and R Clark, 1965), pp. 1-145. Carl A. Volz, *Faith and Practice in the Early Church: Foundations for Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983), pp. 1- 257.

# CHAPTER ONE

## BACKGROUND TO MODERN SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH (1863 – 1959)

### 1.0.Introduction

As a general background this chapter first furnishes an introductory survey of the major characteristics of the birth of Adventism and the religious situation in the U.S.A. during the first and second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which led to the rise of an interconfessional movement in Europe, Asia and America out of which the SDA Church emerged. This period was characterized by a general spiritual awakening and is described in the light of the historical development of the SDA Church and the major factors in the growth of the Adventist Movement.

Though barely a century and forty years old, SDA Church members believe that their roots in history go back a long way, not only to the Millerite movement of the 1830s and 1840s, but farther: to Wesley and the eighteenth century Evangelical revivalists, to the great Protestant Reformers and to such earlier dissenting groups as the Lollards and Wilderness; even to the primitive Celtic Church of Ireland and Scotland, the persecuted church of the first three centuries after Christ, and to Christ and the Apostles themselves<sup>17</sup>.

Hence it is obvious that the modern SDA Church developed in the setting of the great Advent awakening which took place in the early years of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>17</sup>R.W. Schwars, *Light Bearers to the Remnant: Denominational History Textbook for SDA College Classes* (Nampe, Idaho, Oshawa, Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press, 1979), p. 13.

## 1.1. The Great Advent Awakening

Among evangelical Christians during the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was an increasing emphasis on the study of Bible passages which alluded to the Second Advent — the parousia. Firstly, the emphasis fell on eschatology, which was stimulated by the events of the French Revolution<sup>18</sup> in Europe and which later spread to America<sup>19</sup>. Many who participated in these studies became convinced that Christ's return and the day of judgment were imminent and would inaugurate the millennium-a view designated as premillennialism. Consequently, certain individuals strongly opposed the current postmillennial view.<sup>20</sup>

### 1.1.1. Interest In Prophecy

Before the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, isolated scholars such as Joachim of Floris (fl 1180) had seen in the biblical prophecies of Daniel and Revelation evidence of the approach of the second advent. Yet it was not until the Protestant Reformation that belief in the imminence of this event again developed on a broad scale. Several decades thereafter, the hope remained unrealized.<sup>21</sup>

By the beginning of the eighteenth century most Protestant theologians were ready to adopt a new view of the second advent. An English clergyman, Daniel Whitby, soon accommodated them. He posited a spiritual "second coming", to be followed by a thousand years during which first Protestants, then Catholics, and later Jews and Moslems, would renounce sin and unbelief and be thoroughly

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<sup>18</sup> Commenting on the significance of the French Revolution, Sandeen said: "That political cataclysm broke with such force upon Europeans and Americans that no image but an apocalyptic one seemed to give adequate expression to the drama and panoramic sweep of those events" ("Millennialism", pp 107,108) Quoted by Damsteegt, p 13.

<sup>19</sup> On the European revival, see, from, *Prophetic Faith of our Fathers* (Washington , D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1950), IV, Chapters 15, 16, 18, 19.

<sup>20</sup> P Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-Day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Erdmann, 1977), p 13; on the Millennial Polemic, see Froom PFF, IV Chaps 15, 16, 18, 19.

<sup>21</sup> I.V. Brown, "Watchers for the Second Coming", *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 39 (Dec. 1952), pp 441-458.

converted to Christ. At the close of this millennium Christ would indeed come in a literal way. Protestants of all varieties seized this idea with alacrity. By 1750 Whitbyanism, with its belief in a postmillennial advent, dominated Protestant eschatology, especially in England and America<sup>22</sup>.

The stirring events associated with the French Revolution rekindled millennial speculation. This also reawakened interest in such biblical prophecies regarding time as those of the 1260 (Dan 7:25) and the 2300 days (Dan 8:14). In Christian circles, the realisation that a prophetic day stood for a year dates back at least as far as Joachim Floris. By 1800 many Protestant expositors were convinced that the 1260 year period had ended during the 1790s. Now attention began to shift to the 2300 days, the longest specific time associated with prophecy in the Bible<sup>23</sup>

### **1.1.2. Awakening in Europe**

In Germany, the key to dating the 2300 days had been provided as early as 1768 by Joham Petri, a German Calvinist pastor. Apparently it was Petri who first ascertained the close relationship between the Messianic seventy-week prophecy of Daniel 9 and the 2300 days of Daniel 8. He began both time periods in 453 B.C., thus concluding that the 2300 days/years would end in 1847. Similar conclusions were reached by Hans Wood, a pious Irish layman, at about the same time.<sup>24</sup>

Roughly fifty years before Petri, Johann Bengel, another German pastor, had made a major impact on evangelical Protestantism. To Bengel, the entire Bible was a progressive revelation of God's plan for humankind's salvation. In this plan, Christ is the central figure. All prophetic time periods point forward to the culmination of God's plan: Christ's second coming in glory. Through complicated arithmetical reasoning, he ended the period in 1836. He believed that Christ would return at this time and begin a millennial reign on earth to be followed by a second millennium in heaven.

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<sup>22</sup> L.E. Froom on "Whitby", *Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*, 4 vols (1945-1953), II: 649-655.

<sup>23</sup> Froom, III: 328, 329.

<sup>24</sup> Froom, II: 713-722; Schwarz, p. 25.

It was his reemphasis on the second advent that exerted a profound effect on German Pietistic circles and in England, where John Wesley was deeply moved by his teaching.<sup>25</sup>

### **1.1.3. In Spain And Spanish America**

In the 1790s Manuel de Lacunza, an exiled Jesuit priest, began to circulate a manuscript entitled “The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty” in Spain and Spanish America. For centuries the Roman Catholic Church had either virtually ignored Christ’s return or projected it into the far-distant future. It was not until 1812, more than a decade following the author’s death, that the manuscript was published in Spain where the Inquisition’s authority had been undermined during the French occupation<sup>26</sup>. Believing that the two advents of Christ were the focal points of all history, Lacunza called for a thorough examination of the Bible for light on the imminent return of Jesus. This Jesuit priest accepted the early Christian Church’s position that there were to be two resurrections of the dead, separated by a millennium. His understanding of the second advent as occurring at the start of this last millennium placed him in direct opposition to the Whitbyan postmillennialism.

### **1.1.4. In Great Britain**

During the 1820s in Great Britain “The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty” became an important stimulus to the Adventist Awakening which flourished during that period. Early in the Napoleonic period, interest in prophetic interpretation increased among English clergymen. This can be seen clearly in the correspondence columns of *The Christian Observer*, an Anglican journal begun in London in 1802. At first the journal’s correspondents were particularly concerned with the 1260-year period, but in 1810 John A. Brown introduced the 2300 years into the discussion, dating them from 457 B.C. to A.D. 1843<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 709-713.

<sup>26</sup> Schwarz, p. 26.

<sup>27</sup> Froom, III: 283-292.

Around this date, William Cunningham, one of the *Observer's* most vigorous correspondents, a Scottish layman, became a prolific writer. He published twenty-one different works on biblical prophecy and chronology. He interpreted the "cleansing of the sanctuary" (Dan 8:13,14) at the end of the 2300 years as the start of God's cleansing of His Church and the visiting of judgment on apostasy and Islam. He expected the millennium to begin at the close of the 1335 day/year period, as he did the 1260 years, in 533, he figured that it would end in 1867<sup>28</sup>.

Several differences between British participants in the Advent Awakening and their counterparts in the later Millerite movement in America are evident. In general, the British preachers failed to proclaim one specific date with the same fervour as the Americans. The belief that the Jews would be converted and return to establish a Palestinian state was a major British, but not a Millerite, tenet. This led English Advent believers, such as Lewis Way and Henry Drummond, to be very interested in missionary work for the Jews.<sup>29</sup>

All of these participants of the Advent awakening agreed that Christ's coming was "at the door" and many expected Him in 1847. Many of them interpreted the work of the newly organized missionary and Bible societies as fulfilling the loud cry of the first angel of Revelation 14. A quarterly journal dedicated to discussing unfulfilled prophecy emerged from these conferences. It was entitled *The Morning Watch*.<sup>30</sup>

In 1826, at Lewis Way's suggestion, Drummond invited a number of interested ministers and laymen to engage in an intensive study of the prophecies for one week at his Albury Park estate. Among the participants in the conference, two young men in their early thirties stand out: Joseph Wolff and Edward Irving. The son of a German-Jewish rabbi, Joseph Wolff found himself attracted to

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<sup>28</sup> Schwartz, p. 27. Froom, III:364-381.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Froom, III: 435-460.

Christianity as a youth.<sup>31</sup> Repulsed by the rationalism prevalent in early 19<sup>th</sup> century German Protestantism, he turned to Catholicism. Finding his way to Rome, Wolff found favour with the pope and cardinals. Soon, however, this brilliant young Jew found himself in sharp conflict with both teachers and fellow students over the Church's right to burn heretics, which Wolff denounced as a violation of the commandment "Thou shall not kill". At this juncture he met Henry Drummond, who had stopped in Rome to see this famous Jewish Christian and who appealed to him to leave Rome. Shortly thereafter Wolff cut his ties with Catholicism and migrated to England, where he became an Anglican.<sup>32</sup>

#### **1.1.5. In the near East, Central Asia and India**

Wolff came to expect Christ's Second Advent in 1847. An expert in six languages and able to converse freely in another eight, Joseph Wolff was a compulsive missionary to Jews, Moslems, Hindus and Parsis. He traversed most of the Near East, penetrated the mysterious lands of Central Asia, and crossed the Himalayas to India. On a visit to America in 1837 he was invited to address the American congress. Asked what he would do if, when 1847 came, the Millennium did not begin, Wolff replied forthrightly, "I shall say that Joseph Wolff was mistaken".<sup>33</sup>

Edward Irving, the "most colorful figure in the British Advent Awakening"<sup>34</sup> grew up in Scotland and graduated from Edinburgh University at the age of seventeen. After an apprentice ministry in Glasgow he accepted an invitation to pastor a small chapel in London. A brilliant orator, reputed for piety, and his ability to empathise with his parishioners, Irving's early interest in the prophecies was dramatically changed when he read a Spanish edition of Lacunza's work in 1826. That same year he joined James Frere and Lewis Way in organizing the Society

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<sup>31</sup> H. Palmer, *Joseph Wolff, His Romantic Life and Travels* (London: Heath, Cranton Ltd, 1935), passim.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Froom, III: 461-481.

<sup>34</sup> A. Bailey, *The Gospel in Hymns* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), pp. 453, 454.

for the Investigation of Prophecy, which met to study “the speedy coming of our Lord”.<sup>35</sup>

#### **1.1.6. In Scotland**

Under the influence of Frere, Irving accepted 1847 as the probable date of the Second Advent. Frere was one of the few British Adventists who held to the idea that Daniel 8:14 should read “2400 days”, as recorded in the Vatican text of the Septuagint, rather than the commonly accepted 2300 days. Sunday by Sunday Irving taught the imminent return of Jesus before packed congregations of a thousand people in his London church. In towns of Scotland he spoke in the open air before crowds of up to 12,000. A large congregation in Edinburgh turned out to hear him at five o’clock in the morning. During one of his Scottish towns he converted the three Bonar brothers to the advent hope.<sup>36</sup> Horatius Bonar, then only twenty-one, would later serve for twenty-five years as editor of the *Quarterly Journal of Prophecy*. His poetic ability, demonstrated in the lyrics of his famous “I heard the voice of Jesus say”, led him to be known as the “hymnist of the advent”.<sup>37</sup>

#### **1.1.7. Other Continental Expositors**

No other European country has had such a brilliant cluster of heralds of the Advent hope as did England, yet the continent was not without witness. In Geneva, Francois S.R.L. Gaussen, driven from his pulpit by the rationalistic state clergy, became a teacher in the Evangelical Society’s School of Theology. As a “zealous advocate” of the second advent, he paid special attention to the prophecies in his teachings. Gaussen originated a unique way of creating interest in the prophecies by giving a series of Sunday School lessons on Daniel to the children of Geneva. This series attracted numerous adults, including many who visited this city from other areas of Europe.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Froom, III: 388-390, 498-503, 514-526.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Froom, III: 687-700.



In Germany the advent hope was promoted by men like Johann Richter, Bavarian school master Leonard Kebler, and an obscure Roman Catholic parish priest, Johann Lutz. Richter, secretary of the Rhenish Missionary Society, edited a six-volume *Family Bible Commentary*. Lutz, stimulating interest in the scriptures, brought about a revival accompanied by such gifts of the Holy Spirit as visions, dreams, and prophetic utterances calling attention to the imminent coming of Christ and urging preparation for that event.<sup>39</sup>

#### **1.1.8. In Scandinavia**

In Scandinavia, this phenomenon focused the attention of thousands on the advent message. In Sweden the clergy of the state church proved uninterested in discussing the expected coming of Christ. Instead, laymen began proclaiming the impending hour of God's judgment in the meetings in private homes and in the forests. Since such gatherings were in violation of the royal decree, the young lay preachers were arrested, beaten, and imprisoned.<sup>40</sup>

During the years 1842 and 1843 in particular, many children and youth, girls as well as boys, some as young as six years of age, gave discourses on the second advent and called the people to repentance. This exerted a profound impact upon many, particularly among the common people. Most of these children were illiterate. They were as if "overpowered" by the Spirit.<sup>41</sup>

#### **1.1.9. In Adelaide, Australia**

In Adelaide, Australia, on the opposite side of the world, Thomas Playford preached powerful sermons on the second coming. Since local churches were not big enough to hold his audiences, friends built a large structure for his use. In India, Daniel Wilson, Episcopal Bishop of Calcutta and a participant in one of the Albury Park Conferences, published a book on the prophecies of Daniel in 1836.

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<sup>39</sup> M.E.Olsen, *Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, D.C.:Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1925), pp. 98-101,

<sup>40</sup> Froom, III: 671-686. See also Olsen, pp 101-103.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

In this volume he set the end of the 2300 years to fall in 1847, at which time he expected Christ's return and a premillennial resurrection of the dead.<sup>42</sup>

In summary, however, I would agree with Shwartz<sup>43</sup> that in spite of the interest in the second advent, Europe failed to produce a unified movement dedicated to promoting readiness for that climatic event. Why? Several reasons may be suggested. Firstly, considerable argument occurred amongst students of prophecy as to whether the 2300 or 2400 days ended in 1843, 1844, or 1847. No consensus developed. Secondly, they failed to focus on one time period exclusively. Considerable interest was also shown in the 1260, 1290 and 1335-day periods (Dan 12:11,12). Many scholars extended the said prediction to 1866 or 1867. The question arose: what was to happen then?

Though the above paragraph is believed to be accurate, there is nevertheless something important: there was in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe and America a gradual shift of interest from the prophecy of Daniel 7 and the 1260 days to Daniel 8, leading to an upsurge of second advent expectancy throughout Christendom, which was an important and considerable event. Yet, many historicists looked to the end of the 2300 days as the cleansing or purification of the church, the restoration of true worship, the establishment of a kingdom, the day of Judgment, or the second advent.<sup>44</sup>

#### **1.1.10 Awakening in America**

William Miller (1782-1849) was the principal exponent of premillennialism in America during this period. He was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, shortly after the Revolutionary war in which his father was a captain. During his youth he satisfied his thirst for knowledge largely through self-study. He came to be considered unusually well read, self-educated, and conspicuously methodical in

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<sup>42</sup> Froom, III: 617-622. Olsen, p. 103.

<sup>43</sup> Shwartz, p. 30.

<sup>44</sup> Sandeen, *Fundamentalism*, p. 52; Damsteegt, p. 30.

all his ways. After his marriage he lived in Poultney, Vermont for a few years where at the time he served as deputy sheriff and justice of the peace.<sup>45</sup>

Through his friendship with various prominent citizens who were Deists, Miller gave up his religious convictions and became a Deist himself. During the war between the U.S.A. and Britain (1812-1814) he served as a lieutenant and captain, which seems to have disillusioned him regarding his Deistic principles as he began to realize the sinful nature of humanity.<sup>46</sup>

When he left the army and began to work as a farmer, he devoted more time to existential questions regarding the predicament of humankind. During this quest for the deeper significance of life, he regularly attended the Baptist Church, though not as a member<sup>47</sup>. In 1816, while publicly reading a sermon on Isaiah 53, Miller experienced conversion and joined this church. Challenged by his Deist friends, he began an intensive study of the Bible so that he might justify his decision to accept the Christian faith.<sup>48</sup> On the basis of a two-year investigation, he concluded that, according to scripture, the Second Advent of Christ was premillennial instead of postmillennial,<sup>49</sup> and would occur within his lifetime, indicating that there could be no world conversion before Christ's return at the beginning of the millennium.<sup>50</sup>

Miller continued the study of the Bible until, as a result of an invitation, he made his first public appearance in 1831 when some excitement in the various

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<sup>45</sup> P Gerard Damsteeg, *Foundations of the Seventh-Day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmann, 1977), p 13; on the Millennial polemic, see From PFF, IV Chaps 15, 16, 18, 19.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry: A Defense of William Miller and the Millerites* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1944), pp. 17-33.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Generally premillennialists held a pessimistic view of the condition of society and man's attempts to improve it. They felt that only the **cataclysmic** return of Christ could bring about the perfect society of the millennium. Postmillennialists were optimistic about the human ability to gradually transform the secular world into an ideal society in which the principles of the kingdom of God would triumph.

<sup>50</sup> William Miller, MS, Spt. 5, 1882. Quoted by Damsteeg, p. 14.

Protestant Churches with regards to the imminence of the parousia was already evident.<sup>51</sup>

In 1831, Miller prepared a series of eight articles for a Baptist weekly, the *Vermont Telegraph*, which were published during 1832-1833.<sup>52</sup> In 1833 these articles were incorporated in a pamphlet entitled *Evidences from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ about the Year A.D. 1843, and of His Personal Reign of 1000 years*. During the same year, the Baptist Church issued him with a licence to preach. From 1834 onwards he devoted all his time to the proclamation of the Second Advent. In 1836 his lectures were published in a book which was reprinted and expanded several times,<sup>53</sup> and which received nation-wide publicity.

In many churches, Miller gained numerous followers who became known as the "Millerites." This interconfessional movement<sup>54</sup> swelled into a crusade which reached a climax during the 1843 and 1844. In North America about 200 ministers accepted Miller's views and consequently, "Advent Congregations" were established with a total number of approximately 50, 000 believers.<sup>55</sup>

Some of the most influential personalities in this movement were Joshua V. Himes<sup>56</sup> a minister of the Massachusetts Christian Conference; Josiah Litch, a

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<sup>51</sup> Ernest R. Sandeen. *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American. Millenarianism 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). pp. 49, 57, 58. There was a simultaneous increased interest in Britain (Ibid pp. 57, 58).

<sup>52</sup> See *Vermont Telegraph* (Brandon, Vt.), Nov. 6, 1832. March 12, 1833.

<sup>53</sup> Froom, *Prophetic Faith of our Father*, IV, 476-519.

<sup>54</sup> The Millerites were of the following persuasions: "Protestant, Episcopal, Methodist Episcopal, Methodist Protestant, Primitive Methodist, Wesleyan Methodist, Closed Communion Baptist, and Open Communion Baptist, Calvinist and Armenians Baptist, Presbyterians, Old and New school Congregationalists, Old and New School Lutherans, Dutch Reformed, etc. (Josiah Litch ), "RPA," in ASR May 1844, p. 90). E.N. Dick's study of 174 Millerite lecturers indicated that 44.3% were Methodist, 27% Baptists, 9% Congregationalists, 8% Christians, 7% Presbyterians, 2% Episcopalians, 1.5% Dutch Reformed, 0.6% Lutherans, and 0.6% Friends (The Adventist Crisis of 1843-1844," PhD dissertation, 1930, pp 232, 233).

<sup>55</sup> Miller, *Apology*, pp.22, quoted by Damsteegt, p. 15. Joseph Bates, "Incidents in my Past Life," No. 51, YI, May 1863 , p. 34; Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, 1888, p. 376.

<sup>56</sup> Joshua Vaughan Himes (1805-1895) was a minister, reformer and the major publicist, promoter and organizer of the Millerite Movement. First he learned a trade. Later he experienced conversion. He felt a call to the ministry. A reformer by nature, he opposed liquor traffic and fought against slavery. In 1839, he invited Miller to speak in his Church. Immediately after he was

minister and member<sup>57</sup> of the new England Methodist Episcopalian conference, Dr Henry Dana Ward,<sup>58</sup> a prominent Episcopalian clergyman; Charles Fitch,<sup>59</sup> a minister of the congregational Church and the Presbyterian Church; Apollos Hale,<sup>60</sup> a Methodist minister; and Sylvester<sup>61</sup> a Congregationalist. For some, Miller's predictions must have implied an instant utopia; for others, who were disillusioned with the movement of 1830, the premillennial ideas of Miller offered a way out of the religious altruism which failed to redeem civilization.<sup>62</sup> Still others saw in his predication a culmination of their desires for the "blessed hope" and deliverance from an evil world.

In summarising the religious situation at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the U.S.A. one could say that it provided a climate conducive to the development of new religious movements. There was a relative weakness in the major churches, a religious plurality and the "constitutionally guaranteed freedom of religion"<sup>63</sup> which stimulated individual religious expression independent of the larger churches.

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convicted of the correctness of Miller's teachings, he began to organize the movement more effectively. He launched several periodicals; he also introduced Miller to the large cities and took a leading role in the organization of camp meetings and general conferences for Second Advent believers. See also Arthur, "Joshua V. Himes and the cause of Adventism, 1839- 1845", M.A. thesis (University of Chicago), 1963.

<sup>57</sup> Josiah Litch (1809-1886) was a minister and reformer. He participated in the temperance and abolition movements. After his conversion he joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. He became one of the first Methodist ministers to advocate Miller's view as a result of studying his lectures. Litch was editor of several Millerite periodicals and published books on prophetic interpretation. Several of his ideas were adopted by Sabbatarian Adventists.

<sup>58</sup> Henry Dana Ward (1797-1884) graduated from Harvard. As a reformer he was known in the anti-Masonic Movement. Once he embraced the cause of adventism, he published several books. One of them, *Glad Tidings "for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"*, 1838, was a study on millennialism which reached conclusions somewhat similar to those of Miller. He was selected to be Chairman of the first General Conference of Second Advent Believers, Boston, 1840. However, owing to his opposition against the setting of a definite time he receded into the background (see Damsteegt, p. 15).

<sup>59</sup> Charles Fitch (1805-October 14, 1844) studied at Brown University, Providence, R.I. He first became a minister of a Congregational church, then a minister of a Presbyterian church. He was editor of a Millerite periodical. He could be considered as one of the most aggressive and successful Millerite leaders and preachers. Together with Apollos Hale he designed *A Chronological Chart of the Visions of Daniel and John*.

<sup>60</sup> Apollos Hale was associate editor of the *Signs of the Times*. His argumentation on prophetic subject matters was concise and scholarly. He was noted for his clarity and wrote many articles, pamphlets and books.

<sup>61</sup> Sylvester Bliss (1814-1863) was one of the ablest of the Millerite editors and apologists.

<sup>62</sup> Cross, *Burned-over District*, p. 277.

<sup>63</sup> Damsteegt, p. 15.

The democratising of the American culture, the Second Great Awakening, and further revivalism also contributed to the increasing religious individualism.<sup>64</sup> New movements developed from the larger Protestant bodies. With the passing of the era of benevolence, schism and controversy began to reign. The financial depression of 1837, disillusionment with the millennial dreams, and fast growing Roman Catholicism created feelings of insecurity and discontent. It was in such an environment that Adventists successfully developed as one of various new religious movements.<sup>65</sup>

## **1.2. The Historical Development Of The SDA Church**

Nowadays after almost 140 years of existence, the SDA Church is one of the most significant movements on the religious scene in the world. Beginning its organized existence in 1863, this church, by virtue of a prodigious missionary enterprise, has enjoyed such steady growth that it is now a world wide fellowship of more than 12 million communicants gathered into more than 52 000 churches.<sup>66</sup>

A recent Yearbook reported 57 SDA publishing houses that produce literature in more than 138 languages and dialects. The movement also sponsors 6355 schools operated by the church including 1214 secondary schools, 5005 primary schools; 37 training institutes for workers and 99 colleges and universities, including theological seminaries and medical colleges in 203 countries in which work was established, with over 228 of these institutions being recognized by the United Nations.<sup>67</sup>

Seventh-day Adventists are doctrinally heirs of the Millerite Movement of the 1840s. Although the name "Seventh-day Adventist" was chosen in 1860, the denomination was not officially instated until May 21, 1863, when the movement

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2003*, membership statistics (June 30, 2002, Churches:51,919; Church membership:12,593,704), p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

comprised some 125 churches and 3500 members. Work was largely confined to North America until 1874 when the Church's first missionary, J.N. Andrews, was sent to Switzerland.<sup>68</sup>

Africa was penetrated to some extent in 1879 when H.P. Ribton, an early convert in Italy, moved to Egypt where he opened a school. SDA workers first entered non-Christian countries in 1894: these were the Gold Coast (Ghana), West Africa, and Matabeleland, South Africa. The same year witnessed missionaries entering South America, and in 1896, Japan.<sup>69</sup> Consequently, the church has now established work in 203 countries.<sup>70</sup>

### **1.3. Major Factors In The Growth Of The Advent Movement**

The publication and distribution of literature constituted the major factors responsible for the growth of the Adventist Movement. *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* (now *The Adventist Review*), a general church newspaper, was launched in Paris, Maine, in 1850; the *Youth's Instructor* in Rochester, New York, in 1852; and the *Signs of the Times* in Oakland, California, in 1874. The first denominational publishing houses at Battle Creek, Michigan, began operating in 1855 and were duly incorporated in 1861 under the name of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association.<sup>71</sup>

The Health Reform Institute, known as the Battle Creek Sanatorium, opened its doors in 1866, and missionary society work was organized on a state-wide basis in 1870. The first of the Church's worldwide network of schools was established in 1872, and 1874 saw the formation of state-wide Sabbath school associations. In 1903 the denominational headquarters was moved from Battle Creek, Michigan, to Washington, D.C., and in 1989 to Silver Springs, Maryland, where it continues to form the new centre of an expanding work.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid

<sup>70</sup> *Seventh day Adventist Yearbook 2008*, p. 4.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

## **1.4. Conclusion**

In conclusion to this chapter, the survey of the background to the Modern Seventh-Day Adventist Church (1863-1959) has shown that the birth of the Adventists developed in the setting of the great Advent awakening which took place in the early years of the nineteenth century in many countries in Europe, Asia, and America. Stirring events associated with the French Revolution reawakened the interest of people in biblical prophecies such as the 1260 (Dan 7:25) and the 2300 days (Dan 8:14), leading to an upsurge of Second Advent expectancy throughout Christendom.

In North America, the "Millerite" Movement became an interconfessional crusade which reached a climax in the year 1843 and 1844 and "Advent Congregations" were established but not yet organized as new churches. Later, after 1863, the growth and historical development of the SDA Church can be attributed to certain major factors like publication and distribution of literature, the Biblical message transmission, the Health Reform Institute and the education organisation.



## CHAPTER TWO

### GENERAL HISTORY OF DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT

#### 1.0. Introduction

As suggested above<sup>73</sup>, SDAs are doctrinal heirs of the Millerite Movement of the 1840s. This chapter stresses some of the historical basic doctrines which have been regarded as pillars of the SDA Church faith since 1848. A special emphasis has been placed on the history of the doctrine of “righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ” because of the misunderstanding that occurred within the church at that time (1888) and which, unfortunately, often led to the beginning of certain dissident groups that exist in some of the local churches today.

#### 2.1. Miller’s Hermeneutical Principles

The two major published sources expounding Miller’s hermeneutical principles constitute the introduction to his lectures and one of his letters, his principles of biblical interpretation. In 1840, one of these summarizing his rules of hermeneutics was published<sup>74</sup>.

In general, Miller’s hermeneutical principles formed part of the Protestant hermeneutical tradition “*which can be traced back to the primitive church*”<sup>75</sup>. [Italics supplied] His hermeneutic was based on the presuppositions of the principle of “sola scriptura” and the unity and self-authentication of the scriptures<sup>76</sup>. The first four hermeneutical rules dealt with general rules of interpretation. Miller indicated that the Christian canon provided the context for

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<sup>73</sup> See above, chapter 1: The Birth of Adventism. See also Damsteegt, p.13.

<sup>74</sup> Miller, “Letter. No. 5.” St May 15, 1840, pp 25,26 quoted by P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh – day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 17,18; pp 299, 300. (Appendix 1).

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Sandeen, “Millennialism,” pp. 111-13; From, PFF, I, II, III, IV, quoted by Dansteegt, *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>76</sup> The Reformation concept of “*Sacra scriptura sui ipsius interpres*” (the sacred scriptures interprets itself (translation mine)). This functions as a basic principle in SDA hermeneutics. Cf. E.G. White: *Search the Scriptures*, RH Oct9, 1883, p. 623.

interpretation and that scripture can be understood<sup>77</sup> (Rule I). He advocated the hermeneutical rule that scripture is its own expositor<sup>78</sup>, and based this on the concept of the Bible as an ultimate norm (Rule III).

He frequently used the principle of the analogy of Scripture and its application to a particular subject as a means to understand scripture<sup>79</sup> (Rule IV). With regards to its application, he stressed that the importance of “every word” had to be taken into consideration (Rule II, IV). Not only a word but also a sentence had its importance.

Let every word have its own scriptural meaning, every sentence its proper bearing, and have no contradiction, and your theory will and must of necessity be correct<sup>80</sup>,

He also suggested that when all the scriptural passages related to a particular subject were brought together, each word and sentence should exhibit “its proper bearing and force in the grand whole”<sup>81</sup>

The remaining rules were predominantly concerned with principles of interpreting apocalyptic eschatology. This, according to Miller, included visions, symbols and parables, which bore prophetic significance. He devoted special attention to interpreting symbols. According to him, symbols always conveyed a “figurative meaning”, explaining that, when used in prophecy, symbols could be, for example, mountains, meaning governments; beasts, kingdoms; waters, people; camp, word of God; day, year<sup>82</sup> (Rule VIII).

It appears that here Miller and most of his contemporaries frequently made use of the so-called “year – day” principle which has been employed by interpreters for many centuries as a key to determine the time element in symbolic

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<sup>77</sup> Cf. The Reformation doctrine of the “claritas sacrae scripturae”. Miller’s assertion ought to be seen in the polemic against contemporaries who stated that the books of Daniel and Revelation could not be understood. cf. E.G. White, TM, 1923, p.113.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Dansteegt, p. 17.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. Miller, ESH, 1836, p. 5.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Although Miller had been exposed to Bible Commentaries he seems to have arrived at his major interpretations mainly by using the Bible with its marginal references and Cruden’s concordance (Hale, SAM, p. 66; Miller, *Views*, p. 11; Bliss, *Miller*, p.69; quoted by Damsteegt, *op. Cit.* p. 18.

prophecy<sup>83</sup>. This principle indicated that a prophetic day symbolically represented a literal solar year, a prophetic month, literally 30 days, and a prophetic year, literally 360 years. On the basis of the analogy-of-scripture principle, the biblical evidence for this approach was found in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6, and the fulfilment of the 70 weeks of Daniel 9.<sup>84</sup>

In short, although these hermeneutical principles of Miller were still undeveloped during his time (the 1840s), they were in line with the biblical teachings relating to the interpretation and understanding of the word of God in order to avoid human interpretation (2 Peter 1:20) which has posed the danger of biblical doctrines being misunderstood as in several dissident groups. The aim is to let all God-breathed scriptures “be useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

## **2.2. The Historical Shaping of SDA Doctrines (1849-1888)**

SDAs were not surprised at the continued growth of their church after the Great Disappointment<sup>85</sup>. It is historically known that from 1845 onward the majority of Adventists began to interpret this disappointment as a failure in their time calculations. However, for a minority the mistake was not in the time setting but in the prediction of the nature of the event, which was to take place on October 22, 1844. The Sabbatarian Adventists emerged from this minority.

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<sup>83</sup> M. Stuart, *Hints on the Interpretation of Prophecy* 1842, p. 74; see also Froom for a survey of the use of the year – day principle by: (1) *American expositors, 1798 – 1844, PFF, IV*, 396-401; (2) *19<sup>th</sup> century European Expositors.*, III, 743, 744; (3) *Post-Reformation expositors, II*, 784-87. Quoted by Damsteegt, p. 19.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> The Millerite movement experienced a disappointment when the second Advent of Christ did not occur in the spring of 1844 as they had predicted.

### 2.2.1. A Post Disappointment Background Experience

In such a circumstance<sup>86</sup>, intensive Bible study following the Great Disappointment led them (Sabbatarian Adventists) to identify themselves as the divinely commissioned herald for the messages of the three angels pictured in Revelations 14:6-12. They believed that they were a people of prophecy; God was on their side. As Ellen G. White wrote with confidence in 1850. "We have the truth" and "We know it".<sup>87</sup>

Henceforward an analogy was drawn with regards to the experience of Jonah in Nineveh. In the Jonah experience an explanation was found which "justified the preaching of time although the event did not occur as predicted."<sup>88</sup> It was pointed out that "we have done the will of God in thus sounding the alarm, as we believe that Jonah did when he entered into Nineveh."<sup>89</sup>

Another analogy that brought comfort was found in the experience of Abraham when he was going to offer Isaac on Mount Moriah. On the basis of typology it was argued that

no one will say that Abraham was mistaken in believing that he was to slay his son but God chose this very way to test his faith. Even so do we believe that God permitted the preaching of this last time for the same purpose respecting his children now, to test their faith. And we should have sinned nonetheless, had we desired, in our hearts to delay the Lord's coming, than Abraham would, had he withheld his son. God has brought us to mount Moriah, and He will deliver us, or provide for us a lamb.<sup>90</sup>

Furthermore a typological significance was perceived in the experience of the disciples who participated in Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, which was a fulfilment of prophecy (Mt.21:1-11), but who were utterly disappointed by His crucifixion.

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<sup>86</sup> As the day (of the second Advent) passed, the unity of the Advent movement began to erode. However many of the leaders continued to believe not only that the Advent was near but also that it was possible to discover in the scriptures its exact time. See also Schwartz, p. 54.

<sup>87</sup> E.G White *Letter 18*, 1850 to Bro. and Sr. Hastings, E.G. White Estate. Cf Schwartz, p. 166.

<sup>88</sup> Editorial, "*Public*," p.109; quoted by Schwarz, p.104; cf. E.G. White, Sp,1, 148, 157.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

J.B Cook, an Adventist lecturer and a former Baptist minister, stated that the disciples “were disappointed, because they misconceived his design in fulfilling that predicted event. The prophecy was however, just as really fulfilled, as if they had correctly conceived God’s purposes, and realized their expectations”.<sup>91</sup>

Through typological argumentation he pointed out that

The mistake was of precisely the same nature with that of the Holy Twelve, and other, Mat 24:4. They overlooked the events, which were to intervene between that prophetic fulfillment and the kingdom. They mistook our Lord’s design in that fulfillment. It was however a fulfillment. So in our case precisely, God’s will was done.<sup>92</sup>

Cook’s argument was influenced by his philosophy of divine providence which held that God did not guide His people “into their mistakes but He employs them, not withdrawing their mistakes. He verifies His promises to them in spite of all their weaknesses, and gradually brings them to ‘understand’, both his word and Providence”.<sup>93</sup>

It was against this background of the post-disappointment experience that the shape of the SDA doctrines was given. Some of the most influential Sabbatarian Adventists were James White<sup>94</sup>, his wife Ellen G. White,<sup>95</sup> Joseph Bates<sup>96</sup>, Hiram Edson<sup>97</sup>, and John N. Andrews.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> John B. Cook (1804-74) advocated the validity of the Seventh month movement and the idea of a shut door in 1844. In 1846 he joined the Sabbatarian Adventists and for some time he advocated their Sabbath teachings. But after 1849 he became one of their opponents. Cf. Damsteegt, p. 105.

<sup>92</sup> J.B. Cook, “The Doctrine of Providence”, *Advent Testimony* (Boston: March 1846), p. 4; Ibid, p.5. See also. E.G. White, *The Great Controversy, between Christ and Satan During the Christian Dispensation*, Revised and enlarged (Battle Creek, Mich.; Review and Herald, 1888), pp 351, 352.

<sup>93</sup> [Cook], “The Necessity and Certainty of Divine Guidance,” *Advent Testimony*, March 1846,p. 4.

<sup>94</sup> James Springer White (1821 – 1881), who was largely a self made man, was recognised as one of the most outstanding leaders among Sabbatarian Adventists and SDA. When he joined the Millerite movement, White began a preaching ministry. In the beginning of 1845 he became acquainted with Ellen G. Harmon and was married on August 30, 1846. During autumn of that year they began to observe the Sabbath. In 1849 he began a publishing ministry. He founded various periodicals such as PT (1849), AdR (1850), RH (1850), and Y, (1852). He wrote or edited several books and produced charts. In the 1850s he took the lead in ongoing organization among the Sabbatarian Adventists. This culminated in the formation of a general conference of the SDA in 1863. For a number of years he served as the president of the General Conference. See *SDAE*, pp. 1419-25

The shaping of doctrine played a very important part in the formation of the SDA church. It was J.N. Andrews who, among others, presented the newly discovered truths in a precise and logical form with a clear and scriptural backing. Andrews was endowed with a lawyer's analytical mind, yet with a deep fear of God in his heart<sup>99</sup>.

During the decades following 1849, the new Sabbatarian Adventist doctrines were further developed and later incorporated by the SDA<sup>100</sup> into a system of doctrines which became a vital and integral part of their theology of mission. In order to prepare humankind for the second Advent, the apocalyptic-eschatological aspects of this theology indicated by the focus on the angel's

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95 Ellen Gould White (1827-1915) was one of the most influential personalities among Sabbatarian Adventists and SDAs. At the age of 12 she was baptized by immersion and joined the Methodist church. In 1843 she and her parents were disfellowshipped because they had accepted Miller's teachings. After this disappointment, she received what she and some of the Adventists identified as revelation from God. In this they recognised the revival of the biblical gift of prophecy which was designated as the Spirit of Prophecy. As a result the Sabbatarian Adventists considered her statements on spiritual matters to be of great authority. In the theological and organizational development as well as in the establishment of a publishing work, a medical missionary work, and a mission of a worldwide scope, she had a decisive and guiding influence. She was an extremely prolific writer of letters, manuscripts, articles, pamphlets, and books. Besides this she also travelled extensively through several continents presenting lectures and courses on spiritual matters. See SDAE, pp 1406-14.

<sup>96</sup> Joseph Bates (1792 – 1872) was a former sea captain, a Millerite preacher, and one of the principal leaders of the Sabbatarian Adventists. He was involved in the temperance movement before he became an active participant in the Millerite movement. After the disappointment he read an article on the Seventh-day Sabbath by T.M. Preble and decided to observe that day as the biblical day of rest. He was instrumental in convincing J. White, E.G. White and H. Edson to accept the Sabbath. See Damsteegt, p.104.

<sup>97</sup> Hiram Edson (1806-82) was an Adventist with a Methodist background. He seemed to be responsible for the earliest biblical rationale for the disappointment, which stressed the validity of the seventh month movement in the context of a change in Christ's high priestly ministry. This view was further developed by his protegee O.R.L Crosier and published in the periodicals DD and DS in 1846. It became the standard view among SDA. Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> John N. Andrews (1829-83) was one of the principal leaders of the SDA. In 1846 he accepted the Sabbath doctrine. He was one of the major contributors to the formation of their doctrine, a prolific writer, and one of their best scholars. He functioned both as editor and corresponding editor of the R.H. In 1874 he became their first American-born missionary to Europe. See also Damsteegt, pp 103,140, reference notes.

<sup>99</sup> Harry Leonard, *J.N. Andrews, the Man and the Mission* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1985), p. 75.

<sup>100</sup> The name "Millerites" has been adopted to designate Adventists in the USA who accepted many of Miller's expositions on the imminence of the Second Advent. The fact that the Millerites split up into different groups after 1844 makes it advisable to substitute the term "Adventists". The terms Sabbatarian Adventists" and Seventh Day Adventists have been employed to indicate one of these groups, which soon made the observance of the Sabbath a part of its faith, the latter term (abbreviated SDA) being applied after the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in 1863.

message were central in the proclamation of their mission. However, there was a gradual development of various non-apocalyptic aspects of doctrine; but they played a minor role until 1874.<sup>101</sup>

In this chapter, the focus of our discussion will fall on some of these doctrines. However, the problem encountered by established denominational doctrine will be examined before doing so.

### **2.2.2. Resistance To The Formulation Of The Doctrinal Creed**

It was necessary for the SDA church to preserve its identity and unity as regards biblical doctrines. Consequently, much of the formal creed had to be rejected. At that time SDA leaders had learned from their Millerite experience the dangers of spelling out their beliefs, at least as they applied to the predictions of time, with too much precision. Although by the end of 1848 they had agreed upon basic doctrines, which would always be regarded as the pillars of their faith, they also recognised that continued study could lead to a more complete understanding of these “truths”. Thus they steadfastly “resisted the formulation or the appropriation of a specific, comprehensive doctrinal creed”.<sup>102</sup>

Several other factors predisposed the SDA to be suspicious of formal creeds. On a number of occasions during the final phase of the Millerite movement, Adventists had been disfellowshipped from their churches because of their Millerite views. These had been interpreted as running contrary to established denominational creeds. It was because of this that early in the nineteenth century the denomination had taken the position that the Bible would be its only creed; and Christian character its only test of fellowship, a position that was adopted by SDA leaders during the organisational struggle of 1861. When more than a decade later the SDA church did finally publish a statement of fundamental

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<sup>101</sup> Damsteegt, p. 165.

<sup>102</sup> L.E. Froom, *Prophetic Faith of our Father: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, 4 vols. (Washington D.C. Review and Herald, 1954), IV: 1040

beliefs, they carefully announced that they had “no articles of faith, creed, or discipline aside from the Bible”.<sup>103</sup>

A small pamphlet categorizing the basic SDA beliefs in twenty-five articles was published in 1872 not to “secure uniformity, but rather to meet inquiries, to correct false statements, and to resource erroneous impressions.”<sup>104</sup> SDA leaders were particularly anxious to differentiate their views from those held by other Adventist bodies, some of which, the present writer thinks, are subversive of plain and important principles set forth in the word of God. These twenty-five fundamental principles, later reprinted in both the *Review* and *The Signs of the Times* formed a convenient springboard for discussing development within SDA theology during the formative first quarter century of the denomination’s organized existence. Actually, this preoccupation of the SDA leaders during that time shows in suffisance what was the need of the Church to preserve its identity and unity of biblical doctrines.

### **2.2.3. Christ’s Sacrifice And Atonement**

The word “atonement” is described as the suffering and death of Christ to compensate (atone) for the sins of humankind<sup>105</sup>. Damsteegt refers to it as an “act of reconciliation”<sup>106</sup> or justification of the people of God. The SDA pioneers held a distinctive view of the atonement. As Schwarts stresses, most believed that contemporary theologians were wrong in emphasizing that the atonement had taken place at the cross. This to them was simply “the offering of the sacrifice”.<sup>107</sup> Their study of the Levitical types convinced them that atonement took place only when the priest presented the blood of the sacrificial victim before

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<sup>103</sup> R.W. Schwarz, p. 167.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. See Appendix 2, p- for the 25 articles published in 1872.

<sup>105</sup> See Damsteegt, p. 306, Appendix III, note 2, *Fundamental Beliefs of SDA in 1970*; Matt 28.19; Is 44: 6; 489:13; Matt. 12:32; 2 Cor 13:4, Rev 1:8,11.

<sup>106</sup> A.S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, s.v. “atonement”, A.P. Cowie, Ed.

<sup>107</sup> Damsteegt, p. 24.



God. Thus, they reasoned, the atonement did not take place on the cross but in the heavenly sanctuary following Christ's ascension.

Owing to their "shut-door" views Joseph Bates and James White were inclined to believe that Jesus was no longer interceding for the masses after He had moved into the most holy place on October 22, 1844.<sup>108</sup> As increasing numbers were being added to the Sabbatarian Adventist ranks during the 1850s, an additional study of the Levitical system convinced Jiram Edson and J.N. Andrews that the start of the great antitypical Day of Atonement did not limit those who might accept God's last messages and be covered by Christ's atoning blood. They noted that, in Leviticus, the regular sin offerings continued even on the tenth day of the seventh month. Smith was particularly adamant in denying that the atonement had occurred at the cross. Such a view, he held, led either to universalism (salvation for all) or extreme Calvinism (salvation only for the predestined elect). Smith saw the cross as the sacrifice, which met the demands of a broken law. Atonement came when sinners consciously accepted that sacrifice on their behalf had changed their lives by obeying God's command. This could take place only when Christ, following His resurrection, and Jesus began His work in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, he explained.

During that time, an examination of E.G. White's writings indicates that during the course of the 1850s and 60s her concepts of atonement were gradually broadening. She was moving beyond her contemporary Adventists in many respects. In 1864 she referred to Christ's sacrifice on the cross as the atonement for sin; His work in the heavenly sanctuary "shed upon His disciples the benefits of atonement". More and more the cross of Christ came to occupy a central place in her writings. She saw Christ's sacrifice as "the great truth around which all other truths cluster. "Every doctrine quarried from the word of God needed to be studied in the light that which streams from the cross of Calvary".<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p. 155.

<sup>109</sup> P.G. Damsteegt, *Foundations of the SDA Message and Mission* (1977) pp. 170-176); M.J. Davis, "A Study of Major Declarations on the Doctrine of Atonement in SDA Literature," unpublished M.A. thesis, Andrews University (1962), pp. 31-51.

However, Schwartz points out that E. G. White's increasing emphasis on the cross did not eclipse the interest of the SDAs in the heavenly sanctuary or their understanding of the importance of the work there. Proposition 10 in the 1872 statement of *Fundamental Principles* covered the sanctuary doctrine. It was the longest of the twenty-five propositions. This seemed particularly fitting because together with the proposition dealing with the investigative judgement, the concepts affirmed here present the most distinctive SDA contribution to Christian theology.<sup>110</sup>

#### **2.2.4. The Divine Weekly Day of Rest**

As every good Adventist knew, sin constituted breaking God's law of the Ten Commandments. Adventists saw the fourth or Sabbath commandment as the one most flagrantly violated, even by professed Christians. For this reason the Seventh-day Adventists viewed a major part of their work as being to call attention to the true Sabbath. In this way its observance would become a clear test of an individual's complete loyalty to God during earth's final hour.

It took time for pioneers like Bates and White to work out this complete view of the central importance of the Sabbath. At first their Sabbath views did not differ greatly from those of the Seventh Day Baptists, whom they long continued to regard as more truly their brethren than were members of other Christian denominations. By connecting Revelation 11:19 with October 22, 1844, Bates concluded as early as 1847 that after 1844 new attention was to be called to the Law of God and especially to the Sabbath commandment. This would provide a new test of the love and loyalty of God's people. Gradually, particularly influenced by the writings of Bates, James White and J.N. Andrews, Adventists came to see the Sabbath as the climax of the messages of the three angels of Revelation 14.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> R.W. Schwarz, p. 169.

<sup>111</sup> Damsteegt, pp. 188, 189, 241, 242. C. Coffman, "The development of an understanding of the message of the third angel of Revelation 14:9-12 from 1844" unpublished term paper (Andrews University: 1972). Schwarz, pp. 170, 171.

Leonard stressed the point that it is a well-known fact that the Law of God, especially the Sabbath commandment, played a dominant role in the thinking of the pioneers. Besides Joseph Bates, he explains,<sup>112</sup> J.N. Andrews was foremost in defending the validity of God's Law. In his second continuation on the *Review and Herald* in an article entitled "The perpetuity of the Law of God", Andrews laid the foundation for future Adventist discussion on the subject.

Beginning with the Sermon on the Mount, he points out that Christ "did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill" it (Mat.5:17-19). Lest any be in doubt regarding what He was referring to, Christ quoted some of the commandments of the Decalogue. He also summarised this in His words "love to God and love to man" (Matt.22). However, He never introduced any other version of the law. Furthermore, since only one Law was given, the disciples could not possibly enact another law after the death of Christ.

Reaching back in the other direction, Andrews argued that the law did not originate at Sinai. "It was written in the hearts of men before; otherwise the concept of sin would not have been in existence before Sinai", as Paul confirmed in (Rom 5:13). Andrews was no longer legalistic. Perfect obedience rendered out of a pure love for God was impossible after the fall of man, even for those upon whose hearts the Law of God was written. The inability of human beings to fulfil the law was demonstrated by Israel's failure to keep her promise at Sinai, and the salvation of humankind was only assured by Christ's life of perfect obedience. Andrews concluded that "He died to atone for our transgression and to redeem us from its curse. Our hope of salvation then is through faith in Jesus-Christ, whom God had set forth to be a propitiation for our sins"<sup>113</sup>.

During the late 1840s Sabbatarian Adventists had viewed the messages of three angels as successive proclamations of specific truths: (1) the imminence of the Second Advent, (2) the apostasy of "nominal" Christian churches and (3) the

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<sup>112</sup> Harry Leonard, *J.N Andrews, the Man and the Mission*, (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1985), pp. 96, 97.

<sup>113</sup> Harry Leonard, p.98.

need to keep all of God's commandments. They saw the first two messages as having been completed by 1844; and that it was their specific duty to proclaim the third. Thus the Sabbath was logically the main burden of James White in his publication, *Present Truth*.<sup>114</sup> He held that believers must not lose the first messages, hence the *Advent Review's* appearance to recall the importance of their advent experience.

With the combining of these two early journals into the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, we see the beginning of an understanding that the three messages were progressive and cumulative rather than successive. Even Ellen White clearly defined this position during the 1850s. Yet primary attention continued to be accorded to the third message, which was believed in effect to include the preceding two. Thus the message of the third angel soon became the greatest concern of SDAs and the field of their most earnest study.<sup>115</sup>

To these early Sabbatarian Adventists the final clause of the third message (Rev. 14:12) provided a dramatic portrayal of themselves. They were keeping all of God's commandments and patiently awaiting Christ's return; this last event, they saw clearly, could not be pinpointed to occur on a specific date, but rather it would follow the completion of the investigative judgment.

Both Bates and James White had identified the true Sabbath as God's seal early on. During the 1850s Uriah Smith demonstrated the similarity of the fourth commandment to an earthly monarch's seal by pointing out that it not only identified the Ruler of the universe but also His office and dominion. While recognizing the Sabbath as God's seal, James White rejected the idea that all keepers had received this seal and were automatically sure of heaven. The Sabbath, White pointed out, "was of no avail apart from recognition of, and dependence upon the merits of Christ's atonement for one's sins".<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> *Review and Herald*, Jan. 1851, p. 33.

<sup>115</sup> Le Roy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Father: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation* 4 vols. (Washington D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Assn; 1954), 1614, p. 1043; Damsteegt, p. 165, 177-179.

<sup>116</sup> Damsteegt, pp. 143-146, 209, 213, quoted by Schwartz p.172.

### 2.2.5. Final Events And Second Advent

Although SDAs were delivered from the snare of setting specific dates for the Second Advent of Christ early in their establishment, they continued to expect that this event would occur in the very near future, while they assiduously examined the prophetic portions of Scripture, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation, for clues as to the nature of future events that would herald the approaching kingdom of Christ. As spelled out in Proposition 6 of their 1872 *Fundamental Principles*<sup>117</sup>, SDAs affirmed that “a blessing is pronounced upon these who study” prophecy in Revelation 1:3 and that it is to be sufficiently understood by the people of God to show them their position in the world's history, and the special duties required of them. Proposition 7 expressed faith that all biblical prophecy had been fulfilled “except the closing scenes”.<sup>118</sup>

In view of final events, the message of the third angel was interpreted by Sabbatarian Adventists as one of warning with respect to the final conflict that would be a confrontation between the powers of light and darkness. The scene of this conflict was described in Revelation 13:11-18 by the “two-horned beast” and the “beast and his image” as the enemies of God's people. Concerning this conflict, Andrews pointed out that “its fearful character may be learned from the thinking and dreadful import of the angel's message. The Bible no where else depicts such dreadful wrath”.<sup>119</sup>

In comparing Revelation 13:11-18 with Revelation 14:9-12 Andrews explains the final issue as follows:

On one side stands the decree of the beast who is to exercise all the power of the first beast before him, that all who will not worship the image and receive his mark shall be put to death (Rev. 13:12, 15), on the other hand stands the solemn warning of the third angel.<sup>120</sup>

Thus, according to Andrews' interpretation, the issue was two-fold: We can worship the beast and his image, and as the penalty drink the wine of the wrath

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<sup>117</sup> See Damsteegt, pp. 301, 302, Appendix II.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Andrews, *Revelation*, p. 85. E.G. White held that the third angel proclaimed “the most terrible threatening ever borne to man” (Scriptural gift, I, p. 162).

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

of God, or we can refuse and place our lives in peril that we may obey God. It was obvious to Andrews that the third angel's message would draw a line between the worshippers of God and the worshippers of Satan.<sup>121</sup>

As early as 1847 James White, perhaps influenced by Josiah Litch, parted company with most Protestant and Millerite expositors of prophecy by suggesting that the seven plagues of Revelation 16 did not run parallel to the seven churches and trumpets of earlier chapters, but were still placed in the future. These plagues, White reasoned, would come after Jesus had finished His work in the most holy place and immediately preceding the final deliverance of the saints from the time of trouble foretold in Daniel 12:1. By 1850 the small bands of Sabbatarian Adventists had largely accepted Elder White's views of the seven "last" plagues and the time of trouble.<sup>122</sup>

#### **2.2.6. Doctrinal Position On The Millennium**

In addition to their convictions concerning the imminence of the advent, the Millerite believers' experience was reflected in a number of other SDA doctrinal positions. They declared the popular Protestant view of the world's conversion and a temporal millennium preceding the advent to be a "fable of these last days".<sup>123</sup> All of the early SDA leaders found George Storrs's explanation of death as an unconscious sleep to be biblical. However, an immortal soul already in heaven or hell seemed to obviate the need for the pre-and-post-millennial resurrections which they found in scripture.

Hence, from the beginning, the SDAs taught conditional immortality, to be received by the righteous, living and dead, at the Second Advent. The increased interest in spiritism during the 1850s and '60s and the filtering of spiritualist concepts into many religious circles were to the Adventists further signs of the progressive fall of Babylon.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid. See also James White, "The third Angels's message", p. 69. See also Damsteegt, p. 208.

<sup>122</sup> Le Roy Edwin Froom, *Prophetic Faith ...*, vol IV, P. 1060, 1061. *Review* June 12, 1866, pp.13, 14.

<sup>123</sup> R.W. Schwarz, *op.cit*; p. 175.

<sup>124</sup> *Fundamental Principles* (1872); Haddock, p.214.

The final three propositions in the 1872 declaration of SDA beliefs touched on events that were to follow the Second Advent. All would have been quite acceptable to the Millerite forebears. Adventists expected the righteous to spend 1000 years in heaven with Christ, “judging the world and fallen angels”.<sup>125</sup> During this time Satan would be confined to a desolated earth. Following the millennium, the righteous, along with the New Jerusalem, would descend to earth; and the wicked would be raised to receive a final sentence of annihilation in the fires that would purify the earth from the curse of sin. The new heavens and new earth, with the New Jerusalem as its capital, would be the everlasting inheritance of the saints.

### **2.2.7. Baptism, Basic Christian Ordinance**

SDAs considered baptism a basic Christian ordinance which afforded visible evidence of repentance for sin and acceptance of Jesus Christ as saviour, which could be also the belief of most Christians. Since its inception, the SDA had held immersion to be the only biblically approved mode of baptism. This was only natural for the many Adventists who had earlier been Baptists and also since Ellen Harmon [white] had chosen this method of baptism following her conversion in her youth.

Throughout the 1850s and '60s however, there was considerable discussion with regards to the need for rebaptizing those from other Christian communions who had accepted SDA doctrines; there was general agreement that those who had been simply sprinkled in infancy should be immersed, as sprinkling was really no baptism at all. However, there remained a concern with respect to those who had been immersed as adults.

In a long *Review* article in 1867, James White suggested that a new baptism was called for when a person who accepted “the truth” (distinctive Adventist views), had been immersed by an “unholy minister” or had apostatized. At the 1886, General Conference, formal action was taken allowing an individual who had been immersed when joining another denomination to decide for him- or herself

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

whether or not to be rebaptized. Ellen White counselled that rebaptism should not be made a test question for those who had been immersed but was to be left to such a person's individual decision.<sup>126</sup>

Adventists expected the new-birth experience, publicly proclaimed through baptism, to result in a moral change in the life of each convert. They recognized that the new life would be a growing experience with a church member's conduct becoming gradually more and more like that of Jesus. This was not a unique Adventist view, but SDAs went further than most Christians in condemning worldly adornment, such as wearing of gold, pearls, or items of "fancy" clothing. All such were held to give clear evidence that the wearer's heart was fastened upon things of this world rather than upon heaven.<sup>127</sup>

### **2.2.8. Adventist Health Reform**

In the early 1850s, tobacco, tea and coffee were seen by SDAs as injurious not only to health, but to an individual's spirituality as well. How could sincere Christians waste money on such harmful items when it might better be used to spread the gospel? In 1867, the Whites and J.N. Loughborough even asked public forgiveness for selfishly spending money on photographs of themselves.<sup>128</sup>

During the year immediately following Ellen White's vision of health reform,, healthful living became almost a moral crusade for Adventists. To disregard the law of health was considered equal in effect to breaking the sixth commandment, hence, a sin. Yet legislating lifestyle required careful handling because of potential controversy or offence. The 1872 *Fundamental Principles* were silent on specifics of dress, decorum, and health habits.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, Revised ed, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976), pp.126,127. B. Moore, "The SDA Position on rebaptism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century" unpublished term paper, Andrews University (1971, pp.117. From, *Prophetic Faith...IV*: 1044. Schwartz, p. 177.

<sup>127</sup> Schwartz, p. 177.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>129</sup> *Review*, May 8, 1866, p. 180; May 22, 1866, pp, 196. Damsteegt pp. 224-240. Schwartz, p.178; R. Haddock, "History of the Doctrine of the Sanctuary in the Advent Movement, 1800-1905", B.D. thesis, Andrews University, 1970.



### 2.2.9. The Prophetic Gift among Adventists

Until 1872, the SDA Church could not, and would not, deny that they especially benefited from the ministry of E. G. White. Without mentioning her by name, proposition 16 sought to put her work into proper perspective as follows:

That the Spirit of God was promised to manifest itself in the church through certain gifts, enumerated especially in 1 Cor. 12 and Eph. 4; that these gifts are not designed to supersede, or take the place of the Bible which is sufficient to make us wise unto salvation..... that Spirit has simply made provision for its own existence and presence with the people of God to the end of the time....and that those who deny to the Spirit its place and operation, do plainly deny that parts of the Bible which assign to it this work and position<sup>130</sup>

After affirming that spiritual gifts (one of which was prophecy) were specifically promised to the church, the point was made that these gifts are not designed to take the place of the Bible. Rather, the gifts of the Spirit, especially in the last days, were designed to lead to an understanding of that word which has inspired to convince of sin and work a transformation in the heart and life of the person.

By the 1870s most SDAs were willing to argue that this transformation in the heart was exactly what E. G. White had taught and was doing. Schwartz points out that nearly a quarter of a century after Ellen's first vision, her husband described the role he believed God designed for her to fill. Some critics had cast doubt on the idea of Mrs White being divinely led because for years she had agreed with Captain Bates that the Sabbath started at 6 p.m. Friday evening. "It does not appear to be the desire of the Lord", Elder White reasoned, "to teach His people by the gifts of the Spirit on the Bible questions until His servants have diligently searched His word."<sup>131</sup> God had not set the gifts "in the very front and commanded us to look to them to lead us in the path of truth, and the way to heaven". Elder White saw God as using the gifts, "in the time of His choice [to] correct you, and bring you back to the Bible and save you"<sup>132</sup>.

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<sup>130</sup> Proposition XVI of the "Fundamental Principles of SDA in 1872", Damsteegt, p. 301, Appendix II.

<sup>131</sup> *Review*, February 25, 1868, p. 168; cf. Schwartz, p. 179.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

In spite of these critics however, from the earliest days of her ministry, E. G. White's colleagues had seen her as an instrument through whom God provided direct encouragement, counsel, and reproof, but not as the source of some new belief or doctrine. Such came from the Bible alone. As George I. Butler, General Conference president, wrote, "If the Bible should show the visions were not in harmony with it, the Bible would stand and the visions would be given up".<sup>133</sup> As quoted in A. L. White's writing, It appeared that, recognizing the prejudice of many of his peers against visions and dreams, James White decided in 1851 not to publish any of his wife's visions in the *Review*. Why? Because Sabbatarian Adventists were just beginning to gain a hearing among some who had previously mocked them because of their Millerite backgrounds. Elder White wanted nothing to stand in the way of honest people examining Bible truths. He proposed to publish the visions in a *Review Extra* "for the benefit of those who believe that God can fulfil His word and give visions in the last days".<sup>134</sup>

Yet the failure of the *Review* over the next few years to publish more than a handful of articles of only a general inspirational nature by E. G. White, did not free the emerging church from the criticism that it followed a prophet, rather than the Bible. In 1855, Elder White exploded: "There is a class of persons who are determined to have it that the *Review* and its conductors make the views of E. G. White a test of doctrine and Christian fellowship ... What has the *Review* to do with Mrs. White's views? *The sentiments published in its columns are all drawn from the Holy Scriptures*. No writer of the *Review* has ever referred to them as authority at any point".<sup>135</sup>

However difficult it was to publish E. G. White's visions, she (Ellen) decided that her work was almost done. In fact, at a conference in Battle Creek in November 1855, the participants became convinced that the languishing condition prevailing in the infant church was due to a failure to properly appreciate divine leading through her visions. Confessions were made, and the Battle Creek church

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<sup>133</sup> *Review Supplement*, August 14, 1883, p. 12. Schwartz, p. 180.

<sup>134</sup> Arthur L. White, *E. G. White; Messenger to the Remnant* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1969), p. 51.

<sup>135</sup> *Review*, October 16, 1855, p. 61 (Underlining mine).

endorsed a new plan to publish the visions in pamphlet form. A few hundred copies of a sixteen page tract entitled *Testimony for the church* appeared before the end of 1855. It was the first of a series that would eventually extend over fifty-five years and encompass nearly 5000 pages.<sup>136</sup>

In spite of this extensive publication, objections to the visions continued. They were too difficult to understand. The Bible said nothing about women receiving visions, some argued. Paul taught that women should not speak in public while others stressed that the Bible was good enough. To others, the visions were the result of mesmerism or disease. All these and many more abounded, yet Adventist leaders felt it necessary to answer these charges over and over again in subsequent years. The most effective argument they ever developed was that the instructions given by visions (1) led readers and hearers to the Bible and to Christ, (2) exhorted them to the highest moral standard and fuller consecration to God, and (3) “brought comfort and consolation to many hearts”. Did not such good fruits proclaim a good source? Fortunately they were certain that they did.<sup>137</sup>

Lastly, one more area of the 1872 *Fundamental Principles* deserves comment. Upon what authority did SDAs base all their doctrines? This was clearly a vital area because opponents freely charged them with following the visions of a deluded woman in preference to the Bible. To meet this charge, the third proposition clearly affirmed SDA belief “that the Holy Scriptures... contain a full revelation of the will of God to man, and are the only infallible rule of faith and practice”.<sup>138</sup>

### **2.2.10. Righteous by Faith in Jesus Christ**

People and readers who have glanced through the 1872 statements of basic SDA beliefs might have received the impression that Adventists were “legalists”.

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<sup>136</sup> Arthur L. White, *E.G. White: Messenger to the Remnant* pp. 52, 53, 62, 63.

<sup>137</sup> Uriah Smith, *The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White a Manifestation of Scriptural Gifts according to the Scriptures* (Battle Creek, Mich. SDA Publishing Association, 1868), pp. 6,7. Schwartz, pp. 180, 181.

<sup>138</sup> See proposition 3 of the “Fundamental Principles of SDA Church, in 1872,” Damsteegt, p. 301, Appendix II.

The emphasis seemed to fall on what humankind must do rather than on what Christ has done and would do in and through His followers. However, hidden away in the centre of the statement was the acknowledgment that no people could “of themselves render obedience” to God’s just requirements, but were dependent on Christ both for justification and for “grace whereby to render acceptable obedience to his holy law in time to come”.<sup>139</sup>

Yet these words were followed by several propositions emphasizing one’s duty to keep the Ten Commandments. It was their love for Jesus, their appreciation of what He had done for them that had made them so eager for His return in 1844. But then, in their bitter disappointment, they had become conscious of a work to be carried out before Christ’s return. The breach in God’s law must be repaired, in other words, the Seventh-day Sabbath must be restored. There was a test divinely ordained, they stressed, to demonstrate whether or not those who professed to love God actually did so.

By the 1870s and ’80s a new generation of SDAs had emerged. Ridiculed as legalists and Judaized by fellow Christians, persecuted in some areas, these SDAs searched the Bible to sustain their Sabbath beliefs. Fortunately, they found a veritable arsenal of proof texts which could be marshalled with crushing logic to demonstrate the perpetuity of the Sabbath. They countered debate and, according to A W Spalding, imperceptibly to themselves, they tended to become just what they were charged with: being legalists looking to their own actions for salvation rather than to Jesus Christ.<sup>140</sup>

It appears that SDAs did not listen carefully and apply all that E.G. White was saying during those years, because the story might well have developed differently. Yet in 1856, she had shocked her fellow believers by pointing out their Laodicean condition. Contrition and repentance followed.<sup>141</sup> But then came

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<sup>139</sup> Schwarz, p. 183. See “Fundamental Principles of SDA in 1872”. Proposition XV, Damsteegt, p. 301, Appendix II.

<sup>140</sup> A. W. Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists?* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1962), II: 281-288.

<sup>141</sup> E.G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Oakland, Calif: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1885), vol. pp. 239, 240.

preoccupation with the necessity for denominational organization, the American civil war, new light on healthful living and advancing the third angel's message in distant places. In all these it was so easy to let the attention focus on what the individual must do.<sup>142</sup>

In spite of these circumstances, E. G. White valiantly attempted to counteract the tendency of Adventists to flatter themselves on account of their good moral character and obedience to God's laws. "We must renounce our own righteousness",<sup>143</sup> she wrote in an article prepared for the 1882 camp meetings, "and she pleaded for the righteousness of Christ to be imputed to us. We must depend wholly upon Christ for our strength"<sup>144</sup> she stressed. Self must die. We must acknowledge that all we have is from the exceeding riches of divine grace. As she saw it, faith in Christ's sacrifice and merits should be followed by love: "and love by obedience". Subsequently, the Holy Spirit would provide the power to transform the believer into "the divine image".<sup>145</sup> However badly and unfortunately E.G. White expressed the belief, this experience is understood by few who profess the truth.<sup>146</sup>

### ***2.2.10.1. The Message of Waggoner and Jones***

In these circumstances, it was not so easy to make Adventists understand the righteousness by faith in Jesus. Perhaps a new voice, or a challenge from within their ranks was required. Both were in the making. Froom explains that in the very summer of Ellen White's appeal, a twenty-seven-year-old physician was sitting on the edge of the crowd at the Healdsburg, California, camp-meeting. Suddenly this man, Ellet. J. Waggoner, seemed to see a vivid representation of Christ hanging on the cross. He realized that God the Son was freely offering to him His righteousness in place of a life of sin. Deeply moved, the young doctor

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

resolved that all his future study of the scripture would be directed towards more fully comprehending this glorious truth and making it intelligible to others.<sup>147</sup>

Ellet Waggoner was a second-generation Adventist. His father J.H. Waggoner had been one of the first to join the Sabbatarian Adventists from outside the Millerite ranks. At the invitation of James White, Joseph. H Waggoner had moved from Michigan to California to assist with editorial work at the Pacific Press. In 1881, he succeeded Elder White as editor of the *Signs of the Times*.<sup>148</sup>

A second young man, Alonzo T. Jones, also became an assistant editor of the *Signs*, Jones had spent three years in the United States Army. Becoming convinced of the truth of SDA doctrine while serving at Walla Walla, he studied day and night in order to amass a great store of historical and Biblical knowledge. In spite of a “natural abrupt” manner, Jones became a powerful preacher who won many persons to the Advent cause. These two young men, physically and temperamentally so different, were soon closely associated in a campaign that would shake Adventism like an earthquake.<sup>149</sup>

Intensive individual study, especially of Romans and Galatians, had turned both young men into enthusiastic preachers of “righteousness by faith” in the merits of Jesus Christ. Seeking to correct what they regarded as an unbalanced viewpoint within Adventism, the duo set out to convince readers of the *Signs of the Times*, students at Healdsburg, and members of the San Francisco and Oakland churches that “righteousness by faith must become much more than an abstract doctrinal theory. It must be a living reality, a precious experience transforming the life of believers”.<sup>150</sup> But what was the official reaction to this message within the SDA community?

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<sup>147</sup> L.E. Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, D.C. Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971), pp. 239, 240.

<sup>148</sup> Schwarz, p. 185.

<sup>149</sup> Spalding, II:291; *S.D.A Encyclopedia*, pp. 707, 1383.

<sup>150</sup> Schwarz, p. 185. (Emphasis supplied).

### **2.2.10.2. Official Reaction to the Message**

At first, unfortunately, there was a misunderstanding of this message of righteousness by faith. At the denominational headquarters in Battle Creek, some of the respected elders became increasingly agitated. George I. Butler and Uriah Smith, General Conference president and editor of the *Review* respectively, took particular exception to the exegesis of Galatians 3 promoted by Waggoner and Jones who reverted to the early SDA position that the law Paul referred to here as the “schoolmaster to bring us into Christ” (Gal 3:24) was the whole body of moral law, including the Ten Commandments.<sup>151</sup>

The Adventists had almost entirely abandoned this position during the 1860s and 70s – the “schoolmaster” law was reinterpreted to mean the ceremonial and sacrificial laws of Moses which pointed forward to the Messiah. This reinterpretation had developed largely as a reaction to Protestant clergymen who unfortunately interpreted Paul’s statement in Galatians 3:25 (“we are no longer under a schoolmaster”) to mean that the law of the ten commandments had been abrogated’ thus, the seventh-day Sabbath was no longer viable.<sup>152</sup> To present Butler, Waggoner and Jones’s teaching on Galatians 3 would play directly into the hands of the opponents to the SDA teachings regarding the Sabbath.

Of particular concern to Elder Butler was the fact that Waggoner and Jones had given their views such wide publicity before bringing them before the church’s “leading brethren” for approval. This course of action could lead only to division and controversy, hence Butler felt it his “duty to bring the subject before the general conference...the only tribunal in our body where such questions can be properly considered and passed upon”.<sup>153</sup>

Subsequently, Butler persuaded the 1886 General Conference to establish a nine-member theological committee to consider the divergent viewpoints. After hours of debate, this committee, which included Butler, Smith, and Waggoner, divided five against four in support of the view that it was indeed the ceremonial

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Schwarz, p. 185.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, p. 186.

law that was referred to in Galatians 3. However, fearing that this close division, if revealed, would only intensify the controversy, Butler settled for a conference vote expressing disapproval of any doctrinal discussion in church schools or journals which might cause dissension on this point; eight of the members of the theological committee accepted this motion. Only E.J. Waggoner continued to press for freedom of discussion.<sup>154</sup>

In the summer of 1886, Butler appealed to Mrs White for any light which she might have on this subject of the law referred to in Galatians 3. While Ellen White refused to state her opinion as to which law was alluded to, the next spring the major participants in the debate all received words of censure from her. Waggoner and Jones were reported for their over confident attitude and for publicly agitating matters. SDAs must present a united front before the world, she told these young men. Butler and Smith were reminded that they were not infallible and that they should be careful not to take an overly sharp attitude toward younger workers. Instead, she declared that an open and frank discussion of the entire matter was now imperative.<sup>155</sup>

Eighteen months passed before the discussion that Ellen White requested took place. During this time, Waggoner and Jones refrained from promoting their views openly and vigorously. Both became active in the movement to oppose the Sunday laws. Some time before the 1888 GC was called to convene on October 17 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the decision was made to let Waggoner and Jones present their views before the church leaders assembled there. It was expected they would present their understanding of the relationship of Christ and His righteousness with distinctive Adventist Doctrines.<sup>156</sup>

### **2.2.10.3. The Conference Meeting**

Unfortunately many of the delegates to the Minneapolis conference held strong prejudices against the young Waggoner and Jones, who were looked upon as

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<sup>154</sup> George Butler, *The Law in the Book of Galatians*, (Battle Creek: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1886), p.6.

<sup>155</sup> E.G. White Letters, B.37-1887 and B-13-1887, E.G. White Estate, quoted by Schwarz, p.186.

<sup>156</sup> E.J. Waggoner, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians*. (Oakland, California: Pacific Press Association, 1888), p.1.



challenging both the church leadership and the basic tenets of the denomination. But the message was clear. As Dr. Waggoner's studies on Romans and Galatians progressed many delegates found his views to be far different from what they had expected. Waggoner refused to be drawn into debate over the law in Galatians 3. The real point, he affirmed, is that all any law can do is to demonstrate man's sinfulness and inability to justify himself before God (Gal 3).

Furthermore, he was enthusiastic over the divine remedy available to all who have faith to believe in Christ, in whom dwelt "all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col: 2:9). Christ is the one who stands anxious to cover the repentant sinner with his own robe of righteousness, thus making him (the sinner) acceptable before God. Waggoner emphasised that Christ also stood just as ready to impart<sup>157</sup> victory over future sins as to forgive those of the past.<sup>158</sup>

The traditional camp was surprised at the impact of Waggoner's studies. Many delegates later maintained that "their true Christian experience in the ,gospel" began at this time. Particularly disconcerting to Smith, Morrison, and their supporters, was Elder J. White's strong endorsement of the trust in Elder Waggoner's messages.

Shwarz points out that in the ten formal presentations she made during the course of the institute and conference, Mrs White challenged the delegates to a deeper study of God's word and genuine heart conversion to Christ. She confessed to seeing "the beauty of truth" in Dr. Waggoner's presentation of the righteousness of Christ in relation to the law; "In simple words he repeatedly directed the delegates to consider Christ, His sacrifice, and what He wanted to do for His people."<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Froom, pp.188-217.

<sup>158</sup> Norval Peade, *By Faith Alone* (Mountain View, Calif: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1962), pp.132; Froom (pp188-217) essentially the same form in his book *Christ and His Righteousness* (1890). This book is based largely on Hebrews, while the limited contemporary reports in the *Review* indicate that the main thrust of Waggoner's presentations do come through in *Christ and His Righteousness* and his later book, *the Gospel in Creation* (1893).

<sup>159</sup> Schwarz, p. 188.

It is told that at one point in the proceedings of Waggoner's presentations, Elder R. M. Kilgore, a member of the GC committee, moved that any further discussion of "righteousness by faith" be postponed until some later time when Elder Butler could be present, but Ellen White immediately stood up, protesting the Lord's work was not to wait on any man. Waggoner's presentations continued.<sup>160</sup>

In response to Waggoner's message, Elder Morrison began by maintaining that SDAs had always believed and taught justification by faith, which was technically true, although he (Morrison) failed to recognize that this vital doctrine had become obscured by the heavy SDA emphasis on obedience to the law.

In fact, Morrison expressed the fear that Waggoner's messages were directing attention away from the special message Adventists had been commissioned to give during earth's final hour: the need to return to explicit obedience to the Sabbath commandment! So, according to Morrison's presentation, it seemed to some that Waggoner and Jones were in the dark; however, they presented a unique rebuttal. Froom points out that they confined themselves to simply reading alternately and without comment, sixteen passages of scripture, and that this made "an everlasting impression... that can never efface".<sup>161</sup>

#### **2.2.10.4. .Apparent Rejection of Waggoner's Message**

In the saddest aspect of the conference, prejudice and jealousy degenerated into open criticism and jesting in the halls and boarding houses where the delegates stayed. Yet the opposition refused to admit defeat. "The servants whom the Lord sent", Ellen White reported, "were caricatured, ridiculed, and placed in a ridiculous light".<sup>162</sup> The criticism extended to E.G. White herself. It was intimated that she was becoming slightly senile and had been completely "taken in" by Jones and Waggoner. To respond, Mrs. White wrote that "my testimony was ignored and even in my life was I treated as at the conference". Even afterwards she would remember this quarrelsome, unchristian conduct; to her it was a

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<sup>160</sup> Ellen G. White's 1888 presentations are available in A.V. Olson, *Through Crisis to Victory* (Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1966), pp.242-302.

<sup>161</sup> Froom, pp.246.296.

<sup>162</sup> E.G. White, "Looking Back at Mineapolis", MS 24, 1888.

“terrible experience... one of the saddest chapters in the history of the believers in present truth”.<sup>163</sup>

Fortunately no formal vote to either accept or reject any of the controversial points was taken at the time of the 1888 conference because if such a vote had been planned it could have been perilous to make a decision based upon any controversial point without dispassionately considering all sides of the question. Excited feelings would lead to such movements.<sup>164</sup> W.C White observed that the delegates left Minneapolis “with a great variety of sentiments. Some felt that it had been the greatest blessing of their lives while others felt that it marked the beginning of a period of darkness, and that the evil effects of those events at the conference could never be affected.”<sup>165</sup>

This was accurate because years later, A.T. Jones himself remembered that those who had been present at the Minneapolis GC had divided into three camps: (1) those who wholeheartedly accepted the presentation on righteousness by faith, (2) those who rejected it, and (3) those who were undecided in the matter.<sup>166</sup> At that time, a political outcome helped to resolve this problem. Elder Butler had announced that his health would not allow him to continue in the presidency and E.G. White approved Butler’s decision to step down. When her advice was asked about who should succeed him, she suggested Elder O.A. Olsen, then working to broaden Adventism’s base in Scandinavia.<sup>167</sup>

#### **2.2.10.5. E.G.White’s Counsel Relating to Misunderstanding**

In the face of this misunderstanding, the prejudice and the pride of opinion that had kept many of the leading ministers from engaging in prayerful and open-minded study of the scriptures, E.G. White was sadly distressed. For herself, she recognized in Dr. Waggoner’s studies the same glorious truths that had been

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<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> E.G. White message 15, 1888.

<sup>165</sup> Schwartz, pp. 189, 190.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

repeatedly presented by God's Spirit to her and which she had tried for forty-four years to pass on to her church. This was not new light, she insisted, but "old light placed where it should be in the third angel's message".<sup>168</sup>

Of course, the conference had been "the hardest and most incomprehensible tug of war they have ever had among the Seventh-day Adventist people",<sup>169</sup> and E.G. White trembled to think what would have been if she had not been there. Schwarz narrates that Minneapolis shook E.G. White's confidence in many of her former close associates, but she had nevertheless found two new allies who could present with power just the messages from God which she believed the people needed, and she was determined that they would be heard.<sup>170</sup>

If the church leaders would not hear, she would go directly to the people, but first she would make one more attempt to reach those at the top. Thus she went to Battle Creek to meet them and others a month after the conference; their reports along with letters from those who had attended the Minneapolis conference, confirmed Elder Butler's prejudices and suspicions. Although she tried to impress him with her desire for unity, she felt that he had ignored her, whom he still repeatedly acknowledged as the Lord's special messenger. Furthermore, others in Battle Creek also treated E.G. White coolly, yet she urged them to invite A.T. Jones to speak in the tabernacle because she insisted that he had a message from God for the people. Thus Jones did get to preach, and many of them benefited<sup>171</sup>. As a matter of fact, she was rebuffed at headquarters.

After this, E.G. White travelled throughout the East: South Lancaster, Washington D.C., and Chicago. Her reception there was all she had hoped for. S.N. Harkel from South Lancaster had sided with Waggoner on the 1886 Theological Committee. To her it seemed that the message she brought

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<sup>168</sup> W.C. White letter, November 11, 1888.

<sup>169</sup> E.G. White, "Looking Back", Ms 24, 1888.

<sup>170</sup> Schwarz, p. 190.

<sup>171</sup> E.G. White, "Revival Work in the Battle Creek church," *Review*, February 12, 1889, pp. 106, 107. *Idem*, letter B-18-1888.

rekindled the spirit and power of the 1843-44 movement. In Washington she “saw the works of God. His spirit was poured out in rich measure”.<sup>172</sup>

Chicago proved another triumph. E.G. White was greatly encouraged by the first major break from the ranks of those church leaders who had closed their ears and hearts to the message at Minneapolis. Elder R. M. Kilgore, president of the Illinois Conference, experienced the joy of depending “entirely upon Christ’s righteousness, and not upon works of merit”<sup>173</sup> Confessing his wrong attitude at Minneapolis, he telegraphed all SDA congregations throughout the area to join the spiritual feast that they were enjoying as they listened to E. G. White and A.T Jones about the righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ.

But it was not always this way. At the Michigan Conference, E.G. White was disappointed. President Isaac Van Horn, a doubter at the Minneapolis GC, and other ministers of the Conference, supported Elders Butler and Smith. It was much the same at the Iowa Conference. Even though these were no thorough confessions of wrong attitudes by leaders who had been so active in the opposition at the Minneapolis GC, E.G. White felt the spirit of the Lord working.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1889, E.G. White, Jones and Waggoner travelled, sometimes together, sometimes separately, across the nation speaking at camp meetings and ministerial institutes. In general, they were gratified by the people’s response. At the Pennsylvania Camp meeting many “testified to the fact that they had never before attended meetings where they had received so much instruction and such precious light”.<sup>174</sup> Years later, A.T. Jones remembered that the activities of this summer had turned the tide with the people, and apparently with most of the leading men”.<sup>175</sup>

Most, perhaps, but not all. Utilizing his position as editor of the *Review*, Uriah Smith expressed the fear that Waggoner and Jones were directing SDAs towards antinomianism (the belief that under the gospel dispensation, faith alone is

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<sup>172</sup> . Schwarz, p. 191.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, p. 192.

<sup>174</sup> Idem, “Camp meeting at Williamsport, Pennsylvania”, *Review*, August 13, 1889, pp. 513, 514.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

sufficient; obedience to the moral law is unnecessary). “The law is spiritual, holy, just and good, the divine standard of righteousness”,<sup>176</sup> Smith proclaimed. Perfect obedience to it will develop perfect righteousness, and that is the only way anyone can attain righteousness. Of course, Smith continued that all SDAs knew that perfect obedience could be rendered only with the help of Christ.<sup>177</sup>

In fact Smith’s article drew a vigorous protest from E. G. White. So much so that he felt it necessary to back down a little, claiming that his position had been misunderstood. All he wanted was for equal prominence to be given to Christ and “the law of righteousness”; anything less provided only an “imperfect and incomplete view”.<sup>178</sup> Having said this, Smith discontinued the discussion of justification by faith in the columns of the *Review*.

A year after the Minneapolis GC, under Elder Olsen’s leadership, another GC session was convened, this time in Battle Creek. E. G. White noted a major difference. The spirit that was in the meeting at Minneapolis is not here. The summer’s work that E.G. White, Jones and Waggoner did together had been effective. E.G. White found Elder Olsen standing “well, firm and free and boldly on the right side”.<sup>179</sup> Instead of the ridicule and jesting which had characterized the 1888 conclave, “there were many testimonies, that the past years has been the best of their life; the light shining forth from the word of God has been clear and distinct—justification by faith, Christ our righteousness”.<sup>180</sup>

The story of the church reveals that it was not easy for some members of many churches to understand this doctrine. Consequently, as the next few months passed, Adventist audiences continued to hear much about the need to trust solely in Christ. This is about during the two minutes that followed the 1889, ministerial institutes were held in Battle Creek especially for Adventist minutes. E.G. White and both Elders Jones and Waggoner served as instructors at the first institute. At the 1891 GC, Dr. Waggoner presented a series of sixteen

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<sup>176</sup> Schwarz, p.19.

<sup>177</sup> Uriah Smith, “Our Righteousness”, *Review*, June 11, 1889.

<sup>178</sup> Schwarz, p. 192.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> E.G. White, Letter W-30-1890; Idem Ms. 10, 1889.

lectures on Paul's Epistle to the Romans, an outstanding biblical source of enlightenment on justification by faith.

All of this, along with a continued emphasis on the *Signs* helped quicken the religious experience of many SDAs. E. G. White rejoiced as she saw how wonderfully the spirit of God wrought change. Yet she also continued to mourn the failure of key men to see fully the significance of the message of the Minneapolis General Conference. She was distressed at the continued personal rancour towards Jones and Waggoner, men towards whom she was positive and believed had been sent of God at this time to herald a vital truth.<sup>181</sup> E.G. White was particularly concerned over the continued covert opposition of Uriah Smith. His position as editor of the *Review* and his long role as a denominational spokesman gave him wide influence. She saw him as a roadblock preventing other key leaders such as D.T. Jones, R.C. Porter, J.H Morrison, and Le Roy Nicola from coming into the light.

#### **2.2.10.6. *Understanding, Confession and Contrition***

During the closing days of 1890, E.G. White was burdened for Elder Smith. She wrote several earnest appeals to him. Her moving call for a Week of Prayer for church members to truly repent and really come to Christ, fortunately, affected Uriah Smith deeply. Only a few days later he requested a personal interview with her, during which she noted a much different attitude on Smith's part. This was followed by his meetings with a small group of church leaders two days later regarding the messages presented in 1888. He repeated and expanded these confessions on several occasions before large audiences in the Battle Creek Tabernacle.<sup>182</sup>

E.G. White rejoiced that Elder Smith had "fallen on the Rock and was broken". Once more his influence would point in the right direction, and others would follow his example, even if this could not be done at once. She saw the work of revival begun with "the revelation of the righteousness of Christ" in 1888 as "the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth"

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Shwarz, p. 193.

(Revelation 18:1-3), and as the “Loud Cry” that was immediately to precede the Second Coming of Christ. But the “blindness” of many had hindered the advancement of the very message God meant should go forth from the Minneapolis meeting and as a result, Adventists were years behind where God intended them to be.<sup>183</sup>

This message must have caused a great deal of soul searching among those who still harboured doubts as to whether Waggoner and Jones’s messages were really of God. In the early months of 1893, several prominent actors in the Minneapolis debate changed sides: I.D. Van Horn, Le Roy Nicola, and J.H. Morrison. Of Morrison. Elder Jones later wrote that he had “cleared himself of all connection with that opposition, and put himself body, soul, and spirit into the truth and blessing of righteousness by faith, by one of the finest and noblest confessions that I ever heard”.<sup>184</sup>

Finally, in that June, George I. Butler, who had felt repudiated at the Minneapolis GC, joined the group who now recognized that “additional light of great importance” had begun to shine at the historic convocation. It was not easy for Butler to admit mistakes, but he did so with courage. The years since 1888 had once been difficult for him; full of affliction, weakness, sorrow, perplexity, temptation and trial, but not, he stirringly affirmed, “of apostasy”. The next year, he joined A.T. Jones in bringing the major addresses to the Florida Camp Meeting. Following the death of his invalid wife, Butler returned to active leadership, first as president of the Florida GC and later, the Southern Union Conference.<sup>185</sup>

However, not all of those who had mocked at the Minneapolis GC followed the example of Smith, Butler, and Morrison. One group in particular, comprising the business management leaders of the Review and Herald Publishing Association, were particularly obdurate, refusing to alter their decision. They included Clement Eldridge, A.R. Henry, Harmon Lindsay, and Frank E. Belden. Their negative

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<sup>183</sup> Olson, pp. 92-99.

<sup>184</sup> Shwarz, p. 194.

<sup>185</sup> Oslon, pp. 82-91, 107-111; Jones to Holmes, May 19, 1921.



influence spread throughout Battle Creek and proved to be a snare to Elder O.A. Olsen in the later years of his GC presidency, and eventually turned openly against the church. Their doctrinal deviation began in 1888.<sup>186</sup>

### **2.2.10.7. The 1890s Spiritual Awakening**

Throughout the 1890s, the image of the two young men, who were widely regarded as persons with unorthodox views who were out to break the unity of the Church, changed radically during 1888-89. They became virtual heroes. A.T. Jones led the fight for religious liberty, became a respected Bible teacher at Battle Creek College, was member of the General Committee, and from 1897 to 1901 was editor of the *Review*.

Uriah Smith, his former antagonist, was demoted to associate editor. During the entire decade his voice was frequently and effectively heard proclaiming the need to trust in the sanctifying righteousness of Christ.<sup>187</sup>

Dr. Waggoner continued in editorial work at the Pacific Press until 1891. The following year he relocated to England to edit the *Present Truth*, an SDA evangelistic publication, where he remained for a decade before returning to America to play a major role in the GCs of 1897, 1899, and 1901. His pen remained active in the cause he had begun in 1886.<sup>188</sup>

And what of the spiritual awakening that had followed the Minneapolis GC and seemed to herald the onset of the “latter rain” and the earth’s final hours during the next several years? Unfortunately it faltered, wavered for about a quarter of a century. There were many reasons such as pockets of resistance to the 1888 message, especially relative to the law in Galatians, which persisted in the Great Plains states, Texas and sections of the Far West in particular. As late as 1902, E.G. White reported that there were some “not yet healed of their defection” in this matter, but who were ready to “plunge into this subject once more”.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid, pp, 166-128; Froom, pp. 677, 678.

<sup>187</sup> *SDA Encyclopedia*, pp. 707, 1563, quoted in Schwarz, 195.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> E.G. White letter, B-179-1902; Daniel's letter to W.C. White, August 4, 1901, quoted in Schwarz, p. 195.

Yet the faltering of the messengers unquestionably helped to sidetrack the revival of the early 1890s. E.G. White had foreseen this possibility as evident in her writings in 1892: “it is quite possible that Elder Jones or Waggoner may be overthrown by the temptations of the enemy; but if they should be, this would not prove that they had no message from God, or that the work that they had done was all a mistake. E.G. White recognized that some who had opposed the 1888 message all along would use any such defection by the messengers as proof that the message was faulty. She termed such a position a “fatal delusion”.<sup>190</sup>

There were other reasons, as Schwarz stresses, why too much of the “Spirit of Minneapolis” continued in the church – the spirit of criticism, faultfinding, and controversy. Other men and issues were involved, but the spirit was there – and it was not the spirit of Christ. The righteousness by faith doctrine had been misunderstood and rejected: doctrinal heresy in the form of pantheism, insidiously promoted by some leading figures in the church, had threatened this doctrine early in the twentieth century. Furthermore, many of the leaders became preoccupied with the building of institutions and more time was spent in planning schools, sanitariums and publishing houses than in making Christ central in all SDA doctrines.<sup>191</sup>

There were also problems concerning reorganization, the transfer of church headquarters, and a sudden explosion into dozens of mission fields. All these, and more, tended to focus some SDA administrators on problems of organization rather than on Jesus, the solution to all problems.<sup>192</sup>

### **2.3. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the chapter has stressed the historical development of the general doctrines of the SDA Church which, according to the Protestant and the Millerite hermeneutical tradition, were based on the presupposition of the “sola scriptura” principle, and should be understood in Jesus Christ because He is the centre of

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<sup>190</sup> E. G. White, letter 24, 1892, E.G. White Estate.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Schwarz, p. 196.

all biblical doctrine. Not all of the 28 doctrines have been studied here, historically speaking; only some of the basic doctrines which have been regarded as pillars of the SDA Church's faith since 1848 have been discussed, recognizing that continued study could lead to a more complete understanding of other biblical "truths".

During the study it appeared that the misunderstanding and the rejection of the doctrine of "righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ" by certain leading figures created many problems in the SDA church at the 1888 Conference, although many of the leaders subsequently understood, were contrite and confessed their having rejected the truth.

Unfortunately, misunderstanding the truth has usually been the cause of dissident groups in the local churches today. The same spirit of criticism and faultfinding that prevailed in the 1890s has afflicted churches since then. This has given rise to extremism and fanaticism which quickly spreads in the body of Christ (the Church) and in some areas, destroys the body's vision, mission and unity. This will be discussed below. In particular, such a problem is a consequence of misunderstanding biblical doctrines and justification by faith in Jesus Christ, our righteousness.

## CHAPTER THREE

# LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATION OF THE SDA CHURCH

### 2.0. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the leadership and organisation of the SDA Church since its inception (1863) until its modern reorganization (1903). In order to allow readers to be acquainted with the history of this leadership and organization, criticized by dissident groups as being monarchical and authoritative and contrary to the early apostolic church, this chapter aims to shed some light on the subject of how development and growth were advanced, and on that which is common among the modern and early churches.

During its first quarter of the century, the SDA church membership grew. By the time the GC was organised in 1863, an estimated 3500 church members were populating the churches; twenty five years thereafter, by mid-1888, there were 26 112 church members who were spread across thirty-two local conferences, as well as five mission fields, and organized into 901 churches. In 1888 one out of every six SDAs lived in Michigan and California, the second largest constituency with less than half the membership of the SDAs in Michigan. After Michigan and California, the four strongest conferences, numerically, were Kansas, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa.<sup>193</sup>

Outside the United States, SDAs numbered less than a thousand in any one country or area: less than 400 in Australia and New Zealand; about 150 in Great Britain, perhaps the same in Canada, some 700 in all of Germany, Switzerland, France and Italy and a few more than that in Scandinavia.<sup>194</sup> In succeeding years, the SDA membership grew rapidly. We should enquire as to what factors contributed to the successful growth of SDAs.

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<sup>193</sup> Schwarz, 151.

<sup>194</sup> *SDA Yearbook*, 1889: 67.

### **3.1. Organizational Development – 1864-87**

Several factors contributed to this growth. Firstly, SDA ministers were regarded primarily as evangelists rather than pastors. Secondly, church leaders also set out to mobilise lay members to become lay evangelists. Thirdly, during the 1870s the tract and missionary societies developed from a weekly prayer meeting in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, home of Mary and Stephen Haskell;<sup>195</sup> this soon broadened to include non-Adventist neighbours and those for whom the Advent hope had dimmed. Activity followed concern. The small group, which soon doubled in number, began writing letters, making religion-oriented visits to neighbours, and lending or giving away dozens of Adventist tracts, books, and pamphlets. Often they discovered a home in need of temporary assistance, which they tried to supply.

Haskell never forgot that it had been a tract which first focused his attention on the Sabbath. He was also deeply moved by recent appeals from the Whites to increase the distribution of Adventist literature. On June 8, 1869, Elder Haskell helped these women establish a formal organisation, the vigilant Missionary Society.<sup>196</sup>

### **3.2. The Vigilant Missionary Society**

Being organised as a missionary society, busy housewives assisted Elder Haskell. This missionary society met each Wednesday afternoon to pray and plan. Systematically, they divided up the village territory and began regular visits to seek out the poor and ill in need of aid, as well as the spiritually weak and hungry to whom they could bring the good news of the three angels' messages. With Haskell's skillful encouragement they began distributing tracts to hundreds of persons. These recipients were encouraged to begin corresponding about spiritual matters. Soon, the vigilant Missionary Society ladies gained a valuable

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid, quoted by Schwarz, p.152.

<sup>196</sup> E.M. Robinson, *S.N. Haskek, Man of Action*, 1967, pp.25-28.

recruit, and recognising her abilities, the ladies elected Maria Huntley as their president, who soon had them looking far beyond the confines of South Lancaster. Correspondence with foreign lands began with Maria herself learning French in order to handle enquiries in the language. Another sister learned German for the same purpose.<sup>197</sup>

After being elected president of the New England Conference in 1870, one of Elder Haskell's first actions was to organize the New England Tract Missionary Society. Its aim was to establish groups like the Vigilant Missionary Society in every Church. Haskell divided the Conference into districts, a move which helped to establish an organizational pattern within the SDA Church. He appointed a director for each district to organize a Tract and Missionary Society in every church in the district. Moreover, local societies selected a librarian who directed and kept a record of activities and ordered literature from state headquarters. Soon, these societies began systematic efforts to place SDA books in local public libraries.<sup>198</sup>

James White was alert to the potential of his fledgling New England organisation. After a quick on-the-spot inspection he advocated similar societies throughout the denomination. With the blessing of the General Conference, Haskell was soon travelling from Conference to Conference organising tract missionary societies. Throughout 1874, Elder White promoted the interests of these societies. In addition to carrying reports of their activities included articles giving instruction in effective methods of personal evangelism.<sup>199</sup>

The General Conference session that voted to send J.N.Andrews to Europe also organized a General Conference Tract and Missionary Society to coordinate the work of local and state societies. James White became both its president and president of the General Conference. As the business agent, Haskell served as chief promoter of tract and missionary society activities, while Secretary Maria Huntley handled routine business from 1874 until her death in 1890.

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<sup>197</sup> Robinson, pp.25, 26.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid, pp. 30-32.

<sup>199</sup> Robinson, pp.30-32; *SDA Encyclopedia*, p.1502.

In 1876 Elder Haskell succeeded James White as president of the General Conference Tract and Missionary Society. Until he left to pioneer Adventist work in Australia, Haskell's principal efforts were devoted to expanding tract and missionary society activities. He was also an active member of the General Conference Committee, working closely with both James White and Butler.<sup>200</sup>

Haskell continued to enlist as many church members as possible by means of personal evangelism. The statistics gathered in the 1884 report indicated that fewer than half of the church members belonged to tract and missionary societies; however, these members were active. They reported making over 83,000 missionary visits that year, writing more than 35,000 missionary letters, and obtaining more than 19,000 subscriptions to the *Review*, *Signs of the Times*, and *Good Health*. Most impressive were the totals of SDA literature that had been distributed: almost 1,750,000 individual periodicals and tracts.<sup>201</sup>

### 3.2.1 Publishing Work and Literature Evangelists

The programme of literature distribution sponsored by the tract and missionary societies greatly increased the demand for Adventist tracts and books. By 1880 the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association had twenty hardbound books for sale, with more than thirty other titles available in paperback<sup>202</sup>. The major Adventist author at this time was Uriah Smith. In addition to his commentaries on Daniel and Revelation, Smith wrote books on the Sanctuary and the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14, the United States in prophecy, the nature and destiny of man [sic], and a general treatise on the principal biblical doctrines as understood by SDAs.<sup>203</sup>

EG White's four *Spirit of Prophecy* volumes were an early version of her later *Conflict of the Ages* series. Other major authors were JN Andrews, James White, DM Canright, and JH Waggoner. Gradually the missionary societies assumed responsibility for collecting the subscription fees for the church journals. Local

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., pp 36-47.

<sup>201</sup> *S.D.A Yearbook* (1884), p. 42 ff.

<sup>202</sup> Schwarz, p. 154.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

tract and missionary societies subscribed to *The Signs of the Times* in bulk for free distribution. This led to the appearance of a new group of Adventist workers: the colporteurs.<sup>204</sup>

With regards to literature evangelists at about this time, EG White placed her influence behind the call for putting colporteur evangelists to work in all parts of the field. “If there is one work more important than another, it is that of getting our publications before the public, thus leading them to search the scriptures”<sup>205</sup>, she wrote. The work of the colporteur was not to be belittled nor were people to be encouraged to leave it for the regular ministry.<sup>206</sup>

It took the introduction of subscription book sales, however, to launch the full time operation of the colporteurs on a regular basis. Soon, door to door sales agents took orders for later delivery for everything from country histories to the latest book by even popular authors such as Mark Twain. Selling books on subscription was a lucrative business in late nineteenth century America.

A new way had been progressively found to present Adventist beliefs to an ever widening audience at little expense to the church. Colporteurs served in the field in increasing numbers. By 1886 the tract and missionary societies reported over 400 canvassers in the field.<sup>207</sup>

### **3.2.2 City Evangelism and Camp Meetings**

Progressively, as membership grew, some conferences expanded the late-summer quarterly meeting into a conference-wide convocation which might extend to four or five days. In September 1867, one such convocation in the Illinois–Wisconsin Conference attracted 300 church members, most of them housed in twelve tents. This Johnston Center meeting featured a number of sermons by James and EG White. This was still considered a small camp meeting.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> DR McAdams, unpublished manuscript, “History of the SDA Publishing work”. n.d.

<sup>205</sup> EG White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols., 1885, IV: 389, 390.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> McAdams manuscripts; *SDA Yearbook* (1887), p.50 ff.

<sup>208</sup> *Review*, June 18, 1867; Schwarz, p. 158.



Camp meetings were a product of the American frontier, dating back to the early nineteenth century. They had been especially popular with the Methodists and had been used with good effect during the Millerite movement. Once the SDA numbers had increased sufficiently to warrant such meetings, it was natural for leaders to initiate camp meetings as a means for bringing their scattered flock together for religious instruction and encouragement. Yet it was with some fear of the emotionalism and disorder which had frequently marred the spiritual tone of the frontier Camp Meetings that the 1868 General Conference Session voted to recommend such gatherings. During September 1-7, 1868, the first officially designated camp meeting was held by SDAs on the farm of EH Root near Wright, Michigan.<sup>209</sup>

City evangelism seemed to be waiting for an effective method of contacting people in a way that would identify those with a religious interest. It was Stephen Haskell who saw the possibility of carrying out this work by means of house to house visitation by canvassers, persons distributing tracts and visitors who would offer to “hold a Bible reading”<sup>210</sup> and examine pertinent texts on any religious topic. The logical organisations through which to effectively launch city evangelistic missions were the tract and missionary societies and their sponsorship of tract distribution and conversing. This was made possible by Haskell’s enthusiasm. Beginning in 1883, these societies worked closely with the SDA state Conferences in this project.

By 1886, permanent missions operated in twenty-five major American cities, including such major ones as New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington, DC. In 1886 some 102 experienced workers were employed in the city missions and an additional 224 assisted them in order to learn methods of house to house evangelism. These workers held more than 3100 public meetings and conducted more than 20,000 Bible readings that year. Their efforts led to 568 persons accepting SDA doctrines and joining the church. Another aspect of the city missions was the work of the eleven ship missionaries who operated in

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<sup>209</sup> Schwarz, p. 158.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid, p. 157.

eight port cities. These persons visited more than 5700 ships in 1886 and left with the literature distributed to the crews totalling 259,777 pages.<sup>211</sup>

Therefore, during the 1880s, the evangelistic mission helped Adventism take root in the highly populated large centres. The heavy costs involved, however, and the difficulty experienced in finding qualified managers for such work, eventually convinced the conferences to discontinue city missions; however, they played a vital role at a crucial period of denominational growth.<sup>212</sup> Here again, it appears that this growth was gradually and progressively achieved under God's direction deliberately according to his will.<sup>213</sup>

### **3.2.3 Sabbath School and Work for the Youth**

Camp and quarterly meetings were valuable in keeping SDAs established in the faith; however, a more constant method of education was really needed for the church, especially the youth. This was provided by the Sabbath School. The use of Sunday Schools to bring religious instruction to children dates back to Martin Luther and John Knox.<sup>214</sup> In America, the Seventh-day Baptists at Ephrata Pennsylvania, had begun Sabbath Schools as early as 1739.

Among the SDAs it was James White who accorded the Sabbath School the first impetus, as in so many other endeavours. His concern for the children of believers led him to launch *The Youth's Instructor* in 1852. A series of Sabbath School lessons was one of his journal's chief ingredients. Subsequently, in Rochester in 1853, he started a Sabbath School. John Byington soon followed in Buck's Bridge, as did Merritt Kellogg in Battle Creek,<sup>215</sup> and other SDA companies followed. There was considerable variety among those that did so, and each class decided what it would study.

During these first decades there was no central organization to give guidance to Sabbath School teachers and offices. There were no lesson aids for teachers or

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<sup>211</sup> *SDA Yearbook*, 1887: 50 ff .

<sup>212</sup> Nicole, 1982 : 55.

<sup>213</sup> *SDA Yearbook*, 1887: 50 ff.

<sup>214</sup> Nicole , 1982 : 55.

<sup>215</sup> Plummer, 1910: 3-7.

materials for students. A partial attempt was made in 1863 to provide material more suitable to the varying age groups when Adelia Patten began lessons especially designed for children in *The Youth's Instructor*. At the same time, Uriah Smith published a series for adults in *the Review*, but neither of these lasted. A more successful effort was recorded in 1869, when GH Bell, as editor of *The Youth's Instructor*, prepared and published separate lessons for children and youth. Collected into eight different annual series, they were later published as small books; Bell's lessons were used for a quarter century.<sup>216</sup> In this manner, lessons were not only improved, but Bell also shared with his readers the organisational plans that had contributed, under his leadership, to the success of the Sabbath School at Battle Creek.

Unfortunately, many SDA churches were not supported by persons with Bell's dedication and abilities; too frequently those in charge were more than willing to cancel the Sabbath School especially on days of visitors. How could all the churches be led to strengthen their Sabbath School programmes? Finally, a committee was formed and plans for a state Sabbath School Association were drafted and circulated among interested church leaders. In August of 1877 in California, a State Association of Sabbath Schools was organised<sup>217</sup>. Similar action was taken in Michigan a few weeks later.

Lastly, in the next March of 1878, delegates to the General Conference Session established a General Sabbath School Association under the presidency of DM Canright in order to bind together the various state Sabbath School organisations<sup>218</sup> Once more organisational development had occurred gradually and progressively.

With improved Sabbath Schools and the founding of the Battle Creek College in 1874 most adult SDAs seemed to feel that they had adequately provided for the spiritual needs of their children and youth. Not all youthful Adventists shared this view. In the summer of 1879, fourteen-year-old Luther Warren and seventeen-

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<sup>216</sup> Plummer, 1910: 7-10; SDA *Encyclopedia*, pp. 1256. 1261.

<sup>217</sup> Schwarz, p. 161.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

year-old Harry Fenner of rural Hazelton, Michigan, began to discuss how they might help their less spiritual friends. Soon they devised the idea of a boy's missionary society. Initially, the youth society there remained a local affair. It would be another quarter of a century before the General Conference would see the advantages of systematically promoting organisations such as the one that Warren and Fenner had begun for the young people of their hometown.<sup>219</sup>

This progressive improvement of the organisation and development of the SDA Church was also carried on within other works and institutions of the Church, such as that for temperance, the growth of institutions, leadership and so on. The expansion of the SDA Church in size and extent meant that it was very different in 1901 from that of the Church in 1863. The reorganisation movement (1888-1903) set a centralised leadership followed by the decentralisation of decision making and the integration of a growing variety of church activities.

### **3.3 Growth And Reorganisation Movement: 1888-1903**

As mentioned above, in 1901 the SDA church was very different from what it had been in 1863. Instead of a group of six local conferences scattered across the upper American Midwest, it now encompassed fifty-seven local conferences and forty-one organised missions located in every major part of the world except China. By 1901 the evangelistic working force had grown from thirty to nearly 1600; in place of the 3500 members of 1863 there were 78,188, representing more than 2000 local congregations.<sup>220</sup>

In spite of his refusal to serve as the first General Conference president, without question, James White played the dominant role in the organizational structure of the SDA Church during the first two decades of its existence. He did serve as president of the Church from 1865 to 1867 and again from 1869 to 1871 and 1874 to 1880.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Krum, 50, pp. 1, 10.

<sup>220</sup> *SDA Encyclopedia*, **date**, pp. 1326, 1327.

<sup>221</sup> *SDA Yearbook*, 2003: 16.

### 3.3.1 The Leadership Organisation Centralised

At that time (1873), George Butler, the church's chief executive, composed an essay on "Leadership" in which he pointed out that "there never was any great movement in this world without a leader and in the nature of things these cannot be".<sup>222</sup> He believed God specially qualified men and women to lead in a cause and appointed them to be leaders. Moses, Joshua, David, and the apostles were cited as examples. As far as SDAs were concerned, Butler maintained, "the leadership of Elder White and wife is incontestable". Since this was clearly in "the providence of God", Butler concluded that in matters of church policy it was the duty of all Adventists to give Elder White's "judgment the preference and cheerful endeavor to carry it out as fully as though it was our own. To do otherwise could be attempting to usurp the position God has assigned him",<sup>223</sup> he stressed.

Unfortunately this sweeping declaration made both James and EG White nervous, although Butler's essay, officially endorsed by the General Conference in session, was meant to uphold the Whites and rebuke those who were critical of them. In an article in the *Signs of the Times*, James observed that Christ had never appointed one particular disciple to direct the affairs of His church. Some months later EG White wrote that "Satan would be pleased to have one man's judgment control the minds and judgment of those who believe the present truth";<sup>224</sup> thus she was declaring that both she and James had made mistakes in consenting to take responsibilities that the other should carry; furthermore, she was acknowledging that her husband James had already led enough during the early days.

Indeed, church organisation and leadership should reflect the wisdom of heaven, not the policies and programmes of humans. Church leaders are not "overlords", they are "under shepherds". Their authority is centred in the Word of God, which they are to uphold in their own teaching and life practice.<sup>225</sup> However, in spite of

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<sup>222</sup> Schwarz, p. 267.

<sup>223</sup> Butler, 1873, :1, 2, 11, 13.

<sup>224</sup> J White, "Leadership," *Signs of the Times*, June 4, 1875, pp. 70, 71; E.G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols., 1885, III: 501.

<sup>225</sup> Brian Jones, ed, *God's Family the Church: Adult Sabbath School Lessons, Teacher's edition*, (Oct-Nov-Dec., 1996). p. 88.

these declarations stated above, James White in 1874 once more accepted the presidency of the General Conference, and as proposed by George Butler, two years later the General Conference officially voted to abrogate all portions of the tracts that appeared to imply that leadership in the Church was confined to any one person. Instead, the Conference resolved that “the highest authority among Seventh-day Adventists is found in the will of the body of that people as expressed in the decisions of the General Conference when acting within its proper jurisdiction... such decisions should be submitted to by all without exception, unless they can be shown to conflict with the word of God and the rights of individual conscience.”<sup>226</sup>

Consequently, the representative character of Church organisation and leadership was confirmed as it is stressed in *the Testimonies*:

Every member of the church has a voice in choosing officers of the church. The church chooses the officers of state conferences. Delegates chosen by the state Conferences choose the offices of the Union conferences. By this argument, every conference, every institution, every church, and every individual either directly or through representatives, has a voice in the election of the men who bear the chief responsibilities of the General Conferences<sup>227</sup>.

In fact, the administrative authority of General Conference was not organised as being separate from the churches and conferences and union organisations, but it was the sum of all these, the uniting of all the parts for unity and cooperation in doing the work which Christ instituted His church to accomplish. As such, the centralised administrative authority of the General Conference was therefore the authority of the entire church uniting in this form of organisation in order to carry out the gospel work and maintain the unity of faith in the entire world.<sup>228</sup>

Nevertheless, since delegates from the local conferences who constituted the General Conference, were together for only several weeks each year, it was only natural for Adventists to look to the executive committee and the General

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<sup>226</sup> GI Butler, “A confession”, *Review and Herald*, February 25, 1875, pp. 70, 71.

<sup>227</sup> E.G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol 8, pp. 236, 237; *Working Policy of the G.C. of Seventh-day Adventists* 1993-1994 edition, 1994, pp. 37, 38.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid*, p. 38.

Conference president for leadership.<sup>229</sup> This was particularly true when forceful men such as James White and George Butler were at the helm. Butler succeeded White again in 1880.

The geographic spread and growing variety of denominational enterprises, however, made it increasingly difficult for the General Conference president and his executive committee to provide counsel and guidance in all areas. By 1885 the International Tract and Missionary Society, the Sabbath School Association, the SDA Publishing Association, the Pacific SDA Publishing Association, the SDA Educational Society, the Health Reform Institute, and the American Health and Temperance Society were all operating as quasi independent organisations allied with the GC but not subject to it.<sup>230</sup>

Moreover, several members of the GC Executive Committee were overloaded: for instance, in addition to serving as GC President, G.I. Butler was president of the SDA Publishing Association (the legal name of the *Review and Herald*), and the SDA Education Society (which managed Battle Creek College). S.N. Haskell headed the Tract and Missionary Society and the Pacific SDA Publishing Association; W.C. White presided over the Sabbath School Association, even though they were also members of the five-man General Conference Executive Committee; while J.H. Kellogg headed both the Health Reform Institute and the American Health and Temperance Society.<sup>231</sup> The most difficult issue was that in 1885 the G.C. Executive committee members were not living in the same area.<sup>232</sup> Since all these men travelled extensively, this made frequent consultation virtually impossible.

In reality, the SDA Church leadership and organisation needed more progressive reorganisation. This need for this had to be met in the future.

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<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> *The SDA Yearbook* (1886), passion; Schwarz, p. 219.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>232</sup> In 1885 OA Olsen was the only member of the GC Committee besides Butler who resided at headquarters in Battle Creek. Haskell lived in South Lancaster, Massachusetts; WC White was located in Europe while RA Underwood, the fifth member, lived in Ohio (Schwarz, :269).

### **3.3.2 The Reorganisational Attempts**

The organisational matter that drew the most discussion in 1889 was a plan for integrating the various associations and societies, such as recognising a five year organised European council, consolidation of publishing interests, organising Union Conferences, by means of reorganisation, and the establishment of General Conference departments.

#### **3.3.2.1 The European Council**

It was first important to recognise an European Council because of slow communication by mail across the Atlantic which early demonstrated the inefficiency of referring to all matters to Battle Creek for advice and counsel. It is appropriate to recall that, in order to alleviate this need, Haskell was sent to tour the European field in 1882. During his visit, a plan was developed to bring the leading workers in Europe together for a period of counsel. Loughborough, from England, and Matheson, from Scandinavia, joined Haskell and Andrews and his co labourers in Basel, Switzerland. This first European missionary council, very profitable for the participants, established a rudimentary organisation, and was a meeting which they planned to repeat annually.<sup>233</sup>

Unfortunately, the illness and death of Elder Andrews, chairman of the European Council, prevented it from meeting in 1883; nevertheless, a second meeting was held in mid-1884 at the time of President GI Butler's visit. This time delegates from Romania and Italy attended the meeting. In its constitution, the European council provided for executive committees of three to supervise each of the three main geographic areas of Europe in which Adventists were labouring: Scandinavia, the British Isles, and central Europe.<sup>234</sup> The chairmen of these committees would, in turn, form the Executive Committee for the entire European field. Thus the work was joined together and experience gained in one area of labour could be shared with workers in another.

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<sup>233</sup> Schwarz, : 270.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., p. 271.



### 3.3.2.2 Consolidation of Publishing Interests

A strong push towards centralised control of all denominational publishing activities was revealed in a report of a newly established committee for the consolidation of publishing interests in the 1889 session. The committee, including representatives of both the *Review and Herald*, and the *Pacific Press*, called for the formation of one cooperation to own and control all the publishing interests, and thus bring the work under one general management.<sup>235</sup>

This they believed would alleviate “all sectional feeling and personal interests”.<sup>236</sup> The leaders of the *Review and Herald*, such as Clement Eldridge, were particularly active in promoting this consolidation; and during the next several years, the General Conference Association even engaged in some independent publishing: the promoters of consolidation saw this as a prelude to the culmination of their plans.

Fortunately, there was persistent and effective opposition from one influential source: EG White. From the start she saw no light in this type of consolidation. Instead, she maintained, the various publishing houses “must stand separate, each preserving its own individuality”.<sup>237</sup> EG White’s position that “God’s cause is not to be molded by one man or half a dozen men”<sup>238</sup> effectively blocked a plan which she believed was “wrong, decidedly wrong”.

Each of the geographic districts established by the 1889 General Conference continued under the supervision of a member of the General Conference Committee. This district superintendent served as liaison between the local conferences in his district and the General Conference. He attended the conference sessions and Camp meetings in his district, provided counsel for local leaders, helped plan for speakers at ministerial institutes and camp

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> E.G. White, *Consolidation of the Publishing Work* (n.d.).

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> *SDA Yearbook*, 1890: 54, 55.

meetings and alerted the General Conference Committee to any development within the district, which seemed likely to affect the entire church organisation.<sup>239</sup>

### **3.3.2.3 Organizing Union Conferences**

Four years after the geographic district plan had been approved by the 1889 General Conference, President Olsen suggested that “conferences intermediate between the General Conference and the state conferences”<sup>240</sup> be established in each district. Thereafter, it was another eight years before the American districts were organised into “union conferences”. It was a different matter abroad. In 1894, forty delegates at the first Australian camp meeting established the Australian Union Conference, which became a pattern for the union conferences developed in America seven years later.<sup>241</sup>

Meanwhile, Asa T. Robinson, a member of the 1889 planning committee, was sent in to organise South African Adventists into a conference in 1891. Robinson believed that the number of South African members was too small to warrant the establishment of a Sabbath School Association, Tract and Missionary Society, etcetera, each with its own set of offices, but nevertheless, organized the South African Conference as he had proposed,<sup>242</sup> while similar processes continued in Australia and North America.

However, these processes continued amid unfortunate complaints and critical attitudes of certain leaders concerning the inadequacies of the existing denominational structure.<sup>243</sup> In fact, certain delegates of the 1889 General Conference seemed more willing to criticize than to suggest concrete remedies.

Several days later, EJ Waggoner advanced his diagnosis of the church’s organisational problems: failure to give more than lip-service to the doctrine of righteousness by faith. Adventists were trying to devise a suitable organisation in their own strength, Waggoner suggested, whereas if they had allowed the spirit

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> *SDA Encyclopedia*, : 105.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Schwarz, : 273.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., : 274.

of God to work in each individual's life, any kind of organisation would work.<sup>244</sup> WW Prescott, who complained of the mismanagement of funds intended for the mission fields, agreed, but he went on to criticise excessive centralisation in the church, which he believed had created a virtual ecclesiastical despotism.<sup>245</sup>

Throughout that time, a conviction grew in the minds of many Adventist leaders that the organisational structure and administration of the church would be the major issue confronting delegates at the 1901 General Conference. To many it seemed vital that EG White attend this gathering and there was general rejoicing when she returned from Australia to the United States in the fall of 1900. She was also accompanied by Arthur G. Daniels who had directed the Adventist work in New Zealand and in Australia after 1892. He was a good speaker, a careful manager; he had order and neatness in his work,<sup>246</sup> as Olsen wrote about him.

The day before the 1901 Conference formally opened, EG White called a large number of Adventist leaders to meet with her informally in the Battle Creek College Library. The group included the General Conference Executive Committee, the members of the Foreign Mission Board, local conference presidents, and leaders from the educational, publishing and medical institutions.

For an hour and half, this 73 year old "Mother" of the church earnestly discoursed on the need for immediate and far-reaching changes in the structure and management of the cause she loved. "God calls for a decided change."<sup>247</sup> This must begin at once; "Do not wait until the conference is over, and then gather up the forces to see what can be done".<sup>248</sup> Representatives from all lines of the work must be involved in planning the work of the church; "every institution should have a voice".<sup>249</sup> She indicated that there were to be "*no kings*" in the SDA organisation; a new approach to the problems facing the conference session

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., *Daily Bulletin*, Feb, 23 1899, pp. 60-64, 73-77; Feb 26, 1899. Pp. 85-94 (Emphasis mine).

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Olsen to Prescott, August 30, 1896; WW Prescott to WC White, October 26, 1899.

<sup>247</sup> Daniels to W.C. White, August 23, 1900.

<sup>248</sup> *E.G. White manuscripts* 43, 1901, E.G. White Estate.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

must be taken. Then she made a particular point of calling for a blending of the “gospel work” and the “Medical missionary work.”<sup>250</sup>

#### **3.3.2.4 Thorough Reorganisation**

At the opening session of the Conference, the next day, EG White once more stressed the need to begin a thorough reorganisation. This work should have been carried out ten years earlier, she indicated. “The Creator’ strength must be brought into the managing force of the conference”.<sup>251</sup> Just how this was to be accomplished, she could not say, but it was definitely not to be conducted by “men who have had light poured upon them year after year, and have not heeded the light that God has given them”.<sup>252</sup>

As EG White finished speaking, AG Daniels briefly recounted the proceedings of the meeting of the previous day in the college library; consequently, the people understood that a change of conference management should be introduced at the beginning of the conference. At once, he moved for the formation of a large committee to be composed of the current leaders of the General Conference, the GC Association, the Australian and European Union conferences, the Foreign Mission Board, the Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association, the major publishing houses and colleges and “old hands” such as JN Loughborough, SN Haskell, AT Jones and WW Prescott. This committee (later termed the Committee on Counsel) was to organise itself, add to its membership any other necessary to make it representative of “the work of Seventh-day Adventists throughout the world”,<sup>253</sup> and then prepare the business to bring before the delegates.

This motion was supported by SN Haskell and, after a brief discussion, adopted unanimously. This Committee on Counsel (75 members) under the direction of Daniels, was divided into subcommittees and tackled the task of guiding the conference and bringing about reorganisation.

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid. (Emphasis mine).

<sup>251</sup> Schwarz, : 276.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> *Daily Bulletin*, April 3, 1901, pp. 24-27.

The subcommittee on organisation chaired by WC White tabled the first substantive recommendations at the General Conference. After a careful description by AG Daniels as to how the Australian Union Conference was organised and how it functioned, the delegates from each General Conference district were urged to frame a constitution and organise a union conference for their district. Representatives from the Southern District were the first to respond to this call; but before the conference session had ended all the other districts had also formed union conferences. Thus, among the constitutional changes effected in 1901, the union conferences replaced the local conferences as the constituent parts of the General Conference.<sup>254</sup>

EG White thoroughly approved of the organisation of these union conferences. She believed that it would be “for the health of the different conferences to have it thus”.<sup>255</sup> It was not, as some feared, to have a disintegrating effect on the church. “The Lord God of Israel will link us all together”, EG White affirmed. “The organising of new conferences is not to separate us. It is to bind us together.”<sup>256</sup>

The next major item introduced by the Committee on Counsel involved a thorough-going revision of the manner in which the General Conference Executive Committee was constituted. It was to be enlarged to twenty-five members, six to be selected by the Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association, and the remaining nineteen by the session delegates. These nineteen were to include the presidents of the Union Conferences and five individuals with special “ability to foster and develop the true evangelical spirit in all departments of the work”.<sup>257</sup>

These five were to be kept free “from any special business cases” so that they might “act as teachers of the gospel message in all parts of the world”.<sup>258</sup> It was understood that as more “union conferences” were formed, their presidents would be added to the executive committee, thus expanding its membership

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<sup>254</sup> Olson, 1966: 187-189.

<sup>255</sup> *Daily Bulletin*, April 5, 1901, pp. 68, 69.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> Schwarz, : 277.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*

beyond the twenty-five originally elected; this enlarged executive committee was to take the place of all present boards and committees.

### **3.3.2.5 General Conference Departments**

After a thorough discussion in the 1901 conference, delegates voted to accept the new type of executive committee. They also agreed to a series of suggestions, which in effect placed all of the work of the Foreign Mission Board in the hands of the executive committee. This management ended the confusion of the previous years when the Mission Board had been forced to work with three different organisations – the General Conference Committee, the General Conference Association, and the Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association – when sending workers to overseas fields.<sup>259</sup>

Likewise, in harmony with the plans to departmentalise, the officials of the Sabbath School Association, the Tract and Missionary societies, and the Religious Liberty Association immediately took action to wind up their affairs as independent organisations and turn their assets and files over to the secretaries assigned by the General Conference Committee to promote these lines of work. Similar action followed in the local conferences. This action, AG Daniels maintained, would “simplify our machinery”.<sup>260</sup> He stressed that in the past Adventists had “multiplied organizations and boards and institutions until the talent of this denomination is (to a large extent) withdrawn from the field, and placed over the machinery to keep it running”.<sup>261</sup>

In other words, the reorganisation of the denominational structure accomplished at Battle Creek in 1901 constituted both centralising and decentralising aspects:

1. *Centralising aspect:* By departmentalising the various lines of endeavour under the General Conference Committee, and subsequently at lower levels under the union and local conference committees, centralised authority, control, and direction in the hands of a group was designated to be a kind of

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid, p. 278.

<sup>260</sup> Jorgensen, 1949: 40-42, 44-47; *Daily Bulletin*, April 15, 1901, p. 228.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

representative sample of the church's employees. There seems however to have been no thought of including laymen on these governing committees.<sup>262</sup>

2. *Decentralising aspect*: This was evident in the formation of the union conferences. That they might have more authority over the work in their territories, the General Conference Committee was authorized to transfer ownership of and responsibility for educational institutions, such as Oakwood Industrial School and Union College, to the unions in which they were located.<sup>263</sup> Subsequently, during the next two years, in an attempt to ease and simplify its financial problems, the GC Committee decided to transfer all assets and liabilities of the General Conference Association to the Union Conferences in which the various denominational properties were located.<sup>264</sup>

### **3.2.3. The Organisation And Its Authority**

As it had been realised in the previous years (1863s), church order and unity were a necessity for effective operation and success in mission endeavours.<sup>265</sup> The larger the religious body became, the more urgently the need was felt for unity and organisation in order to prevent general confusion, and especially so during the civil war.<sup>266</sup> Finally in 1863, having overcome the theological obstacle to organisation, the SDA organised itself legally with the specific purpose of "securing unity and efficiency in labor and promoting the general interest of the cause of present truth".<sup>267</sup>

#### **3.2.3.1. Categories of Church Offices**

A conference address regarding organisation<sup>268</sup> was published in the 1863 General Conference Report. This address indicated two categories of church

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid, pp. 53-55.

<sup>263</sup> *Daily Bulletin*, April 17, 1901, p. 281: April 18, 1901, p. 310.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Damsteegt, 1977: 255.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.; See E.G. White, "Communication from Sister White," *Review and Herald*, May 6, 1862.

<sup>267</sup> G.C. Report, *Review and Herald*, May 26, 1863, pp. 204. 205, quoted by P.G. Damsteegt, 1977: 256.

<sup>268</sup> Address presented by Loughborough, Hull and Cornel on the 1861 Battle Creek Conference Address

offices in the New Testament: “Those who hold their office by virtue of an especial call from God, and those selected by the church: the former embracing apostles and evangelists; and the latter elders, bishops, pastors and deacons”.<sup>269</sup>

It was motivated that the office of apostles was not confined to the 12 Apostles of Christ<sup>270</sup> and could not be restricted to New Testament times.<sup>271</sup> An apostle was seen as: “one sent forth, a messenger,; so that ‘anyone especially sent out of God in any age leading out in any new truth or reform could be called an apostle’”.<sup>272</sup> An evangelist was described as “a preacher of the gospel, not fixed in any place, but traveling as a missionary to preach the gospel and establish churches”.<sup>273</sup> At this time anyone in the former category was also called a Minister.<sup>274</sup>

Regarding the latter category, it was pointed out that the names elder, bishop and pastor are synonymous and denote an identical office<sup>275</sup>. This reduced the number of offices to be appointed by the individual churches to two: elders and deacons. As far as the respective responsibilities were concerned, the work of a deacon was to be confined “exclusively to the temporal matters of the church; such, for instance, as taking charge of its finances, making preparation for the celebration of the ordinances[...], while the work of the elder was to take the lead and oversight of the church in spiritual things and function as chairman in all its business meetings”<sup>276</sup>. Hence, both the elder and the deacon were to be ordained by a minister.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid, “Conference Address,” *Review and Herald*, Oct 15, 1861, p. 156.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid. (SDA, report, p. 11). The argument was that Christ, Paul, and Barnabas were called apostles (Heb. 3:1; Acts 14:14) while the Greek text also designated Ephaphoditus, Titus, and others as apostles (Phil 2:25; 2Cor. 8:22, 23).

<sup>271</sup> Ibid. (Eph 4:11-13) The office of apostles is co-extensive with that of pastors and teachers, and other spiritual gifts.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid. As examples, the names of Luther, Melanchiton and Miller were given.

<sup>273</sup> Loughborough, *et al.* 1861, p. 156.

<sup>274</sup> Damsteegt, : 256. Those who felt a call from God to become ministerial workers were advised to express their convictions before a conference committee. If they were considered qualified they would receive a licence. GC Report, *Review and Herald*, May 26, 1863, p. 205.

<sup>275</sup> Loughborough, *et al.* ; « conference Address », p. 156 (SAA report, pp. 12, 13 [**seems a different source from above, n 81**]) Reference was made to Tit. 1:5,7, and Acts 20:17,18.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., Textual evidence: Acts 6: 6; Tit 1: 5.



The mutual relationship between the various offices was expressed by the following rule: “That no person by virtue of a lower office can fill a higher one; but any one filling a higher office, can by virtue of that office, act in any of the lower”.<sup>278</sup>

### **3.2.3.2. Church Leaders and Authority**

In the newly organised church a distinction was made between the leadership and the laity in regard to the question of authority. Referring to church organisations EG White pointed out (in terms of Heb 13:17, 1Thes. 5:12, 13; and Mt. 18:15) that “there is no higher tribunal upon earth than the church of God. And if the members of the church will not submit to the decision of the church and will not be counseled and advised by them (Local and traveling elders), they cannot be helped”.<sup>279</sup>

A warning was given that “God has bestowed power on the church and the ministers to the church, and it is not a light matter to resist the authority and despise the judgment of God’s ministers”.<sup>280</sup> However, as far as the mission of the movement was concerned she stated that “the work does not depend alone upon the ministers. The church – the lay members must feel their individual responsibility and be working members”.<sup>281</sup> In order to prevent confusion and disunity regarding the subject of “new light” or “new truth,” she suggested that “no new views should be advocated by preachers or people upon their own responsibility. All new ideas should be thoroughly investigated and decided upon. If there is any weight in them they should be adopted by the body; if not, rejected”.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid. (SDA Report, p. 14). It was added that “a deacon cannot by virtue of his deaconship act as elder nor an elder as evangelist, nor an evangelist as an apostle; but an apostle can act as an evangelist, elder or deacon; an evangelist as an elder or deacon; and an elder as a deacon”.

<sup>279</sup> Damsteegt, p. 257 quoted in Letter, EG White to the Scotts, No. 5, 1863.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid. In case the church should make an error of judgment, she said, “God could take hold of this matter in His own time and indicate the right: (Ibid).

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., quoted in Letter, EG White and Emma White. N°19b , 1874.

<sup>282</sup> EG White, letter to Sawyer, no. 8 1863. She also said “It is not in the order of God for one to feel at liberty to express views independent of the body”. (Ibid) “All without exception unless they can be shown to conflict with the word of God and the right of individual conscience” (GC Report R.H Oct 1877, p. 106).

Regarding the question of leadership that had arisen during the 1870s discussion, in 1873, J White declared that “our General Conference is the highest authority with our people, and is designed to take charge of the entire work in this and all other countries”.<sup>283</sup> It was in the same year that Butler wrote an essay in which he developed the idea that the highest authority of the church should be invested in one individual namely, James White.<sup>284</sup> The reason for Butler’s position was his desire as president of the GC to eliminate certain problems with regard to responsibility, which had arisen among SDA leaders and to improve the unity among them.<sup>285</sup> At first his view was fully endorsed by the GC of November, 1873.

However, after a few weeks of reflection, J White adopted a position against this concept of leadership. In the context of Christ being the head of the church, he stressed the servant aspect of leadership and advocated the “true doctrine of the leadership of Christ and the equality of the ministerial brotherhood”.<sup>286</sup> He reiterated the previous view that the GC is the highest authority of God on earth; then he urged that “in view of the authority Christ has invested in the church, and the tender care he has had for our course; the only safe course for our ministers, and for our people, is to respect the decisions of the General Conference”.<sup>287</sup>

In the discussion, J White was supported by his wife EG White. Subsequently, she wrote to Butler that “no man’s [sic] judgment should be surrendered to the judgment of any one man [sic]. But when the judgment of the G.C. which is the highest authority that God has upon the earth is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be maintained, but surrendered”.<sup>288</sup> Faced with such opposition to Butler’s views, the GC reversed its position<sup>289</sup>.

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<sup>283</sup> J White, “Organization” *Review and Herald*, Aug. 5, 1873, p. 60.

<sup>284</sup> Butler, *Leadership*, 1873, pp. 180, 181.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, “Letter to C.C. Crislen”, Sept 25, 1914 quoted by Damstregt, p. 258.

<sup>286</sup> J. White “Leadership *Review and Herald*”, Dec. 1, 1874, p. 180.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, “Leadership” in *E.G. White, T.C.*, No. 25, p. 192.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43; *E.G. White, T*, IX, 260.

<sup>289</sup> The 1875 G.C. passed a resolution to revise Butler’s essay (G.C. Report, R.H. Aug. 26, 1875 G.C. It was decided to resind all portions of the essay which taught that the leadership of the church was to be confined to any one man. This was followed by a resolution which stated that “the highest authority under God among SDA is bodily of that people as expressed in the decision

### 3.3. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has covered the leadership and organization of the SDA church from 1863 to 1903. During the study, it was clearly recognized that the process of change and development in the SDA Church organization and leadership had much in common with the early Apostolic church – as will be elucidated later. The following aspects have been pointed out:

**1. The gradual and progressive growth:** In similar fashion, the doctrinal development, the church organization and leadership was gradually and progressively established<sup>290</sup>, increasing steadily and making a continuous forward movement. I believe that this process is one of the means used by God throughout history in order to hold up His church.

**2. Emphasis placed on mission and spreading the Gospel:** This was effected with organized Vigilant Tract and Missionary Societies **and** by praying, planning, visiting and distributing Christian literature, first under Elder S.N. Haskell's direction and by groups of housewives.

**3. Seeking unity:** the SDA Church should not be disintegrated because its Redeemer, the Lord God of Israel, would link all its constituent parts together. In reality the organizing of the General, Union, and local conferences as well as the departmentalising at all levels of the SDA organisation were not intended to separate them but encourage unity.

**4. A representative system was established:** There were to be “no kings”<sup>291</sup> in the SDA organization. “Representatives from all lines of our work have to be involved in planning the work of the church, every institution and local church, every church member... should have a voice”.<sup>292</sup> The offices of a local

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of the G.C. when acting within its proper jurisdiction and that such decision should be submitted by all church members.

<sup>290</sup> See above, p. 108.

<sup>291</sup> E.G. White manuscripts 43, 1901, E.G. White Estate.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*

church are servants of that church and not lords to rule over it with force. “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Mat. 23:11).

**5. A centralised and decentralized organisation:** Centralized authority, control, direction and decision making placed in the hands of a group was designed to represent a cross section or representative sample (governing committees) at all stages of organisation, from the local church to the G.C. The decentralisation took place in the form of conferences: Union Conferences and local conferences that might have wielded more influence over the work in their territories. The GC takes care of the general supervision of the work in all its branches, including the state [Union] conferences. The Union conference supervises all branches of the work in the state, including the churches in the state. The church constitutes a body of Christians associated with the simple covenant to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.<sup>293</sup>

**6. The practice of righteousness by faith in Jesus** by church officers and members would lead to successful organization in the SDA church. It is true that SDAs should not devise a suitable organisation in their own strength; rather, they should allow the Spirit of God to work in each individual's life; thus any kind of organisation would work, as Waggoner suggested. The church's major organisational problem lies in “failure to give more than lip-service to the doctrine of righteousness by faith”<sup>294</sup>.

**7. The question of leadership** has been finally understood as a servant leadership at every level of organisation and institution. In the context of Christ's being the head of the church, the GC has been explained as constituting the highest administrative authority with the SDA people in session and is designed to take charge of the entire work in all the countries. The true doctrine of the leadership of Christ and the equality of the ministerial brotherhood has been stressed.

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<sup>293</sup> J.N. Loughbrough, *The Great Second Advent Movement: Its Rise and Progress* (New York: Arno Press, a New York Times Company, Religion in America – series II, Reprint Ed., 1972), p. 346.

<sup>294</sup> See above, p. 73 ff.

Hence, the question that arises is: How did the historical development of women's ministries in the SDA church unfold? The following chapter explains this.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

#### 4.0. Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to briefly present the history of the development of the SDA women's ministries to the readers. Special emphasis is placed firstly on the role of women's ministry within the church, and secondly, the problem of external and internal pressures concerning whether the ordination of SDA women should be allowed. In this light, the actual attitude of the SDA Church towards women clergy is addressed in order to prevent the serious problem of misunderstanding this issue.

#### 4.1. Historical Account Of Evangelism By Women

In spite of the successful growth of the tract and missionary societies developed amongst a group of women during the 1870s, and the notable examples given by Sarah Lindsey and Ellen Lane who formed successful evangelistic teams with their husbands in the worldwide outreach during 1868-1885, "the Adventist ministry had become by the 1930s a virtual male preserve... Although the initial internship policy seemed to provide for young women to be considered for internships, none were ever really accomplished".<sup>295</sup>

During this period (1868-1885), Adventist ministers did evangelise far and wide. In some instances husbands and wives formed successful teams. Notable examples were John and Sarah Lindsey, Elbert and Ellen Lane in Ohio, Indiana, Virginia, Tennessee, Western New York and Pennsylvania. During a series at Pleasant Valley, New York, Sarah Lindsey spoke on the Second Advent twenty

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<sup>295</sup> On the Lindseys, see *Review*, June 15, 1869: 200; quoted by Schwartz, p. 135.

three times. Ellen Lane not only enjoyed “excellent success” in house-to-house visitation, but she was also a powerful preacher. One Sabbath morning in Virginia, Elder Lane attracted only thirty-five listeners; the next day, 650 turned out to hear Ellen preach.<sup>296</sup>

Remembering that the first preacher to tell of a risen Christ was a woman, another Ellen expressed the view that “the refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth”.<sup>297</sup> “Zealous and continued diligence in our sisters”, Ellen G. White continued, “would astonish us with its results”.<sup>298</sup> JN Andrews agreed that women had a definite role to fill in spreading the gospel message. But what kind of role would this be?

An enthusiastic delegate to the 1881 GC session saw qualified women as a logical resource to employ in meeting the ever increasing need for workers. He proposed a resolution “that females possessing the necessary qualification... may with perfect propriety, be set aside by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry”.<sup>299</sup> Once referred to the General Conference Committee, the resolution was not heard of again. There was no reply. Nevertheless, this proposition had been among the very first important questions concerning the role of women in the SDA Church.

## **4.2. The Ministry Of Women**

A group of Adventist theologians, who assembled in the spring of 1976 at Andrews University, felt it necessary to recommend to the GC Committee the development of an internship programme for Bible instructors comparable to that in operation for ministerial interns. This same group witnessed “no women to various offices, including the ministry”<sup>300</sup>. Yet for decades church leaders had generally perceived the female role in the church to be a supportive one.

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<sup>296</sup> On the Lanes, see *Review*, Feb. 24, 1874, p. 70 quoted in Schwarz, p. 135.

<sup>297</sup> *Review*, January 2, 1879: 1, 4; Dec. 20 1881: 392.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>300</sup> Schwarz, p. 494.

It was good for a pastor's wife to be able to help with the music, accompany her husband in giving Bible studies, and perhaps teach in the local church school – all, except in the case of the church school teacher, without pay. Young women who felt a special call to full-time religious work might be utilised as “Bible workers” aiding evangelists in giving studies to interested persons. College departments of religion and later, the seminary, offered abbreviated courses to prepare women for their assigned role as “Bible instructors”.<sup>301</sup>

In spite of this, some Adventist women (and men) thought that this role did not meet the needs of the church. During the first decades of the twentieth century, quite a number found satisfaction in promoting some of the church's departmental activities, particularly those in the Sabbath School youth, and education departments. During the depression of the 1930s these opportunities virtually ceased and SDA women once more were relegated to the roles of being a wife, Bible instructor, teacher, nurse, and / or secretary.<sup>302</sup>

By the early 1970s an increasing number of SDA women were asking why they should be automatically excluded from the full work of the gospel ministry. Church leaders appointed a variety of study groups to survey the possibility of including women in the ministry. In spite of favourable recommendations, in 1975, the church leadership decided that the worldwide body of SDAs was not yet ready to accept ordination of women for the ministry. Several years earlier it had been agreed to allow a limited number of women to serve on a trial basis as ordained local elders.<sup>303</sup>

In September 1973, Dr Josephine Benton, who had been ordained as the first Adventist female local elder the previous year, joined the pastoral staff of the large Sligo SDA Church in Takoma Park. Subsequently, other female local elders appeared at the Walla Walla and Atlantic Union Colleges. However, as at March 1975, Dr Benton was the only woman elder in North America.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid p. 495.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> *Review*, Dec. 1973: 19; “Minutes of the Biblical Research Committee council”, April 4-7, 1976.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., cf GC Committee minutes, April 3, 1975.



According to Schwarz, shifting ideas as to just what role women should play in the Adventist ministry demonstrates the interaction between the church and the world in which it operates;<sup>305</sup> this is true since the growing Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and '70s undoubtedly heightened the interest of SDA women regarding playing a larger role in the leadership that has traditionally directed the work of the church. In fact this presented a problem to which we turn our attention next. It is well known that the economic distress of the 1930s had reinforced the image of the strictly supportive and subordinate role of SDA women in the church. But what was the problem with regards to ministry by women?

### **4.3. The Problem Of Women's Ministry**

During the decade of the 1970s in the United States, the focus of national attention had periodically fallen on the feminist crusade to complete the emancipation of women through the passage of Equal Rights Amendments.<sup>306</sup>

The battle has been carried into the church by Christian women's liberation advocates, Letha Scanzoni, Nancy Hardesty and Virginia Mollenkott, supported by Fuller Seminary theologian Paul K Jewett. These and others have strongly challenged traditional evangelical biblical interpretation which has limited, if not prohibited, authoritative feminine leadership in the church. The pressure to modify church polity to allow the participation of women in official church leadership roles has been, in some instances, quite intense.<sup>307</sup>

#### **4.3.1. The External Pressure on Women Clergy**

Talking about this issue, Chaves argues that if rules regarding women clergy are best understood as reactions to environmental pressure to institutionalise or resist gender equality, then it should be possible to specify the sources of that

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<sup>305</sup> Schwarz: 495.

<sup>306</sup> David R. Nicholas *What's a Woman to Do --- in the Church*, 1979: xi, xii.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*

pressure. On the one hand, pressure continues to emanate from outside the religious sphere towards greater gender equality in religious organisations.<sup>308</sup>

Furthermore, according to Chaves, pressure also stemmed from the state and an organized women's movement<sup>309</sup> The more subtle normative pressure as a consequence of support for formal gender equality has increasingly become widely diffused in American society during the twentieth century, while denominations have lagged considerably behind other types of organisations in institutionalising it.<sup>310</sup> Obviously, these sources of pressure are of varying importance to the institutionalisation of formal gender equality in American religion.

On the other hand, as Chaves maintained, pressure continues to stem from within the religious sphere itself, yet is external to any particular denomination, where denominations influence one another in their decisions with regards to the ordination of women. Although pressures from outside the religious sphere coerce denominations towards gender equality, ecumenical pressures can lean either way, depending on the part of the religious institutional environment to which the particular denominations are most oriented.<sup>311</sup>

Generally speaking, it appears that denominational alliances and the subcultures they support are important sources of variation regarding female clergy and the ordination of women. In an important sense, it is impossible to draw a clear line between "internal" and "external" influences on female clergy and their ordination.<sup>312</sup> For instance, although it has been argued that the women's movement is a source of "external" pressure exerted on denominations, it exercises this pressure largely through women and men inside denominations who, influenced by the outside movement, advocate, either individually or collectively, greater equality within religious organisations.

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<sup>308</sup> Chaves, 1997: 38.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.* p. 39.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>312</sup> Chaves, 1997: 38, 39.

Similarly, although it is argued that ecumenical concerns represent another sort of “external” pressure, that pressure exists only to the extent that people, within a denomination, care about their relationship with other denominations. However, in one way or another, denominations are all concerned with interaction with their environment.<sup>313</sup> But what were the consequences of this “external – internal” pressure exerted on denominations regarding female clergy and the ordination of women?

#### **4.3.2. Consequences of External – Internal Pressure**

As a result, some denominations have found themselves torn between a literal interpretation of Pauline passages dealing with the subordination of women in church life and evangelical feminist pressure to eliminate gender-based distinctions in terms of Paul’s teaching with regards to spiritual equality in Galatians 3:28.<sup>314</sup>

Groups, such as the National Organization of women (NOW), imposed a “sociological mindset” upon their biblical interpretation; they have gone so far as to demand that churches and seminaries immediately stop their sexist doctrinal teaching which assigns different roles to men and women, advocating that federal statutes be amended and enforced in order to deprive certain churches that believe it is their right to discriminate on the basis of gender.<sup>315</sup>

The state, because of its authority to develop and enforce regulations stipulating various details of organizational structure and behaviour, has often exerted a crucially important influence on organisational change, policies and rules.

A finding in research conducted on organisational change is that organisations respond to state pressure in many ways. For instance, Shaves stresses that Gerald Davis (1991:587) argued that “the state at which Fortune 500 companies adopted the ‘poison pill’ method of guarding against hostile takeovers ‘leaped’ after a key court case classified ambiguity concerning the legality of the

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<sup>313</sup> Chaves, 1997: 39.

<sup>314</sup> David R. Nicholas, p. xii.

<sup>315</sup> Rosemary Thompson, “A Christian View of Equal Rights Amendments” (Pamphlet, 1977) p. 3. Quoted by Nicholas, p. xii

practice".<sup>316</sup> This example illustrates that the state, because of its capacity to regulate the environment in which organisations operate, exerts a powerful influence on the diffusion of various institutional practices across organisational populations. In other words, in certain countries, Governments have the power to legislate and enforce equal access to positions within religious organisations over which the state has direct authority.<sup>317</sup>

State influence on the ordination of women is clearest among Lutheran denominations. Shaves explains<sup>318</sup> that the state churches of Norway, Denmark and Sweden are all Lutheran, and those churches are administratively part of the government in ways that other state churches (for example the church of England) are not. We would expect, therefore, that these Scandinavian Lutheran churches granted full clergy rights to women before Lutheran denominations in the United States. This is indeed the case. The Norwegian parliament opened all state positions to women in 1938. By definition, this included all positions in the state church, although "provision was made that a woman ought not be made pastor of a congregation unwilling to have a woman as pastor".<sup>319</sup>

In 1947, the Danish Parliament removed any legal barrier to the ordination of women despite the fact that only two of the nine bishops were in favour of the action<sup>320</sup> In Sweden, as a result of pressure placed on the church Assembly by the government, women were first ordained in 1960<sup>321</sup>. By comparison, no US Lutheran denomination had ordained women prior to 1970. It seems that a variation in state denomination institutional ties affects the timing of such organisational change.<sup>322</sup> How should the SDA Church face and confront this issue of the ordination of women? Should the church yield to

pressure with regards to the said issue?

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<sup>316</sup> Chaves, 1997: 40.

<sup>317</sup> Thompson, 1997: 3, 4.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>319</sup> Chaves, 1997: 43.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

### 4.3.3. Inerrancy, Sacramentalism, and Ordination of Women

According to Chaves, two groups of denominations are particularly resistant to the ordination of women: denominations practising sacramental ritual and those endorsing biblical inerrancy.<sup>323</sup>

Chaves defines sacramental denominations as those, including the Catholic, Episcopalian, Eastern Orthodox, and to a lesser extent, Lutheran churches, in which the communion ritual is not merely a symbolic remembrance of a meal of long ago; it actually changes bread and wine into body and blood.<sup>324</sup> Similarly, baptism is an act that literally confers salvation, for example, the Conservative Baptism Association.

Biblically inerrant denominations, according to Chaves, are distinguished by an official assertion that the “Old and New Testaments are regarded as the divinely inspired Word of God and are therefore infallible and supreme authority”.<sup>325</sup>

The resistance of these two types of denominations to the ordination of women is clear. Sacramentalist denominations and biblically inerrant denominations are prominent among Churches which still do not ordain women today. Moreover, inerrantist and sacramentalist denominations which currently do permit female clergy have tended to make this change much later than the denominations that are neither sacramentalist nor inerrant. For instance, the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church both granted full clergy rights to women in 1970; the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Covenant Church both officially permitted female clergy only in 1976.<sup>326</sup>

Biblically inerrant denominations are similarly resistant to formal gender equality. Only 28 percent of biblically inerrant denominations have ordained women since the 1850s, compared with 55 percent of denominations that do not hold the Bible

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<sup>323</sup> Chaves, 1997: 84.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> Jacquet 1989: 54, cited in Chaves, 1997: 85.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

to be inerrant. Among those inerrant denominations that have ordained women, the mean date at which they began is 1933 compared with a mean date of 1922 for noninerrant denominations.<sup>327</sup>

Hence, it is obvious that both sacramentalist and biblically inerrant churches represent substantial pockets of resistance to formal gender equality in American religion.<sup>328</sup> Furthermore, resistance to the ordination of women in these denominations is often justified in terms of their sacramentalist or inerrant identities.

Most arguments against the ordination of women appear across virtually all denominations: the Bible prohibits female clergy, women are not suitable for the role, congregations will not accept female clergy, the ordination of women will threaten ecumenical relations, tradition requires an all-male clergy, and so forth.<sup>329</sup> As such, resistance to female clergy is understood as part of a denominational identity that encompasses, but is broader than, the issue of gender equality.

#### **4.3.3.1. The ordination of women and sacramentalism**

Among sacramental denominations, opponents of female clergy use a type of argument that does not occur within the less denominations. Its essence is the claim that the efficacy of the sacramental act of changing bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ requires an agent who resembles Christ, and maleness is an essential component of that representation.<sup>330</sup> In terms of this logic, it is literally impossible for a woman to be a priest; the sacrament, if performed by a female, would not be valid.<sup>331</sup>

This argument is repeated in the two most recent papal statements on the question. In his June 1994 "Letter on ordination and women", Pope John Paul II

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<sup>327</sup> Chaves, 1997: 85, 86.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Chaves, 1997: 86.

<sup>330</sup> Roman Catholic 1876 *Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood* (Sacred Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith '1976' 1991), pp. 6, 8.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

essentially endorsed the 1976 declaration, and in his July 1995 “Letter to women” he stated:

One can also appreciate that the presence of a certain diversity of roles is in no way prejudicial to women, provided that this diversity is not the result of an arbitrary imposition, but is rather an expression of what is specific to being male and female. This issue also has a particular application within the church. If Christ – by his free and sovereign choice, clearly attested by the Gospel and by the church’s constant tradition – entrusted only to men the task of being an “icon” of his countenance as “shepherd” and “bridegroom” of the church through the exercise of the ministerial priesthood, this in no way detracts from the role of women... These role distinctions should not be viewed in accordance with the criteria of functionality typical in human societies. Rather, they must be understood according to the particular criteria of the sacramental economy, i.e., the economy of “signs” which God freely chooses in order to become present in the midst of humanity.<sup>332</sup>

According to the above statement, a woman cannot be a priest, not because of any lack of appropriate skill or ability, but because their femaleness makes it impossible for them to resemble Christ in the eucharistic sacrament.

This argument also occurs in other sacramental denominations in less subtle forms. The Orthodox Church, for example, bases the “impossibility of the ordination of women”, among other points, on “the typological and iconic experience of worship (in which) Christ as the High Priest is presented to us appropriately and fittingly only by a male in the High Priestly image”.<sup>333</sup>

In 1977, Bishop John Maury Allin announced his opposition to the ordination of women in the Episcopal Church by saying:

I have prayed to be open to any understanding of either priesthood or human sexuality which may be given to me. Thus for my understanding of Christian priesthood, of the inter-relatedness of the Christian ministry, of the New Testament imagery and symbolism, of the roles and interrelations of human sexuality prevent my believing that women can be priests *any more than they can become fathers or husbands... I remain unconvinced that women can be priests.*<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> Pope John Paul II, “Letter on Ordination and Women” June 1994. Id. “Letter to Women,” a letter prompted by the United by Nations World Conference of Women in Beijing, July 1995.

<sup>333</sup> “Conclusion of the Interorthodox Consultation on the Place of the Woman in the Orthodox Church and the question of the Ordination of Women” (“Conclusion” ‘1998’1989, pp.396-397).

<sup>334</sup> Ward 1991: xxvii, quoted by Chaves, 1997: 88.

Furthermore, at the November 1992 meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Auxiliary Bishop B. Vaughan of New York City said: “In the year 2000, 20 000, or 2 000 000, there will still be a Catholic Church and it will still have an all-male clergy. *A woman priest is as impossible as for me to have a baby*”.<sup>335</sup>

So, it is clear that within sacramental denominations, such resistance is often expressed in terms of that sacramentalism. An all male clergy is not merely contingent fact about these denominations; it is bound up with their core sacramentalist identity. But can an analogous point be made about a biblically inerrant denomination?

#### **4.3.3.2. Women’s ordination and inerrancy**

Here the standard biblical argument against female clergy is not just one among several kinds of “evidence” offered by women’s ordination opponents, it is the central argument. To illustrate, consider again the 1984 Southern Baptist resolution prohibiting female clergy. Chapter 2 reproduced the resolution’s final paragraph in order to emphasise the Southern Baptists’ awareness of external pressure towards gender equality, pressure they felt called to resist.<sup>336</sup> Here I reproduce more of the justification offered with regards to forbidding female clergy.

Whereas, we, the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention...recognize the authority of Scripture in all matters of faith and practice...and

Whereas, the scriptures attest to God’s delegated order of authority (God the head of Christ, Christ the head of man, man the head of woman, man and woman dependent one upon the other to the glory of God) distinguishing the roles of men and women in public prayer and prophecy (1 Cor.11:2-5); and Whereas, the scriptures teach that women are not in public worship to assume a role of authority over men lest confusion reign in the local church (1 Cor.14:33-36); and

Whereas, while Paul commends women and men alike in other roles of ministry and service (Titus 2:1-10), he excludes women from pastoral leadership (1

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<sup>335</sup> Steinfels 1992: A13, emphasis added; quoted by Chaves, 1997: 88.

<sup>336</sup> Melton 1991: 236, “The 1984 Southern Baptist resolution prohibiting female clergy”, quoted by Chaves, 1997: 89, 90.



Tim.2:12) to preserve a submission God requires because the man was first in creation and the woman was first in the Edenic fall (1 Tim.2:13ff); ...

Therefore, be it *Resolved*, that we not decide concerns of Christian doctrine and practice by modern cultural, sociological, and ecclesiological trends or by emotional factors; that we remind ourselves of the dearly bought Baptist principle of the final authority of scripture in matters of faith and conduct; and that we encourage the service of women in all aspects of church life and work other than pastoral functions and leadership roles entailing ordination.<sup>337</sup>

This resolution is a typical argument from the premise of biblical inerrancy to the conclusion that “no female clergy” can be permitted. The intervening step is not the inability of women to represent Christ, as it is in sacramental denominations, but rather the biblically mandated submission of women to men. Such a justification relies on a logic of interpretation, in which biblical citations form an essential element and which is itself the core feature of denominations that identify themselves as being biblically inerrant. Resistance to the ordination of women is expressed here in a manner that makes it appear the inevitable implication of a core commitment to inerrancy.<sup>338</sup>

#### **4.3.3.3. Proponents or opponents of the gender equality debate**

A striking feature of the debates regarding the ordination of women is the ease with which either proponents or opponents of gender equality are able to use the Bible to support their position. Some of them recall the “ambiguity of the Bible” on the issue. It is very difficult for an observer of this sort of intellectual stalemate to avoid the conclusion that the biblical text is simply not definitive on the said issue.<sup>339</sup> Some point out that biblical inerrancy does not cause resistance to ordination of women as a matter of logical deduction. The association is very much a cultural association, and therefore it begs for a sociological explanation.<sup>340</sup>

The fundamental ambiguity of the Bible on the matter of female clergy stems from the fact that the text contains some passages that clearly imply a

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<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Chaves, 1997: 90.

<sup>339</sup> Chaves, 1997: 91.

<sup>340</sup> Chaves, 1997: 92.

commitment to gender inequality and others, to gender equality. Among the passages frequently cited as definitive by opponents to the ordination of women are:

- Let the woman learn in silence with all submissiveness, I permit no woman to teach...(1Tim 2:11,12).
- As in all churches of the saints, the woman should keep silence... let them ask their husbands at home... (1 Cor.14:33-35).

Among the passages cited as definitive by proponents of the ordination of women are:

- There is neither Jew or Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal.3:18).
- Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head (1 Cor 11:4,5).
- And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.(Acts 2:16-18).

The first two passages seem to proscribe female clergy while the last three seem to prescribe, or at least, allow them. In fact, the interpretive way to understand these passages is a problem that will be discussed in chapter seven of this study.

Meanwhile, noninerrantist Christian supporters of gender equality and the ordination of women, in particular, have taken these interpretive paths.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *Women's Bible* represents a prominent early example of a noninerrant approach, one that avoids wrestling with biblical ambiguity by rejecting biblical authority altogether. The hostile reception of the *Women's Bible*, however, even by prominent advocates of gender equality in religion, shows that

Stanton's rejection of biblical authority was not considered a necessary condition for wholehearted support of the ordination of women at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>341</sup>

Stanton explicitly distinguished herself from those having a fetish of these biblical books and believing them to be the veritable "Word of God". Instead of the more usual matter of routine of maintaining the Bible's authority and interpreting it to support gender equality, she [Stanton] rejected inerrancy altogether:

The only point in which I differ from all ecclesiastical teaching is that I do not believe that any man ever saw or talked with God, I do not believe that God inspired the Mosaic code, or told the historians what they say he did about women... The canon law, the scriptures, the creeds and codes and church discipline of the leading religious bear the impress of fallible man, and not of our ideal great first cause.<sup>342</sup>

As such, the women who produced the *Women's Bible* "do not regard the Bible as the Word of God, but like any other book, to be judged by its merits".<sup>343</sup> Fortunately however, the work on the *Women's Bible* was delayed, for example, because in her first (1886) attempt to mobilise female biblical scholars, Stanton was "disappointed to find that most of the learned women she tried to enlist in the project still considered her claim that the Bible was not divinely inspired to be suspect".<sup>344</sup>

Hence, when the *Women's Bible* was published in 1895, the National American Woman Suffrage Association "passed a resolution disavowing any connection to its publication intent",<sup>345</sup> and before the turn of the twentieth century, then, for reasons of both religious commitment and political expediency, it did not seem necessary to most supporters of gender equality to reject biblical authority.

In order to understand the debate with regards to the ordination of women in the church, the issue will be discussed again in chapter seven with reference to Paul and the role of men and women in the Early Christian Church.

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<sup>341</sup> Stanton, '1895', 1972: 8, quoted by Chaves, 1997: 93.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid, 1972: 12-13.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Fitzgerald, 1993: xxv, quoted by Chaves, 1997: 94.

<sup>345</sup> Fitzgerald, 1993:xxxvi, quoted by Chaves,1997: 94.

#### 4.4. SDA Church Attitudes Towards Women Clergy

The attitude of SDAs towards women's ministry has been heavily influenced by their understanding of the special role that women have been called to play in the church and the counsels received from EG White relative to God's expectations of them as a distinctive group of Christians.

In the spring of 1973, SDAs in Southern New England, at a meeting in a conference session, passed a series of resolutions upholding the rights of SDA women to equal treatment within the church. They recommended:<sup>346</sup>

- (1) Electing the most competent persons to church offices without reference to sex;
- (2) Considering competent women for conference leadership roles;
- (3) Increasing the number of women on church boards and committees;
- (4) Giving consideration to paying pastors' wives when they acted as Bible instructors;
- (5) Approving women to serve as local elders; and
- (6) Acknowledging that women "who feel called to the gospel ministry by God ought not to be refused ordination by men."<sup>347</sup>

However, two years later, during its Spring Council, the GC went on record to the effect that all church positions "not requiring ordination" were to be open to women "whose home and family responsibilities make this possible".<sup>348</sup> Nevertheless, it maintained that God had ordained that a woman's primary role be played in the home. This concern was shared by delegates to the 1975 General Conference Session at which they voted to establish a home family service at the church headquarters and to change it with developing programmes and materials designed to strengthen Adventist home bands.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> L. Running "The Status and Role of Women in the Adventist Church", *Spectrum* (summer 1972), iv: 54-61.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>348</sup> GC minutes, April 3, 1975; Schwarz, 1979: 527, 528.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*

#### 4.4.1. Ellen White and Women in the Church

In accordance with the historical Protestant teaching, SDAs give priority to the Bible as the rule of faith and practice for the Christian. They also believe that God has given a prophetic witness to the church in the life and work of Ellen White (1827-1915). This witness “was not to supersede the Bible nor to be an addition to the canon of scripture, but to call attention to the truths of scriptures and to make their application plain. In light of its belief in the prophetic role of Ellen White, the church takes her writings seriously, viewing them as a source of comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction”.<sup>350</sup>

Though Ellen White promoted the concept of varying spiritual gifts, she also saw women using every talent as an evangelistic tool for God, regardless of her circumstances. This study will briefly present theological foundations for Ellen White’s statements regarding the roles of women, which will also include her stance in this regard.

- (1). *Evangelical and Practical View*. “No one should believe that women were excluded from God’s service, and no one must forbid another from participating”<sup>351</sup> Ellen White declared. It was in terms of this evangelistic and practical view that Ellen White spoke about the role of Christian women in service. In her writings and in her example she urged women to be active in giving the gospel to the world, and to labour for lost men and women. Her arguments regarding the work women were to do were practical, not theological. She wasted no time to arguing theology with so great a need unmet.<sup>352</sup>

She said:

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed ...We need to branch out more in our

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<sup>350</sup> “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventist” Number 17: *The Gift of Prophecy, in Seventh –Day Adventist yearbook 1986*. 1986: 7, quoted by Damsteegt, p. 257.

<sup>351</sup> Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles* 1911: 175.

<sup>352</sup> Cindy Tutsch and Laura Wibberding, *Ellen White and the Roles of Women*, September 20, 2004 (Powerpoint workshop prepared for the Department of Women’s Ministries, GC of the SDA Church).

methods of labor. Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labor, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work. Place the burden upon men and women of the church that they may grow by reason of exercise, and thus become effective agents in the hand of the Lord for the enlightenment of those who sit in darkness”<sup>353</sup> .

“In this work, [she stressed], women may play an important role. God grants that those who read these words may put forth earnest efforts to present an open door for consecrated women to enter the field.”<sup>354</sup>

(2). *Women in the Work of Mission.* What were Ellen White’s views on the involvement of women in the work of mission? First, she believed that few women recognised their responsibility as individuals to work for God. Doubtless, many thought that the trials of running a family and a home demanded all the time they had, and excused them from further obligations. She stated:

Women who have the cause of God at heart can do a good work in the districts in which they reside. Christ speaks of women who helped Him in presenting the truth before others, and Paul also speaks of women who labored with him in the gospel. But how very limited is the work done by those who could do a large work if they would.<sup>355</sup>

(3) . *Varied Ministries.* Then what did she envisage as the role of women in the church? Ellen White saw women as able to do a great work for Christ in personal contacts, bringing the message for this hour into homes and families. She also recognised and cited important contributions they could make in various leadership responsibilities in the Church, as well.<sup>356</sup>

For example, she called for training to be offered to women in our schools. Speaking of Avondale, the new school in Australia, she said, “The Lord designs that the school should also be a place where a training may be gained in women’s work...”<sup>357</sup> After enumerating certain domestic and educational training

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<sup>353</sup> “The Duty of the Minister and the people,” *Review and Herald*, 9 July 1895: 25.

<sup>354</sup> Manuscript Releases, 21 vols..

<sup>355</sup> “Why the Lord waits”, *Review*, 21 July 1896: 449.

<sup>356</sup> Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church...*, 1985: 277, 278.

<sup>357</sup> E White, *Evangelism*, 1946: 475 (Letter 3, 1898).

courses to be included, she adds, “they are to be qualified to take any post that may be offered – superintendents, Sabbath school teachers, Bible workers – They must be prepared to teach day schools for children”.<sup>358</sup>

She envisaged an important mission for women:

Wonderful is the mission of the wives and mothers and the younger women workers. If they will, they can exert an influence for good to all around them... A truly converted woman will exert a powerful transforming influence for good. Connected with her husband, she may aid him in his work, and become the means of encouragement and blessing to him. When the will and way are brought into subjection to the Spirit of God, there is no limit to the good that can be accomplished<sup>359</sup>

While there is surely an emphasis on a husband-wife ministry, here single women, “the younger women workers”, are also included. The type of work is not mentioned here, but would surely include the various lines of work that Ellen White specified, as noted previously.

(4). *Working within One’s Own Sphere*. Unfortunately, Ellen White stressed that not all people (men and women) were willing to live in subjection to God, even our first parents. Though the issue in the following passage does not specifically refer to the role relations of men and women in the church, perhaps the principles may find some application there.

Eve had been perfectly happy by her husband’s side in her Eden home; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. In attempting to rise above her original position, she fell far below it. A similar result will be reached by all who are unwilling to take up cheerfully their life duties in accordance with God’s plan. In their efforts to reach positions for which He has not fitted them, many are leaving vacant the place where they might be a blessing. In their desire for a higher sphere, many have sacrificed true womanly dignity and nobility of character, and have left undone the very work that Heaven appointed them<sup>360</sup>

Clearly, in her view, it is important to operate within the sphere that God has assigned, for our own happiness, nobility and effectiveness. How to define that sphere is, of course, the essence of the discussion in this regard in the SDA Church. Ellen White would be the first to say that we should go to the Bible for

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<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid, pp.467-468 (Manuscripts 91, 1908), quoted by Bacchiocchi, p. 278 .

<sup>360</sup> EG White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 1958: 59.

guidance on the matter of the role of the relationships among men and women. “The scriptures are plain upon the relations and rights of men and women.”<sup>361</sup>

(5). *Respect for Role Distinctions*. Ellen White would also remind men and women of the dangers of imbibing the spirit of the times when that is out of harmony with our scriptural duty. The statement just quoted comes from a passage that deals with a women’s rights movement in the 1860s. A part of that movement was an attempt to bring about much-needed reform in the matter of women’s dress.<sup>362</sup>

After addressing the Biblical call for a clear distinction in dress, Ellen White commented on the spirit that attended the women’s rights movement: “Those who feel called out to join the movement in favor of women’s rights and the so-called dress reform might as well sever all connection with the third angel’s message. The spirit which attends the one cannot be in harmony with the other. The scriptures are plain upon the relations and rights of men and women.”<sup>363</sup>

Was there a spirit of disaffection, or promotion of self? In the assertion of one’s right, is there a spirit that comes not from above, and that would keep us from representing the character of Jesus, who did not think that equality was “a thing to be grasped” (Phil 2:6)? This statement seems to warn the reader of such dangers.

(6). *Respect of Husband’s Leadership*. Contrary to the positions adopted by many feminists today, EG White upheld, in both her practice and her teaching, the traditional understanding of the Bible’s statements on the headship of man in marriage. Arthur White writes,

Her understanding of the proper relationship between husband and wife stands out in a letter written to a friend in her early married life: “We women must remember that God has placed us subject to the husband. He is the head and our judgment and views and reasoning must agree with his if possible. If not, preference in God’s word is given to the husband where it is

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<sup>361</sup> EG White, *Testimonies of the Church*, 9 vols., 1948, vol. 1, p. 421; quoted by Bacchiocchi, p. 379.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>363</sup> EG White, *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 421.



not a matter of conscience. We must yield to the head "Letter 5, 1861". She would not stand in the pulpit to speak at the Sabbath morning service if James White was present... she would speak in the afternoon<sup>364</sup>

Yet we still have not fully answered the question of what EG.White's concept of women's work really was. She stressed the importance of working within one's own sphere, and did so in the setting of the danger of leaving the very work to which God was calling one, while seeking some supposedly higher sphere of labour. Her concern seems to have been not so much to deny anyone any particular activity, but rather to encourage each to labour within his / her God-appointed sphere, where s/he could be most effective.<sup>365</sup>

(7). *Emphasis on Personal Ministry and Families*. It is clear that EG White did envisage a particular sphere of labour for women. In *Testimonies*, volume 6, she published a selection called, "Women to be Gospel Workers".<sup>366</sup> The emphasis falls on individual accountability to God to be involved in personal work for others. Regarding ministry to families, she also speaks of, especially, the work that women are to do:

They may accomplish a good work for God if they will first learn in the school of Christ the precious, all-important lesson of meekness. They should possess the Spirit of Jesus. They must walk even as He walked, purifying their souls from everything that defiles... If they are imbued with a sense of their duty, and labor under the influence of the Spirit of God ...they can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach. Their labor is needed... they carry the gospel to the homes of people in the highways, they read and explain the word to families, praying with them, caring for the sick, relieving their temporal necessities, showing that the way to find peace and joy is to follow Jesus.<sup>367</sup>

In summarising this section, pertinent questions arise: Did Ellen White call for ordaining women as elders or pastors? No. Did she explicitly forbid it? No. She simply did not address these questions directly as an issue. However, it also seems clear that she did not envisage the ordination of women.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> Arthur L White, "Ellen G. White the Person," (n. 26), p.20; see also "Family Religion", *Testimonies* (n. 16), vol. 1, p. 307.

<sup>365</sup> Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church...*, 1987: 280.

<sup>366</sup> EG White, *Testimonies* 6(16): 114 -118.

<sup>367</sup> EG White, *Testimonies* 6(16): 115-116.

<sup>368</sup> Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church...*, 1987: 282.

What she did envision is significant: apart from the matter of ordination, she urged a vigorous participation of women in personal ministry, in particular, and in which the women of the SDA Church are not yet widely engaging. There is a desperate need for this.

What difference would our adoption of Ellen G White's view of the role of women in the Church make? It does not call for any change in the Church structure or policy, yet its implementation would revolutionise the Church's practice. There would be a great increase in personal work being carried out, both by paid full and part-time workers and by volunteer labourers. If the work were to be performed in the light of the Spirit of Jesus, the women would show a greater than power that of men. There would be healing in the home relationships, as godly women workers challenged men to reflect the self-sacrificing headship of Christ in their own relationship with their wives, and women to honour that headship as they would of Christ.<sup>369</sup> Families would be strengthened, and the Church would show a world filled with hurting and broken families what a difference the practising of the Lordship of Jesus really makes!

#### **4.4.2. The SDA Church Statement On Women's Issues**

SDAs believe that all people, male and female, are created equal, in the image of a loving God. We believe that both men and women are called to fill a significant role in accomplishing the primary mission of the Adventist Church: working together for the benefit of humanity. Yet SDAs are painfully aware that throughout the world, in developing and developed nations, adverse societal conditions often inhibit women from fulfilling their God-given potential.<sup>370</sup>

The SDA Church has identified several major problems, well-documented by research, that often keep women from making valuable contributions to society. Stress, the environment, and increased demands have placed women at greater risk for health problems. Poverty and heavy workloads not only deprive women of

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> This statement was approved and voted by the GC of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and was released by the Office of the President, Robert S Folkenberg, at the GC Session in Utrecht, the Netherlands, June 29-July 8, 1995.

their ability to enjoy life, but also impair their physical and spiritual well-being. Family violence takes a heavy toll on its victims.<sup>371</sup>

Women are entitled to the God-given privileges and opportunities intended for every human being – the right to literacy, education, adequate health-care, decision making, and freedom from mental, physical, or sexual abuse. We also maintain that women should play an increased role in the leadership and decision-making bodies of both Church and society.

Ultimately, we believe that the Church will fulfill its mission only when women are empowered to achieve their full potential.<sup>372</sup>

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

In concluding this chapter, it has been made clear that by the 1930s the SDA ministry had become a virtual male preserve. Fortunately, since a softening influence by SDA women was needed in the great work of preaching the truth, an important role to fill in spreading the gospel message within the church has been defined.

It is also well known that from 1881 to 1975, the GC of SDAs in session had never accepted the ordination of women by official vote, although several resolutions were offered by certain enthusiastic delegates in different GC sessions (1881, 1973 and 1975, for instance).

In spite of the external pressure on women clergy, pressure emanating from outside the religious sphere and moving in the direction of greater gender equality in religious organisation,<sup>373</sup> the role of SDA women in the church has remained important: they were able to perform a great work for Christ in a particular sphere of labour for women, such as personal contact and bringing the evangelistic message into homes and families.

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<sup>371</sup> Rajmund Dabrowski, *Statements Guidelines and other Documents SDA Church, a 2005 Compilation by the General Conference of SDA Church*, June 2005, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. p.123.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> Dabrowski, 2005: 123.

They could also make an important contribution to various leadership responsibilities in the church and in the schools: superintendents, Sabbath school teachers, Bible workers, teachers, nurses, secretaries and youth instructors; with the emphasis falling on individual accountability to God to be involved in personal evangelistic work for others.

In short, the fact was that as far back as 1881 in the SDA Church history, the ordination of women had not been accepted by the SDA world Church; yet the problem claimed by dissident groups regarding women's ministries and leadership should be discussed more often and well understood in order to avoid false problems of misunderstanding within the church. In fact, this is a problem to which we next turn our attention in chapter seven in order to determine the roles of men and women in the Biblical and historical perspectives of the early apostolic church.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### LITURGY AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

#### 5.0. Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss some of the standards and religious practices, for example, worship and its components, such as prayer, music, behaviour and others in the context of the modern SDA Church. A study of these aspects would help the reader to gain clarity in order to counteract misinformation and reinforce understanding and confidence in Biblical teaching. Special attention, is paid to the attempts, in open criticism about religious practices, which are made by dissident groups to draw some church members away from the main SDA Church. Thus the chapter attempts to shed some light on this critical issue.

#### 5.1. Adventist Dissident Groups In Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The history of the SDA Church, from the time of its inception, is replete with individuals and groups who have left the movement for one reason or another.<sup>374</sup> Labels such as breakaways, dissidents, rebels, independent, splinter groups, reform, and others have at certain times been applied to them.

Such trends regarding church splinter groups are not unique to the SDA Church. Church historians have reminded us that religious groups are always prone to fragmentation. From “the New Testament times to the apostolic era, churches have had to deal with pain of dissidents who have broken off from the church family”.<sup>375</sup>

##### 5.1.1. Background Of The Origins Of The Dissidents

In the DRC, the last few years witnessed unprecedented growth in the SDA Churches in several regions. This phenomenal growth has been accompanied by

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<sup>374</sup> R.W. Shwartz, 1979: 45-62.

<sup>375</sup> Rassi, 2001: 480.

a two-pronged problem: (1) several large churches and administrative fields without trained leadership, and (2) a continued proliferation of dissident groups in which members are not adequately theologically informed.<sup>376</sup>

Church leaders and graduates are asking intriguing, yet genuine questions such as: Why does a person born and brought up in the SDA Church or who has been loyal to the church oppose it? Why do dissident leaders begin with good intentions but later become too critical of the church, its liturgy and practices, its leadership, doctrines and women's ministries, and even tear down some members of the church in the name of reform?

#### ***5.1.1.1. Classifying the Taxonomy of Dissident Groups in the DRC***

The DRC, like other countries in which Adventism has spread, has been exposed to the development of dissident groups. The dissidents are mainly conservative rightwing agitators.<sup>377</sup> They normally demand reforms and insist that whatever they teach is correct. They are not easily persuaded.

Some dissident groups split off and develop their own beliefs and teachings. The teachings are attached to the alleged "new light" which they sometimes claim to have received from either God or from the writings of EG White or both. Most of the so-called reformed SDA churches operate outside the organic principal churches.<sup>378</sup> Some are "mainly movements transported and transplanted into the church in Africa and whose origins are largely in North America and sometimes Australia",<sup>379</sup> such as the Reformed Adventist, Shepherd Rod, Last day Reformers, Hope International, The Lord our Righteousness, etcetera. A breakdown<sup>380</sup> of the indigenous groups in the DRC is reflected in the following table:

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<sup>376</sup> Declaration received from Ntibilgirwa Simeon, a Pastor from Masisi, a dissident group area in the DRC, North-Kivu, Sept. 2008.

<sup>377</sup> Tumwasi, **2001**: 483.

<sup>378</sup> The Lubero-Beni area dissident groups operate outside the organic principle churches at Kayna, Mupo, Nguva, Maboya, Beni, Mavivi, etc.

<sup>379</sup> Tumwasi, p. 485.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., p. 483.

**Table 3,**

**DRC Dissident Groups**

AREA	GROUP'S NAME	YEAR	MEMBERS	PERCENTAGES, ELEMENTARY STUDY LEVEL	TEACHINGS, PRACTICES/ ACCUSATIONS
Lubumbashi/ Katuba	1.Reformed Adventists  2.Historical Adventists	1980	140	98%	SDA has become an ecumenical church;  External reform of the SDA Church; Elders must be paid by church funds
Mudaka/ Bukavu  Kavuno/ Bukavu	1.Temperance Group  2.Adventist Reformers	1993	150	96%	Women should not preach; Women should not be ordained;  Elders should be paid; Don't accept SDA church manual; SDA church relationship with government criticised
Masisi  Rutshuru  Kalehe	1.Abakusi (the poor)  2.Abagorozi (Reformers)  3. The polygamists  4. The Mana-Munu (man-god)	1990	560	91%	Ascetism: Don't eat meat, salt, cooking oil,...; Don't use any soap, don't take medication from a clinic;  Reform the church which has become ecumenical; Drink only boiled water; Deacons and elders baptise new members; Kneel down every time you pray; Welfare actions to the community;  They are polygamous; They baptize polygamous people;  They are atheists; They believe that humankind is god

Lubero-Beni, Kayna, Mupo, Luseke/Nguv a, Maboya, Mavivi, Mutwanga/ Lume,  Passisi	1. Temperance groups,	1983	600	90%	Lord's Supper conflicts Church leadership criticised
	2. Adventist reformers	2002		95%	Sabbath observance relaxed; Elders and Deacons paid by church funds; Reject theological training.
	3. Polygamists	2000		98%	Relaxation of temperance; Religious liberty condemned; Women's ministry contested; Kneel down every time you pray; SDA tolerance contested; Adopt extremism and fanatism; Religious harassment adopted; Exaggerated temperance practices

Source: The information in table 3 was extracted from interviews with pastors and evangelists from the different areas mentioned above: (Bukavu, Katanga, Masisi, Rutshuru and Kalehe), June, 2005; July 2006 and August, 2009. This list is not exhaustive. and others<sup>381</sup> whose membership may be too insignificant to warrant consideration.

Owing to a deep concern about the spiritual apathy and Laodiceanism that has characterized (as they claim) some of the SDA Churches, certain members have broken away from the main church to form new SDA groups. This allows them to redefine Adventism in a new way so that they can practise their individual versions of the Adventist faith. After some time, they ordain pastors, establish and dedicate churches, set up tithe-receiving treasuries, and even send out missionaries.<sup>382</sup>

<sup>381</sup> These are sample groups in selected Congolese areas since limitations of space will not allow the present writer to name all the groups and areas where they are active.

<sup>382</sup> Gibson, 1997:12.



Seeing themselves as the “Elijahs” of our time, they never cease proclaiming their reformatory work of turning the hearts and minds of the Adventist Church members towards what they term “righteous historical Adventism”. They develop the spirit of condemning those who refuse to subscribe to their understanding and accept their line of argument. In the end they become intolerant and uncooperative.

### 5.1.2. Factors That Nurture Dissidents

Studies have demonstrated that the more effort is expended to “combat” such groups or individuals, the more they gain sympathisers, and the more they grow, the more they become stubborn and obstinate.<sup>383</sup> The confrontational approach has caused some to grow numerically and gain ground. Since this approach has not proven to be the best viable option, it is necessary that religious teachers and ministerial students consider Holmes’ approach that “integration is concerned not so much with attack and defense as with positive contribution of human learning to an understanding of the faith and to the development of a Christian worldview”.<sup>384</sup>

The present writer therefore proposes some general causes that often trigger the growth of dissidence in the SDA Churches in the DRC, as a case study for the readers. Not all the factors given here are present in every case but they do serve as a model.<sup>385</sup>

- **Dissatisfaction with Leadership:** this is prolific in places in DRC where the leadership of SDA Church is in low esteem and is not honoured.
- **Weak, negligible workforce:** Where the workforce is weak, and leaders and members are uneducated regarding current church issues, charismatic individuals take advantage and sow seeds of discord. They

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<sup>383</sup> Holmes, n.d.: 46.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

<sup>385</sup> These factors were almost always present within different dissident groups were visited in the Lubero-Beni area with an emphasis falling on leadership, women ministries, and misunderstanding of certain biblical doctrines and religious practices. See also, *Christ in the Classroom*, Vol. 28, pp. 480-493.

thrive on the ignorance of members who are either new or not properly grounded in the faith.

- **Rejection of ecclesiastical authority:** Out of convenience, would be dissidents opt to disregard church authority. When approached and advised to follow the church's system of governance or to conform to the church order of operation, they become emotional. When the issue is not properly resolved through tact, it degenerates into misunderstanding that sometimes leads to schism.
- **Control of Money:** A member's desire to control church funds when met with resistance from the authorities can also result in misunderstanding. This occurs when the person has some hidden intentions to cheat sincere members by deceit or to control their money. They normally mislead sincere church members by misinforming them that the organised church is not the "storehouse" spoken of in Malachi 3:8-10.
- **Pretentious discovery of new light:** Some begin with the claim of having been endowed with the gift of discernment, either from the Bible or the Spirit of prophecy. When the new light fails the litmus test and the church authority rejects it, dissatisfied members leave the church or they become embittered. Such people consider themselves as divinely appointed "resident" messengers to correct church doctrines and leadership. When the church refuses to listen to them they quit the organised work.<sup>386</sup>
- **Disregard for the spirit of prophecy:** When the church leaders trivialise the counsel of E.G. White on issues such as vegetarianism, cooking on the Sabbath, drinking tea, coffee and other intoxicants, fanatical SDAs react negatively by leaving the Church in protest.
- **Disregard for church structures:** People who have the tendency to break away do not respect church structures. They criticise such matters

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<sup>386</sup> A particular female church member in Bubange SDA Church at Butembo has reported the discovery of new light for several years, and still expects the SDA Church to approve her pretended gift of discernment. (From contacts made in June 2007, October 2008.)

as the subdivisions of Missions, Fields, Conferences, Unions and Divisions of the General Conference. They claim that there is no apostolic precedence for such hierarchical orders that must be followed today. Instead, they promote a priesthood of all believers and call for the abolition of paid clergy.<sup>387</sup>

- **Misinterpretation of the Bible and the spirit of prophecy:** Members who have not been taught properly or are new to the writings of EG White misread and misinterpret her teachings and the Bible to suit their own caprices. The issues that are likely to cause misunderstanding between the organized work and the individuals are mainly lifestyle issues. Some of these issues are dressing, preaching robes, preaching by women, their ministry and ordination, misunderstanding of several religious practices such as worship, the communion service, and so on. It appears that they are not open to new changes and would prefer the status quo to remain always. They forget that the revelation of truth and “knowledge is progressive.”<sup>388</sup>
- **Position seeking:** Disappointed members who lose their positions in the church or are not granted anticipated positions become disgruntled and break away or form factions.
- **Rebellion:** When censured or disfellowshipped for wrongdoing due to a lifestyle that is inconsistent with Adventist teachings, the persons or group may choose to leave the church en masse. They begin to formulate their own doctrines and teachings to suit their personal convictions.

#### ***Reasons Why Dissidents Leave The SDA Church***

Certain accusations have been made against the SDA Church over the years and have at some time or other threatened the unity of the church. Some of these accusations are exaggerated beyond the biblical truths and are therefore baseless.

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<sup>387</sup> Beni dissident group declaration, August, 2005.

<sup>388</sup> EG White, *The Great Controversy*, P. 678. quoted in *Christ in the Classroom*, p. 489.

That “there are considerable differences in what one group emphasizes as compared to another”<sup>389</sup> is also true regarding dissident groups in the DRC. Furthermore, it has been observed that the accusations tend to change, so that “what you saw in one of them twenty years ago differs from what they stress today”.<sup>390</sup>

Here are some of the accusations, among many, that seem to surface periodically

- That the SDA Church is the “fallen Babylon” which EG White spoke of in her writings. They insist that all SDA church members “must come out of her” so that they do not partake in some of her sins. Several passages are quoted from her writings, especially in the Testimonies to the Church, to substantiate their stand on this issue. Some of the quotations are sometimes vague and twisted to suit their interpretations and arguments.<sup>391</sup>
- That the SDA Church, through the influence of certain staff of the General Conference Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty, has collaborated with the Vatican and sought for and been admitted into the World Council of Churches (WCC).
- That the falling of the Adventist Church means that “a remnant within the remnant” must come out of the church in the last days. They see that the time is at hand and they claim to be the “remnant within the remnant” that will come out and reform the organised work.
- That the Spirit of the Lord has since 1888 “gradually been withdrawn from the SDA Church” because of her apostate state that EG White had

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<sup>389</sup> Correspondence with Dr. George Reid, Director, General Conference Biblical Research Institute, November 9, 2000, cited in *Christ in the Classroom*, vol. 38, p. 490.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

predicted. This began when the entire church rejected the 1888 message of Alonzo Jones and JE Waggoner.<sup>392</sup>

Among the recent accusations, dissidents with such mindsets have continued to attack the SDA Church on different fronts in the DRC and Africa. Some of these accusations and misinformation have been refuted through official communications. Others have been ignored. Knowing that these accusations have lost their effectiveness to attract followers, dissidents in the DRC have come up with the following fresh charges:

- SDA Church members and leaders live unhealthy lives. They do not follow a strict vegetarian diet. Meat, coffee, tea and other intoxicants are served at SDA functions, such as camp meetings, sessions, and institutions (secondary schools, colleges, and hospitals).
- The SDA Church should follow the primitive apostolic method of home churches, that is, members meeting, praying, fasting and worshipping in homes similar to the one recorded in Acts 2. They insist that to worship in a church building is the antithesis of true biblical teaching.<sup>393</sup>
- The creation of the department of women's ministry, at all levels, that is, from the General Conference to the local level, is unbiblical. Dissidents believe that the entire concept is Roman Catholic. They argue that if we have a Dorcas Society, there is no need for the women's ministry, and women should neither preach nor be ordained to the ministry.

### **5.1.3. EG White And Dissident Groups / Individuals**

During the time of EG White, there were a great many who were advocating that the SDA Church was in an apostate state. They used her writings to justify their assertions that the SDA Church had become Babylon.

She confronted some of them squarely. There were others with whom she did not spend time to refute their teachings. While in her writings she occasionally

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<sup>392</sup> On the spot, these accusations may vary from one group to another.

<sup>393</sup> *Christ in the Classroom*, vol 38, pp. 492, 493.

spoke of sin and influences in the SDA Church, she in no way advocated breaking away from the organised work.<sup>394</sup> She once wrote that “the church, enfeebled and defective, needing to be reprov’d, warn’d and counseled, is the only object upon earth upon which Christ bestows His supreme regard”<sup>395</sup>. She dissociated herself from those who were promoting divisions. She said that “God is leading, not stray offshoots, not one here and one there”.<sup>396</sup>

She also responded to those who were teaching that the SDA Church was “Babylon” and warned that those who would assert this might better stay at home.<sup>397</sup> She repeatedly emphasised that God’s work must not “be disorganized or broken up into independent atoms”.<sup>398</sup> To her, such people do not bear divine credentials; she emphasised that God does not lead a work that is divided.<sup>399</sup>

## 5.2. Liturgy And Religious Practices

How does the SDA Church exercise its liturgy and religious practices in order to phase out misunderstanding and criticism?

According to Hornby, “liturgy” is a fixed form of public worship used in churches; and “worship”, it is also defined as “reverence, respect or love for God”.<sup>400</sup> It may also constitute an “act or ceremony that shows this reverence to God”.<sup>401</sup>

Of the various definitions listed, the one most relevant to our present search is found in the *Chambers Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions*. “Worship is the acknowledgement, reverence and veneration of a God or gods. It can also be employed in a metaphorical sense to refer to something a person holds dear. Worship involves a diversity of activities such as praise, adoration, confession, thanksgiving, intercession, and petition”.<sup>402</sup> Most religions have developed a ritual

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<sup>394</sup> EG White, 1980: 49.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>397</sup> Id. , 1950: 61. See also p. 31; *Selected Messages* Book 2, p. 390 and Book 3, p. 21.

<sup>398</sup> White, 1950: 53.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

<sup>400</sup> Hornby , “Liturgy”, “Worship” , 1989: 729, 1477.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid.

<sup>402</sup> *Chambers Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions*, 1992 ed., S.V. “Worship and Liturgy”, p. 567.

in order to structure and regulate worship. This ritual often involves re-enacting the core events of the particular religious tradition.

### **5.2.1. Christian Worship**

Christian worship should not be a mere formalism, that enjoins a careful observance of rules, conventions of language or behaviour. It should not be misunderstood and practised as a strict observance of external forms, ceremony, etcetera, often without concern for feeling or meaning but as a mere formality.<sup>403</sup>

To worship or serve God is to honour Him for what He has done. Christian worship is a primary response of praise and thanksgiving for the revelation of God in creation, scripture, Christ and the Holy Spirit.<sup>404</sup> Christian worship, whether public, corporate or individual, typically includes elements of praise (in prayer and song), thanksgiving, confession of sin, and prayers for other people (intercession).

In public worship, the reading of the Bible is usually followed by a sermon (an important emphasis in Protestantism) or other commentary. A celebration of the Lord's Supper or Eucharist might also be included. Public worship is generally led by a minister, a priest or another ordained or authorised person, although there is an increasing trend towards participation by ordinary church members (commonly, if mistakenly, described as the "laity") in parts of the service.<sup>405</sup>

Songs and music might also vary in style. As Christian worship may take place anywhere, its outward forms and the musical, artistic or architectural settings are considered to be important by some Christians and less so by others, who emphasise the inward and spiritual nature of worship.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> *Chambers Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions*, p. 567.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>405</sup> Hustad, , 1995: 10-15.

<sup>406</sup> *Chambers Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions*, s.v. "Worship and Liturgy" (1992), p. 567.

### **5.2.1.1. Women in worship**

In many religious traditions, women have been regarded as being inferior and subordinate to men. Their role in such religious worship has been restricted to menial and secondary roles, and they have not for the most part been permitted to lead religious services.<sup>407</sup> In the SDA Church, however, women have tended to play a more prominent role and often have been involved at the centre of the Divine service in worship. During the special international and national days honouring women, they are also allowed to lead the worship in religious services

Finally, although various communities place an emphasis on how music and songs should be sung (with gestures or not, piano or drum, sounding of trumpets, harps lyres, tambourine and dancing, strivings, flute, and cymbals, etc.) any of this should not be practised as a mere formality, the emphasis should be placed on the presence of the Spirit of Christ who renders Christian worship Holy.<sup>408</sup>

### **5.2.2. Sabbath Observance And Recreational Activities**

Conscious of the fact that the worldwide worshipping community encounters numerous problems in the observance of the Sabbath arising from within a given cultural and ideological context, an attempt will be made to take these difficulties into consideration, particularly with respect to certain dissident groups in the east of the DRC, although it is not the intention of this study to address every question pertaining to Sabbath keeping. Given this background to the modern SDA Church, the question that arises is whether any lack of strict observance of the holy Sabbath has been observed as claimed by dissident groups.

Responding to this question, it should be understood that Biblical principles and guidelines for using the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy should assist the church members as they endeavour to follow the leading of the Lord. According to the SDA Church Statement Guidelines,<sup>409</sup> observance of the Sabbath includes both worship and fellowship. The invitation to enjoy both is open and generous. Sabbath worship directed toward God usually takes place in a community of

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<sup>407</sup> Retersen, Brown, 2009: 4-6.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid.

<sup>409</sup> Dabrowski, ed. 2005: 226,227.



believers and the same community provides fellowship. Both worship and fellowship offer unlimited potential to praise God and to enrich the lives of Christians.<sup>410</sup>

When either Sabbath worship or fellowship is distorted or abused, both praise to God and personal enrichment are threatened. In this way, as God's gift of Himself to us, the Sabbath should bring real joy in the Lord. Thus, to the believer the Sabbath is a delight.

This is why, regarding the observance of the Sabbath, Church members and dissident groups should know that Christians render obedience to God and thus observe the Sabbath in terms of the place in history and the predominant culture where they live. Nevertheless, "any attempt to regulate Sabbath observance beyond Biblical principles by developing lists of Sabbath prohibitions will be counterproductive to a sound spiritual experience."<sup>411</sup> The Christian will test his/her Sabbath experience by principles".<sup>412</sup> He/she [the Christian] should know that it is the main purpose of the Sabbath to strengthen the band of union between him/herself and God. Thus one's activities, guided by Biblical principles and contributing toward such a strengthening, are acceptable.

SDA guidelines still stress that since one can rightly evaluate the personal motives of others, "a Christian must be very careful not to criticize brethren living in cultural contexts other than his/her own who engage in Sabbath recreational activities of which they approve".<sup>413</sup> In order to avoid misunderstandings regarding the Sabbath observance, SDA guidelines on this issue will also be a question to which we next turn our attention in the following chapter.

### **5.2.3. Total Commitment To God**

One of the most important practices recommended to each church member, pastors, congregations, elementary schools and academics, colleges and universities, hospitals and health care institutions, institutions of mass

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<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid.

<sup>412</sup> Dabrowski, p.227.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid.

communication (publishing houses, media centres, Adventist Book centres, and radio stations, conference/mission, or Union; General Conference/Division, and so forth, is a total commitment to God. It is a declaration of spiritual accountability in the family of faith.<sup>414</sup>

The history of the SDA Church is filled with examples of individuals and institutions who have been, and are, vibrant witnesses to their faith. Because of their passionate commitment to their Lord and appreciation of His abundant love, they all have the same goal: to share the Good News with others.

One key Bible text has motivated them. It is a text that fires the souls of SDAs every-where. It is called the Gospel commission, the Mandate from the Lord Himself, as recorded in Matthew 28:19,20, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost". This mandate from the Lord Himself is simple, beautiful, and binding. It sounds wherever SDAs work or congregate.<sup>415</sup>

This challenge calls for a frank and analytical approach in determining where the church is in relationship to the Lord's command. Total commitment to God involves, primarily, complete acceptance of the principles of Christianity as outlined in the Bible and as supported by the Spirit of Prophecy.<sup>416</sup> The following three examples among many others, illustrate how a full commitment to God is implemented practically in the SDA Church:

1. *What does "total Commitment to God" involve for each church member?*<sup>417</sup>

Each SDA believer, whether a denominational employee or layperson, is promised the gift of the Holy Spirit which will enables spiritual growth in the grace of the Lord and which will empower the development and use of spiritual gifts in witness and service. So, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is demonstrated by:

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<sup>414</sup> See *SDA Statement Guidelines*, pp. 237-247.

<sup>415</sup> *SDA Statement Guidelines*, p. 238.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

- Maintaining, where possible, a Christian home where the standards and principles of Christ are both taught and exemplified;
- Experiencing a life that rejoices in the assurance of salvation, is moved by the Holy Spirit to effective personal witness to others, and which experiences in Christ a gracious character that is consistent with God's will as revealed in His Word;<sup>418</sup>
- Using the spiritual gifts of God which He has promised to each one;
- Dedicating time, spiritual gifts, and resources, prayerfully and systematically, in Gospel proclamation and, individually as well as part of a church family, by becoming the Lord's salt and light through sharing His love in family life and the community.
- Participating in a plan for systematic spiritual growth and assessment of one's personal walk with God.

In short, the practice of "Total commitment to God", for every SDA believer, involves letting the Lord Jesus Christ guide his/her whole secular and Christian life. When this is actualized in the lives of Church members, pastors, congregations, and institutions, this guiding principle is binding together the whole SDA World Church, and it conforms with the early apostolic church practices.

#### **5.2.4. Kneeling Attitude During Worship And Prayer**

Praying is not simply a matter of kneeling or standing as some people might think, but is one of the aspects of communion with God and spiritual growth; it should not merely constitute a matter of body position, but rather, a humble spiritual attitude. Therefore, the enquiry "why should believers not always kneel every time they pray?" should not be pertinent among dissident groups.

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<sup>418</sup> Ibid.

According to the Holy Scriptures, SDA Church members have always believed that Christianity is a “life of prayer”.<sup>419</sup> If God’s Word is the bread that nourishes our soul, prayer is the bread that keeps our soul alive. So, prayer is speaking with God, listening to His voice, kneeling in surrender, and rising up in the full empowerment of God’s strength.<sup>420</sup>

Paul considers prayer so important in Christian growth that he mentions six fundamental principles; “pray always;” “pray with supplication in the Spirit;” “pray in the Spirit”, “pray watchfully”, “pray with perseverance”, and “pray... for all saints” (Eph 6:18).

Prayer should not be simply a routine. Unfortunately, like the Pharisee (Luke 18:11), we are often tempted to pray for show, in order to be seen, but effective prayer is self-denying, Spirit-filled<sup>421</sup> and intercessory. As such, prayer is a perpetual communion with God; it is the oxygen of the soul, and without it the soul atrophies and dies.<sup>422</sup>

“Prayer”, says EG White, “is one of the most essential duties. Without it you cannot maintain a Christian walk. It elevates, strengthens, and ennobles; it is the soul talking with God”.<sup>423</sup> As such, prayer may be offered everywhere at every moment, silently or loudly, alone or among the congregation; kneeling, standing or seated when the spiritual attitude of humbling oneself before God is maintained.

On the one hand, we are told that we are to always kneel in prayer; while on the other, we are told that we do not need to always kneel in prayer. We are also given examples of both positions in prayer. How do we harmonise the two concepts?

The solution is quite simple, and it agrees with every statement in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy: when you are in an act of public, group, family, or private

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<sup>419</sup> Ministerial Assn, GC-SDA, 2005, p.158.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid.

<sup>423</sup> E. G. White, 1885, vol. 2, p. 313.

worship of your Creator, you are to descend to your knees when you pray to Him, unless it is not possible to do so or you are physically incapable of doing so. This is the best attitude for worshipping God. Ellen White writes accordingly:

To go down in prayer to God is the proper attitude to occupy... Both in public and private worship it is our duty to bow upon our knees before God when we offer our petition to Him. This act shows our dependence upon God.<sup>424</sup>

But when you are not worshipping God, you do not need to kneel when you pray. Many times throughout the day it is not practical or feasible to kneel when sending up prayers of thanks or requests for help. Some examples and statements could demonstrate how they harmoniously agree with this:

- When we pray throughout the day as we go about our work;
- At mealtimes, before we eat;
- During a consecration call at the close of a meeting; and
- As we lie in bed sick or about to drift off to sleep; and so on.

In God's Word, we are repeatedly urged to pray frequently, even unceasingly (1Thes 5:17). But we need not be on our knees all day long. God never calls us to monasticism. We have a work to do for Him as well as for others in the home and in the community.

In addition, before the Monarch Artaxerxes, Nehemiah darted up a prayer to the God of heaven, before he dared to answer the King. The result was that he obtained all that he asked or even desired (Neh 2:4). This silent prayer was offered to God while Nehemiah was standing before the Monarch.

It is also said that "there are instances where Ellen White stood at the desk while offering prayers of consecration during a church service."<sup>425</sup> Furthermore, there is

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<sup>424</sup> EG White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1885, vol 2: 313, Ps 95:6.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

a footnote which indicates that they did not kneel at the Whites' home when they gave thanks for the food.<sup>426</sup>

Finally in Luke 18:10-13, the following is written: "And the publican, standing far off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying: God be merciful to me a sinner". This man was in the process of coming to God. He did not know how to properly approach Him. If a pagan sat or stood, while in sincere prayer for forgiveness of sin, would not Jesus commend his prayer and receive him? Of course, He would.

So a Christian should pray constantly, with a humble mind and a meek lowly spirit. He/she need not wait for an opportunity to kneel before God. He/she can pray and talk with the Lord wherever he/she may be; it is not always necessary to bow upon his/her knees in order to pray.<sup>427</sup>

#### **5.2.5. Seventh-Day Adventist Philosophy Of Music Practice**

One of the controversial issues among dissident groups and the Church is the philosophy of the practice of music during the worship. Some will shout loudly with drums, very exciting music, dancing, falling down and crying in a confused attitude. Why, they wonder, should the modern SDA Church not adopt such an attitude of worship?

##### ***5.2.5.1. SDA philosophy of music guidelines***

God has woven music into the very fabric of His creation. It is written that when He made all things, "the morning stars sang together and the angels shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). The book of Revelation portrays heaven as a place of ceaseless praise with songs of adoration to God and the Lamb resounding from all (Rev 4:9-11; 5:9-13).

Because God made humans in His image, we share a love and appreciation for music with all His created beings. In fact, music can touch and move us with a

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<sup>426</sup> Ibid., pp. 266, 267.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid., pp. 266, 267.

power that goes beyond words or most other types of communication.<sup>428</sup> At its purest and best, music lifts our beings into the very presence of God where unfailing choirs of angels worship Him in song.

However, sin has cast a blight over creation; the divine image has been marred and well-nigh obliterated; in all aspects God's word and His gifts come to us with a mingling of good and evil. Music is not morally and spiritually neutral. While certain music may be used for the most exalted human experience, other types may be used by the prince of the evil to debase and degrade us, to stir up lust, passion, despair, anger, and even hatred.<sup>429</sup>

Ellen White continually counsels us to raise our sights in music. She writes, "Music, when not abused, is a great blessing; but when it is put to a wrong use, it is a terrible curse".<sup>430</sup> "Rightly employed..., [music] is a precious gift of God, designed to uplift the thoughts to high and noble themes, to inspire and elevate the souls."<sup>431</sup>

As part of religious service, singing is as much an act of worship as prayer. Indeed, many a song is prayer.<sup>432</sup> As our Redeemer leads us to the threshold of the Infinite, flushed with the glory of God, we may catch the themes of praise and thanksgiving from the heavenly choir round about the throne, and as the echo of the angels' song is awakened in our earthly homes, hearts will be drawn closer to the heavenly singers. Heaven's communion begins on earth. Here we learn the keynote of His praise.<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> E.G. White, *Education*, p. 168: "the music is one of the most effective means of impressing the heart with spiritual truth".

<sup>429</sup> *SDA Statement Guidelines*, p. 147.

<sup>430</sup> EG White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols, 1948, Vol 1, p. 497. She also states that in the future, "just before the close of the probation, there will be shouting, with drums, music and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit never reveals itself in such methods, in such a bedlam of noise. This is an invention of Satan to cover up his ingenious method for making of none effect the pure, sincere, elevating, ennobling, sanctifying truth for this time" (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 37).

<sup>431</sup> EG White, *Education*, p. 167.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*, p 168.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*

As SDAs, we challenge all members to choose the good and not the bad, to “say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus” (Titus 2:12, 13).

We believe that the Gospel influences all areas of life. We therefore hold that, given the vast potential of music for good or ill, we cannot be indifferent to it. While realising that tastes in music vary greatly among individuals, we believe that the scriptures and the writings of Ellen White suggest principles that can inform our choices.

In this study, the phrase “sacred music” – sometimes referred to as religious music – designates music that focuses on God and on Biblical and Christian themes. In most cases it is music composed and intended for the worship service, evangelistic meetings, or private devotion, and may be both vocal and instrumental. However, not all sacred/religious music may be acceptable for an Adventist. Sacred music should not evoke secular associations or invite conformity to worldly behavioural patterns of thinking or acting.<sup>434</sup>

#### **5.2.5.2. Principles to guide the Christian**

The music that Christians enjoy should be regulated by the following principles:<sup>435</sup>

- All music that the Christian listens to, performs or composes, whether sacred or secular, will glorify God: “so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). This is the overriding Biblical principle. Anything that cannot meet this high standard will weaken our experience with the Lord.<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> *SDA Statements Guidelines*, p. 148.

<sup>435</sup> These guidelines were approved and voted by the General Conference of SDAs at the Annual Council Session in Silver Springs, Maryland, October 13, 2004. See also *SDA Statements Guidelines*, pp. 148-150.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*



- All music that the Christian listens to, performs or composes, whether sacred or secular, should be the noblest and the best: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is pure, whatever is right, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things”(Philippians 4:8).

On these two foundations – glorifying God in all things and choosing the noblest and the best – depend the other principles listed below for the selection of music by Christians.

- It is characterised by quality, balance, appropriateness, and authenticity. Music fosters our spiritual, psychological, and social sensitivity, and our intellectual growth.<sup>437</sup>
- It appeals to both the intellect and the emotions and affects the body in a positive way. It is holistic.
- Music reveals creativity in that it draws from quality melodies. If harmonised,<sup>438</sup> it uses harmonies in an interesting and artistic way, and employs rhythm that complements the harmony.
- Vocal music employs lyrics that positively stimulate intellectual abilities as well as our emotions and our will power. Good lyrics are creative, rich in content, and of good composition. They focus on the positive and reflect moral values. They educate, uplift, and correspond with sound Biblical Theology.<sup>439</sup>
- Musical and lyrical elements should work together harmoniously to influence thinking and behaviour in harmony with Biblical values.
- Music maintains a judicious balance of spiritual, intellectual, and emotional elements.<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> We acknowledge that in some cultures harmonies are not as important as in other cultures.

<sup>439</sup> SDA. *Statements Guidelines*, pp. 149.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid.

- We should recognise and acknowledge the contribution of different cultures in worshipping God. Musical forms and instruments vary greatly in the worldwide SDA family, and music drawn from one culture may sound strange to someone from a different one.<sup>441</sup>

In short, SDA music-making means to choose the best, and above all, to draw close to our Creator and Lord, and to glorify Him. We should rise to the challenge of a viable alternative musical vision and, as part of our holistic and prophetic message, make a unique Adventist musical contribution as a witness to the world regarding a people awaiting Christ's imminent coming. By this I mean that it would seem to conform with the Holy Scriptures (Matthew 26:30, Marc 14:26) and ipso facto, would have been practised in the early apostolic christian Church.

### **5.2.6. Historical Standard for Temperance Principles**

SDA temperance principles have often been misunderstood in the milieu of the dissident groups; on the one hand, they have been exaggerated and stretched beyond the truth,<sup>442</sup> or on the other hand, adherence to the principles has been slackened, which is to say that emphasis on temperance has been diminished.

Since the very inception of the SDA Church, temperance has been a major focus and the Church has played a key role in struggling against the inroads of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and other drugs. While some Christian denominations have lessened their emphasis on temperance, SDAs have continued to vigorously oppose the use of alcohol, tobacco, and improper drugs. The stand of the Church advocating abstinence from harmful substances is well established in the Church's fundamental beliefs.<sup>443</sup>

#### **5.2.6.1. Behaviour and Salvation**

In determining what is appropriate behaviour, we should avoid the two extremes. The first is accepting the rules and applications of principles as a means of

<sup>441</sup> *SDA Statements Guidelines*, pp. 149, 150.

<sup>442</sup> In several areas of dissident influence the use of any kind of soap, cosmetic oil, sugar, egg, salt and making fire on the Sabbath, has been forbidden as sin.

<sup>443</sup> *SDA Statements Guidelines*, p. 109.

salvation. Paul sums up this extreme with the words, “you who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ, you have fallen away from grace” (Galatians 5:4, NIV). The opposite extreme is believing that since works do not save, they are therefore so unimportant-that a person’s actions really do not matter. Paul addressed this extreme as well: “you, my brothers were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature” (Galatians 5:13, NIV).

While our behaviour and our spirituality are closely related, we can never earn salvation by means of correct behaviour. Rather, Christian behaviour is a natural fruit of salvation and is grounded in what Christ has already accomplished for us at Calvary.<sup>444</sup> If not, “the church becomes not the body of Christ, within which there is mutual love and care, but a collection of atomistic individuals, each of whom goes his or her own way without taking any responsibility of one’s fellows or accepting any concern for them”.<sup>445</sup>

#### ***5.2.6.2. Temples of the Holy Spirit***

Not only the Church, but also the individual Christian, is a temple for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and you are not your own?”(1 Corinthians 6:19)

Christians, then, should practise good health habits to protect the command centre of their temples – the mind, the dwelling place of the Spirit of Christ. For this reason, SDAs throughout the past century have stressed the importance of healthy habits.<sup>446</sup> This emphasis has been rewarded: Recent research reveals that SDAs are less likely than the general population to develop almost any of the major diseases.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> King, 1980: 436.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid.

<sup>446</sup> For the development of the Biblical basic of healthful living in the SDA Church, see Damsteegt, **1977**: 221-240.

<sup>447</sup> Walter, Walton, and Scharffenberg, 1981:4.

As Christians, we are concerned with both the spiritual and the physical aspects of people's lives. Jesus, our pattern, healed "every disease and sickness among the people" (Matthew 4:23, NIV). The Bible views human beings as a unit, a living soul (Genesis 2:7), which means an indivisible unity. By stressing his organic unity, scriptures portray a person as a whole.<sup>448</sup> "This dichotomy between the spiritual and the material is foreign to the Bible."<sup>449</sup> Thus, God's call to holiness involves a call to physical as well as spiritual health. Susannah Wesley, mother of the founder of Methodism, aptly summarised this principle:

Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, decreases the strength and authority of your mind over your body – that thing is wrong, however innocent it may be in itself.<sup>450</sup>

Hence, it is obvious that God's laws, which include the laws of health, are not arbitrary but are designed by our creator to enable us to enjoy life at its best. However, Satan, the enemy, wants to steal our health, our joy, our peace of mind, and to ultimately destroy humankind (John 10:10).<sup>451</sup>

### **5.2.6.3. God's Blessings as a Consequence of Total Health**

Attaining this health depends upon practising a few rather simple but effective God-given principles. The blessing of exercise implies regular exercise for increased energy, a firm body, stress relief and healthier skin<sup>452</sup>; the blessing of sunlight (Genesis 2:5) powers the process that produces nutrients that nourish and energise our bodies; the blessing of water helps to maintain an efficient, happy sense of well-being; and the blessing of fresh air is important, therefore one must do everything possible to secure a generous supply of fresh air daily.<sup>453</sup>

The blessing of being temperate and drug-free stimulates free living. Drugs have saturated our society because they offer stimulation and release from stress and pain. The Christian is surrounded with seductive invitations to use drugs: coffee,

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<sup>448</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 94.

<sup>449</sup> *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 1975, vol.1, p 884.

<sup>450</sup> CB Haynes, 1941: 7

<sup>451</sup> See also *Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, p. 313.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.* See also Kenneth H, Cooper, 1982 [:p].

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid* , p. 314.

tea, and cola contain caffeine,<sup>454</sup> and fruit-flavoured wine coolers contain alcohol. The wise Christian will abstain from all that is harmful, using only that which is good in moderation.

Tobacco in any form is a poison that has a slow harmful effect on physical, mental and normal power. Those who use it are slowly committing suicide,<sup>455</sup> transgressing the sixth commandment: "Thou shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13, KJV). Alcoholic beverages and other drugs should be abandoned.

While Christians are to enjoy the blessings of rest, and that of eating nutritious food, modest dress is also recommended by the scriptures and should be practised by the believers (see Mark 6:31; Gen 1:29; 3:18; 9:3-5).

#### **5.2.6.4. Exaggerated Practices?**

As discussed above, the Enemy is working to bring people to focus on the two extremes mentioned above. In fact this appears to be a characteristic of dissident misperception which becomes a serious problem within the numerous dissident groups' areas in the DRC.

Indeed, excessive involvement in good works as part of one's activity of faith can also lead to self-righteousness. This was also associated with the Pharisees in particular. Although they were sincere and open to new ideas, they are condemned in the Gospels because their tendency to self-righteousness is diametrically opposed to salvation through Jesus Christ alone. In all their efforts to be sincerely broad-minded and law-abiding, they ended up being self-righteous; they thought their efforts deserved salvation.<sup>456</sup>

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<sup>454</sup> Caffeine has also been found to contribute to increased blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, increased gastric secretions, and peptic **ulcer**. It has been implicated in heart disease, diabetes, and cancers of the colon, bladder, and pancreas. Its use during pregnancy increases the risk of birth defects and low-birth weight infants. See O' Brien and Sidney, 1984,:51,52; Baldwin, 1973: 10-13; Gorham, Garland, Garland, et al., 1988: 48- 53. etc...

<sup>455</sup> Regarding the circulatory system, tobacco increases the risk of heart attacks, high blood pressure, and peripheral vascular disease such as Berger's disease, which necessitates the amputation of fingers and toes. etc. See e.g. *Smoking and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General* 1979.

<sup>456</sup> Bagnall, 1995: 53.

Although Pelagianism, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, was a Christian point of view, it contained many errors and is distinctive for its teaching that a person can achieve salvation by his /her own efforts and needs not rely on the grace of God.<sup>457</sup>

Such an attitude has not died. The emphasis placed on “gaining” salvation by means of a variety of practices was opposed by the Reformers. The very encouragement of good living can result in an attitude, even today, that somehow church-going and good works (religious or social) can gain salvation. Pharisees and hypocrites do exist in the present day.<sup>458</sup>

In conformity with the scriptures, the SDA church teaches that practical faith needs to be balanced by genuine, devotional and reflective faith. Devotion to others or to whatever cause is not adequate; involvement in doing good needs to be directed towards the person of Jesus Christ while conforming with the teachings and practices of the early Christian church.

Living with the “mind of Christ” is recommended. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). Under all circumstances, believers should seek to understand and live in harmony with the will and mind of Christ (1Corinthians 2:16).

Ellen White has noted the beautiful results of a life that is lived in this kind of relationship with Christ: “All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, He will so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to his will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience.”<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> Ibid. See also *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, passim.

<sup>458</sup> This does not mean that Pharisees were more actively pharisaical than anyone else, or that they were all hypocrites, but the word has developed a meaning independent of historical fact.

<sup>459</sup> E.G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 1940: 668.

In brief, the acceptance of the Gospel message consists of two elements that counteract self-righteousness: the intellectual process of submission to another person is a sign of self-effacement and the acceptance of Jesus as Saviour obviates any thought of salvation by one's own efforts.<sup>460</sup> The excess of practical faith live with some believers today and they should remember that their faith needs to be balanced regularly by devotion to Christ and submission to God. Every true Christian puts God first in all he does, in all he thinks, in all he speaks, and in all that he desires. He has no other gods before His Redeemer (1 Corinthians 10:31).

### **5.2.7. The Stand Of The SDA Church Regarding Tolerance**

Dissident groups have been preoccupied with the practice and social life advocated by the SDA Church with regards to tolerance. Some complained about showing less tolerance towards dissidents and other denominations by the SDA church members.. Can this statement be verified?

SDAs still support the United Nations proclamation of 1995 as the year of tolerance.<sup>461</sup> The church acknowledges that this proclamation has come at an opportune time when intolerance is abounding on all continents where there is bigoted religious extremism, racism, tribalism, ethnic cleansing, linguistic enmity, and other forms of terrorism and violence.<sup>462</sup>

The Church holds that tolerance, the capacity to endure unfavourable circumstances, is merely a beginning of Christian life. Christians and all people of good will, must go well beyond this negative concept and develop sympathy with people who hold beliefs or carry out practices that not only differ from, but even conflict with, their own. Dialogue is certainly much better than diatribe. Human beings must learn to agree or disagree without violence; they must be able to discuss varying viewpoints without hatred or rancour. This does not mean that

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<sup>460</sup> Begnall, **1995**: 47-58.

<sup>461</sup> This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and was released by the office of the President, Robt S. Folkenberg, at the General Conference Session in Utrecht, the Netherlands, June 29-July 8, 1995.

<sup>462</sup> *SDA Statements Guidelines*, p. 120.

they must be docile or engage in abject submission, but rather adopt an attitude of partnership and respect for the equal rights of others.<sup>463</sup>

In this manner, the SDAs honestly affirm that the complaints by dissident groups regarding intolerance within the Church today seem to be irrelevant to the SDA Church which strongly states that every person has the right and the responsibility to express both ideas and ideals with verve and vigour, but without reaching the boiling point of violent words or actions.

This stand of the SDA Church regarding tolerance has been pragmatically implemented towards dissident groups at Beni, Mupo and Kayna in the North Kivu Association in the DRC; consequently, some of them have been reintegrating with the Church.

Finally, for the church, tolerance at its best, not only means acceptance of other views and people, but also approaching others with benevolence, responsiveness and understanding toward others, that is, every other human being,<sup>464</sup> The SDA believes that this tolerant attitude conforms with the light of the early Christian church where dialogue, sympathy, agreement without violence, and good will prevailed against a negative confliction and misunderstanding in the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15:1-35).

#### **5.2.8. The Lord's Supper Liturgy Conflict**

The Lord's Supper liturgy has also been a misunderstood practice within the dissident groups assemblies in the DRC. Some would like to eat a delicious big meal in place of only a little piece of unleavened bread, while others would simply want to omit the ordinance of foot washing in the liturgy. How then should the Lord's Supper be celebrated and what is the historical development in the SDA Church in this regard?

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<sup>463</sup> *Statements Guidelines and other documents*, p. 120.

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid.*



### **5.2.8.1. The Lord's Supper in the New Testament**

In the New Testament, the Lord's Supper (Grec: Kuriakon deipnon) is the symbolic meal that Jesus instituted on the night of His betrayal to commemorate His death and to foreshadow His coming kingdom (1Cor 11:20).<sup>465</sup> The institution of the Lord's Supper is recorded in Matthew 26:20-29; Mark 14:17-25; Luke 22:14-20 and 1Cor 11:23-25). In both the Gospels and Paul's Epistle, the words of institution contain the same three themes: substitution, covenant, and eschatology. Each of these is found in the mission in the background of the NT. Jesus repeatedly compares His mission (see Isaiah 53:12; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:37); the "blood of the covenant" and the "new covenant" (Exodus 24:8; Mark 14:24) as well as the eschatological banquet (Isaiah 25:6-8; Revelation 19:9; 21:3,4,9-14).<sup>466</sup> are familiar biblical themes

### **5.2.8.2. The Historical Development of the Lord's Supper in the SDA Church**

The Lord's Supper has formed a part of the SDA services of worship from the beginning of the Movement. For example, it is recorded that those attending the early Sabbath conferences held in Volney, New York, beginning August 18, 1848, celebrated the Lord's Supper, which,<sup>467</sup> as the organisation developed, became a regular part of what was termed the "quarterly meeting". With members often widely scattered, this meeting constituted a major institution in the organised church life.

According to the recommendations, the observance of the Lord's Supper was opened with the reading of the membership roll by the church clerk, each member giving testimony regarding his / her Christian experience as his / her name was called (a form of this practice is sometimes still followed in smaller congregations). Thereafter, if an ordained minister or elder was present, the Lord's Supper was celebrated. After sunset, or the next day, a church business meeting would be held. Absence from a quarterly meeting without apology for

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<sup>465</sup> "Lord's Supper" *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1996, 10: 956.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 957.

<sup>467</sup> (2SG 97f.) quoted by *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 10: 937.

nine months was grounds for dismissal from the church.<sup>468</sup> While other aspects of this meeting have largely disappeared, in many congregations, the Lord's Supper is still commonly referred to as the quarterly meeting.<sup>469</sup>

Throughout SDA history there appears to have been little change in the understanding of the meaning of the Lord's Supper. The bread and wine have been seen as symbols of the body and blood of Christ, as reminders of Christ's passion and death. The Lord's Supper is also a witness to the believer's acceptance of Christ as his / her Saviour and of his / her faith in the Second Advent (1Cor 11:26). In the communion service (Lord's Supper), Christ meets His people and the Spirit is present to seal them as His.<sup>470</sup>

### **5.2.8.3. SDA Church Practice of the Lord's Supper**

The "Outline of Doctrinal Beliefs", in the *Church Manual* (1990) states: "the ordinance of the Lord's Supper commemorates the Savior's death; and participation by members of the body is essential to Christian growth and fellowship. It is to be preceded by the ordinance of foot washing as a preparation for this solemn service".<sup>471</sup> The Lord's Supper is to be a joyful season, not a time of sorrow. The preceding foot washing service provides an opportunity for self-examination, confession of sins, reconciliation of differences, and forgiveness. Having received the Saviour, the believers are ready to enter into special communion with their Lord. They turn to His table with joy, standing in the saving light, in the shadow of the cross, ready to celebrate the redemptive victory of Christ.<sup>472</sup>

A typical service would be as follows: A short sermon precedes the ordinance of foot washing for which the men and women meet separately. The church then reassembles, and the minister and elders officiate at the communion table. The bread is uncovered, 1Corinthians 11:23,24 is read, and the prayer of blessing offered; the bread is then broken by the elders and distributed to the

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<sup>468</sup> Ibid.

<sup>469</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 228.

<sup>470</sup> E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 149, 659.

<sup>471</sup> Lord's Supper, "*Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 10:956.

<sup>472</sup> *Seventh-Day Adventists Believe*, p. 229.

congregation by the deacons. A similar procedure is followed for the wine, after the reading of 1Corinthians 11:25,26. In each instance, the congregation waits until all have been served, and then partake of the emblems simultaneously. The service is completed by the singing of a hymn followed by a prayer.

#### **5.2.8.4. Preventing conflict over the Lord's Supper**

Opponents to the traditional SDA format of the Lord's Supper who would like to eat a large meal should acknowledge the symbolic and spiritual characteristics of the communion ordinance since its inception in the SDA Church. Only unleavened bread and unfermented wine were used, leaven being considered a symbol of sin (1Corinthians 5:7, 8), and fermented wine an unworthy representation of the blood of Christ.<sup>473</sup>

The Lord's Supper replaces the Passover festival of the old-covenant era. The Passover met its fulfillment when Christ the Paschal Lamb gave His life on the cross. Before His death, Christ Himself instituted the replacement, the great festival of spiritual Israel under the new covenant. Thus, the roots of much of the symbolism of the Lord's Supper extend back to the Passover Meal.<sup>474</sup> As the Passover festival commemorated Israel's deliverance from Egypt, the Lord's Supper commemorates deliverance from spiritual Egypt, the bondage of sin.<sup>475</sup>

This is the reason that the SDAs practise open communion: "Christ's example forbids exclusiveness at the Lord's Supper. It is true that open sin excludes the guilty, but beyond this none are to pass judgment. God has not left it with men to say who shall present themselves on these occasions."<sup>476</sup>

Contestants who would like to omit the foot washing ritual from the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, should understand that by washing the feet of the disciples when He instituted the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, Jesus made use of a common practice of the day and accorded spiritual significance to it (John13:1-

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<sup>473</sup> "Lord's Supper", *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 10:956.

<sup>474</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 229.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>476</sup> E G White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 656.

17). By this act of humility He subdued the spirit of pride and the desire for supremacy among the disciples.<sup>477</sup>

Generally, the ritual of foot washing was observed in the early church (see Tim.5:10). Commenting on John 13:1-17, some of the early church Fathers, such as Origen, usually considered the practice of foot washing as a spiritual experience and a symbol of humility.<sup>478</sup> However, certain church fathers held other opinions.

One reason that foot washing was not literally and mutually practised was that some congregations interpreted Christ's injunction spiritually, that is, they held that Jesus' example was to be considered as merely a pattern of what the Christian should do and was not necessarily to be a mechanical, physical repetition of the washing of feet.

For Augustine of Hippo, foot washing not only indicated humility among brethren but was to be practised for the purpose of mutual forgiveness. In particular, on the occasion of foot washing, he said, "We know that[...] we were admonished that we should confess our faults one to another, and pray for one another".<sup>479</sup>

Early Adventists debated the question of foot washing among themselves. In 1845 advocates referred to this as "an example for showing our love to the brethren, by an act of humility on the part of the superior,"<sup>480</sup> and held that it was important to observe "all the commands of Jesus, even to washing one another's feet".<sup>481</sup> The practice was sometimes referred to as our Lord's "least commandment".<sup>482</sup>

SDAs observe the ceremony immediately preceding the Lord's Supper; it is called the ordinance of humility. It is suggested that participants correct their misunderstandings and confess their faults one to another at this service. As to

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<sup>477</sup> "Foot Washing," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 10:559.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>479</sup> *On the Gospel of John*, NPNF, 1<sup>st</sup> series, vol.7, p. 306, quoted by *SDA Encyclopedia*, 10:559.

<sup>480</sup> *Day-Star* 8:11, Oct.25,1845, quoted by *SDA Encyclopedia* 10:560.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*, 8:11, Oct. 18, 1845.

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.* 7:8, Aug. 18, 1845.

significance, the following is quoted: “this ordinance is Christ[John13:14-15] appointed preparation for the sacramental service. While pride, variance, and strife for supremacy are cherished, the heart cannot enter into fellowship with Christ. We are not prepared to receive the communion of His body and His blood. Therefore it was that Jesus appointed the memorial of His humiliation to be first observed”,<sup>483</sup> which, the SDAs believe, conforms with the early Christian church practices.

### **5.2.9. Religious Liberty And Relationships With Other Christian Churches**

Many questions have been raised with regards to religious liberty and the relationship of the SDA Church with other Christian churches. Among these is the question of whether the SDA church grants religious freedom or not while others have accused the church of proselytism. How then should the SDA church avoid friction in its relationships with other Christian churches and organisations?

#### **5.2.9.1. Religious Liberty**

SDAs believe that freedom of religion is a basic human right. As Christians, they are persuaded that the dissemination of religious beliefs is not only a right, but a joyful responsibility based on a divine mandate to witness.<sup>484</sup>

An official statement of the basic principles of religious liberty held by SDAs through the years appears in the Working Policy.<sup>485</sup> God has called Christians to evangelism, that is, the proclamation of the good news of salvation in Christ (Matthew 28:19, 20). This is central to Christian life and witness. Thus Christianity, by its very nature, is missionary.

In the context of the dissemination of religion, the issue of “proselytism” has arisen because the term “proselytism” is defined in a number of ways and is increasingly being given a pejorative connotation, associated with unethical

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<sup>483</sup> EG White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 650.

<sup>484</sup> The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM), voted that this statement be released at the time of the General Conference session in Toronto, Canada, June 29-July 9, 2000.

<sup>485</sup> *Working Policy, Seventh-day Adventist Church, East-Central Africa Division of the General Conference, 2007: 297, 298.*

means of persuasion, including force.<sup>486</sup> SDAs unequivocally condemn the use of such methods. They believe that Christian faith and religion are best disseminated when convictions are manifested and taught with humility and respect, and the witness of one's life is in harmony with the message announced, evoking a free and joyous acceptance by those being evangelised.<sup>487</sup>

In reality, however, it has been regrettable to note certain embarrassing circumstances experienced by the DRC SDA Church in 1990 (declared as Year of World Global Evangelism by the GC), in which certain young lay evangelists would not abide by this SDA Church standard regarding religious liberty. During that period indeed, the said lay evangelists extrapolated their own understanding and went beyond the standard requirement. They adopted some unethical methods of persuasion at Lubero, Mulo, Butembo, Oïcha, and other places of the East-Congo area.

In several villages they verbally threatened people to believe and even ridiculed those who could not accept their message. Unfortunately such unpleasant situations may occasionally occur, particularly amongst uneducated SDA members, although the church standards concerning this issue are clearly defined.

Fortunately, in order to prevent such extrapolation in the future, the organisation of the church (North Congo Association) organised lay evangelist training in July 1990 at the Lukanga Seminary.

Evangelistic and missionary activity needs to respect the dignity of all human beings. Individuals need to be truthful and transparent when dealing with other religious groups. Terminology that avoids offending other religious communities should be employed. Statements that are false or ridicule other religions should be avoided.

In short and in accordance with the early church and Biblical religious liberty (Acts 8:20-23), conversion is an experience of the Spirit, and should therefore in

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<sup>486</sup> *Statements Guidelines and Other documents*, p. 86.

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid.*

no way be connected to offering and receiving material inducements. While the right to engage in humanitarian activities must be fully recognised, such action must never be linked to evangelism in a way that exploits vulnerable people by offering financial and material incentives to entice them to change their religion.<sup>488</sup> In this manner, SDAs are committed to serving their fellow human beings by preaching the everlasting gospel to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people (Revelation 14:6).

#### **5.2.9.2. Relationship with Other Christian Churches**

In order to avoid creating misunderstanding or friction in its relationships with other Christian churches and religious organisations, the SDA Church has set forth the following guidelines.<sup>489</sup>

- We recognize those agencies that lift up Christ before men as a part of the divine plan for evangelization of the world, and we hold in high esteem Christian men and women in other communions who are engaged in winning souls to Christ.<sup>490</sup>
- When interdivision work brings the church in contact with other Christian societies and religious bodies, the spirit of Christian courtesy, frankness, and fairness shall prevail at all times.<sup>491</sup>
- We recognize that true religion is based on conscience and conviction. It is therefore to be our “constant purpose that no self interest or temporal advantage shall draw any person to our communion and that no tie shall hold any member save the belief and conviction that in this way that the true connection with Christ is found. If a change of conviction leads a member of our church to feel no longer in harmony with Seventh-day Adventist faith and practice, we recognize not only the right but also the responsibility of that member to change, without opprobrium, religious

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<sup>488</sup> Ibid.

<sup>489</sup> The following is the text of *Working Policy* n<sup>o</sup> 0110 in the General Conference Working Policy.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid.

affiliation in accord with belief. We expect other religious bodies to respond in the same spirit of religious liberty".<sup>492</sup>

- Before admitting to church membership members of other religious organizations, care shall be exercised to ascertain that the candidates are moved to change their religious affiliation by religious conviction and out of regard to their personal relationship with God.<sup>493</sup>
- A person under censure of another religious affiliation for clearly established fault in Christian morals or character shall not be considered eligible for membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church until there is evidence of repentance and reformation.<sup>494</sup>
- The Seventh-day Adventist church is unable to confine its mission to restricted geographical areas because of its understanding of the Gospel commission's mandate. In the providence of God and the historical development of His work for men, denominational bodies and religious movements have arisen from time to time to give special emphasis to different phases of Gospel truth. In the origin and rise of the Seventh-day Adventist people, the burden was laid upon us to emphasize the gospel of Christ's second coming as an imminent event, calling for the proclamation of Biblical truth in the setting of the special message of preparation as described in Bible prophecy, particularly in Revelation 14:6-14 to all humankind.<sup>495</sup>

Any restriction which limits the witness to specified geographical areas therefore becomes an abridgement of the Gospel Commission. In its good relationships with other Christian churches, the SDA Church also acknowledges the right of other religious persuasions to operate without geographic restrictions.<sup>496</sup>

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<sup>492</sup> Ibid.

<sup>493</sup> *Working Policy* n° 110 in the General Conference Working Policy.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid.

<sup>495</sup> *SDA Statement Guidelines and Other Documents*, pp. 219, 220.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid.



In 1980, the General Conference set up a council on interchurch relations in order to give overall guidance and supervision regarding the church's relations with other religious bodies. This council has from time to time authorised conversations with other religious organisations where it was felt that this could prove helpful.<sup>497</sup>

Adventists have not been called to live in a walled-in ghetto, talking only to themselves, publishing mainly for themselves, showing a sectarian spirit of isolation. Furthermore, Ellen White did not believe in the isolationist mentality: "our ministers should seek to come near to the ministers of other denominations. Pray for and with these men [sic], for whom Christ is interceding. A solemn responsibility is theirs. As Christ's messengers we should manifest a deep earnest interest in these shepherds of the flock."<sup>498</sup>

### **5.3. Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed how the SDA Church exercises worship and other religious practices, as well as considering its standards in this regard in order to phase out misinformation and criticism.

The taxonomy of dissident groups which split off and developed their own belief and teachings was presented along with factors that create dissidents and their accusations towards the SDA Church, in order to sensitise church members and readers who may not be aware of some of their activities.

Yet it may be said that till now efforts to "combat" such groups or individuals have not proved the most viable option, and therefore it is necessary that researchers, writers and ministerial students consider that "integration is concerned not so much with attack and defense as with the positive contribution of the faith and to the development of a Christian worldwide".<sup>499</sup>

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<sup>497</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>498</sup> Ellen G. White, 1885, vol. 6, p. 78.

<sup>499</sup> A Holness, *The Idea of Christian College*, n.d.: 46.

This is why the standards pertaining to certain SDA liturgical and religious practices were presented in terms of which quality and purity can be measured, and relationships and unity among believers, themselves and God, can be defined.

Thus Christian worship and all other religious practices should not be a mere formality but a service, an honour to the Lord. As such, real “worship is a verb”,<sup>500</sup> and congregations should be led to creatively experience worship rather than merely observing it, because this is necessary for spiritual growth, and understanding of others, which is more important.

If SDAs are convinced that dissidents will always be with them, and in order to address misunderstanding and criticism, then the following are some integrative suggestions<sup>501</sup> for evangelists, religious teachers, SDA Church leaders and lay members:

- **Identify reasons for growth of the number of dissidents.** It is necessary to continually study the factors that create them and be proactive before they become uncontrollable.
- **Adopt a non-confrontational approach.** Confrontation should be abandoned. Regrettably, this aggravates the issue and complicates matters with far-reaching consequences that are always costly to the SDA Church.
- **Seek a point of dialogue.** The church must seek a point of contact to enter into dialogue with dissidents whenever an opportunity arises in order to clarify certain issues. They must be given a hearing so as to understand them so that their objections can be answered effectively.
- **Development of good character.** The life and character of church members must be above reproach. It must be consistent with church

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<sup>500</sup> Cress, 1995: 29.

<sup>501</sup> See also Tumwasi, 2001: 496-497.

standards and teachings. This will discourage dissidents from picking on minute details and attacking the church; and finally,

- **The SDAs must be proactive.** Since most of the accusations are based on misinformation and are defamatory, the SDA Church in the DRC should not waste time, energy and resources in polemic defence. Rather, it should endeavour to stay on track in order to perfect the characters of the members, consistent with the Biblical teachings, the spirit of prophecy and the Adventist standards.

Finally, this chapter has pointed out that the SDA Church grants religious liberty and encourages good relationships with other Christian churches and organisations, and this the writer considers it would be in conformity with the principle of love as recommended by the Lord to the early apostolic church (2 John 5,6).

However, after all these practical challenges, how was the planting of the SDA church in the DRC effected? This is the issue to which we turn our attention in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **THE PLANTING OF THE SDA CHURCH IN THE DRC**

#### **6.1. Introduction**

This chapter describes the planting of the SDA Church in the Congo and the further development of the gradual expansion of the missionary inreach which can be considered as a beginning of the concept of the problems encountered (see chapter 7) with regards to mission, doctrine, and leadership.

As a result of the effective strategies used by the Church's pioneers, the preaching of the Gospel spread to the Katanga, the North-Kivu, and the West-Congo and Upper-Congo territories despite the many obstacles encountered by the first missionaries there. Slowly but progressively, through the teaching of Biblical doctrines, spiritual education and chapel services, the establishment of primary and secondary schools, the rooting of the SDA Church in Congo became a reality. However, the slow-down in the secondary and higher education improvement programme resulted in serious, unpleasant problems owing to a lack of well trained SDA intellectuals for many years which later favoured the rise of dissident groups in the Churches.

#### **6.2. The Background Of The Mission In Congo**

The former Belgian colony of the Congo, gained independence on June 30, 1960 (not to be confused with its smaller neighbour, Congo Brazzaville), is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean, Cabinda, the Congo (Brazzaville), the Central African Republic, Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Zambia, and Angola. It

occupies an area of 2.3 million square kilometers and housed an estimated population of 62 million in 2007.<sup>502</sup>

The population of Congo comprises more than 200 African tribes, mostly of Bantu origin. Seventy percent of the people are Christians, 10 percent are Muslims, and the rest, animist.<sup>503</sup> The early 1960s were marked by much civil war and bloodshed, while the economic difficulties, prevalent in the 1980s, further deteriorated during the 1990s.

At first, the Christian faith had already entered the ancient kingdom of Kongo as far back as the 15th century AD. Steven Lindeman penned the following:

[Diego Cao] escapes with four notables. The four notables (...) are taught Christian religion. In 1487, Diego Cao takes back the hostages in their country. They become first missionaries of Christian faith<sup>504</sup>.

Nevertheless, the SDA church began its activities in 1921 when the missionaries Christopher Robinson and his wife opened a church in Songa, 650 kilometers north-west of Lubumbashi, in the Katanga province among the Baluba people.<sup>505</sup> In 1924, the SDA church opened another church at Bigobo and later, in 1927, the Kirundu church in the Upper Congo Province.

### **6.3. The SDA Church Planting In The Katanga Territory**

The main task of the SDA church continues to be to preach the Gospel to all humankind without discriminating against race, nations, tribe or language (Revelation 14:6,7). In these circumstances, the first missionaries desired to spread the evangelical message and reach everyone in his/her town, village and home as well (Matthew 28: 19-20).

The Katanga Territory located in the South-East Congo and bounded by Zambia in the south received the first Adventist missionaries from South Africa. In 1920

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<sup>502</sup> *SDA Yearbook*, 2007, pp.57, 62.

<sup>503</sup> *SDA Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, p. 35.

<sup>504</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 1, p. 179.

<sup>505</sup> Don F. Neufeld and Neuffer, Julia (eds) *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, 1966, p. 300.

Christopher Robinson and Gilbert Willmore crossed the frontier of Congo looking for a new area for a mission station. This step was the beginning of SDA work in the Belgian Congo (the actual DRC).<sup>506</sup>

After some investigation, G Willmore returned to South Africa leaving Gilbert Robinson and his wife in the Congo. This couple travelled and reached the Songa area in the Katanga Territory among the Luba people where they planted the first mission station of Songa in 1921.

Two years later, Raleigh Robinson (brother of Gilbert Robinson) and his wife arrived at Songa in order to support the missionary work. Yet another two years later, Le Butt followed and established the second station, the Katanga Mission (now South Katanga Field) in 1925 on the outskirts of Lubumbashi, and opened a school.<sup>507</sup>

At that time (1925) the work in Belgian Congo was under the direction of the Zambezi Union, with its headquarters in Bulawayo, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). In the same year, the Congo Union was established, with its headquarters in Elizabethville (Lubumbashi).

Between 1932 to 1961, ten Adventist mission stations were established in the Belgian Congo with four of them in the Katanga Territory: Songa station (1921); Katanga station(1925); Bigobo Station(1931), and Lubumbashi Station(1950). Each of these mission stations did have opened a primary school, some churches and dispensaries.<sup>508</sup>

In 1954 the Association of Congo was established. It comprised the province of Katanga and the territories of Kasongo and Kabambare in the district of Maniema, Kivu province. Its headquarters were situated in Elizabethville (Lubumbashi) and later transferred to Kamina in 1959. It included the Songa, the

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<sup>506</sup> Ibid.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid, p. 936.

<sup>508</sup> Information given by N. Nyembo Mwema, former retired Union President of the Congo Union, Lubumbashi, 2004.

South Katanga, the Bigobo (1930) and the Lulengele stations in the Kasay province.<sup>509</sup>

#### **6.4. The SDA Church Expansion In The West Congo Territory**

The West Congo Field (established in 1961) comprised the Equatorial, Kasai and Kinshasa provinces. SDA work was instituted in this area through the work of immigrants from a point on the River, 240 kilometers east of Kisangani. In 1921 they belonged to a group of radicals that had been exiled there by the government from their homes near the mouth of the Congo River.<sup>510</sup> D.E. Delhove, then working at nearby Kirundu Station, held evangelistic meetings among these people at Lowa, and organized a church.<sup>511</sup>

In 1954 a group of government officials sent to examine the exiles were so impressed by the transformation in the lives of the SDA converts that they recommended that they be permitted to return to their former homes. Many of those repatriated in 1955 returned to the village of Nkwanza, about halfway between Kinshasa and the coast. Here an attempt was made to open new work as well as to shepherd the members who had moved back to the Bas-Congo.<sup>512</sup> After considerable difficulties, a church, a large primary school, and workers' homes were constructed at Nkwanza.

The Lulengele station in the West Congo Field was established in 1949 in the centre of Congo (DRC) among the Lulua people, 80 kilometers west of Kananga in the province of Kasai. The training school for the West Congo Field, formerly at Songa, was operated at Lulengele until 1960. In spite of much civil disorder caused by tribal fighting in the 1950s, the Lulengele station continued to attract students from many areas.

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<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>510</sup> See also *SDA Encyclopedia*, vol. 11 p. 937.

<sup>511</sup> This information was confirmed by Mrs and Elder Ndinga Mbote, a retired pastor of West Congo Mission as eyewitnesses of the event, Kinshasa, April 1992.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*

During the civil disorder after 1960, when many workers were forced to flee, national leaders continued the work, although for nearly three years no pastor was able to visit the isolated groups. In 1973 the work in the Kasai province was separated from the West Congo Field and became known as the Kasai project, under the Congo Union administration.<sup>513</sup>

## **6.5. The Planting Of The SDA Church In The North-Kivu Territory**

The North Congo Field (organized 1956) included the Eastern province,(except for the district of Kisangani), and the territories of Beni and Lubero in the North-Kivu province. The field contained three stations, with headquarters at Rwese.

The Rwese station is situated on the top of a range of mountains at an elevation of about 7500 feet (2300 meters), and consequently is cool even though it lies within a mile (1.6 kilometers) of the equator. AA Mater, Sr. established this station in 1941. The Banande people live in the area, which is heavily populated. The work of the Rwese station extends north to the Rwenzori Mountains and to the East Congo Field in the South. The Anderson Memorial Church is situated at the station, a landmark built with a donation by WHAnderson, a veteran SDA missionary.<sup>514</sup>

The Nebasa station, established in 1948 in the forest near the northern border of Congo, and the Talla station, “the mission of light”, established in 1949 among the Alur people near Mahagi, on the border of Uganda, north of Lake Albert, were built on land grants obtained by DE Delhove, then a member of the Governor General’s Council.<sup>515</sup>

The East Congo Field (established in 1960) embraced the province of Kivu (except the territories of Beni and Lubero in the north), and the district of

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<sup>513</sup> This information was received from Pastor Kubi Mamba converted with all the churches he was leading during the Kasai project crusades, Babcock University, 1993.

<sup>514</sup> WH Anderson is still well known at Rwese by many of those old people still alive, such as Madiri, Nzingene, Sihingirwa and others which the researcher interviewed, and his works are still appreciated.

<sup>515</sup> *SDA Encyclopedia*, vol 11, p. 396.



Kisangani in the Oriental province. In the late 1940s and early 1950s many immigrants, including many SDAs from overpopulated northern Rwanda, moved into the less-populated areas near Masisi in Congo.<sup>516</sup> The first SDA worker to be sent into the area was J. Ndenziki. A district was organised, and in 1955 a station was built. In 1960 the district was organised into the Central Kivu Field and expanded to include the Kirundu station.

The Kirundu Station (established 1927) was cut out of the thick Ituri forest, 230 kilometers southeast of Kisangani, to serve the Malengola and other small tribes. A girls' school which was opened there contributed towards raising home standards and causing the gospel to be more effective. Throughout the mid-1900s, the Kirundu station included many churches and companies on the way to Kisangani and southward to Lowa and beyond along the Congo River.<sup>517</sup>

Fizi district, near the northwest coast of Lake Tanganyika, was founded in 1951, when a student from the area returned from three years in school at Bigobo Station and began to preach and conduct a school. In response to subsequent appeals, more workers – a pastor and three teachers – were sent there. In 1960 it became part of the central Kivu Field.<sup>518</sup>

#### **6.5.1. 1939: North Kivu Exploration Mission**

In 1939, a delegation of explorers arrived Lubero in the North Kivu province. It comprised two white missionaries, AA Matter, Sr and DE Delhove. Each of the two was accompanied by two black people, Methusela Masumbuko and Simon Ntuzikwira both of whom were Rwandese. Matter, who spoke Kinyarwanda fluently, was a Swiss National who arrived via Mugonero (Ngoma), Rwanda. He accompanied Delhove, a Belgian missionary from Kirundu (upper Congo Province) where Swahili was spoken; consequently, he spoke Swahili fluently, Delhove was accompanied by Samuel Karekezi and Eliezer Rwanyonga, also Rwandan nationals. Once this delegation of six people arrived in Lubero, they

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<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>518</sup> *SDA Encyclopedia*, vol. 11, p. 397.

entered into a contract with the local administrative authority and eventually were sent to Vurundi – Bukokoma, at Luotu.<sup>519</sup>

### **6.5.2. 1940: Temporary stay at Vigango (Luotu)**

The abovementioned delegation sent the report to the hierarchy concerned. The following year, that is 1941, other SDA Missionaries, M Cambridge and M Amba, a pastor, arrived in the area. Their purpose was to support temporary pioneer Missionary, Matter at Vigango. These three white missionaries spent six months at Bigango (Bukomerwa)<sup>520</sup>. Their team acquired reinforcements from the four Rwandese Evangelists who participated in the exploration of the area: Samuel Karekezi, Eliezer Rwanyonga, Simon Ntuzikwira and Methusela Masumbuko at Kamole.

### **6.5.3. Biblical Doctrine Teachings**

These Evangelists embarked on teaching Biblical doctrine in the villages to which they were sent. Those who received the message were categorised into two groups: the listeners (Wasikiaji) and members of the tested people (Wajaribiwa). The listeners had to study the book that teaches the laws concerning and guidance of a Christian: “Akatikisimo oko Banande”,<sup>521</sup> Volume 1. A listener was someone who was freely asked to participate in the service of the church for a period of more or less a year. It was only after baptism that one could become a Christian, a member of the SDA church.

Before the baptism, if at the end of this study of doctrines, the convert wanted to be baptised, he/she had to sit for a test of sixty questions on the basic doctrines

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<sup>519</sup> This information was confirmed by Elder Nzingene, a retired pastor of the North-Kivu Association as eyewitness of the event, Interview, August, 2008 at Rweze.

<sup>520</sup> In fact, Bigango and Bukomerwa are not two separate villages. They are both situated on the same hill. However, for people **born there**, Bigango is the name of the village while Bukomerwa is the name of the site of the football stadium..

<sup>521</sup> The lessons for the newly converted people were written in the book of Catechism in two volumes, edited in the Nande language at Gitwe, in Rwanda. The first volume comprised directives called “Maziwa” (milk), for the listeners. The lessons in the second volume were called “Chakula” (food), and were reserved for the baptismal class. Cf. statement from the retired pioneers of the SDA movement at Rweze, Headquarters of the North-Kivu Association, East Congo Union mission.

of the SDA church, Volume 1. If his / her results were satisfactory, s/he was admitted to class two and continued with the study of the book of doctrine “Akatikisimo oko Banande”, Volume 2. Thus, the first Biblical harvest was the SDA church’s implanting in the Lubero and Beni territories. Later on this constituted the nucleus of the association of churches in the North East Congo. This was the result of the work of these first evangelists. The responsibility of white missionaries was to supervise the work; while they would also evangelise the local population by means of organised crusades in the Bukomerwa stadium.<sup>522</sup>

#### **6.5.4. 1941: First Momentum Of Missionary Work<sup>523</sup>**

In 1941 the Black evangelists remained alone in the newly created camps. The White missionaries returned to their headquarters and could only pay brief visits to these newly planted churches. Delhove visited the area more frequently. Since these Black missionaries wanted to prove their total commitment and determination in the work of the Lord, they intensified their activities so much so that they occasionally encountered resistance.

##### **6.5.4.1. *Obstacles encountered by Pioneers***

During their first days of teaching the Biblical doctrines in the villages, the Black evangelists soon encountered problems; some doctrines seemed a bit different from the ones that were taught by the Catholic and other missionaries in the villages. For instance, the Adventist evangelists encouraged people to own a Bible and read it, something that appeared to be unusual at that time.

Teaching about temperance, abstinence from alcohol and tobacco, making a distinction between clean and unclean foods (Deut. 14), the recommendation of a Saturday Sabbath as the seventh-day of the week and a day of rest, all seemed a bit different. In fact, these controversial doctrines, compared with the ones that

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<sup>522</sup> Ibid.

<sup>523</sup> Bahati M Vitsange, information extracted from the historical archives of the NAK; June 2003.

had been in place, created conflicts with regards to building churches in the area, conflict among the followers and a shortage of land for building.<sup>524</sup>

Catholic missionaries against the planting of a SDA church in the area were so hostile that they even had to seek the assistance of local political and administrative authorities in order to silence or completely bar all the SDA church's activities and its establishment. Nevertheless, the Lord protected the birth of the new church;<sup>525</sup> subsequently, several churches were planted in the area, for instance, at Kisinga (1941), Rukemba (1941), Kakohwa (1942), Kamole and many others. The numbers of newly converted members increased. As a result, the Headquarters of the SDA churches in the East / North Congo were established at Rwese in the Lubero territory. Thus the first missionary district had been founded at Rwese and Samuel Karekezi was designated to be the first district leader in 1942.

#### **6.5.4.2. *Spiritual education and chapel services***

The first SDA missionaries encouraged the spiritual education of the newly converted people and the spiritual growth of their children. They supported the development of the church as well as of society in general. Every morning and evening, the family committed itself to the hands of the Lord so that He could guide their activities. The children in earlier years were initiated as regards manual, intellectual and spiritual work. They were also encouraged to participate in Adventist youth meetings led by Missionary Volunteers (MV), and also to become members of the Sabbath school.<sup>526</sup>

Educational service was always considered to be the right hand of evangelisation within the newly planted SDA church in the East Congo. In 1942, Missionary Delhove initiated some schools in order to train as many catechists as possible in order to quickly preach the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. These

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<sup>524</sup> Ibid.

<sup>525</sup> This information was confirmed by both Elders Sihingirwa and Nzingene, retired pastors of NKF, Rwese. Interview, August, 2008.

<sup>526</sup> Nzingene, Retired pastor, Interview: August, 2008.

schools were called “Chapel schools” because they took place in chapels. The very first schools of this kind were planted at Rwese, at Kaseghe and at Kakohwa.

The teaching language in such schools was “Kiswahili”, regarded as the “lingua franca’ for the local population who spoke Kinande to the evangelists whose mother tongue was Kinyarwandwa and to the white missionaries who spoke Indo-European languages.<sup>527</sup>

The curriculum that was introduced was approved by both the white missionaries themselves and the colonial administration. The spiritual preparation of candidates was the main objective of the programme. Religion was a matter of choice. The programme also placed an emphasis on handwriting, reading and arithmetic. It furthermore comprised elementary courses such as the history of the Bible and religion, hygiene, social sciences, Kiswahili, manual work, carpentry, bricklaying, etcetera.

This training programme took three years to complete. The courses covered during the first two elementary years were taught by an evangelist. During the third year, the subjects covered during the two previous years were taught in greater detail. A chapel school teacher taught three different classes in the same classroom at the same time, that is, the first, second and third years.<sup>528</sup> The number of students could not exceed twenty in each of the three classes. One must say that in those days, there was a passionate love for studying. Students were motivated by the prestige of the work during that time. Nurses, teachers, agriculture officers, etcetera were the more privileged people in the community. A pastor was the most respected person in the church.

#### **6.5.4.3. The first primary school: The primary school of Rwese**

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<sup>527</sup> Information extracted from the historical documents of the NKA Bureau of Education, May 2004.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid.

The performance of the final year students at the school chapel was always poor. In fact, the students not only faced a new faith at an advanced age while they had already been steeped in practical traditional beliefs both spiritually and mentally, but even the teachers had not been trained with regards to teaching methodology that would assist in achieving better results. Consequently, it was necessary to engage a capable native person to assist the white missionaries in dealing with the challenge of education and evangelism, and to initiate a programme for the Congolese nationals who wanted to advance their learning<sup>529</sup>

It was in this context that the missionary Delhove founded the primary school of Rwese in 1944.<sup>530</sup> The white missionaries revised the lessons because the teaching methods had focused on memorising rather than comprehending the material. Moreover, during the Bible preparation years, students were taught, among others, French, Kiswahili, history of the Adventist religion, hygiene, geography, natural sciences, physical education, drawing and pedagogy. Reading and writing were taught throughout the three years. In order to move from the chapel school to the primary school, a student was required to sit for a test after the three years at the former school. The fourth year, fifth year and finally the sixth years were taught at the primary school<sup>531</sup>.

Once a student was admitted to the fourth year, s/he would feel proud to be a member of an important class in the society; he would be spared from paying any tax while the benefits and other privileges were known as “article nine”. This person was regarded as an authority and respected in the village.

#### **6.5.4.4. First pastoral school at Rwese in 1950**

In order that the SDA missionaries might offer Congolese nationals access to pastoral ministry and church development, religious training was organised. The Swiss missionary, Matter and the American Marsh founded the pastoral school of Rwese in 1950. The curriculum of that school placed much emphasis on the

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<sup>529</sup> See the historical documents of the NKA Bureau of Education, May 2004.

<sup>530</sup> Ibid.

<sup>531</sup> From Education Archives, North Kivu Association, May 2004.

Bible, the methods of evangelism, the history of the church, rhetoric, practical pastoral work, temperance, church administration, religious music, educative meetings, languages and pedagogy.<sup>532</sup>

The pastoral school of Rweze contributed much to the education of men who later became prominent evangelists, well known pastors and church leaders as well as talented spreaders of evangelical literature. According to the documents in the Department of Pastoral Association, the numbers of students enrolled at the school from 1950 to 1964 are depicted in the table below:

**Table 4**

**Number of Students/Rweze Pastoral School (1950-1964)**<sup>533</sup>

<b>Years</b>	<b>1950-51</b>	<b>1951-52</b>	<b>1952-53</b>	<b>1953-54</b>	<b>1954-55</b>	<b>1955-56</b>	<b>1956-57</b>
Number of students	3	10	13	15	16	18	22
<b>Years</b>	<b>1957-58</b>	<b>1958-59</b>	<b>1959-60</b>	<b>1960-61</b>	<b>1961-62</b>	<b>1962-63</b>	<b>1963-64</b>
Number of students	27	31	36	39	43	47	53

Source: Table presented by the Department of Pastoral Association, NKA, 1950-1954.

The chart above indicates that the number of students enrolled at the pastoral school increased year after year. This suggests that the ministries of the pastor and evangelist were highly regarded as professions. In fact, the work that those two missionaries carried out was sacred. The work of feeding the children of God afforded them a privileged status in society. In the same spirit, each family wanted at least one of his/her sons to attend that school. Unfortunately, when the rebellion began in 1964, the teachers, who were all white missionaries, had to leave and the school ceased its activities.<sup>534</sup>

Church employees who were formed in this school fell into three categories, not according to their intellectual knowledge, but in a manner that was consistent

<sup>532</sup> Ibid.

<sup>533</sup> From files of the Department of Pastoral Association, North Kivu Association, 1950-1964. Cf. Bahati M. Vitsange, op. Cit, p. 33 (underlining applied).

<sup>534</sup> Ibid.

with their behaviour and the degree of their spiritual belief. Firstly, those who proved to be peace loving and devoted with excellent behaviour were immediately given jobs by the church as pastors / evangelists, a profession desired by everyone at that time. Secondly, those displaying good behaviour were eligible for a scholarship for further studies in Rwanda. That appeared to be a strategy employed by the missionaries to control the morals and spiritual life of the employees. Thirdly, in any case, if one could not meet these conditions, however intelligent he/she was, he/she would not be employed by the church. Those who displayed any ill discipline were abandoned despite their intellectual capacities. The church sought exemplary employees for the society with regards to their spiritual life and morals. Such people would have to seek employment for themselves, either in the government or elsewhere for the rest of their life.<sup>535</sup>

#### **6.5.4.5. SDA secondary schools 1950-1955**

During this period, no SDA secondary school had been founded in the area. The church in the North Congo Mission trained its cadres abroad. Pastors were trained at Gitwe (Rwanda) and nurses, either at Songa (Katanga Province) or Mugonero (Rwanda), while public health as well as civil engineering trainees were sent to Tanzania, until 1968 when the first secondary school was founded at Lukanga.<sup>536</sup>

In conclusion, the penetration of the SDA Movement in the East / North Congo territory (1939 – 1959) was the recent work of both committed White and Rwandese missionaries and converted national evangelists who, in spite of many obstacles and opposition encountered in their daily activities, worked courageously under divine protection. The new SDA church expanded rapidly throughout the country and soon national evangelists worked in the newly planted churches.

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<sup>535</sup> From files of department of education NKA, May, 2004.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid.



#### **6.5.4.6. Factors contributing to the rapid expansion**

In fact, a change in the strategies employed for evangelism was one of the factors that contributed favourably towards this expansion. The following other factors contributed to the rapid expansion:

(1). *The itinerant ambulance.* During their visits in the country, White missionaries offered free medical treatment and drugs to sick people without any religious or ethnic discrimination. Before the treatment of sick people, a brief prayer was offered and a short meditation from the Bible directed their attention to Jesus, the Excellent Doctor. As soon as they had recovered, people were interested to know much more about this Jesus who had healed them. This strategy increased the popularity of the new Church, and people became more and more favourable towards the SDA church; and often accepted the invitation to be baptized.<sup>537</sup>

(2). *The chapel schools.* In 1941, White missionaries initiated chapel schools; the teachers were Black evangelists. As mentioned above, these schools utilised the chapels at Rweze, Kaseghe and Kakohwa, and because they were open to anyone interested in the courses offered, these schools assisted in the training of local evangelists and spread the Adventist faith in the country.

(3) *The transmission of the Biblical message by the pioneer evangelists* was based on the Biblical texts; they could not preach anything without biblical support, thus their teachings were credible and accepted by many listeners in spite of hostile views of antagonists against the new message.

### **6.6. Recent Developments In The Church**

During the period following independence in 1960, massive changes took place. Africans were placed in charge of most of the stations. Some of these leaders, with little or no training, valiantly continued in spite of the trouble caused by

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<sup>537</sup> This custom of the first pioneers missionaries still continues in Health Centers in DRC.

marauding soldiers and other intruders. None of the stations were destroyed, although some looting did take place. The Union office and mission homes in Lubumbashi were badly damaged during the fighting and completely looted; however no workers lost their lives. Church members in some areas were scattered as a result of tribal and political conflict, others fled to their ancestral homes where no SDAs had ever lived.<sup>538</sup>

During this period the message penetrated the Lubumbashi and Kinshasa radio stations. Following the opening of the stations in the big cities of Bukavu, Kisangani, Kananga, and Mbuji-Mayi, Swahili programmes were added to the French ones. In July 1966, the Kirundu station was reached using a Union Cessna 180 aircraft, where, in spite of the unrest, the membership was found to have remained faithful, despite much suffering and persecution.<sup>539</sup>

The Lulengele station in the Kasai, was reactivated in 1967 and work began on a airstrip. The secondary schools at Lukanga, Kivu, and Songa in the Shaba (Katanga) province were converted into Union institutions. Evangelistic efforts in Bukavu and Goma began the work in these important cities. In November 1969 a delegation of 17 people arrived at Kalehe after having walked more than 500 kilometers through the forest to plead for the message of the Gospel to be taken to the remote Shabunda region, which followed as a fruitful effort in 1971.<sup>540</sup>

At that time (1971), the headquarters of the East Zaire Field was moved from rural Nyamitaba to Goma, while in the North at Rwese, a national, Nyembo Mwema, replaced the expatriate president of the North Zaire Field. The year 1972 marked the beginning of the Kasai project, where, as a result of the compulsory reregistration of all churches into the “Eglise de Christ au Zaire” (ECZ), Church of Christ in Zaire, the attention of thousands was directed to the

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<sup>538</sup> This information was confirmed by N.Nyembo Mwema, former retired Union President of the Congo Union, Lubumbashi, 2004. See also, *SDA Encyclopedia*, Vol. 11, p. 937.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*

SDA Church. This laid the foundation for an ever-expanding work in the Kasai province.<sup>541</sup>

The Kasai project was further enriched by the opening of a pastoral training school. Subsequently in 1973, Mokotsi Mbirukira was selected as Union President, the first national to hold this position. Since this date (1973) the Zaire union has experienced a significant growth in membership. This necessitated a reconfiguration of field territories. In 1974, Kisangani was confirmed as the headquarters of the Upper Congo Association, with Ruterahagusha, its first president.

In the same year (1974), the SDA Church statistics show that the Republic of Zaire (actual DRC) was reorganized into one Union mission called the “Zaire Union Mission” administered by the Trans-Africa Division,<sup>542</sup> with 199 churches and 30 591 members, recorded in the following tables:<sup>543</sup>

**Table 5**

**Zaire Union Mission in 1974: Reconfigurative Table of Territories**

Field/Association	Churches	Members	Schools	Evangelist	Pastors
East-Zaire Field/Goma	117	17, 790	75	32	28
North-Zaire Field/Rwese <sup>544</sup>	36	4, 410	25	32	28
South-Zaire Field/Kamina <sup>545</sup>	42	7, 059	8	21	22
West-Zaire Field/Kindu	2	250	1	2	2
Kasai Project/Lulengele	2	1, 082	10	9	-
<b>Total, Zaire Union Mission</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>30, 591</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>80</b>

Source: Table 5 as presented from the files of the Zaire Union, ZUM,2003.

The statistics in Table 5 indicate a significant growth in membership, and in the number of churches and schools, mostly at the primary level. Only two secondary

<sup>541</sup> See above, the conversion of Pastor Kubi Mamba, p. 244.

<sup>542</sup> See the *SDA Yearbook*, 1974.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

<sup>544</sup> Only one secondary school at Lukanga out of 25 registered schools, all the others were primary or chapel schools.

<sup>545</sup> Only one secondary school at Songa out of 8 schools registered.

schools had been established in the entire country of Zaire. These were situated at Songa in the South Zaire Field serving the North and the Central Field/Association, and at Rweze in the North Zaire Field, serving the North East and the Upper Congo Territory. Indeed, this was not sufficient to provide education for the SDA youth at the secondary school level.

In this situation, many young people from the SDA were not able to study at a SDA secondary school, owing to all the disastrous consequences that the SDA Church in Zaire had experienced with regards to church development, administration and religious understanding, after the departure of the foreign missionaries; when leaders with little or no training carried on the evangelistic ministry and the administration of the Church.

Nowadays (since 2003), the territory of the DRC consists of two Union missions and an additional territory in the North-East, under the administration of the East-Central Division Headquarters at Nairobi.

#### *The West Congo Union Mission*

Reorganised in 2003, comprises 495 churches, with 278 255 members, out of a population of 35 879 688.<sup>546</sup>

- the Central Kasai Field, organised in 1981, reorganised in 1993;
- the Congo Equatorial Field, organised in 1889;
- the East Kasai Field, organised in 1993
- the Lower Congo Field, organised in 1997;
- the West Congo Field, organised in 1956, reorganised in 1962; and
- the West Kasai field, organised in 1981, reorganised in 1993.

#### *The East Congo Union Mission (ECUM)*<sup>547</sup>

Organised in 1925; reorganised 1995, 2003, comprised 152 churches, reporting 77 154 members out of a population of 88 822 669:

- the North Katanga Field, organised 1954; reorganised in 1974;

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<sup>546</sup> See "Statistics", *SDA Yearbook* 2007, pp. 57-59.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45, 46.

- the South Katanga field, organised in 1974.

*The North East Congo Attached Territory (NECAT)*<sup>548</sup>

Organised in 2003, containing 822 churches and 151 860 members, in a total population of 17 958 643. It comprises:

- the Central Kivu Association, organised 1955, reorganised 1960
- the North Kivu Association, organized 1956
- the South Kivu Field, organized 1988; and
- the Upper Congo Field, organised 1974, reorganised in 2003.

## **6.7. Evaluation Of SDA Evangelism And Church Planting**

What are the similarities between the history of the evangelism and expansion of the SDA Church and that of the early apostolic church? There are indeed several lessons to be learnt that are similar to those of the early apostolic church during the period of the apostles Peter, John and Paul:

1. The attitude of the initiative and determination of pioneers with regards to the evangelical ministry allowed the Gospel to be spread everywhere within the country (DRC) in spite of the many difficulties encountered. This is in conformity with the spirit of the Apostles (Acts 4, 8 and 13) who preached the Gospel in spite of the many difficulties.

2. The fact that the White person's pioneering work was carried out in collaboration with the neighbouring communities, was of great help. Delhove, for instance, enjoyed good relationships with other non Adventist missionaries which facilitated the planting of the SDA message and churches. This action is also in conformity with the Pentecostal event where the disciples worked on behalf of the many gathered communities (Acts 2).

3. Congenial collaboration of the SDA missionary with civil and political local authorities in order to explain his mission and request their assistance and support reminds one of the occasion when Paul and Barnabas met the proconsul

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<sup>548</sup> Ibid. pp 62-64.

Sergius Paulus at Paphos on Cyprus (Acts 12:6,7,12), whom he converted to the Lord Jesus.

4. The education of the evangelised people supported the ministries of evangelism and church planting. The pioneers planted churches together with primary chapel schools as well as some health centres. Although the level of study was very low, it helped the churches to grow and contributed to the rapid expansion of the Gospel. Jesus did the same. He instructed his disciples during three and half years and also healed many diseases wherever He preached the Gospel (John 21:25; see also Luke 7:18-25).

5. An active involvement in church activities such as spiritual, social and financial development, and a clear vision for the future self-development of the church, was needed. Although many of the pioneers failed in training members with regard to the self-development of the church, a few worked hard to promote self-support within the churches. The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand is a good example given by the Saviour regarding self-support: "Give them something to eat ... How many loaves do you have?" (Mark 6:37, 38 NIV). Unfortunately, many of the pioneers failed in this respect; they promoted paternalism instead and consequently many churches were unable to support themselves once the missionaries had departed.

6. Men, women and children were involved in preaching the Gospel. The SDA pioneers understood the pertinence of this combined action. The Delhove family and many others were fully involved in expanding the Gospel: Clara and Thomas Staples worked in Rwanda, Congo and Canada; Edna worked in the Republic of South African; John at Helderberg (RSA); Paul in Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and Nyassaland; Lydia in Congo, Rwanda.<sup>549</sup> Acts 2:44-46 confirms such inclusive involvement in the early church.

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<sup>549</sup> Delhove Lydie M., *A Daughter Remembers DE Delhove Pioneer Missionary in Central Africa*. From his life and works, 1984, pp. 10-15.

## 6.8. Conclusion

In conclusion, these were effective strategies used by the church's pioneers in Zaire (DRC) territory to plant and grow the SDA church. Generally speaking, the work was not easy for the pioneer missionaries; it required a spirit of sacrifice and abnegation. No roads existed at that time; these people had to walk long distances through expansive forests and cross large rivers without bridges. They also experienced climatic problems, encountered linguistic and social difficulties and sometimes many diseases and even death owing to differing climatic environments. However, in spite of these difficulties, the pioneers endured, the Lord helped them, and the growth of the church was attained.

Unfortunately, the development of schools from the levels of the chapel schools to primary, secondary and high schools was very slow; and because of a lack of well trained SDA intellectuals, for many years in the East / North Congo, a misunderstanding between several local SDA members regarding many issues related to religion, administrative and social problems has occurred in the churches. This favoured the rise of several dissident groups in the modern SDA church since the 1980s.<sup>550</sup> How then has the SDA Church in DRC engaged with actual pertinent issues? This preoccupation will draw our attention in the following chapter.

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<sup>550</sup> Statistics of Table 3, pp. 175, 176 indicate that an average of 90% of the followers of the dissident groups are undereducated, who only frequented primary schools and even rarely completed this lowest study level.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### HOW IN THE DRC THE SDA CHURCH HAS ENGAGED WITH DOCTRINAL AND LEADERSHIP MISUNDERSTANDINGS

#### 7.0. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to clearly show and spiritually evaluate whether or not the modern SDA Church's doctrines and leadership are in conformity with the early apostolic church's teachings. The purpose of the writer is to listen to the dissident groups' accusations in order to be acquainted with a number of doctrinal and leadership misunderstandings. He hopes to be helpful both to the modern SDA Church and dissident groups as regards facing misinformation and disagreements, but also wishes to assist them to be diligent about the proper hermeneutic of the Bible and the spirit of Prophecy.

Consequently the present writer is reassessing some pertinent claims by such groups. Therefore it is important to recall here that the SDA church believes that its roots in history go back a long way to the early apostolic church,<sup>551</sup> in other words, its evaluation of these issues should be made through the light of the Holy Scriptures on which was built the earliest church: "... God's household is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ Himself as the Chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20 NIV).

The two following tables are a response to the inquiries stemming from followers of such groups in North-Kivu, DRC, and being faced by the local SDA Churches. Several important dissenting groups have installed themselves in the Beni and Lubero areas at Kayna, Mupo, Nguva, Butembo, Maboya, Pasisi, Mutwnga, and Beni, with almost 600 followers being located in the Beni/Lubero area. Among

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<sup>551</sup> See above, chapter one, p. 21.



them 200 people were selected for our research investigation as the population sample.<sup>552</sup> Further, in Tables 7 and 11 (pp. 271, 430), 200 SDA Church members were also selected at random from several churches of the area and responded to the same questionnaire.<sup>553</sup>

**Table 6.**

**Pertinent issues raised by dissident groups as faced by SDA local churches \***

<b>Pertinent issues</b>	<b>Dissenting members sample</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No idea</b>	<b>%</b>
Biblical doctrines teachings and observance lowered?	200	138	69	62	31	-	-
Are SDA Biblical interpretation and understanding true?	200	172	86	20	10	8	4
Is E.G. White's Spirit of Prophecy ministry misunderstood in the SDA Church?	200	30	15	166	83	4	2
Is the justification by faith doctrine still misunderstood?	200	107	53.5	88	44	5	2.5
Is the SDA Church exercising a monarchical and authoritarian leadership?	200	120	60	78	39	2	1

\* This information in Table 6 was given by selected dissenting groups' followers from several groups of the Lubero and Beni areas, June 2005 to July 2007.

## **7.1. The SDA Church And Biblical Doctrines**

The accusation brought against the SDA Church by dissenting groups showed that 138 persons (69%) of the 200 people investigated among the followers of dissenting groups in Lubero and Beni stated that the modern SDA Church has relaxed their strict observance and teachings of Biblical doctrines,<sup>554</sup> although 62 persons (31%) replied that this problem concerned only certain individuals and it should not be projected on the whole church.

<sup>552</sup> See below, Table 6, p. 262.

<sup>553</sup> See further, Table 7, p. 271.

<sup>554</sup> Information received from the dissenting groups researched in Lubero and Beni, April 2005.

This declaration should be clarified by assessing the claim that the SDA Church in practice still believes, lives, and teaches the fundamental Biblical Doctrines in the light of the early apostolic church. On the other hand, it may be observed that 168 DRC SDAs among the 200 inquired into (84%) recognize and appreciate the contributions of those Biblical scholars who through history have developed useful and reliable methods of Bible study consistent with the claims and teachings of Scripture. These Adventists are committed to the acceptance of Biblical truth and are willing to follow it, and like their brothers/sisters all over the world, are using all the methods of interpretation which are consistent with what Scripture says of itself.<sup>555</sup>

The use of the historical-critical method which rejects the reliability of accounts of miracles and other supernatural events narrated in the Bible, which, if applied, retains a principle of criticism that subordinates the Bible to human reason, is generally unacceptable to Adventists in DRC churches and worldwide; because it minimizes the need for faith in God and obedience to His commandments; and as stated in the *SDA Guidelines*, it de-emphasizes the divine element in the Bible as an inspired book (including its resultant unity) and depreciates or misunderstands apocalyptic prophecy and the eschatological portions of the Bible.<sup>556</sup>

In contrast with the historical-critical method, SDAs believe it to be helpful to set forth the principles of Bible study that are consistent with the teachings of the scriptures themselves, that preserve their unity, and are based upon the premise that the Bible is the Word of God.<sup>557</sup> Such an approach still seems to be leading SDAs of DRC into a satisfying and rewarding experience with God, like the Christians of the early apostolic church.

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<sup>555</sup> *SDA Statements Guidelines*, pp.209-210. See also Table 7, p. 265.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

<sup>557</sup> Ibid.

**Table 7:**

**SDA church members' views regarding pertinent issues\***

Pertinent issues	SDA Church members inquired of	yes	%	No	%	No idea	%
Are biblical doctrines teachings and observance lowered?	200	18	9	160	84	14	7
Are SDA Biblical interpretation and understanding true?	200	192	96	4	2	4	2
Is Ellen G White's Spirit of Prophecy ministry misunderstood in the SDA Church?	200	20	10	174	87	6	3
Is the SDA Church exercising a monarchical and authoritarian leadership?	200	39	19,5	148	74	13	6,5
Is the justification by faith doctrine still misunderstood by church member?	200	16	8	172	86	12	6

\* These responses in Table 7 were given by randomly selected SDA church members from several churches in the Lubero and Beni areas, July, August 2009.

**7.1.1. Principles of Approaching the Interpretation of Scripture**

This important issue is often misunderstood by some confessional communities and also dissenting groups. How do SDAs know that their Biblical interpretation is true, they wonder? How may one understand and explain the prophetic and apocalyptic events revealed in the Bible without the risk of being wrong?

It is interesting, however, that 172 respondents (86%) among the 200 dissident groups consulted in Beni and Lubero confirmed that the SDA Biblical interpretation and understanding is true. Only 20 persons (10%) affirmed the opposite, while 8 persons (4%) had no idea. Furthermore, 192 SDA church members (96%) of the 200 investigated have concurred with the dissidents in confirming this truth. Only 4 persons (2%) disagreed, while 4 others (2%) had no idea.

### **7.1.1.1. Useful presuppositions from Scriptures**

In this case, it is obvious that SDAs and dissenting groups all likewise believe that there are certain presuppositions arising from the claims of Scripture, according to its origin and authority, which are important to be pointed out here:

#### **1. Its origin**

a. The Bible is the Word of God and is the primary and authoritative means by which He reveals Himself to human beings.

b. The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible writers with thoughts, ideas, and objective information; in turn they expressed these in their own words. Therefore the Scriptures are an indivisible union of human and divine elements, neither of which should be emphasized to the neglect of the other (2 Peter 1:21).<sup>558</sup>

c. All Scripture is inspired by God and came through the work of the Holy Spirit. However, it did not arrive in a continuous chain of unbroken revelations. As the Holy Spirit communicated truth to the Bible writers, each wrote as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the aspect of the truth which he was led to stress. For this reason the student of the Bible will gain a rounded comprehension on any subject by recognizing that “the Bible is its own best interpreter and when studied as a whole it depicts a consistent, harmonious truth”<sup>559</sup> (2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:1, 2).

d. Although it was given to those who lived in an ancient Near Eastern/Mediterranean context, the Bible transcends its cultural backgrounds to serve as God’s Word for all cultural, racial, and situational contexts in all ages of history.

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<sup>558</sup> See also E G White, *Great Controversy*, pp. 5, 6.

<sup>559</sup> E G White, *Selected Messages*, 3vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958), Book 1, pp. 19, 20.

## 2. *Its authority*

a. The 66 books of the Old and New Testaments are the clear, infallible revelation of God's will and His salvation. The Bible is the word of God, and it alone is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested (2 Timothy 3:15,17; Psalms 119:105; Proverbs 30:5,6; Isaiah 8:20; John 17:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; Hebrews 4:12).

b. Scripture is an authentic, reliable record of history and God's acts in history. It provides the normative theological interpretation of those acts. The supernatural acts revealed in scripture are historically true. For example, chapters 1-11 of Genesis are factual accounts of historical events.<sup>560</sup>

c. The Bible is not like other books. It is an indivisible blend of the Divine and human. Its records of many details of secular history are integral to its overall purpose to convey salvation history. While at times there may be parallel procedures employed by Bible students to determine historical data, the usual techniques of historical research, based on human presuppositions and focused on the human element, are inadequate for interpreting the scriptures, which are a blend of the divine and human. Only a method that fully recognizes the indivisible nature of the scriptures can avoid a distortion of its message.<sup>561</sup>

d. Human reason is subject to the Bible, not equal to or above it. Presuppositions regarding the scriptures must be in harmony with the claims of the Scriptures and subject to correction by them (1 Corinthians 2:1-6). God intends that human reason be used to its fullest extent; but within the context and under the authority of His Word rather than independent of it.

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<sup>560</sup> This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of SDA Executive Committee at the Annual Council Session in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, October 12, 1986.

<sup>561</sup> Ibid. See also *SDA Statement Guidelines*, p. 210.

e. The revelation of God in all nature, when properly understood, is in harmony with the written Word, and is to be interpreted in the light of Scripture.<sup>562</sup>

#### **7.1.1.2. SDA Approaching the Interpretation of Scripture**

In addition to the above presuppositions, there are also certain principles for approaching the interpretation of Scripture through which the Spirit enables the SDA believer to accept, understand, and apply the Bible to one's own life as he or she seeks Divine power to render obedience to all scriptural requirements and to appropriate all Bible promises personally. Only those following the light already received from the Scriptures can hope to receive further illumination of the Spirit (John 16:13, 14; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14).

It is a necessity for the Church and the Beni and Lubero dissenting groups to understand that Scripture cannot be correctly interpreted by strict observance of external form, ceremony, and technique without the aid of the Holy Spirit, for it is the Spirit who enables the believer to understand and to apply the Scripture. Therefore, "any study of the Word should commence with a request for the Spirit's guidance and illumination".<sup>563</sup>

Those who come to the study of the Word must do so with faith, in the humble spirit of a learner who seeks to hear what the Bible is saying. "They must be willing to submit all presuppositions, opinions and the conclusions of reason to the judgment and correction of the Word itself."<sup>564</sup> With this attitude, the Bible student may come directly to the Word, and with careful study, he or she may come to an understanding of the essentials of salvation apart from any human explanations, however helpful.

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<sup>562</sup> *SDA Statements Guidelines*, p. 211.

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*

The investigation of Scripture must be characterized by a sincere desire to discover and obey God's will and word rather than to seek support or evidence for preconceived ideas.

### **7.1.1.3. Some methods of Bible study<sup>565</sup>**

The following methods could help the reader to better understand and avoid preconceived ideas:<sup>566</sup> Select a Bible version for study that is faithful to the meaning contained in the languages in which the Bible was originally written, giving preference to translations done by a broad group of scholars and published by a general publisher above translations sponsored by a particular denomination or narrowly focused group.

*Choose a definite plan of study, avoiding haphazard and aimless approaches. Study plans such as the following are suggested:*

1. Book-by-book analysis of the message;
2. Verse-by-verse method;
3. Study that seeks a biblical solution to a specific life problem, Biblical satisfaction for a specific need, or a Biblical answer to a specific question;
4. Topical study (faith, love, second coming, and others);
5. Word study; and
6. Biographical study.

Seek to grasp the simple, most obvious meaning of the Biblical passage being studied. Seek also to discover the underlying major themes of Scripture as found in individual texts, passages, and books. Two basic, related themes run throughout Scripture:

1. The person and word of Jesus Christ; and

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<sup>565</sup> This statement was approved and voted by the G C of SDA Executive Committee, Annual Council Session in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Oct.12, 1986. See also *SDA Statements Guidelines*, pp. 212- 218.

<sup>566</sup> See Table 6, p. 269.

2. The great controversy and various perspectives involving the authority of God's Word, the fall of man, the first and second advents of Christ, the exoneration from God and His law, and the restoration of the divine plan for the universe.<sup>567</sup> These themes are to be drawn from the totality of scripture and not imposed on it.

Then let me point out that it is essential to recognize that "the Bible is its own interpreter and that the meaning of words, texts and passages is best determined by diligently comparing scripture with scripture because the Bible does not contradict itself".<sup>568</sup> Yet it is recommended to study the context of the passage under consideration by relating it to the sentences and paragraphs immediately preceding and following it, and to try to relate the ideas of the passage to the line of thought of the entire Bible book.<sup>569</sup>

As far as possible, ascertain the historical circumstances in which the passage was written by the Biblical writers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Determine the literary type the author is using. Some Biblical material is composed of parables, proverbs, allegories, psalms, and apocalyptic prophecies. Since many Biblical writers presented much of their material as poetry, it is helpful to use a version of the Bible that presents this material as poetic style,<sup>570</sup> for passages employing imagery are not to be interpreted in the same manner as prose.

Take note of grammar and sentence construction in order to discover the author's meaning. Study also the key words of the passage by comparing their use in other parts of the Bible using a concordance, Biblical lexicons, and dictionaries. In connection with the study of the Bible text, explore the historical and cultural factors. Archaeology, anthropology, and history may contribute to

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<sup>567</sup> Ibid.

<sup>568</sup> *SDA Statements Guidelines*, pp. 212, 213.

<sup>569</sup> Ibid.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid. .



understanding the meaning of the text.<sup>571</sup> SDAs believe that God inspired Ellen G White. Therefore, her expositions on any given Bible passage offer an inspired guide to the meaning of texts without exhausting their meaning or preempting the task of exegesis.<sup>572</sup> But how do SDA scholars deal with interpreting prophecy?

*Interpreting prophecy.* In this major task, one should keep in mind that:

1. The Bible claims God's power to predict the future (Isaiah 46:10).
2. Prophecy has a normal purpose. It was not written merely to satisfy curiosity about the future. Some of the purposes of prophecy are to strengthen faith (John 14:29) and to promote holy living and readiness for the Advent (Matthew 24:44; Revelation 22:7, 10, 11).
3. The focus of much prophecy is on Christ (both his first and second advents), the church, and the end-time.
4. The norms for interpreting prophecy are found within the Bible itself, which notes time prophecies and their historical fulfillments; the New Testament cites specific fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah; and the Old Testament itself presents individuals and events as types of the Messiah.<sup>573</sup> In the New Testament application of Old Testament prophecies, some literal names become spiritual: for example, Israel represents the Church, Babylon apostate religion, et cetera. (Revelation 17:1,5).
5. There are two general types of prophetic writings: nonapocalyptic prophecy as found in Isaiah and Jeremiah, and apocalyptic prophecy as found in Daniel and the Revelation. These differing types display different characteristics:<sup>574</sup>

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<sup>571</sup> Concerning hermeneutical principles and other methods of Bible study, see also P Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the SDA Message and Mission*, pp. 16- 30. See also *SDA Statement Guidelines*, pp. 213-218.

<sup>572</sup> See for example, *Evangelism*, p.256; *The Great Controversy*, pp.193, 595; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol.5, pp. 665, 682, 707-708.

<sup>573</sup> *SDA Statements Guidelines*, pp 214, 215.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*

a. Nonapocalyptic prophecy addresses God's people; apocalyptic is more universal in scope.

b. Nonapocalyptic prophecy is often conditional in nature, setting forth to God's people the alternatives of blessing for obedience and curses for disobedience; whereas apocalyptic emphasizes the sovereignty of God and His Control over history.

c. Nonapocalyptic prophecy often leaps from the local crisis to the end-time day of the Lord; apocalyptic prophecy presents the course of history from the time of the prophet to the end of the world.

d. Time prophecies in nonapocalyptic prophecy generally are long, for example, 400 years of Israel's servitude (Genesis 15:23), and 70 years of Babylonian captivity (Jeremiah 25:12). Time prophecies in apocalyptic prophecy generally are phrased in short terms, for example, 10 days (Revelation 2:10) or 42 months (Revelation 13:5). Apocalyptic time periods stand symbolically for longer periods of actual time.

6. Apocalyptic prophecy is highly symbolic and should be interpreted accordingly. In interpreting symbols, the following methods may be used:<sup>575</sup>

a. Look for interpretations (explicit or implicit) within the passage itself (for example, Daniel 8:20,21; Revelation 1:20).

b. Look for interpretations elsewhere in the book or in the other writings by the same author.

c. Using a concordance, study the use of symbols in other parts of scripture. For instance, a study of ancient Near Eastern documents may throw light on the meaning of symbols, although scriptural use may alter those meanings.<sup>576</sup>

7. The literary structure of a book is frequently an aid to interpreting it. The parallel nature of Daniel's prophecies is an example. Parallel accounts in Scripture sometimes present differences in detail and emphasis (for example,

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<sup>575</sup> For further studies about symbol interpretation, see Damsteegt, *Foundation of the SDA Message and Mission*, pp. 18-20.

<sup>576</sup> *SDA Statements Guidelines*, pp 214, 215.

see Matthew 21:33, 34; Mark 12:1-11; and Luke 20:9-18; or 2 Kings 18-20 with 2 Chronicles 32). When studying such passages, first examine them carefully to be sure that the parallels are actually referring to the same historical event.<sup>577</sup> For example, many of Jesus' parables may have been given on different occasions to different audiences and with different wording.

In cases where there appear to be differences in parallel accounts, one should recognize that the total message of the Bible is the synthesis of all of its parts. Each book or writer communicates that which the Spirit has led him to write. When parallel passages seem to indicate discrepancy or contradiction, look for the underlying harmony. Keep in mind that dissimilarities may be due to minor errors of copyists,<sup>578</sup> or may be the result of differing emphases and choice of materials of various authors who wrote under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit for different audiences under different circumstances.<sup>579</sup>

To sum up, "the Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human".<sup>580</sup> Because this method of interpretation and understanding of the Bible and its prophecy is being made good use of in the practice of the SDA Churches' Sabbath Schools Bible study guide in the DRC and all over the world, it appears that the modern SDA Church in Congo might not have relaxed its teachings with respect to Biblical doctrines. Even though, perhaps, some individuals could have lessened their strict observance of Biblical doctrines, this situation should not be projected on to the whole SDA Church in the DRC and worldwide.

As it is impossible for those who do not accept Christ's divinity and spiritual awareness to understand the purpose of His incarnation, it is also impossible for

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<sup>577</sup> Ibid.

<sup>578</sup> Ellen G White, *Selected Messages from the Writings of E. G. White*, 2 vols. 1959, book 1, p. 16.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid., pp. 21, 22; Ellen G White, *Great Controversy*, p. vi, ( Introduction).

<sup>580</sup> Ibid., pp. Vi, Vii (Introduction).

those who see the Bible merely as a human book to understand its message and doctrines, however careful and rigorous their methods are.<sup>581</sup> Unfortunately, this may be the case of many of the dissenting groups' followers in the East Congo territory, without excluding some individual SDA church members.

### **7.1.2. The Issue of the Truth as Regards the Post-Biblical Prophets and the Bible**

This important doctrinal issue has been questioned and often misunderstood by several religious congregations and dissenting groups in the DRC. Why should there be post-biblical prophets in the church, they wonder, while it already has scriptural prophets in the Bible. What is the pertinence of the Spirit of Prophecy in the SDA Church today, and how to free the Modern SDA Church from the criticism that it is following a prophet and not the Bible? Is this doctrinal practice in conformity with that of the early apostolic church and the Scripture?

Only 30 persons (15%) of the dissenting groups' followers consulted in the Beni and Lubero areas responded that the Spirit of prophecy is misunderstood in the SDA Church, and fortunately 166 dissidents (83%) confirmed that this doctrine is biblical and well understood by almost all the SDA Church members;<sup>582</sup> in addition, they asserted that the Spirit of prophecy is one of God's gracious gifts to His church and that it assists the SDA Church members to understand the Biblical teachings well.

It is also encouraging to assess the same view amongst the SDA Church members consulted on the same issue. 174 members (87%) of the 200 respondents confirmed that the Spirit of prophecy is still understood in the SDA Church while only 20 respondents (10%) disaffirmed this view and six others (3%) had no idea about it.<sup>583</sup>

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<sup>581</sup> *SDA Statements Guidelines*, p. 217.

<sup>582</sup> See Table 6, p. 262.

<sup>583</sup> See Table 7, p. 271.

### **7.1.2.1. The Prophetic Gift in the Early Bible Times**

SDAs believe that 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 – the Lord’s messenger.<sup>584</sup> Her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provides comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction for the church. However, they (Adventists) also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.<sup>585</sup>

In the Scriptures, a prophet is “one who receives communications from God and transmits His intent to His people”.<sup>586</sup> Prophets did not prophesy on their own initiative, “for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). In the Old Testament the word Prophet is generally a translation of the Hebrew *nabi*. Its meaning is expressed in Exodus 7:1,2: “The Lord said to Moses: see, I had made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet [*nabi*]. You shall speak all that I command you. And your brother shall speak to Pharaoh”. So Moses’ relationship to Pharaoh was like that of God to His people.

The term “Prophet”, then, designates a divinely appointed spokesperson for God. The Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *nabi* is *prophetes* from which the English word “prophet” is derived.<sup>587</sup> “Seer”, a translation of the Hebrew *roch* (Isaiah 30:10) or *chozech* (2 Samuel 24:11; 2 Kings 17:13) is yet

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<sup>584</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 24. ( Read also Joel 2:28,29; Acts 2:14,21; Hebrews 1:1-3 ; Revelation 12:17; 9:10).

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>586</sup> Frank B. Holbrook, “The Biblical Basis for a Modern Prophet”, (shell document, Ellen G. White Estate Inc., General Conference of SDA,, p. 1, Quoted by *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 248.

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.*

another designation for persons with the prophetic gift. The terms “prophet” and “seer” are closely related (1 Samuel 9:9).

Through the years, God has given revelations of His will for His people through persons with the gift of prophecy. “Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7; Hebrews 1:1). But after this period, what are the functions of the prophetic gift in the New Testament?

#### ***7.1.2.1.1. The functions of the prophetic gift in the early apostolic church***

The New Testament gives prophecy a prominent place among the gifts of the Holy Spirit, once ranking it first and twice second among the ministries most useful to the church (see Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 14:1; Ephesians 4:11). It encourages believers to desire especially this gift (1 Corinthians 14:1, 39). The New Testament suggests that prophets had the following functions:<sup>588</sup>

(1). *They assisted in founding the early church.* The Church was “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20,21).

(2). *They initiated the church’s mission outreach.* It was through certain prophets that the Holy Spirit selected Paul and Barnabas for their first missionary journeys (Acts 13:1,2) and gave direction as to where missionaries should labour (Acts 16:6-11).<sup>589</sup>

(3). *They edified the Church.* “He who prophesies”, Paul said, “edifies the church”. Prophecies are spoken “to men for their up building, and encouragement and consolation” (1 Corinthians 14:3,4, RVS). Along with other gifts, God gave prophecy to the church to prepare believers “for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12).<sup>590</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> See Holbrook, “... Modern prophet”, pp. 3-5, Quoted in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 249.

<sup>589</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 249.

<sup>590</sup> Ibid.

(4). *They united and protected the church.* Prophets helped to bring about “the unity of faith,” to protect the church against false doctrines so that believers would “no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching...” (Ephesians 4: 13,14, NIV).

(5). *They warned of future difficulties.*<sup>591</sup> One New Testament prophet warned of an approaching famine. In response, the church initiated a relief programme to assist those who suffered because of that famine (Acts 11:27-30). Other prophets warned of Paul’s arrest and imprisonment in Jerusalem (Acts 20:23; 21:4,10-14).

(6). *They confirmed the faith in times of controversy.* At the first church council, the Spirit guided the church to a decision on a controversial issue dealing with the salvation of Gentile Christians. Then, through two prophets, the Spirit reaffirmed the believers in the true doctrine: “Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen (“confirm”, KJV) the brothers (Acts 15:32,NIV).<sup>592</sup> Let us then consider the prophetic gift in the last days of modern church history, as SDAs believe.

#### **7.1.2.1.2. The prophetic gift in the last days**

Many Christians believe that the gift of prophecy ceased at the close of the apostolic era. But the Bible reveals the Church’s special need for divine guidance during the crisis at the time of the end; it testifies to a continuing need for and provision of the prophetic gift after New Testament times.

(1). *Continuation of spiritual gifts.* There is no biblical evidence that God would withdraw the spiritual gifts He gave the church before they had completed their purpose, which, according to Paul, was to bring the Church “to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

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<sup>591</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, pp. 249-250.

<sup>592</sup> *Ibid.*

And because the church has not yet reached this experience, it still needs all the gifts of the Spirit. These gifts, including the gift of prophecy, will continue to operate for the benefit of God's people until Christ returns.<sup>593</sup> Consequently, Paul cautioned believers not to "quench the Spirit" or "despise prophecies" (1 Thess 5:19,20) and counselled, "Desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy" (1 Cor 14:1).

Unfortunately these gifts have not always manifested themselves abundantly in the Christian Church<sup>594</sup> because of the decline of spirituality in the Church<sup>595</sup> and the resultant apostasy which led to a diminishing of both the presence and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, while at the same time false prophets caused a loss of confidence in the prophetic gift.<sup>596</sup>

Fortunately, however, the decline of the prophetic gift during certain periods in Church history did not mean that God had withdrawn the gift permanently. The Bible indicates that, as the end approaches, this gift will be present to assist the church through these difficult times. More than that, it points to an increased activity of this gift (Acts 2:17).

#### **7.1.2.1.3. The prophetic gift before the second Advent**

God gave the gift of prophecy to John the Baptist to announce Christ's first advent. In a similar way we may expect Him to send the prophetic gift again to proclaim the second advent in order to cause people to be prepared for this event and meet Him when He comes. It is the case that Jesus' warning against

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<sup>593</sup> Ibid.

<sup>594</sup> Unfortunately, no complete records of what occurred throughout the Christian era are available.

<sup>595</sup> Gerhard Friedrich, "Prophets and prophecies in the New Testament" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol.6, p. 859. After the death of the apostles, prophets enjoyed respectability in many circles until A.D. 300. See also *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 250.

<sup>596</sup> Ibid., pp. 860, 861.



false prophets (Matthew 24: 11,24) implies that there would be true prophets, as well.

The prophet Joel predicted a special outpouring of the prophetic gift just before Christ's return:

And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also on My menservants and on my maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord (Joel 2:28-31, RAV).

The first Pentecost saw a remarkable manifestation of the Spirit. Peter, citing Joel's prophecy, pointed out that God had promised such blessings (Acts 2:2-21). However it is obvious that Joel's prophecy did not reach its ultimate fulfillment in Pentecost, there must yet be another, more complete fulfillment, because we have no evidence that the phenomena in the sun and moon that Joel spoke of either preceded or followed that outpouring of the Spirit. It is known that these phenomena did not occur until many centuries later.<sup>597</sup>

Thus Pentecost, then, was a foretaste of the full manifestation of the Spirit before the Second Advent: like Palestine's early rain, which fell in the autumn, shortly after the crops were planted, the complete and final fulfillment of Joel's prophecy corresponds to the latter rain, which, falling in the spring, ripened the grain (Joel 2:23). Likewise, it is obvious that, the final bestowal of God's spirit will take place just before the Second Advent, after the predicted signs in the sun, moon, and stars (see Matthew 24:29); Revelation 6:12-17; Joel 2:31). This final outpouring of the Spirit will ripen the harvest of the earth (Matthew 13:30,39). *The prophetic gift in the Remnant Church*

Revelation characterizes the loyal believers who comprise the remnant as those "who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ"

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<sup>597</sup> The Scriptures describe the signs that tell of the nearness of the Second Advent (Luke 21:25). The first signs announcing the Second Advent took place more than 1700 years after Christ's ascension, and others have followed, contributing to the evidence that His return is very near (see also *SDA Believe*, pp. 371-385).

(Revelation 12:17). The meaning of the phrase “the testimony of Jesus”<sup>598</sup> speaking of prophetic revelation is clear from later conversations between the angel and John.

Near the end of the book the angel identifies himself as “your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 19:10) and “your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets” (Revelation 22:9). These parallel expressions make it clear that it is the prophets who convey the testimony of Jesus.<sup>599</sup> This explains the angel’s statement that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Revelation 19:10).

Therefore the expression the *Spirit of prophecy* may refer to (1) the Holy Spirit inspiring the prophet with a revelation from God, (2) the operation of the gift of prophecy, and (3) the medium of prophecy itself.<sup>600</sup> The prophetic gift, Jesus’ witness “to the church through the medium of prophecy,”<sup>601</sup> comprises a distinctive characteristic of the remnant church. Revelation also identifies the possession of the two as distinctive characteristics of the end-time Church; its

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<sup>598</sup> The expression “testimony of Jesus” is best understood as a subjective genitive not an objective genitive. “Two translations are possible: a ) The testimony (witness) *about* or concerning Jesus (objective)= what Christians witness about Jesus. Who bear Jesus’ testimonies” (RSV). B ) The testimony (witness) from or by Jesus (subjective genitive)=messages from Jesus to the Church. The evidence from the use of this expression in the book of Revelation suggests that it should be understood as a subjective genitive (a testimony *from\_* or *by* Jesus), and that this testimony is given through prophetic revelation” (Holbrook, “Modern Prophet,” p. 7,. quoted in *SDAs Believe*, p. 260, Reference, 8) . See also Revelation 1:1,2 and 22: 20. .

<sup>599</sup> See *SDA Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., vol. 7, p.812. T.H. Blincoe, “the prophets were until John”, *Ministry*, supplement, July 1977, p. 241.

<sup>600</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 252.

<sup>601</sup> “Spirit of prophecy” *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, Rev. ed., p. 1412.

members “keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” — the prophetic gift (Revelation 12:17).

It appears that the Spirit of prophecy in the Church today is in conformity with the early apostolic church. God gave the prophetic gift to the “Church” of Exodus to organize, instruct, and guide His people (Acts 7:38,KJV). “By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet he was preserved” (Hosea 12:13). It comes as no surprise, then, to find that gift among those who are involved in the ultimate exodus: the escape from sin-polluted planet Earth to the heavenly Canaan, in other words the remnant church which will live the second Advent.<sup>602</sup>

#### ***7.1.2.2. Post Biblical prophets and the Bible***

It is now appropriate to consider why there are post biblical prophets in the church today. It should be known that the prophetic gift produced the Bible itself. In post-biblical times this gift does not supersede or add to Scripture, because the canon of Scripture is now closed.

The prophetic gift functions in the end-time much as it did in the time of the apostles. Its thrust is to uphold the Bible as the basis of faith and practice, to explain its teachings, and to apply its principles to daily life.<sup>603</sup> It is involved in establishing and edifying the church, enabling it to carry out its divinely appointed mission.

The prophetic gift reproves, warns, guides and encourages both individuals and the church, protecting them from heresy and unifying them as regards Bible truths.

Post biblical prophets function much like prophets such as Nathan, Gad, Asaph, Shemaiah, Azariah, Eliezer, Ahijah, and Obed, Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Simeon, John, the Baptist, Agabus, Silas, Anna, and Philip’s four daughters, who

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<sup>602</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid., p. 253.

lived in Bible times, but whose testimonies never became a part of the Bible.<sup>604</sup> The same God who spoke through the prophets whose writings are in the Bible inspired these prophets and prophetesses. Their messages did not contradict the previously recorded divine revelation.<sup>605</sup> However, how can one distinguish the genuine prophetic gift from the spurious one?

#### **7.1.2.2.1. Testing the prophetic gift**

Because the Bible warns that before Christ's return false prophets will arise, we must investigate carefully all claims to the prophetic gift. "Do not treat prophecies with contempt", Paul said. "Test every thing. Hold to the good. Avoid every kind of evil" (1Thessalonians 5:20-22, NIV; see 1 John 4:1).

The Bible specifies several guidelines by which one can distinguish the genuine prophetic gift from the false.

(1). *Does the message agree with the Bible?* "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). This text implies that the messages of any prophet ought to be in harmony with God's law and testimony throughout the Bible. A later prophet must not contradict earlier ones. The Holy Spirit never contradicts His previously given testimony, for God "does not change like shifting shadows" (James 1:17, NIV).<sup>606</sup>

(2). *Do the predictions come true?* "If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him" (Deuteronomy 18:21,22,NIV; see Jeremiah 28:9). Though predictions may

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<sup>604</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 253.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid.

<sup>606</sup> Ibid., p. 254.

comprise a comparatively small part of the prophetic message, their accuracy must be demonstrated.”<sup>607</sup>

(2). *Is Christ’s incarnation recognized?* “By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God” (1John 4:2,3). This test demands more than a simple acknowledgment that Jesus Christ lived on earth. The true prophet must confess the Biblical teaching on Christ’s incarnation – must believe in His deity and preexistence, His virgin birth, true humanity, sinless life, atoning sacrifice, resurrection, ascension, intercessory ministry, and second advent.<sup>608</sup>

(3). *Does the prophet bear good or bad “fruit”?* Prophecy comes through the Spirit’s inspiring “holy men of God” (2 Peter 1:21). We can discern false prophets by their fruits. “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit”, Jesus said, “nor can a bad tree bear good fruit... Therefore by their fruit you will know them” (Matthew 7:16, 18-20).

This crucial counsel in evaluating a prophet speaks first of the prophet’s life. Even though he or she is not perfect (James 5:17), this should be characterized by the fruit of the Spirit and his/her influence, not by works of the flesh (see Galatians 5:19-23).

### **7.1.2.3. Is the Church following only a prophet, not the Bible ?**

This popular accusation should be clarified by frankly stating that if this was not the case for the early apostolic church, the same light from the Holy Scriptures is the one which leads the SDA Church in the DRC and worldwide today. This claim is now discussed.

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<sup>607</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p.254.

<sup>608</sup> *Ibid.*

### **7.1.2.3.1. The writings of E G White and the Bible**

The writings of E G White are not a substitute for Scripture. They cannot be placed on the same level.<sup>609</sup> The Holy Scriptures stand alone – the unique standard by which her and all other writings must be judged and to which they must be subject.<sup>610</sup>

(1). *The Bible the supreme standard*. SDAs fully support the Reformation principle of “Sola scriptura”,<sup>611</sup> the Bible as its own interpreter and the Bible alone as the basis of all doctrines. The founders of the church developed fundamental beliefs through study of the Bible; they did not receive these doctrines through the visions of Ellen G White. Her major role during the development of their doctrines was to guide them in understanding the Bible and to confirm conclusions reached through Bible study.<sup>612</sup>

Ellen G White herself believed and taught that the Bible was the ultimate norm of the church. In her first book, published in 1882, she said, “I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the ruler of your faith and practice. By the Word we are to be judged”.<sup>613</sup> She never changed this view. Many years later she wrote, “In this Word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience”.<sup>614</sup>

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<sup>609</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 258.

<sup>610</sup> Ibid.

<sup>611</sup> See above, chapter II, p. 38 ff.

<sup>612</sup> Jemison, *A Prophet Among you*, pp. 208-210 ; from , *Movement of Destiny* (Washington , D.C.: Review and Herald, 1971), pp.91-132; Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission*, pp.103-293.

<sup>613</sup> E G White, *Early Writings of Mrs White ; Experience and views and Spiritual Gifts*, 2 vols (Battle Creek , Mich: Review and Herald, 1882), vol 2, p. 78.

<sup>614</sup> E G White, *Great Controversy*, p.vii.

In 1909, during her last address to a general session of the church, she opened the Bible, held it up before the congregation, and said, “Brethren and sisters, I recommend to you this Book”.<sup>615</sup>

(2). *E G White’s writings, an addition to the Bible?* Not at all. According to the above statements, it is obvious that, although 30 dissident members (15%) and 20 SDA Church members (10%)<sup>616</sup> still misunderstand this pertinent issue, the DRC SDA Church members and those worldwide still appear to understand clearly and teach the Spirit of prophecy ministry as a guide to the Bible, a guide in understanding its doctrines, a guide to apply Bible principles.

In response to believers who considered her writings an addition to the Bible, she wrote, saying, “I took the precious Bible and surrounded it with the several *Testimonies for the church*, given for the people of God... You are not familiar with the scriptures. If you had made God’s Word your study with a desire to reach the Bible standard and attain to Christian perfection, you would not have needed the *Testimonies*”.<sup>617</sup>

As a guide to the Bible, she (Ellen G White) saw her work as that of leading people back to the Bible. “Little heed is given to the Bible”, she said, therefore “the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light”.<sup>618</sup> Furthermore, Ellen G.White considered her writings as a guide to a clearer understanding of the Bible. “Additional truth is not brought out”,<sup>619</sup> she wrote, “The written testimonies are not given to give new light, but to impress vividly

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<sup>615</sup> William A Spencer, *The Spirit of Prophecy in the Advent Movement* (Washington, DC : Review and Herald, 1937), p. 30.

<sup>616</sup> See Table 6, p. 269; and Table 7, p. 271.

<sup>617</sup> E G White , *Testimonies*, vol.5, p. 664, 665.

<sup>618</sup> Id. “An Open Letter”, *Review and Herald*, Jan 20, 1903, p. 15, in E G White, *Colporteur Ministry* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1953), p. 125.

<sup>619</sup> E. G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 663.

upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed”.<sup>620</sup> Much of her writings apply the biblical counsels to everyday life.

Once again, this appears to be a proof that the DRC SDA Church and worldwide is still in conformity with the early apostolic church concerning the Spirit of prophecy (see Rev 19: 10).

### **7.1.3. Is the Justification by Faith Doctrine still Misunderstood?**

Concerning this essential issue, 107 (53.5%) of the dissenting groups' followers<sup>621</sup> stated that the justification by faith doctrine is still misunderstood by several members within the modern SDA Church. On the other hand 88 persons (44 %) of the people consulted asserted that the SDA Church members still understand and practically live out justification by faith in Jesus Christ. Only 5 persons (2.5%) had no idea on the question.

This situation has spurred the present writer to search and know how the modern SDA Church in the DRC and worldwide has engaged with this central matter.

#### **7.1.3.1. SDA Church's Teachings on Justification**

Regarding this issue, the modern SDA church confirms that it has not departed from the light given by the scripture and the early apostolic church concerning its teachings on justification by faith, although some individuals within the Church may still personally be misunderstanding the teachings given by the church on this issue.

The present research has confirmed this reality. 172 respondents among the 200 SDA church members involved (86%) maintained that this doctrine is well understood and practised in the SDA Church today. Only 16 members (8%)

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<sup>620</sup> Ibid.

<sup>621</sup> See Table 6, p. 262.



declined to accept this view while 12 persons (6%) had no idea on the question.<sup>622</sup>

(1). *The biblical Justification by faith.* The following teachings on justification by faith are still taught by the SDA Church in accordance with the Scriptures and the early apostolic teachings. In His infinite love and mercy God made Christ, “who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5: 21). Through faith in Jesus Christ, the heart is filled by His Spirit. Through this same faith, which is a gift of God’s grace (Romans 12:3; Eph 2:8), repentant sinners are justified (Romans 3: 28).<sup>623</sup>

The term “justification” is a translation of the Greek *dikaionoma*, meaning “righteous requirement, deed”, “regulation”, “judicial sentence”, “act of righteousness”, and *dikaosis* signifying, “justification”, “vindication”, “acquittal”.<sup>624</sup> The related verb *dikaioo*, meaning “be pronounced and treated as righteous”, “be acquitted”, “be justified”, “be set free”, “made pure”, “justify”,<sup>625</sup> ... affords additional insights into the term’s meaning.

In general, “justification”, as used theologically, is “the divine act by which God declares a penitent sinner righteous or regards him as righteous. As such, justification is the opposite of condemnation (Rom 5:6)”.<sup>626</sup> Hence, the basis of this justification is not our obedience, but Christ’s, for “through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life... By one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous (Romans 5:18,19)”.<sup>627</sup> He gives

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<sup>622</sup> See Table 7, p. 271.

<sup>623</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 136.

<sup>624</sup> E W Vine “Justification” *An Expository Dictionary of the New Testament Words*, 1966, pp. 284-286.

<sup>625</sup> William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, “justify,” *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (1973), p. 196.

<sup>626</sup> “Justification” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, rev. Ed. ; p. 137.

<sup>627</sup> *Ibid.*

this obedience to those believers who are “justified freely by His grace” (Romans 3: 24). “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us” (Titus 3:5).

(2). *The experience of justification by faith.* Through justification by faith in Christ, this righteousness is imputed to us. We are right with God because of Christ our Substitute. God, Paul said, “made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2Cor 5:21). As repentant sinners, we experience full and complete pardon. We are reconciled to God.<sup>628</sup>

True repentance and justification lead to sanctification (Greek *hagiasmos*, meaning “holiness”, “consecration”, from *hagiazō*; “to make holy”, “to set apart”, “to consecrate”, The Hebrew equivalent is “*qadash*” which means to separate from common use.) Justification and sanctification are closely related,<sup>629</sup> distinct but never separate. They designate two phases of salvation: justification is what God does **for** us, while sanctification is what God does **in** us.<sup>630</sup>

So, frankly speaking, the modern SDA Church teaches and preaches that neither justification nor sanctification is the result of meritorious works. Both are solely due to Christ’s grace and righteousness (John 3:16); Acts 4:12),<sup>631</sup> and the church has never denigrated this Biblical truth.

#### **7.1.3.2. Danger of False Ideas on Justification**

Many of the SDA’s critics and some of its members wrongly believe that their standing before God depends on their good or bad deeds. The result of this position is that they negatively criticize and accuse the church, its leaders and

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<sup>628</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 137.

<sup>629</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>630</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>631</sup> E G White, *Messages to Young People* (1930), p. 35.

other follow members of being lost because of less strict observance of certain religious or social practices that, they believe, should be strictly observed in order for one to be justified and receive salvation.

This, the writer thinks, has been the main problem he encountered during almost all the visits he made to the dissenting groups. This situation often caused him to wonder himself whether this kind of believing is really in conformity with the light of the Scripture and the early apostolic church these critics claim.

(1). *The role of faith and works.* Addressing the question of how persons are justified before God, Paul unequivocally stated that he “suffered the loss of all things, ... that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness,... but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith” (Philippians 3:8,9). He pointed to Abraham, who “believed God, and it was accounted (“credited”, NIV) to him for righteousness” (Romans 4:3; Genesis 15:6). He was justified before he underwent circumcision, not on account of it (Romans 4:9, 10).

So in practice, what kind of faith did Abraham exercise? The Scriptures reveal that “by faith Abraham obeyed” when God called him, leaving his homeland and travelling “not knowing where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8-10; cf. Genesis 12:4; 13: 18). That he had a genuine, living faith in God was demonstrated by his obedience; and it was on the basis of this dynamic faith that he was justified.<sup>632</sup>

It appears that the church (the people of God) is right with God because of faith in Christ the Saviour and not because of some strict observance of religious deeds or personal merits, and this is indeed in conformity with the Biblical teachings of the apostolic church.

The New Testament certainly recognizes Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as “the Lamb of God who takes away sin of the world” (John 1:29). Through His precious

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<sup>632</sup> See also *Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, p. 136.

blood, “as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19), He obtained for the human race redemption from the ultimate penalty of sin.<sup>633</sup> The SDA Church strongly believes and preaches this Biblical truth. It should therefore assist members in understanding the role of good works in justification by faith. Are they useless?

The apostle James warned about another incorrect understanding of justification by faith: that one can be justified by faith without manifesting corresponding works. He showed that genuine faith cannot exist without works. Like Paul, James illustrated his point from Abraham’s experience. Abraham’s offering of Isaac his son (James 2: 21) demonstrated his faith. “Do you see”, James asked, “that faith was working together with his works and by works faith was made perfect?” (James 2:22). “Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (James 2: 17).<sup>634</sup>

Abraham’s experience revealed that works are the evidence of a true relationship with God. The faith that leads to justification is, therefore, a living faith that is effective (James 2:24). “Neither works nor a dead faith lead to justification. It can be realized only by a genuine faith that works by love (Galatians 5:6) and purifies the soul.”<sup>635</sup>

(2). *E G White’s teachings on justification by faith.* Addressing the church of God, she pointed out that the danger had been presented to her again and again of entertaining, as a people, false ideas of justification by faith.<sup>636</sup> I have been shown for years, she continued, that “Satan would work in a special manner to confuse the mind on this point”<sup>637</sup>

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<sup>633</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>634</sup> Seventh-day Adventists Believe p. 137.

<sup>635</sup> Ibid.

<sup>636</sup> P G Damsteegt, C M Maxwell, eds., *Source Book for Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 1993, p. 435.

<sup>637</sup> Ibid.

One of her statements follows:

There is not a point that needs to be dwelt upon more earnestly, repeated more frequently, or established more firmly in the minds of all, than the impossibility of fallen man meriting anything by his /her own best good works. Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone.<sup>638</sup>

Furthermore, she clearly declared:

If any man can merit salvation by anything he (sic) may do, then he is in the same position as the Catholic to do penance for his sins. Salvation, then is partly of debt, that may be earned as wages. If man cannot, by any of his good works, merit salvation, then it must be wholly of grace, received by man as a sinner because he receives and believes in Jesus. It is wholly a free gift.<sup>639</sup>

It is obvious that these teachings are in conformity with the Biblical view on justification by faith and with the teachings of the early apostolic church. Justification by faith is biblically placed beyond controversy; and all this controversy is ended, as soon as the matter is settled that the merits of a fallen man/woman in his /her good works can never procure eternal life for him/her.

In short, EG White concludes, saying:

The light given me of God places this important subject above any question in my mind. Justification is wholly of grace and not procured by any works that fallen man can do ... I ask, how can I present this matter as it is? The Lord Jesus imparts all the powers, all the grace, all the penitence, all the inclination, all the pardon of sins, in presenting His righteousness for man to grasp by living faith... which is also the gift of God.<sup>640</sup>

This is indeed, what the DRC and worldwide SDA Church believes and teaches with regard to justification by faith, as it is in conformity with the scriptures and the early apostolic church.

### ***7.1.3.3. How to Face Doctrinal Misunderstandings?***

In order to face this doctrinal misunderstanding, and in the ultimate interest of the complete unity of the church, the SDA Church members and leaders have

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<sup>638</sup> Ibid.

<sup>639</sup> Ibid.

<sup>640</sup> Ibid.

engaged with the beliefs and needs of the critics, seeking to listen and to know. As such, for the ultimate benefit of the purity of the believers and reintegrating of dissidents in the church, the SDA Church in DRC) has committed itself to respond to the following self-recommendations:

(1). *Listen to know their beliefs and needs.* Listening to dissenting groups' followers helps us to know what is important to them and how the church can meet their needs. It communicates that we value and still respect them. Do we know what our friends misunderstand? What do they think about God, salvation, justification, and what comes next?

Some dissident groups' followers focus more on strict observance of good works for justification, criticism, fault finding, own merit standing on, exclusion of women from office and so on, and because of this, they (women) are often rejected and forgotten by the dissident groups in worship.

However, in the present research, the writer realized that all of these critics need to be loved. Empowered by such a love, our words will sink into their heart, and as Griswold stated for Buddhists, "we will learn to speak in ways that lead them simply step-by-step to greater truths"<sup>641</sup> and bring them back to better understanding and to the Church.

(2). *Engaged to teach and affirm similarities in values.* Often SDA Church members meeting the dissidents want to dive quickly into controversial doctrinal discussions whereas compassionate actions could be more useful because critics are frequently confused or offended by such a person's confrontational approach.

The DRC SDA Church should build a bridge by affirming what it still holds in common with the dissidents, and also emphasise with them the morality the SDA

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<sup>641</sup> Scott "Grisworld, Becoming a Bridge Builder for Buddhism" *Elder's Digest : quarterly resource for local church elders*, April/June 2008, pp. 8, 9.

Church still holds in common. Certainly, our understanding is different as regards some doctrines, but we could start with a friendship based on what we share.

Thereafter, the SDA in the DRC should be able to teach and study well the scriptures with them and the understanding of Biblical doctrines of the early apostolic church as founded in the New Testament teachings and the prophetic writings.

Moreover, it should emphasize teachings on approaching the interpretation of Scriptures by which God reveals Himself to human beings and avoid mere human speculation and interpretation, because opinion arrived at in this way may prove totally wrong. Such a sound interpretation is in conformity with the early Christian church of Berea where it is written that the “Bereans were of more noble character... for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (Acts 17: 11; NIV).

(3). *Joyful engagement to share about differences.* Dissident groups may not want to discuss religion, but if one is their friend, they will listen to one’s story. If one wants them to understand about justification by faith in Christ (Rom 3:19-22), tell them what happened when one received Jesus; tell them that deeds should not be considered as priority or merit in order to be justified. Show them, instead, that works should be understood as a result of fruits borne by someone who has been justified by his /her faith in Jesus.

These stories, and ones from the Bible, interestingly shared at the right time will help to stop misunderstanding.

(4). *Engaged to share through a testimony.* The DRC SDA Church finds testimony much better than a debate in which no one is affected and someone may become more closed than ever.

One might give a testimony concerning some good works lived after one's conversion to Jesus Christ; also describe some religious and social observances and inform the hearer that they are the result of the power of the Holy Spirit, "directly" tied to the fruit of the Spirit (character), the gifts of the Spirit (actions), and the tongues of the Spirit (words)".<sup>642</sup>

One could testify against strict religious observances as sine qua non for being justified. Let people know that genuine Christians should not be judges of other church members and for their leaders; let all of them be humble and committed to God by faith.

Finally, one should testify in favour of the genuine Christian justification which is given to the sinner by faith and not because of his / her good works in terms of the Law<sup>643</sup> and add that the Law cannot save anybody. God Himself reveals His righteousness, manifested through the high sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of Golgotha. Conscientiously thought and practised by the Modern SDA Church, this truth also seems to be in conformity with the Scriptures and ipso facto with the practice of the early apostolic church.<sup>644</sup>

## **7.2. The SDA Church and Leadership**

Does the modern SDA Church exercise a monarchical and authoritarian leadership? 120 respondents (60%) among the dissident groups' followers declared that the church is governed by such a leadership, while 78 persons (39%) refuted this hypothesis, declaring that the modern SDA Church still exercises a strong, wise, and safe leadership built on a godly character,

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<sup>642</sup> Grisworld, "Becoming a bridge builder ..." *Elders Digest*, p. 9.

<sup>643</sup> *Guide d'étude de la Bible : Leçon de l'École du sabbat « la Réconciliation et la croix du Christ »*, 2008, classe des adultes NO 428, octobre, novembre, décembre 2008 P. 26. Translation supplied.

<sup>644</sup> Ibid .



experience, integrity, and efficiency. Only 2 persons (1%) had no idea about the question.<sup>645</sup>

For the present researcher, it has been encouraging to realize that 78 (39%) of the dissident groups' followers nonetheless recognize that the SDA Church (from which they dropped out) still exercises a wise and safe leadership. It is interesting to see that this group of positive critics has been joined by 148 respondents, members of the SDA church (74%), who also refuted that statement by confirming that the SDA Church does not exercise monarchical and authoritarian leadership. Only 39 respondents (19,5%) confirmed the contrary while 13 others (6,5%) expressed no opinion on the question.<sup>646</sup>

Concerning the 120 persons (60%) who accused the SDA Church of an authoritarian and monarchical leadership, the present writer felt the need to research the issue of organization on behalf of all Church members and dissident groups.

### **7.2.1. Reasons for Studies in Organization and Leadership**

Many young people are receiving church membership every year, large numbers of whom are without instruction in the principles of church organization. Large numbers of these new members come into our church fellowship from other denominations, labour unions, secret societies, clubs and organizations of various kinds. In these connections many have had some experience in the conduct of the business and affairs of assemblies, and in parliamentary usages. Incidentally, as Montgomery points out, it is but natural that many of these new members, as they grow into Sabbath school and church responsibilities among us, will feel that their ideas and ways of conducting meetings and business are

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<sup>645</sup> See Table 6, p. 262.

<sup>646</sup> See Table 7, p.265.

best, and should be adopted by our members. They need really careful instruction in the divine order of SDA church organization.<sup>647</sup>

There are many of our association workers and church members who have never heard a series of studies on church organization and leadership. The spirit of independence, of strife for supremacy, of disorganization, is everywhere. A growing disregard for constituted authority, for government, for law and order, is everywhere, and even representative governments in the world are falling. Confusion and anarchy are far reaching in the world. Consequently, the cross currents of these influences are sweeping across the church from every quarter.

That the church leadership and unity are in danger from within as well as from without is evident from the following statement:

The World is filled with strife for the supremacy. The spirit of pulling away from fellow labourers, the spirit of disorganization, is in the very air we breathe. By some, all efforts to establish order are regarded as dangerous, - as a restriction of personal liberty, and hence to be feared as popery. These deceived souls regard it a virtue to boast of their freedom to think and act independently. They declare... that they are amenable to no man. I have been instructed that it is Satan's special effort to lead men to feel that God is pleased to have them choose their own course, independent of the counsel of their brethren.<sup>648</sup>

God has made His church on the earth a channel of light, and through it he communicates His purposes and His will. As such, all negative or positive criticism of leadership should be uttered in the light of the Holy Scriptures and the early apostolic church, as is stressed below:

There have ever been in the church those who are constantly inclined toward individual independence. They seem unable to realize that independence of spirit is liable to lead the human agent to have too much confidence in himself, and to trust in his own judgement rather than to respect the counsel and highly esteem the judgment of his [sic] brethren, especially of those in the offices that God has appointed for the leadership of His people. God has inverted His Church with special authority and power, which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising; for he who does this despises the voice of God.<sup>649</sup>

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<sup>647</sup> Olivier Montgomery, *Principles of Church Organization*, 1942, pp. 21, 22.

<sup>648</sup> Ellen G White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 1962, p. 486.

<sup>649</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 443, 444.

For these and other reasons, and in order to avoid misunderstanding as regards leadership and organization, it seemed necessary that careful and thorough instruction be given to church members, workers, students, and dissident groups followers with respect to the clear and fundamental principles of church organization.

### **7.2.2. Leadership in the Early Apostolic Church**

The word “Church” is found only twice in the four Gospels, both times in Matthew 16: 17,18. It is evident that the church had been brought into existence and was known and recognized by the disciples at that time.

The New Testament is silent regarding the steps taken on the procedure followed in the organization of the apostolic church, but there is abundant scriptural evidence that it was established and that it grew rapidly and extended far during apostolic times. The church as such is mentioned 104 times in the New Testament.<sup>650</sup>

The Jerusalem church was the first church concerning which we have any record. This was the parent church, and it was no doubt looked upon as a model for the organization of churches in other places where converts were won to the faith of the Lord Jesus.

#### **7.2.2.1. Division of Responsibility in the Early Church**

As a result of the preaching of the apostles under the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit, the church at Jerusalem was greatly enlarged, and it was in urgent need of a division of responsibility and strengthening of the organization of the parent church<sup>651</sup> in view of this rapid development.

In a council meeting called by the apostles a plan for better organizing the work was laid before the believers. This resulted in the choosing and ordaining of

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<sup>650</sup> Montgomery, *Principles of Church Organisation...*, p. 64.

<sup>651</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

seven deacons to assist the apostles in bearing the burdens that were so rapidly multiplying (Acts 6:3). Stephen and Philip and five others were chosen; and when the apostles had set them before the congregation, they prayed and laid their hands on them and ordained them to their holy office. As the result, the disciples greatly multiplied in Jerusalem.<sup>652</sup>

Persecution rapidly increased against the Church there, “and they [its members] were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judah and Samaria” (Acts 8:1). Thus Samaria heard the Message, and subsequently Damascus, Lydda, Joppa and Caesarea (Acts 11:19-21) and Antioch which seems first in prominence and importance.<sup>653</sup>

Quickly various churches were raised up in different places; respectively the churches at Thessalonica, at Corinth, at Cenchrea, at Babylon, at Ephesus, and thereafter the seven churches referred to in Revelation 2 and 3: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea.

One should note that as those churches were founded and established in the faith, it is well to note that the apostles and those associated with them were very careful to surround them with the safeguards of church organization. They were duly and properly organized. Officers were appointed for leadership. Elders were chosen. Thus proper order and system were established and the work was conducted in a dignified, spiritual, and proper manner.<sup>654</sup>

#### **7.2.2.2. Fundamental Principles of Organization and Leadership (Early Apostolic Church)**

It should be noted also that when difficulty arose in the church at Antioch because of circumcision and the law of Moses, and a definite schism was

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<sup>652</sup> Ellen G. White, *Acts of the apostles*, p. 89.

<sup>653</sup> Montgomery, p. 67.

<sup>654</sup> E G White, *Acts of Apostles*, p. 92; Id., *The History of Redemption*, 2001, p. 992.

threatened (Acts 15), after much counsel and prayer, it was decided to send delegates to Jerusalem.

Note that not all the members of the church at Antioch went down to Jerusalem, but *delegates* were chosen from among the leading brethren to *represent* this church. Paul and Barnabas were included in this group. A council was called at Jerusalem. Representatives from other churches were present. The apostles and the leading brethren at the centre of the work were there.<sup>655</sup> It was really a large and important conference which took on the nature of a general council of the entire church. After due consideration was given to the question, a decision was made, and the findings were communicated to the church at Antioch and all the other churches.<sup>656</sup>

Obviously this was a very important meeting, not only because it had to do with the settlement of a thorny theological problem, but also because, "It was the means in the hands of God for the establishment in the Apostolic Church of certain broad, clear, fundamental principles of leadership and organization which would be vital to the church of Christ to the end of time."<sup>657</sup>

Thus we find well established and accepted in the early apostolic church the following fundamental principles of leadership: (a) ecclesiastical authority, (b) delegated authority, (c) representative government, (d) recognition of autonomy, limited and unlimited, (e) recognition of relationship to other congregations, the general interests of the whole body of the churches, (f) the holding of general councils or conferences representing the entire sisterhood of churches.<sup>658</sup>

These principles are fundamental in the church of Christ today, as we shall notice when we study the modern SDA Church leadership.

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<sup>655</sup> Montgomery, p. 69.

<sup>656</sup> Ibid.

<sup>657</sup> Montgomery, p. 69.

<sup>658</sup> Ibid.

According to Johnson (2006), formal leadership roles in the early apostolic church may be categorized into three types. Listed in order of appearance, the three types can be denominated (1) charismatic, (2) familial, and (3) appointive.<sup>659</sup>

(1). *Charismatic leaders*. They received a direct divine call. Charismatic ministry was marked by the bestowal of a spiritual gift (charismata, Roman 12:3-8; 1 Cor 2:4-11; Eph 4:11-13). It was not an office to which one was elected or humanly appointed. It was a function to which one was divinely called.<sup>660</sup> The church could extend its recognition of that calling, but its reception did not depend upon such recognition and normally preceded it.

(2). *Familial leadership*. During his earthly ministry the brothers of Jesus did not believe in Him (Mark 3:21, 31-35; John 7: 5). Something apparently happened, however, to bring them to believe, and this was probably the special post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to his brother James (1 Corinthians 15: 7).

As a result, at least James and perhaps other brothers not only came to be counted among the early believers, but also became leaders in the church. Two New Testament epistles (James and Jude) are traditionally ascribed to them. James became the leader of the Jerusalem church when Peter fled (Acts 12:12-17). Of interest here is that Jewish Christianity, as was natural, continued to regard the blood relatives of Jesus with respect as leaders.<sup>661</sup> Eusebius supplies

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<sup>659</sup> Robert M. Johnson, « Leadership in the Early church During its First hundred years, » Paper presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Bible Conference, Izmir, Turkey, July 2006.

<sup>660</sup> This feature is similar to the calling of Old Testament prophets. The case of Elisha, who was anointed by Elijah to be his successor (1King 19:16), though chosen by the Lord; the calling of Moses, Samuel, and the classic prophets such as Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.

<sup>661</sup> Johnson, p. 4.

the names of some: James was succeeded by his cousin Simon (Simeon) bar Clopas, under whose leadership the Christians of Jerusalem fled to Pella during the Jewish war. He was chosen by the surviving relatives of Jesus.<sup>662</sup>

(3). *Appointive leaders.* Acts 6 reports that administrative questions threatened to distract the Twelve from their ministry of preaching and teaching (Acts 6: 1, 2). The Apostles directed that the believers elect seven men, “of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom”, to perform this work (Acts 6:3). This was done, and judging from the Hellenistic names of the seven, they were chosen from among those who had complained. The Seven were made to stand before the Apostles, and having prayed the latter laid their hands upon them.<sup>663</sup> This was the beginning of the appointive ministry, leaders selected by the people and given authority by laying on of hands.

This action of the early apostolic church “was a far more momentous event than is commonly recognized, because it inaugurated a completely new type of ministry and Church leadership. It was this type that was destined to prevail over the other two kinds and replace them.”<sup>664</sup>

Concerning the laying on of hands, it is worth it to examine the following:

-*First*, it should be noted that this action did not bestow a spiritual gift; the seven were already “full of the Spirit”, and that was one of the reasons why they were chosen (Acts 6: 3).

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<sup>662</sup> Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3. 11. 1. See also Hans – Joachim Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity : Factional Disputes in the Early Church*, 1969, p. 32.

<sup>663</sup> From the Greek it is not clear whether “they” were the Apostles or the whole church community, but it is easier to read them as the former (Apostles).

<sup>664</sup> Johnson, p. 4.

-*Second*, they were chosen by their peers, apparently elected in some fashion.<sup>665</sup>  
-*Third*, their office was created for pragmatic reasons, to fill a need (Greek, *chreia*, Act 6:3).

-Fourth, they received the laying on of hands – whether from the Apostles or the whole community – and this ceremony accorded them some authority that they had lacked previously.<sup>666</sup>

Gile's understanding of the act of laying on of hands has some plausibility:

The people set apart in this way are explicitly depicted as Spirit-filled leaders, who have already had a significant ministry. The laying on of hands by those assembled therefore does not signify the bestowal of a ministry, or of the Spirit, but rather that from now on their ministry is no longer an individual one: they are from this point on representative of their community. What they do, they do not undertake in their own name, but in the name of the community that has set them apart as its representatives.<sup>667</sup>

After pointing out the above fundamental principles of leadership within the early apostolic church – representative government; ecclesiastical authority; delegated authority; recognition of relationship to the general interest of the whole body of the Churches ..., – we now proceed to evaluate the modern SDA Church's leadership in this light.

### **7.2.3. SDA Church Leadership in the Light of the Early Church**

Has the modern SDA Church exercised a monarchical leadership? Does it teach and practically apply an authoritarian administration? Is there any failure to understand rightly the fundamental principles of leadership? Is the issue finally simply an individual slight misunderstanding over the reality?

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<sup>665</sup> As peers, they could be persons who were equal to others in rank, status or merit, and elected in the same manner.

<sup>666</sup> Johnson , p. 4.

<sup>667</sup> Kevin Giles, *What on Earth is the Church? An Exploration in New Testament Theology*, 1995, p. 95.



### **7.2.3.1. Is the SDA Church a Monarchical Organization?<sup>668</sup>**

It appears to have not been so, and those who support this statement should be more informed of the worldwide SDA principles of leadership and organization.

The SDA Church is an organization of individuals who hold the same faith and doctrines in common and who are joined in Christian fellowship throughout the world in the unity of the faith for service for God.<sup>669</sup>

Among SDAs there are four steps from the individual believer to the worldwide organization of the Church. First, the local church, which is a united body of individuals; second, the local conference or local mission field, which is the united body of churches in a state, province, or local territory; third, the Union Conference or Union Mission fields within a larger territory; fourth, the General Conference, including its divisions, embracing all the unions and detached mission fields in all parts of the world.<sup>670</sup>

(1). *SDA Church principles of leadership.* First of all, it is important to state that the SDA Church is organized and administered under the apostolic form of representative church government, in which the people participate. This form recognizes the authority of representative, or delegated, bodies,<sup>671</sup> as will be noted below. Under this form of church order the entire ministry of the church stands on an equality.<sup>672</sup>

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<sup>668</sup> Sixty percents of the respondents from the dissident groups supported the statement . See table 3 of pertinent issues, above p. 264.

<sup>669</sup> Montgomery, p. 87 ; see also *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, pp. 163-180.

<sup>670</sup> Ibid.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>672</sup> In harmony with Christ's declaration that "you are all brethren" and "he who is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matt. 23: 8, 11), members are committed to relate to one another on the basis of equality. They have to minister to the needs of others, leading them to the Master, See also, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 172.

a. *Ecclesiastical authority.* The General Conference in session is the highest legislative body in the denomination. It is composed of duly accredited delegates representing all the union conferences, union missions, and detached mission fields of the world.

In any case, all discussion of polity should rest on the basic fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the church and all human agents are subordinate to His direction.<sup>673</sup>

Christ's authority is applied to the offices of the SDA Church are in conformity with the above statement by Harrison. Indeed, Christ exercises His authority through His church and its specially appointed servants, but He never transfers His power. No one possesses any independent authority apart from Christ and His Word.<sup>674</sup>

SDA congregations worldwide and in the DRC elect their officers. But while these officers function as representatives of the people, their authority comes from Christ. Their election simply confirms the call they received from Christ. The primary duty of the elected officers is to see that Biblical instructions for worship, doctrine, discipline, and gospel proclamation are followed. Since the church is the body of Christ, they are to seek its counsel regarding their decisions and actions,<sup>675</sup> because Christ is the supreme ecclesiastical authority.

b. *Delegated and Representative Authority.* Now, furnishing an example of organization and leadership in the SDA Church in the DRC and worldwide, it has been mentioned that the Conference or the Mission Field is a "sisterhood of Churches".<sup>676</sup> It is created by uniting all the churches located in a given territory, as a state, or states, or a portion of a state.<sup>677</sup>

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<sup>673</sup> Everett F. Harrison, *The Apostolic Church*, 1995, p. 108.

<sup>674</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 176.

<sup>675</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>676</sup> Montgomery, p. 97.

This is a legislative body comprising delegated representatives of all its churches. These delegates appointed by the various churches are, by such appointment, authorized to represent the church in all the deliberations and actions of the Conference.<sup>678</sup>

The same applies to a Union Conference or Union Mission which is formed by the unity of a given number of conferences or missions within a given territory, such as a group of states or provinces.

The Union in session is a legislative body of delegated representatives of all the conferences constituting it. The conferences are represented in the union conference session by duly accredited delegates who are authorized by appointment to represent the conference in all the deliberations and actions of the Union session.<sup>679</sup>

In a word, the delegated authority of the SDA Church is defined. To delegate is to “send as a representative, with authority to act”.<sup>680</sup> A delegate is a person appointed to act for another or others.<sup>681</sup>

Authority is the “right to act officially; the person or persons in whom government or command is vested; an authoritative opinion, decision, or precedent”.<sup>682</sup>

It should be noted that a representative authority is affirmed in the SDA Church, when a person is appointed by the Church as delegate to the conference

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<sup>677</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, p. 36.

<sup>678</sup> *SDA Church Manual*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>679</sup> *Ibid.* See also Montgomery, p. 97.

<sup>680</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>681</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>682</sup> *Ibid.*

session; he/she is vested with authority by such appointment to represent and to act for the church in all the deliberations of the body.<sup>683</sup>

Hence it will be evident that the principles upon which the SDA denomination is established are those of representative government. In the SDA Church, this is the organized control of the general interests of the church; the administration of the affairs of the church. Of course, as explained above, this principle is the one established in the experience of the Jerusalem Council concerning circumcision (Acts 15) as noted at the opening of this chapter. Here again the SDA Church is still in conformity with the early church concerning its delegated and representative authority.

*c. Recognition of relationship to the whole body of the church worldwide.*

The holding of sessions of general councils or conferences represents the entire sisterhood of the church. This does recall their relationship to the whole body of the church.

The General Conference session is organized very much along the same general lines as are the Union conference and local conference sessions.<sup>684</sup> The voters of this conference are designated as (a) delegates at large, and (b) regular delegates.

Delegates at large are all the members of the general conference Executive committees, and such members of the Division Committees as are not members of the General Conference Committee; while regular delegates are such persons as are duly accredited by division committees and union conference.<sup>685</sup>

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<sup>683</sup> See also *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 174.

<sup>684</sup> Montgomery, p. 106.

<sup>685</sup> *Ibid.* p. 107.

The opening page of the SDA Church Manual (1986: 20)<sup>686</sup> asserts that “there are no barriers to membership of the church because all men [sic] are of one blood, and belong to the universal brotherhood [sic] of Christ. The church is pledged to “the conquest of every barrier which sin has erected between human beings”.<sup>687</sup>

Hence, “the Seventh-day Adventist Church describes itself as a conservative Christian body, worldwide in extent, and evangelical in doctrine...”.<sup>688</sup> Therefore according to all the above principles of leadership of delegated and representative authority worldwide, the SDA Church seems not to be a monarchical organization as some dissenting groups assert. The fact is that the SDA leadership is in this regard also in conformity with the Scriptures and the early apostolic church.

#### **7.2.3.2. Does the SDA Church Exhibit an Authoritarian Leadership?**

The organizational structure of the SDA Church strives to reflect Christ’s principle of a participative Gospel and a servant leadership. Of the four recognised forms of church polity – papal (Roman Catholic), Episcopal (Anglican church), independent (Baptist), and representative (Uniting church) – the Seventh-day Adventist Church practises the last mentioned.<sup>689</sup>

This is a Presbyterian type of government, which recognises that the locus of authority rests in the church membership and that executive responsibility is delegated to representative officers and bodies. This government affirms the equality of the entire ministry and emphasizes participation of the laity.<sup>690</sup>

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<sup>686</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 1986, p. 22.

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>688</sup> D.F. Neufeld, Ed, *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1976, rev. ed., 10: 1325.

<sup>689</sup> See Montgomery, p. 96.

<sup>690</sup> Cushla Apitzeke, *Literacy and Religion : the Textual. Politics and practices of Seventh-day Adventism*, 1955, p. 63.

A real leader is possessed of the ability to organize his/her own work, to guide and collaborate with those who are associated with him or her. He or she should know how to counsel with them and, under his or her direction, arrange their work.

Unfortunately, the ability properly to estimate or appraise men or women can be sometimes a rare gift. It is true, according to Montgomery, that we have seen some sad mistakes made by leaders in the choice of men or women because the one called was wholly unfitted for the position or the responsibility in which he/she was placed.<sup>691</sup>

There is grave danger that friendship and favouritism will influence such a choice. These should have no place in the decisions of any leader. The sterling qualities of a man or woman, his or her ability to do a given work, and his or her loyalty and devotion to the cause are the factors that should govern a leader in his or her choice of men and women<sup>692</sup> in the DRC SDA Church and elsewhere in the world.

If the 120 persons (60%) among the dissident groups' followers have declared that they have encountered authoritarian leaders in the DRC SDA Church, one should enquire what kind of leadership the dissidents want? Is it one which Aaron exhibited when he so easily obeyed the people's demands to make a calf (Exodus 32: 1-5)? Is it the one which allows church members to do all they want in the church, despite misunderstandings and a lack of information on several issues of Biblical truth, social, and leadership teaching?

It is true that certain isolated and individual cases of authoritarian leadership may happen somewhere in the SDA Church; nevertheless the present writer argues that those individual cases should not be extended to the whole church's organization and as such understood as the church's code of practice. This, I

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<sup>691</sup> Montgomery, p. 74.

<sup>692</sup> Ibid.

consider, has been the major challenge offered by misconceptions about SDA Church leadership within the said dissenting groups' followers.

Nevertheless, as is the case, the SDA Church principles of leadership in DRC are in opposition to such a misunderstanding. Fowler points out four instances from the book of Acts that give us the qualities to expect from leaders, and the principles the SDA Church follows in choosing its leaders. Those instances are: (1) Acts 1:21-26, the replacement of Judas, required someone with personal experience of Jesus; (2) Acts 6: 1-6, the choosing of deacons, required them to be "full of the Spirit and wisdom, and of faith"; (3) Acts 11: 19-25, the selection of Barnabas to lead the church at Antioch, called for the person to be of "good repute"; (4) in Acts 13:2-3, the sending of missionaries to the Gentiles, the early church placed the utmost emphasis on prayer and submission to God as the ultimate chooser.<sup>693</sup>

It is clear that these are qualifications that the early apostolic church insisted on in their choice of leaders.<sup>694</sup> The writer considers that it is the same today in the DRC for the modern SDA Church, as Fowler points out again:

Theology, culture, erudition, management, personal charm, and persuasion were all skills that the church could have used in its administration, but none of these could have taken the place of knowing Jesus personally, heart to heart, mind to mind, one to one.<sup>695</sup>

As such, the present writer strongly affirms that church leaders chosen in this way in the DRC SDA Church are exercising a servant leadership in relationship to the church membership at all levels of the Church as Jesus and the apostles did (Mark 10: 42-45). Indeed, these leaders are not authoritarian: Christ is still the Head of the church (Matt 28: 18) and they believe that "Christ's headship over the church is based primarily on His mediatory work, and that He (Christ)

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<sup>693</sup> John M. Fowler, « Choosing leaders, » *Ministry*, occupying till He comes *International Journal for Pastors*, June 1995, 5-6.

<sup>694</sup> Ibid ., See also *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, pp. 174-179.

<sup>695</sup> Fowler, "Choosing leaders", *Ministry*, p 6.

exercises His authority through His Church and its specially appointed servants, but He never transfers His power. No one has any independent authority apart from Christ and His Word.”<sup>696</sup>

Can one imagine a local church in the DRC with people who are not separated or divided by categories that define their identity, such as pastors, staff, and lay people? Is it possible to create a specific leadership pattern for a body with many members, all with gifts interdependent on one another, in a ministry in which members of the body lead with the gifts that God has given them? Thus, as Willhauck and Thorpe observe:

In a system like this, Jesus is at the center and at the margins. Jesus is the source, and it is His Spirit we rely on to meet needs not the Pastor. When God is depended on to meet needs and all the people are resources, no one person is ahead of another.<sup>697</sup>

Speaking about spiritual gifts, Paul wrote: “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines. The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ” (1 Corinthians 12: 11, 12; NIV).

This organizational structure is very different from many unhealthy systems of leadership where the people focus on the Pastor or paid staff to meet their needs. One of the ways to adjust our local churches and to restore their effectiveness for unity is to discover and use a redemptive approach in order to rectify misunderstanding; and this will be our concern in the next chapter.

### **7.3. Conclusion**

Several conclusions emerge from the present study. According to the population sample selected from the dissenting groups’ followers, it has been observed that

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<sup>696</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p 176.

<sup>697</sup> Susan Willhauck and Jacquelyn Thorp, p. 67.



there is a misunderstanding regarding several doctrines such as justification by faith, spirit of prophecy and Biblical interpretation.

It has been estimated however that with respect to doctrinal issues and matters of Church leadership, the Modern SDA Church in the DRC and globally still believes, teaches and practises them in conformity with the Biblical view and the early apostolic church.

In order to face doctrinal misunderstanding, the SDA Church members and leaders have committed themselves to listen and to know the beliefs and needs of the followers of dissenting groups; to teach and affirm similarities in values; to joyfully share about differences and to share with them through testimonies; all this being done for the ultimate benefit of purity and reintegrating of dissident groups in the church.

Nevertheless, some local SDA Churches in the DRC should also review some of their unbiblical standards on several issues such as fanaticism, formalism, secularism, and the unkind confrontational approach towards critics. Rather they should “conform to the worldwide practice of the sisterhood of churches”,<sup>698</sup> endeavouring to stay right on track and develop their characters to be consistent with Biblical, spirit of prophecy and Adventist teachings.

Concerning the SDA Church in the DRC and worldwide, congregations elect their officers. However while these officers function as representatives of the people, their authority should stem from Christ. Their election simply confirms the call received from Christ. The primary duty of the elected officers is to see that Biblical instructions for worship, doctrine, discipline, and Gospel proclamation are followed. Since the Church is the body of Christ, they are to seek its counsel regarding their decisions and actions.<sup>699</sup> As such, it seems clear that the SDA Church government is neither monarchical nor authoritarian in leadership; rather,

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<sup>698</sup> S.K. Twumasi, “Adventist dissidents...”, *Christ in the classroom*, p. 496.

<sup>699</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 176.

it appears to be a delegated, representative and Christ likened leadership instead. Therefore, the present writer considers that almost nothing has changed from the early apostolic church to the modern SDA Church in the DRC and worldwide.

How then has the church engaged with women's ministries, practices and liturgical problems? To these pertinent issues we will now turn in the following Chapter.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### HOW IN THE DRC, THE SDA CHURCH HAS ENGAGED WITH WOMEN'S MINISTRIES, PRACTICES AND LITURGICAL ISSUES

#### 8.0. Introduction

The historical survey of the development of women's ministries in chapter IV and of the religious practices in chapter V has demonstrated (1) that women play a vital role in both the private and public religious life of God's people today, supporting the church in the Evangelical Account, and other ministries; (2) that Christian worship and practices should render honor and service to the Lord in total commitment to Him.

The aim of chapter VIII is to take a closer look at the evaluation of whether or not contexts and criticism on this issue are true, and to ascertain if the principles of women's ministries and religious practices to which the present writer has alluded in the two previous chapters are legitimately derived from God's purpose as they were practiced without distortion in the early apostolic church, and how the DRC SDA Church has faced such a pertinent issue.

#### 8.1. Women's Ministries Challenges In The DRC

Have actual SDA church women's ministries in this country and worldwide departed from those exercised in the early apostolic church? Responding to this question, 200 people selected at random from both sides (followers of dissident groups and SDA church members) responded to the questionnaire.<sup>700</sup> 180 respondents (90%) among the dissident members accepted that modern SDA women's ministries have changed from those practised in the early apostolic

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<sup>700</sup> See questionnaire, Table 8, p. 333.

church (see Table 8 below). Only 16 persons (8%) denied the fact, and 40 others (2%) did not have any idea, as shown in the following table:

**Table 8**  
**Pertinent Issues Faced by SDA Church from Dissident Groups-Continued\***

Issues	Number of people inquired into	Confirmed the issue (yes)	%	Refuted the issue (no)	%	No idea	%
Have actual SDA church women's ministries changed from those of the early apostolic church?	200	180	90	16	8	4	2
Have some DRC church practices and liturgy changed from those of the early apostolic church?	200	103	76.5	43	21.5	4	2

\*These data in Table 8 were furnished by a random selection of dissident groups' followers stemming from several groups in the Lubero and Beni areas, June-July 2004, 2005.

Indeed, for the dissident groups' followers, the women's ministry issue has been a very big challenge to the DRC SDA church; many of these groups have declared they have dropped away from the church because women have been allowed to preach during Sabbath worship and also because some women, worldwide, were claiming to be ordained pastors at the General Conference session; "We are fearing one day in the future, this church could ordain a woman as pastor",<sup>701</sup> they stated.

Of course, in these dissenting groups, women are completely excluded from any office in worship: they cannot speak, may neither preach nor teach and can never be ordained elder or pastor; they should cover their heads and be seated quietly in the church during worship. In many groups, even their clothes and their physical beauty are threatened.

What light do the Scriptures and the early Apostolic Church shed on women's ministry? How is the SDA Church in the DRC engaged in this issue? Is there any

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<sup>701</sup> Statement received from followers of the Mupo dissenting groups, June, 2004, as well as from many other groups in the Area.

change from the early church and, if so, why? Or is there still any link between the early church and the modern SDA church? What about those “conflicting” passages in 1 Corinthians about women? What about their clothes and their beauty?

## **8.2. Women’s Ministry In The Scriptures And The Early Apostolic Church**

Exegetical and hermeneutical models used by SDA Church to understand issues such as women’s ministries and female ordination accord priority to a systematic study, from a Biblical perspective, of the issues throughout the Scriptures as presented below from the Old Testament to the early apostolic church in the New Testament.<sup>702</sup>

It appears that in order to understand issues where differences in parallel accounts seem to exist, one should allow “each Bible writer’s idea” on women’s ministries and female ordination to “emerge and be heard while at the same time recognizing the basic unity of the divine self disclosure”.<sup>703</sup>

Moreover one should recognize that “the Bible is its own interpreter and that the meaning of words, texts and passages is best determined by diligently comparing scripture with scripture because the “Bible does not contradict itself”.<sup>704</sup>

Hence women’s ministries in the DRC SDA church being studied should be viewed and evaluated in the light of both the scriptures and the early apostolic church as is done for the whole church worldwide.

### **8.2.1. The Early Christian Church**

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<sup>702</sup> See also above, Chapter 8.1., “SDA Principles of Approaching the Interpretation of Scripture”, pp. 339.

<sup>703</sup> Statements Guidelines, p. 215.

<sup>704</sup> *SDA Statements Guidelines*, pp. 212, 213.

By early Christian Church, the present writer means the Body of Christ, the society of those who accepted Him as Messiah, Lord, Saviour, and Son of God and were incorporated into Him through baptism, since the early ministry of Jesus and the apostles in the first century up to the time of Constatine I, the first Christian emperor.<sup>705</sup>

This was continuous with the Old Testament people of God who looked for a Messiah and his kingdom and it inherited the promises made to them. The early Christian Church took new shape and new life through the teaching and ministry of Jesus, through His redeeming death, resurrection and ascension and through the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

This study deals with the early apostolic Christian Church period (up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century) as a yardstick of evaluation in the different sections of the thesis. The patristic Christian church period (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries) is a means of reference only.

#### **8.2.1.1. Key elements of the Early Christian Church.**

**1. Origin and growth.** As soon as it had begun, with Jesus' ministry and the apostles, the early church spread with astonishing rapidity. Already in the Acts of the Apostles its movement from one headquarters to another can be traced: Jerusalem, Damascus, Antioch; the Pauline mission to Asia Minor (Tarsus, Iconium, Ephesus and Cyprus); the crossing to Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica and Achaera, Athens, Corinth); then its beginning in Rome.<sup>706</sup>

Other early evidence tells of more churches in Asia Minor and of Christians in Alexandria. Though Christianity found a springboard in Jewish synagogues, it owed even more to the crucial decision to open the church to Gentiles without either circumcision or complete adherence to the Jewish law, and above all,

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<sup>705</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "Early Christian Church", Chicago-London., William Berton, (1968), 7: 843-845.

<sup>706</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 7, p. 843.

much more was due, humanly speaking, to “the widespread longing for personal religion and the assurance of salvation”.<sup>707</sup>

Persecution rapidly increased against the church at Jerusalem, and the disciples “were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria” (Acts 8:1) and farther, and there believers were converted to Jesus and the churches rose up in different places, taking the names of the cities in which they were located,<sup>708</sup> and by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century there were well-established churches in Gaul (Lyon, Vienne, perhaps Marseilles) and Latin Africa (Carthage) with perhaps a start in Britain, Spain and Roman Germany, though little is known of these areas for another century.<sup>709</sup>

**2. Developing Church Organization.** The church of the new dispensation was organized and established by Jesus Christ Himself. He is the greatest prophet of his church, and “when He ascended, He left the Church and all its interest as a sacred trust to His followers”.<sup>710</sup>

He established a Gospel ministry and a divinely appointed leadership, as is written: “He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them...” (Mark 3: 13-15).

**a. The exercise of supervision:** For most of the activities of the church, there are strong indications of planning and administrative supervision. The apostles were at first located in Jerusalem, and remained there even during the persecution arising from the stoning of Stephen. From there they sent Peter and John to help Philip in Samaria. When Peter dealt with Cornelius (Acts 10), the brethren in Jerusalem were troubled, and asked Peter to give an account of this.

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<sup>707</sup> Ibid.

<sup>708</sup> Thus we have the church at Antioch, the Church at Thessalonica, at Corinth, at Cencrea, at Babylon, at Ephesus... See Montgomery, p. 67.

<sup>709</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 8, p. 843.

<sup>710</sup> Montgomery, p. 292.

They did the same by summoning representatives to the council in Jerusalem to solve the matter of the ritual required of Gentiles (Acts 15).

All this indicates that the apostles recognized the validity of referring problems of general concern to an authority more central than the local congregations.<sup>711</sup>

**b. *The Spirit's guidance in administration:*** Administration presupposes authority, power, prerogatives. These are derived from some form of organized society or association or corporation. Administration in the church of Christ is the exercise of those powers or prerogatives with which one has been vested by the church through the guidance of the Spirit.<sup>712</sup> It is not indicated to what extent the brethren at Antioch laid out for Barnabas and Paul the route they were to follow. Rather, one gains the impression that they operated under the leadership of the Spirit. Paul, on his second journey, was even prevented by the Spirit from entering certain provinces while on that journey (Acts 16:6-10). As a matter of fact, it may be argued that the Holy Spirit was the overall divine guide for the church's administration.<sup>713</sup>

The men of the Spirit, the apostles, prophets, teachers and evangelists, were active in leading the church. The deacons, as such, were appointed to supervise the distribution of goods and food to the members of the church in Jerusalem. "This was essentially an administrative function",<sup>714</sup> although under the blessing of the Spirit, they proved also to be successful evangelists.

Therefore no sharp division in this early day between the elders and deacons as administrative officers, and the apostles, prophets, teachers and evangelists as men of the Spirit, can be pressed. However, the distinction grew in later years between these two classes of functionaries in the church. The elders and

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<sup>711</sup> *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol.6, p. 37.

<sup>712</sup> Montgomery, pp. 20, 21.

<sup>713</sup> *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol.6, p. 37.

<sup>714</sup> *Ibid.* p. 38.



deacons increased in administrative power and influence, and the men of the Spirit not only became numerous but, as is evident from latter Christian writings, actually fell into disrepute.<sup>715</sup>

**c. The Presbytery.** For the official leadership in the local congregations two terms were used. One, *presbuteros*, literally, “older”,<sup>716</sup> indicates one in a position of respect. The word has come into English as “priest” and “presbyter”<sup>717</sup> although the medieval and modern Christian priests perform ritualistic and sacerdotal functions that the presbyters of the early church never thought of exercising.

Hornby explains “Presbyterian” as being of a church, especially of a national church (such as that of Scotland) governed by elders (presbyters) who are all equal in rank.<sup>718</sup>

The other term is “bishop”, from the Greek *episcopos*, “an overseer.”<sup>719</sup> It must be noted that in the early church these two titles did not designate two different offices. The fact that they were applied interchangeably to the same office is shown clearly in Acts 20:17, 28, where the elders of Ephesus who met Paul at Melitus are called both elders and bishops or “overseers”; also in Titus 1:5-9 where, in describing the qualifications necessary for the leaders of the church, the terms “elder” and “bishop” are used synonymously.<sup>720</sup>

The difference that emerges between the term “bishop” on the one hand and “presbyter” or “priest” on the other, stems from a much later time than either the apostolic or the subapostolic church. Indeed Clement, the leader of the church at

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<sup>715</sup> Ibid. See also *Encyclopedia Britanica*, vol 7, p. 843.

<sup>716</sup> Ibid.

<sup>717</sup> Ibid. p. 38.

<sup>718</sup> AS Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary...*, “Presbyterian”..., p. 979.

<sup>719</sup> *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol 6. p. 38.

<sup>720</sup> Ibid.

Rome just before the close of the first century, in writing his first Epistle to the Corinthians, knows only “presbyters”,<sup>721</sup> and uses for the presbyterial office the term “episcopate”, that is “oversight”.<sup>722</sup>

Even more striking is the fact that Irenaeus, leader of the church of Lyons in Gaul about the year 185, still speaks of the predecessors of Victor, leader of the church at Rome, as presbyters.<sup>723</sup>

Why then the two terms? It is clear that they designate the same activity. “Elder” or “presbyter” is evidently the title of office.<sup>724</sup> As such, the eldership (presbytership) apparently consisted of a plurality of elders: Paul had not one elder, but “elders” appointed in each congregation (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

**d. *The Episcopate.*** In the New Testament, as mentioned, the other title is *episcopos*, meaning “overseer” or “superintendent”, rendered “bishop” in English. That these words are both applied to the office of elder may be seen by comparing Acts 20:17 with v. 28, and also from their use in such passages as Titus 1:5-9.

However, it soon became the case in the church that these two Greek words took on different meanings as applying to different offices. Though at first the “bishop” served more as a sort of chairman or first among equals, he gradually assumed more and more authority over those associated with him in the administration of the affairs of the local church. The term *episcopos* thus came to designate a “bishop” as the “presenting elder”, and eventually, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, as

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<sup>721</sup> Clement, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Ches. 44 and 47, quoted in *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p.38.

<sup>722</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch. 44.

<sup>723</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* v. 24, 14 . quoted in *SDA Biblical Commentary*, Vol 6. p. 38.

<sup>724</sup> *Ibid.*

a sort of “overlord” in the church. Such an officer of the church in the early centuries is now commonly known as a monarchical bishop.<sup>725</sup>

**e. *The Episcopate at Antioch.*** The episcopate evolved out of the chief eldership (see here above), though not at the same rate everywhere. The monarchic episcopate seems to have emerged earliest at Antioch in Syria. It is not known what happened there after Paul’s imprisonment about the year 60 or 61. In his book, Eusebius names the leaders of the church at Antioch as Peter, Euodius, and Ignatius.<sup>726</sup>

This tradition of Peter’s primacy at Antioch, however, does not appear to accord with the record of the book of Acts. Peter was in Antioch “dissembling” in the matter of Judaism, and was challenged by Paul for so doing (Gal 2:11-21). The church was, of course, already organized at Antioch, and Peter was scarcely its leader then.<sup>727</sup>

**f. *The monarchical episcopate of Ignatius.*** Ignatius of Antioch was martyred about A.D. 116 in a situation of persecution under the emperor Trajan. In Acts 13:1, 2 it is revealed that the early leadership of the church at Antioch was furnished by men possessing spiritual gifts, the *pneumatikoi*. It may have been that vigorous men came to leadership there later than the first decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century: “there is evidence in Antioch and several Asian cities of congregations being governed by a single bishop assisted by a group of presbyters and a number of deacons”.<sup>728</sup> Since this time in fact, monarchical expressions such as “Live in harmony with the will of the bishop”, “we must regard the bishop as the

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<sup>725</sup> Ibid.

<sup>726</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* iii. 36. 2.; 22. quoted in *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6. pp. 26, 38.

<sup>727</sup> Ibid.

<sup>728</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol 7, p. 843.

Lord himself”,<sup>729</sup> appeared. This was perhaps the beginning of the post-apostolic church monarchical episcopate.

**g. The apostolic succession.** A little before AD 200, Irenaeus, leader of the church in Gaul, developed a clear-cut theory of the episcopate. His thesis is that the apostles handed down the true Christian teaching to the bishops (episcopos), who were supposed to have succeeded them. He holds that the bishops of churches founded by the apostles were the preservers of sacred tradition.<sup>730</sup> In this redaction may be observed the beginning of the theory of apostolic succession.

**h. The Established Episcopate.** The first clear evidence of the bishop as the authoritarian leader of the various congregations is shown in the writings of Cyprian, bishop of the churches centring on Carthage in North Africa. Cyprian was martyred in A.D. 258.<sup>731</sup> Eusebius, the church historian, calls all church leaders “bishops” from the earliest times, but in doing so he is, of course, speaking from the point of view, and using the terminology, of A.D. 324, at which time the bishops were fully monarchical in authority virtually everywhere.<sup>732</sup>

In short, it is as well to note that in the apostolic times (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD) as the churches were raised up and established in the faith in different provinces (Judea, Galilee, Samaria, Asia, Macedonia, Galatia, Syria, Cilicia, etc.) the apostles and those associated with them (elders, presbyters, deacons), in bringing these churches in existence, were very careful to surround them with the safeguards offered by church organization.

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<sup>729</sup> *To the Ephesians* 4. quoted in *SDA Bible Commentary* vol 6. p. 39.

<sup>730</sup> This declaration he [Irenaeus] sets forth in book iii of his treatise *Against Heresies* III. 3.3. Quoted in *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol.6, p. 40.

<sup>731</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>732</sup> *Ibid.*

They were duly and properly organized.<sup>733</sup> The administrative team (bishop, elders, deacons) of the church was neither spoken of in terms of the highest sanctity nor those of monarchical ecclesiastical authority, but they administered it under the apostolic form of representative church government (Acts 15:1-35) and a Christlike leadership model (Matt 20:25-28), in which believers participated (Acts 15:2,30,31). This form of church order recognized the authority of representative, or delegated, bodies under which the entire ministry of the church stood on an equal footing,<sup>734</sup> under the blessings and guidance of the Spirit of Christ (John 15:26; 16:13,14).

In reality, the successors to the apostles in terms of ecclesiastical authority were the presiding elders. It took years for the office of elder to evolve into the monarchical episcopate.<sup>735</sup>

**3. Early Church doctrine.** Actually, it is argued that “the church doctrine exists to promote the worship of God, the inner life of the spirit, the evangelization of the world and the molding of society according to the will of God”.<sup>736</sup> Hence early Christian doctrine had to maintain “its biblical and historical character, against other elements like speculative, rationalist..., [so that] in its Hellenistic environment”,<sup>737</sup> it recorded and reflected upon the Bible. Thus it developed a standard of orthodoxy in the course of its struggle with various forms of Gnosticism which threatened to spiritualize away the historic acts of the divine redemption, and to deny a true incarnation of God in Christ, partly because the matter was regarded as evil.<sup>738</sup>

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<sup>733</sup> See above, chapter VII. p. 314 ff.

<sup>734</sup> Montgomery, p. 96.

<sup>735</sup> *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p, 40.

<sup>736</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 7, p. 844.

<sup>737</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>738</sup> *Ibid.*

For the early church it became necessary to determine a new canon of authoritative scriptures (the writings of the apostles and their circle); and on this basis to “draw out the theological implications of the gospel; and to adopt such institutional forms as would preserve and propagate the inner life in Christ”.<sup>739</sup>

**a. *The second coming of Jesus in the early church.*** Thus in their daily expectation of the return of Christ as judge, this doctrine (Acts 1:11) helped faithful early church members to prepare themselves for Jesus’s kingdom and, by urgently preaching His Gospel (Matt 10:7), bring others into the redeemed community by performing baptisms in terms of which the church marked its new members<sup>740</sup> (Matt 28:19,20).

Upon a definite threefold pledge the early church community could and did build a hope for the future: (1) He [Christ] would come again; (2) He would be the very same Jesus, the One whom they had known and loved on earth, who would come again; (3) He would come as they had seen Him go, visible to everyone, not secretly or uncertainly. All this recalled to them what Jesus Himself had told them a few days before the crucifixion (Matt 24:27).<sup>741</sup>

**b. *The justification by faith in the early church.*** It was inevitable that, as soon as the early apostolic church engaged in worldwide missionary work, a serious difficulty and misunderstanding should arise within its membership about Judaism in the Christian Church. Being Jews, the first Christians knew the Jewish faith as the only true faith, and the God this faith worshipped as the only true God; they furthermore believed thoroughly in the inspiration and spiritual authority of the Scriptures that had come down to them from their fathers (Rom 3:1,2).

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<sup>739</sup> Ibid.

<sup>740</sup> *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 22, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 7, 843.

<sup>741</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

These Jews mistakenly concluded that those who were brought into line with Jesus' teachings would also follow the practices of the Jewish church, that is to say, also become members of the great body of Judaism.<sup>742</sup>

The noble decision of the council of Jerusalem on this problem was not accepted without a struggle on the part of those who wished to maintain Judaism in the church. Even Peter and Barnabas, under their pressure, "dissembled",<sup>743</sup> ceased to engage in fellowship with the Gentiles, and allied themselves with the ritualistic party from Jerusalem (Gal 2:11-14).

But Paul was not willing to let the victory won at Jerusalem become fruitless. He "withstood" Peter "to the face" (v 11), and challenged him with respect to "knowing law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (Gal 2:16), adding that "we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified".<sup>744</sup>

It appears clear that justification by faith in Jesus Christ was one of the fundamental doctrines of the early apostolic church despite the many difficulties it encountered among Judaizing Christians. This controversy caused Paul to write the Epistle to the Galatians some years later as well as the Epistle to the Romans to counteract the influence of the Judaizers who followed Paul's route and worked among his converts.<sup>745</sup> In fact the problem of Judaism continued to perplex and trouble the Christian Church for more than two centuries.

### ***c. Days of observance in the Early Church.***

**The Sabbath** – Neither the inspired writers of the New Testament nor the writers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century focus on the matter of the day of Christian worship.<sup>746</sup> Paul

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<sup>742</sup> *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 33.

<sup>743</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>744</sup> *Ibid.* See also chapter VII above.

<sup>745</sup> It is surprising to note that the same controversial situation against justification by faith doctrine in the early church showed up again in the 1888 SDA Church Conference upon the same doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ (see above, chap. II. B.10, pp. 72 ff.).

<sup>746</sup> *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 48.

indeed admonishes Jewish Christians not to forsake their assembling together (Heb 10:25). However, at this point in his writings Paul does not refer to any particular day of observance.

Christ attended the synagogue while He was on earth (Matt 13:54); Mk 1:21-29; 6:1-6; Lk 4:16-38). His presence in the synagogue on the Sabbath was an act of personal worship on His part, “his custom”, and not merely the seeking of an opportunity to instruct the Jews. It seems that it was not due to any disregard of the seventh-day Sabbath that Jesus did things displeasing to the Jewish leaders, such as healing the sick, and refusing to rebuke His disciples for gathering handfuls of grain, on the Sabbath. Rather, it appears that it was in order to lead the Jewish people away from the unreasonable traditional practices that were making Sabbath observance a burden.<sup>747</sup>

It is also clear from the Gospel record that Jesus Christ died just before sunset preceding the seventh-day Sabbath, rested in the grave over the Sabbath,<sup>748</sup> and rose early on the first day of the week (Lk 24:1). It was the divine plan that He should remain at rest in the grave over the Sabbath day of that last eventful week. While He was doing so, His followers were keeping the Sabbath “according to the commandment” (Lk 23:56).

It is also mentioned of the apostle Paul that, in the cities where he found himself on his missionary journeys, he visited the synagogues on the Sabbath day. Doubtless he went there, not only to evangelize, but also to worship (Acts 13:14-16, 42-44). At Antioch of Pisidia (the first missionary journey), and in Thessalonica (his second missionary journey) Paul, during the three Sabbath days reasoned with listeners out of the Scriptures (Acts 17:2). It was the same in Corinth, when Paul spent eighteen months (Acts 18:2-4).<sup>749</sup>

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<sup>747</sup> Ibid.

<sup>748</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 774., see also Luke 23: 52-56; 24:1-3.

<sup>749</sup> *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 48.



The gospel writers know only the Sabbath day as a weekly day of worship. John records of himself that he was in the spirit on the “Lord’s day” (Rev 1:10). But the day over which Jesus is the Lord is the seventh day Sabbath (Matt 12:8; Mk 2:28). This is the Lord’s “holy day” (Es 58:13) and the Sabbath day of the Lord of the commandments (Ex 20:10). Furthermore, the writer of the gospel of John mentions that it is known by the simple title “the first day of the week”.<sup>750</sup> In short, it appears that Christians of the Early Church kept the seventh-day Sabbath during the time of the apostles, and as ample information shows, many of them kept it for centuries.<sup>751</sup>

**The annual Sabbaths-** After Christ died upon the cross, certain elements in the requirements in the law of Moses ceased to be operative, as clearly foretold in Daniel 9:24-27, where it is prophesied that “in the midst of the week He [the Messiah] shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease”.<sup>752</sup>

The apostles’ faithful observance of the weekly Sabbath stood in sharp contrast to their attitude toward the annual ceremonial Sabbaths. They made clear that Christians were under no obligation to keep these yearly rest days, because Christ had nailed the ceremonial laws to the cross. Paul said, “Therefore let no one judge you in food or drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Col 2:16,17 NIV). Since “the context [of this passage] deals with ritual matters, the sabbaths here referred to are the ceremonial sabbaths of the Jewish annual

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<sup>750</sup> See John 5:1-9; 9: 6- 14; 20: 1, 19.

<sup>751</sup> See, e.g., Bacchiocchi, “The rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity”, in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, D.C. Review and Herald, 1982), p. 137; Also Id., *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977.), pp. 223-232.

<sup>752</sup> When the veil of the Temple was rent from top to bottom at the moment Christ died upon the cross, the Lord indicated thereby that the way to the true, the heavenly, sanctuary was open through the intercession of Jesus Christ, and the sacrifices that had been brought daily by the Hebrew people need no longer be offered (Matt 27: 50, 51; Heb 8; 9).

festival 'which are a shadow' or type, of which the fulfillments were to come in Christ".<sup>753</sup>

Likewise, Paul remonstrated against the observing of the requirements of the ceremonial law. He said, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Gal 4:10, 11 KJV).

In short, two kinds of Sabbaths in the early church seem to be plainly pointed out: (1)the weekly Sabbath, belonging in the eternal moral law of ten commandments (Ex 20:8-11); (2) the annual ceremonial Sabbaths: two Sabbaths related to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Sabbath of Pentecost, the Sabbath of the Feast of the Trumpets, the Sabbath of the Day of atonement, and two Sabbaths connected with the Feast of Tabernacles.<sup>754</sup>

Therefore, it should be concluded that certain rituals were abrogated at the cross: (1) The sacrifices of various kinds that were offered as part of the unfolding of the plan of atonement for the Hebrews.

(2) Circumcision, a tribal sign administered before the age of accountability to males of the 12 Hebrew tribes, and to male proselytes. This rite had to give way at the first advent of the Lord, because after Christ came, these people were no longer a tribe of people representing Christ. The family of Christ comprises individuals drawn from every nation and from men/women of every condition (Gal 3:28,29).

(3)The annual feasts, with their ceremonial Sabbaths, "a shadow" of the things of Christ to come, no longer required after the inauguration of the Christian church on earth.<sup>755</sup>

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<sup>753</sup> "Sabbath", *SDA Encyclopedia*, rev., ed., p. 1244. See also *SDA Bible Commentary*, Rev. ed., vol. 7, pp. 250, 2006. Quoted in *SDA Believe*, p. 287. See also White, "The Australia Camp Meeting," *Review and Herald*, Jan. 7, 1896, p. 2.

<sup>754</sup> These annual Sabbaths are described in Leviticus 23; that they were specifically called Sabbaths is clear from verse 11. see also *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 49, 50.

<sup>755</sup> *Ibid.*

**First day of the week observance.** Apparently, the annual celebration of the resurrection on the first day of the week played a part in the establishment of weekly worship on Sunday. The first indubitable evidence of regular Sunday worship is found in the writings of Justin Martyr (c. A.D.155), who describes Christian meetings as taking place on the morning of “the day of the sun”.<sup>756</sup>

The sect of astrologers was already giving recognition to the sun on the first day of the week of their weekly cycle, and by this time the Mithraists were probably using Sunday for the special worship of Mithra.<sup>757</sup> How much inducement there was for the Christians to set up a day for celebrating the triumphant resurrection of Christ on the same day as the sun was being worshipped is now impossible to know. In any case, by the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Sunday was a weekly observance of many Christians, particularly at Rome.

From the second to the fifth centuries, while Sunday was rising in influence, Christians continued to observe the seventh-day Sabbath nearly everywhere throughout the Roman Empire. The fifth-century historian Socrates wrote, “Almost all the churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred ministries on the Sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this”.<sup>758</sup>

Thus it appears that there is no need to look in Scripture for the origin of Sunday.<sup>759</sup> It came into the Christian church about a half century after the last of the apostles had died,<sup>760</sup> and the change occurred gradually.<sup>761</sup>

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<sup>756</sup> Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 67; ANF, vol. 1, p. 186. Quoted in *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 51.

<sup>757</sup> Ibid.

<sup>758</sup> Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, book 7, chap. 19, trans. in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, vol. 2, p. 390; Quoted in *SDA Believe*, p. 292.

<sup>759</sup> Andrew T Lincoln, “From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective”, in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical Historical and Theological Investigation*, D.A. Carson, ed. (1982), p. 386.

<sup>760</sup> See Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (1979), vol. 1, 186; Maxwell, *God Cares* (1981), vol 1, p. 130.

<sup>761</sup> Ibid., Quoted in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 292.

**4. Historic Christian Worship in the Early Church.** Christian worship can be understood as the reverent homage paid to God and Christ in the context of a Christian assembly. Early Christians assembled for various reasons: each type of assembly was a complex of several kinds of ritual behaviors and celebrations all combined into a unified whole.<sup>762</sup>

Early Christian worship displayed a primarily verbal character, and in this respect it was similar to synagogue Judaism, with which it had strong historical ties.<sup>763</sup> Yet Christians did hold religious gatherings where various types of ritual were practised. Christians gathered to eat together (i.e. to celebrate the Lord's Supper), to baptize new members, to read scripture, to listen to God speak to them through other Christians, to experience healing, to pray and sing hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God.<sup>764</sup>

These activities were not tied to particular places but could be practised virtually anywhere. The primary unifying feature was temporal rather than spatial.<sup>765</sup> Early Christian worship functioned in two primary ways.

(1) it was not only a model and celebration of the distinctive religious and moral ideals of Christians, but (2) it also performed an anticipatory function in that it provided a vehicle for actualizing the perfect future realization of these religious ideals in the present.<sup>766</sup>

As such, the terms "ritual" and "worship" are largely synonymous with the term "cult". What does it mean? For Bultman,

(1) the cult is a human action (particularly sacrifice) intended to influence the deity to act in the interest of the group; (2) the action occurs at fixed sacred times

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<sup>762</sup> "Liturgy", *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols, David Noel Freedman, et al ; (1991), p. 974.

<sup>763</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 973.

<sup>764</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>765</sup> Smith, 1962:1987.

<sup>766</sup> *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* "Early Christian Church", p. 975.

in sacred places and in accordance with regulations; (3) it is performed by religious specialists (primarily priests) who mediate between the community and God (or Gods).<sup>767</sup>

However, the present writer more completely agrees with Deisman who reacted against the idea that worship is intended to influence God (or gods) and that the external signs of the cult were priest, temple and sacrifice, by distinguishing between “acting” cults (those which try to influence the deity) and “reacting” cults (those in which human action is in response to a prior act of the deity).<sup>768</sup> According to this schema, early Christian worship constituted a “reacting” cult.

Thus early Christian worship focused on God, but particularly upon the salvific benefit of what God had done for humanity, through Jesus Christ. The focus of Christianity, both theologically and ritually, was therefore salvation.<sup>769</sup> While salvation had been inaugurated in the past through the first coming of Christ, the Parousia should inaugurate His glorification or the eschatological salvation. Many features of Christian worship such as celebration of the Lord’s Supper, and the singing of hymns, often combined historical features (aspects of the past mission of Jesus) with eschatological elements (centring on the future completion of eschatological salvation).<sup>770</sup>

Early Christians, being an illegal sect, could own no property, and met in the homes of members<sup>771</sup> or in hired halls. In addition, Pliny describes the meetings for worship as held “on certain fixed day”<sup>772</sup> without identifying the day.

**The order of service** was very simple, with a minimum of elaboration or formality. The meeting opened with congregational singing, doubtless using the psalms (Eph 5:19), and probably chanting or reciting some sort of simple formula

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<sup>767</sup> Ibid.

<sup>768</sup> Deisman, 1957: 114-18, quoted in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, p. 975.

<sup>769</sup> Ibid.

<sup>770</sup> *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, p. 975.

<sup>771</sup> See Rom 16: 5; 1Cor 16: 19; Col 4:15.

<sup>772</sup> Letter X. 96; Loeb ed., vol. 2, p. 403, quoted in *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 47.

of Christian belief, as suggested by such passages of scripture as 1Tim 3:16; 2Tim 2:11-13. Pliny reports that they “bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to do any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust”.<sup>773</sup>

According to Justin Martyr there was a reading from the Scriptures which by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century included at least parts of the New Testament. The reading was followed by comments on the portions selected, by one leader appointed for the day: usually the chief elder or one of the associate elders. When the sermon was ended, the congregation rose together and prayed.<sup>774</sup> It appears from Pliny that after this part of the service had taken place, the congregation was dismissed or that only those who were baptized members of the church reassembled and celebrated the Lord’s Supper.<sup>775</sup>

In short, a comparison of this early Christian worship service with that of the Jewish synagogue reveals such striking similarities that it is safe to conclude that in many respects the Christian order was patterned after the Jewish.<sup>776</sup> For early Christians God was present in worship in a variety of manifestations and degrees.<sup>777</sup> Though Christians worshipped the same God as the Jews, the role of Christ in defining God is an essential and distinctive feature of Christian worship.<sup>778</sup>

**Historic Lord’s supper in the early apostolic church.** The following meal was commonplace among both Jews and pagans. As the Passover of Jesus’ ministry approached, He expressed a desire to eat it with His disciples (Lk 22:15). Arrangements were made for it, and on Thursday night of the crucifixion week,

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<sup>773</sup> Ibid.

<sup>774</sup> Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 67, quoted in *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 47.

<sup>775</sup> Pliny, Letters X. 96.

<sup>776</sup> See *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 57, 58.

<sup>777</sup> Smart (1972:11ff), quoted in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, p. 975.

<sup>778</sup> Ibid.

the eve, or the beginning of the dark part of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, Jesus Christ ate the Passover with His disciples.<sup>779</sup>

Early in the ceremony Jesus washed His feet. Later, He inaugurated the Lord's Supper. According to information provided by the apostle Paul (1Cor 11:23-26), Christ instructed them to partake of the bread and the "first of the vine" as representative of His body, which was mortally wounded as He bore the sins of the world, and of the blood that He shed in dying for men. These emblems were to signify Christ's death until He should return the second time.

However, abuses crept in. Within 25 years of Jesus' death, apparently it had become a custom, at least at Corinth, for the members of the church to bring to their meeting food to eat and wine to drink (see 1Cor 11:20-22). For the clannishness and selfishness manifested at these feasts, Paul rebuked the people. The feast accompanying the Lord's Supper was called the "agape, or love feast".<sup>780</sup> Jude refers to it (v 12) and at the same time indicates that there were adverse elements in the love feast. Doubtless, his and Paul's criticism of the love feast (agape), and "probably Christian feeling in general concerning the abuses, caused this feature of the rite to pass out of the experience of the church, and there was left the simple Lord's Supper"<sup>781</sup> without a festive meal.

This depressing experience should challenge some breakaway groups which argue that a large meal should be served and eaten during the ceremony of the Lord's Supper, which must be held at night and not during the daytime. One should know that "eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood was symbolic language for the assimilation of the word of God, through which believers maintained communion with heaven and were enabled to have spiritual life".<sup>782</sup>

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<sup>779</sup> See additional Notes on Matt 26, Note 1, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 405- 407. See also in this study "Lord's Supper".

<sup>780</sup> "Lord's Supper", *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 45.

<sup>781</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>782</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 230.

Since one “appropriated the benefit of Christ’s atoning sacrifice by faith, the Lord’s Supper was much more than a mere memorial [big] meal”.<sup>783</sup>

In short, the symbolism showed that “one was as dependent on Christ for spiritual life as he or she is on food and physical life”.<sup>784</sup>

**5. Historical life of the early church.** In daily expectation of the return of Christ as judge, the early faithful Christians had continually prepared themselves for His kingdom and, by urgently preaching His Gospel, to bring others into the redeemed community.<sup>785</sup> Thus the newly baptized faithful (*fideles*) were at once admitted to the full privileges and obligations of the Christian life. Adult baptism seems to have been the norm in the early Church especially as regards baptismal theology; infant baptism was practised only later.<sup>786</sup>

The baptism was by immersion: from the early records such as the baptism of the Ethiopian at the hands of Philip, and of Cornelius of Caesarea at the hands of Peter, it appeared to be a simple ceremony without any elaboration of ritual.<sup>787</sup> In every recorded case of baptism, instruction was given before the rite was administered.

In the event, longer perspectives regarding the “time of the Early Church” opened up. Christians faced the problems of living among a pagan majority: the missionary challenge proved to be far greater than could have been foreseen, and with it came the task of building a Christian social life.<sup>788</sup>

This was not done without opposition. From the beginning, the Jewish leaders had rejected Jesus. After Christ had been put to death, they in turn rejected His followers and the church they formed. “Hence Christianity had no legal position,

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<sup>783</sup> R. Ric, *Reign of God*, p. 303, quoted in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 231.

<sup>784</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>785</sup> “Early Christian Church”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 7, pp. 843- 845.

<sup>786</sup> “Life of the Church,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 7, p. 845.

<sup>787</sup> “Baptism”, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 43, 44.

<sup>788</sup> *Ibid.*



Romans could not accept Christianity through Jewish channels, because the Jews themselves repudiated it.”<sup>789</sup> Thus at first it was an illegal religion with no status in law.

**Early Christianity an illicit religion.** The Jews resented Christianity for numerous reasons. They feared lest the Christians would bring the wrath of the Romans down upon the Jews themselves.<sup>790</sup> They disliked the Christian’s Christ as a rival to their expected Messiah. They rejected early Christians the more because they took Gentiles into their fellowship. Hence, at every opportunity the Jews made trouble for the Christians in so far as it was in their own power to persecute them in the land of Palestine, and elsewhere, by stirring up large disorderly crowds to riot against the Christians.<sup>791</sup>

In short, these relationships being what they were, it is needless to search Roman law to discover any decree against Christians. No decree was needed. The Christians simply had no legal standing. In later years policies were developed against the Christians, which became increasingly severe. The first attacks of Roman officialdom against the Christians were sporadic, the result, not of policy, but of caprice or bad will on the part of the emperors.<sup>792</sup> Such were the persecutions levied against the Christians by Nero (A.D. 64) and Domitian (A.D.95).<sup>793</sup>

### **8.2.1.2. Were early church practices homogenous?**

There has been a strong inclination to read a chronological and geographical uniformity of development into the history of early Christian worship practices,

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<sup>789</sup> “Jewish Rejection of Christianity”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, p. 843; see also *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 60.

<sup>790</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>791</sup> A number of instances of this are seen in the book of Acts. A particular document, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, tells the same story of the city of Smyrna in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. In the 3<sup>d</sup> century Tertullian calls the Jewish synagogues “foundations of persecution” (*Scorpiate X*; ANF, vol. 3, p. 643).

<sup>792</sup> *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 61.

<sup>793</sup> *Ibid.*

though the “evidence strongly suggests that great variety existed at various places and times during the first two centuries of Christian history”.<sup>794</sup>

Although the source of our knowledge for the various aspects of early Christian practices is often incomplete and fragmentary until the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. and is difficult if not impossible to synthesize,<sup>795</sup> it is obvious that the morphology of Christian practices would have changed from the early to the modern church.

While the basic function of religious ritual is to act on the other world for the purpose of influencing this world, the more specific functions of ritual depend on many variable factors, including the relationship of the religious groups to the social and cultural context within which its members live.<sup>796</sup>

The use of such terms as “brother” and “household” for example, suggests that Christians attempted to overcome social rejection by creating a surrogate family.<sup>797</sup> Further, the isolated character of individual Christian communities was overcome by the maintenance of links with other similar communities which could culminate in the development of the conception of the church universal.<sup>798</sup>

Thus general features of religious rituals and practices could be repeated, made sacred or they could consist of formalized or stereotypical words, gestures and action.<sup>799</sup> For early Christianity, a minority group within an often hostile religious and cultural environment, the group’s ceremonies and ritual could function in a way which tended to dramatize and actualize the new, distinctively Christian norms, principles and values.<sup>800</sup>

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<sup>794</sup> “Early Christian Worship”, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 6, p. 974.

<sup>795</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>796</sup> W. Smith, *Musical Aspects of the New Testament* (Amsterdam: s.a., 1987), p. 103.

<sup>797</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>798</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>799</sup> Smith, p.103.

<sup>800</sup> *Ibid.*

These norms, principles and values may be thought to be timeless principles in all communities at any geographical milieu and chronological period everywhere; they are homogenous.<sup>801</sup> Nevertheless, the applications of these principles and values may vary in different cultures, they are not in fact homogenous, and these differences, “which Scripture warrants, comprise part of the fertilizer that stimulates church growth”.<sup>802</sup>

### **8.2.2. Women’s Ministry in the Old Testament Times.**

To appreciate the social and religious roles of women, it is important to understand the different functional roles of men and women. As will be discussed, the relationship between man and woman in the creation story is presented as being one of both equality and subordination.<sup>803</sup>

#### **8.2.2.1. Equality in being**

This is expressed in Genesis 2: 27: “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female He created them.” The focus of this text is the whole human race. The English word “man” is a translation of the Hebrew “adam” which can be translated equally well as “human being” or “mankind”;<sup>804</sup> that means God created mankind in two sexes, as male and female, and both of them equally reflect His image (Genesis 1; 27).

A survey of the religious roles of women in the Old Testament shows that women played a most vital role both in the private and public religious life of ancient Israel. As full members of the covenant community, women participated in the study and teaching of the Law to their children (Prov 1: 8). “The home”, writes a

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<sup>801</sup> Biblical principles and values such as love, reverence, compassion, humility, fraternity, respectfulness, purity, etc. are timeless principles and values although their applications may vary in different cultures and geographical milieu

<sup>802</sup> Gottfried Oosterwal, “Gospel, culture, and mission”, *Ministry: what about church standard?* Vol. 62, n° 10 (1989), 22-29.

<sup>803</sup> Samuele Bacchiocchi, 1987: 30.

<sup>804</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

Jewish scholar, “is the real temple of a woman, the education of her children is her divine service, and her family is her congregation”.<sup>805</sup>

#### **8.2.2.2. A woman prophet**

Women also participated in offering prayers and vows to God, in ministering at the entrance of the sanctuary, in singing and in the prophetic ministry of exhortation and guidance (2 Kings 22: 14; Neh 6: 14).

#### **8.2.2.3. In public worship**

In public worship, festivals and sacrifices, women participated not only in individual and family worship but also in several forms of public worship. The Mosaic law expected women to be present at the great festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deut 12: 7; 16: 11-14) even though their attendance was not obligatory, presumably because of their responsibilities at home<sup>806</sup> (Judges 13: 15 -20).

#### **8.2.2.4. In Ministry at the Sanctuary**

Women contributed to the sanctuary in two ways; through their gifts and their services. They brought their gifts for the building of the tabernacle individually and personally (Exodus 35:22). We also observe several examples of women participating in the worship of the temple by singing: Ezra speaks of “two hundred male and female singers” (Ezra 2: 65; 1Chron 25: 5-6; 2Chron 35: 25).

#### **8.2.2.5. Women in Office**

“The fact that the Old Testament assigns to women a subordinate role in the religious and social life... in accordance with the functional subordination established by God at creation ... did not prevent some women from serving as

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<sup>805</sup> Hirschel Revel, ed. “*Woman*” 1948: 565.

<sup>806</sup> J.B. Payne, 1962: 229.

prophetesses”<sup>807</sup> (2Kings 22: 14; Neh 6: 14), judges (Judges 4: 4-6), and even queens (2Kings 11: 3).

#### **8.2.2.6. No women priestesses**

In spite of the important religious leadership roles which women such as Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah exercised in the Israelite society, women were excluded from the priesthood. Why? Because of the “unique Biblical view of the role the priest fulfilled as representative of the people to God”.<sup>808</sup>

#### **8.2.2.7 The representative role of the priest.**

During patriarchal times the head of the household or the tribe fulfilled the priestly function of representing his household to God. Thus Noah (Genesis 8: 20), Abraham (Gen 22: 13) and Jacob (Gen 35:3) each served as representative priest of his family.<sup>809</sup>

With the establishment of the theocracy at Sinai and the erection of the tabernacle, God appointed the tribe of Levi to serve as priests in place of the first-born or head of each family (Numbers 3:6-13). When the priests ministered, they acted as the representatives of the people.

It was because of this male representative role, which the priest fulfilled as the head of the household of Israel, that women were excluded from the priesthood and not because of their frequent ritual impurity or the danger of sacred prostitution, as some writers have proposed. A woman could minister as prophet because a prophet was primarily a communicator of God’s will, but she could not function as a representative of the people to God and of God to the people.<sup>810</sup>

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<sup>807</sup> Bacchiocchi, 1987:36.

<sup>808</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>809</sup> Ibid. Read also Numbers 3: 10, 11.

<sup>810</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

Moreover as Hurley rightly observes, “the Mosaic provision (for an exclusively male priesthood) stands in a historical continuum and continues the practice of having representative males serve to officiate in public worship functions”.<sup>811</sup>

Other writers, such as Meyendorff, “show[s] that a male priesthood was the sign of a specifically Biblical, i.e. Jewish and Christian identity”.<sup>812</sup> This unique, counter-cultural Jewish and Christian identity stems not from the religious genius of Judaism or Christianity but from divine revelation which established a functional headship role, which man is to fulfill in the home (Eph 5: 22-24) and in the household of faith.<sup>813</sup>

#### **8.2.2.8 Equal, yet different**

Three statements are contained in Genesis 1:1 26-31: (1) God created humankind in His own image and likeness; (2) God created human beings as male and female; (3) God gave humanity dominion over all the other living things and power to increase and multiply, that is to become a race.<sup>814</sup> Two vital concepts are embodied in the above statements: equality in being and differentiation in sex.

Equality here is suggested by the fact that both man and woman are created in the image of God. Gen 1: 26 states: “Then God said: ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’ ...” “Man” here refers inclusively to men and women, and as already said above, the Hebrew word for “man” (‘adam’) can be translated equally well as “mankind, humanity”: “Let us make mankind in our own image,”<sup>815</sup> since it is written “ male and female he created them” (Gen 1: 27).

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<sup>811</sup> James B. Hurley, 1981: 52.

<sup>812</sup> John Meyendorff, “The orthodox Churches”, in *Hamilton and Montgomery*, 1975: 130.

<sup>813</sup> Bacchiocchi, p. 39.

<sup>814</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>815</sup> Bacchiocchi, , 67.

Different, of course, because equality must not obscure the sexual differentiation which is equally clear in the passage: “male and female he created them” (Gen 1: 27). The two sexes are part of God’s original purpose for the human race and both are good, as Bacchiocchi points out: “Both men and women are essential to the proper functioning of the human race. Denial or perversion of sexual differentiation is a rejection of the order established at the creation”.<sup>816</sup> This notion of man and woman being equal and yet different (maleness and femaleness) is fundamental to all further consideration of the roles of men and women.

### **8.2.2.9 Subordination in Genesis 2**

Although the focus of Genesis 2 falls on the sameness of nature and partnership between man and woman, there exists within that equality and partnership an overall sense of woman’s subordination. The term “subordination” is used here not in its negative connotation of oppression, domination or inferiority, but in its positive sense of depending upon another person for direction. Its purpose is to ensure unity and harmony.<sup>817</sup>

It is obvious that the Biblical idea of subordination does not imply inferiority. Nicholas confirms:

“Subordination, then, in terms of its New Testament usage, conveys the idea of equality, and if any hierarchy is to be perceived in such an ontological relationship, it is for the purpose of executing the will of God as was the case in the submission of Christ to the will of the Father. Christ was in no way inferior to the Father as God incarnate, yet, to facilitate God’s plan He assumed a subordinate role”.<sup>818</sup>

As such, functional subordination, “the woman’s creation from man and for him (“a helper fit for him”... Genesis 2: 18)” suggests a functional dependency and subordination. Von Rad points out, “Genesis describes the woman not in

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<sup>816</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>817</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>818</sup> Nicholas, 1979: 28.

romantic terms as a companion to man, but in pragmatic terms as a “helper to him”.<sup>819</sup>

Many reject the notion of functional subordination of woman to man in Genesis 2. They argue that in Eden before the fall there was a perfect 50-50 partnership between husband and wife, and the subordination of woman is seen as a consequence of the curse. In their view Christ lifted this subordination (Gal 3:28) and consequently Christians must work to eradicate any form of subordination in the relation between man and woman, and such commentators often treat the scriptures as sexist or male-chauvinistic.<sup>820</sup>

The objection to this view is that subordination is present in Genesis 2, that is, before the fall described in Genesis 3. Moreover, the New Testament urges the subordination of woman to man not on the basis of the curse of sin, but of the purpose of God in creation.<sup>821</sup>

In short, it is clear that the religious roles played by women in the Old Testament indicate how women played a vital role both in the private and public religious life of ancient Israel. These religious roles of women, however, were different from those of men, in accordance with the principle of equality of being and subordination in function which is implicit in the creation story.

The principle of appointive male leadership in the home and in public worship was threatened then as it is today, and would have been easily lost if there had not been a number of the Old Testament laws which were designed to distinguish between the roles that God has called men and women to fulfill in the socio-religious life.<sup>822</sup>

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<sup>819</sup> Von Rad, 1961:80.

<sup>820</sup> Bacchiocchi, :72.

<sup>821</sup> Ibid.

<sup>822</sup> Vos, 1968: 207.



At this point it suffices to note that the religious roles of women in the Old Testament were different and yet complementary to those of men, in accordance with the Biblical principle of equality in being and subordination in function.

### **8.2.3. Women's Ministry in New Testament Times**

What was the impact of the coming of Christ on the social status and religious roles of women? Does the New Testament respect or reject the social and religious role distinction between men and women which we have found in the Old Testament?

#### **8.2.3.1. Two opposing views**

Two opposing answers are generally given to these questions. Some Bible students argue that the New Testament abolished "the distinction between priest and laity",<sup>823</sup> by granting to women equal and full access to all forms of ministry open to men.<sup>824</sup> Elizabeth M. Tetlow, for example, concludes her book by saying:

There is nothing inherent in the characters of Christian Ministry as it is presented in the writings of the New Testament which would give reason for the exclusion of women. On the contrary, the New Testament portrays Jesus treating women as equal human persons. It also portrays women and men serving side by side in the various ministries of the Early Church... According to the evidence of the New Testament, the exclusion of women from ecclesiastical ministry is neither in accord with teaching or practice of Jesus nor with that of the first century church.<sup>825</sup>

Other Bible students disagree with this conclusion, maintaining instead that the New Testament upholds the Old Testament role distinctions between men and women in the home and in the Church.<sup>826</sup> For example, the commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church ... Missouri Synod, states in its report issued in September 1985:

This analysis of the order of creation and redemption leads to the formulation of a second principle, derived from the Holy Scriptures, for clarifying the function of women in the church today: Distinctive identities for man and woman in their

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<sup>823</sup> Scanzoni and Hardesty, 1975: 208.

<sup>824</sup> See, Bilenzkian, 1980: 118, 206 ; Jewett, , 1980:135, Quoted by Bacchiocchi, p. 44.

<sup>825</sup> Tetlow, 1980:135.

<sup>826</sup> Bacchiocchi, p. 44.

relation to each other were assigned by God at creation. These identities are not nullified by Christ's redemption, and they should be reflected in the church.<sup>827</sup>

### **8.2.3.2. Reasons for opposing views**

How can evangelical Christians reach two opposing conclusions regarding the New Testament teaching on the role of women in the church? According to Bacchiocchi, and the present writer supports his view, the major reason is the seemingly contradictory data found in the New and Old Testaments regarding the social status and religious roles of women.<sup>828</sup> Some statements and examples suggest that women shared equally with men in the various ministries of the church while others indicate that women were excluded from the appointive representative roles of apostles, pastors, and elders/bishops.

Jesus, for example, on the one hand elevated women to a position of equal worth with men, admitting some of them to His inner circle of companions, and commissioning them to witness for Him (Matt 12 : 49- 50; 27: 55-56; 28:7; Luke 8: 1-3; John 4: 26- 30; 20: 17-18). Yet on the other hand Jesus did not include any women among His twelve apostles nor did He commission any to "feed my sheep" (John 21: 17).<sup>829</sup>

Similarly, Paul, on the other hand, speaks of women as "fellow workers" (Rom 16:1-3, 6, 12; Phil 4: 2-3), prophets (1Cor 11: 5), "persons who have labored side by side with me in the Gospel" (Phil 4:3) and as being equal to men and one in Christ ("neither male nor female..." Gal 3: 28). Yet on the other hand the apostle teaches the submission of wives to their husbands (Eph 5: 22-24; Col 3: 18) and the exclusion of women from the authoritative teaching role of pastor or elder (1Tim 2: 11-12; 1Cor 14: 34-35).<sup>830</sup>

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<sup>827</sup> *Women in the church : Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice*, A Report of the commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church ... Missouri Synod, September. 1975, p. 27.

<sup>828</sup> Bacchiocchi, 45.

<sup>829</sup> Ibid.

<sup>830</sup> Ibid

The existence of these apparently contradictory teachings can easily give rise to conflicting views. As a result one chooses to maximize those statements which favour one's view and to minimize opposing statements by ignoring, reinterpreting or rejecting them. This is not a new phenomenon in Biblical interpretation.

### **8.2.3.3. Methods of Interpretation**

A responsible interpretation of seemingly contradictory Biblical teachings must first recognize the existing tension and then seek a resolution by trying to understand its causes. In the case of Paul's contradictory statements about the law, for instance, Bacchiocchi has shown elsewhere<sup>831</sup> that the contradiction can be explained by simply recognizing the *different contexts* in which Paul speaks about the law. *In the contexts of salvation* (justification... right standing before God), Paul clearly affirms that law-keeping is of no avail (Rom 3:20) because really the Law cannot justify nor save anybody. But *in the context of Christian conduct* (sanctification ..., right living before God), Paul maintains the value and validity of God's law (Rom 7:12; 13:8-10; 1Cor7: 19).<sup>832</sup>

The same methodology can be used in the present study by delineating the seemingly contradictory teachings of the New Testament regarding the role of women in the church, and seeking to resolve the apparent contradiction by trying to understand its causes.

Therefore it may prove difficult to reconcile minor similarities (i.e. women's ordination) in details which may be irrelevant to the main and clear message of the passage. In some cases judgment may have to be suspended until more information and better evidence are available to resolve a seeming discrepancy.<sup>833</sup>

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<sup>831</sup> Bacchiocchi, 1985: 108- 120.

<sup>832</sup> Ibid.

<sup>833</sup> *SDA Statements Guidelines*, p. 215.

#### **8.2.4. Women in the Ministry of Jesus**

Women were always present and active in the ministry of Jesus. One should therefore enquire what the attitude of Jesus toward women was.

##### ***8.2.4.1. Jesus' attitude toward women***

Jesus' attitude toward women represented a radical break with the Jewish cultural tradition of His time, as most scholars acknowledge. Jeremias writes: "Jesus knowingly overthrew custom when He allowed women to follow him."<sup>834</sup> He calls the presence of women in the inner circle of Jesus' followers "an unprecedented happening in the history of that time".<sup>835</sup>

It is important to note that at that period the subordinate role of women was hardened to a considerable degree. Women became relegated to a position of marked inferiority. In religious life, contrary to the Old Testament practice, women were largely excluded from participation in public worship, being considered unfit to learn and inappropriate to teach.<sup>836</sup>

The prevailing rabbinic attitude toward the role of women in the temple or synagogue is well reflected in Rabbi Eliezer ben Azariah's comment, "the men come to learn, the women come to hear" (bHag. 3a.<sup>837</sup> The women could listen to the reading of scripture but were not expected to gain any deep understanding, and on account of this perception, they (women) were almost totally excluded from any formal religious education.

Against this background, Jesus' attitude toward women is without precedent in contemporary Judaism:

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<sup>834</sup> Jeremias, 1969: 376.

<sup>835</sup> Ibid.

<sup>836</sup> Forster, 1964: 127.

<sup>837</sup> Ibid. See also Bacchiocchi, *l.c.* 47.

1. **Women as persons.** Central to this attitude is His view of them as *persons* for whom He had come. He viewed them not in terms of gender, age or marital status, but in terms of their relation to God. In Matt 12: 50, Jesus identifies as disciples and members of His family, any person, male or female, who does the will of God. This sentiment will later on be echoed in Paul's great proclamation: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3: 28). Moreover, women are not objects that can be dismissed in divorce at will "for any cause" (Matthew 19: 3,6).<sup>838</sup>

2. **Women's intelligence and faith** were appreciated by Jesus. His conversation with the Samaritan woman (John 4: 7-30) demonstrates His willingness to dismiss the cultural conventions of His time. According to rabbinic thinking Jesus should not have talked with her for three reasons: "she was a Samaritan, a woman, and immoral".<sup>839</sup> Despite all these restrictions, Jesus refused to be confined by such cultural conventions in revealing to her His Messiah ship (John 4: 25, 26).

Intelligent and faithful, this woman could learn profound theological concepts such as the "living water" (John 4:10), the correct place of worship (4:21), and the spiritual nature of God (4: 24).

Other encounters of Jesus with women further demonstrate His appreciation for their faith and love (Mark 5:24-34; Luke 7:36-50). The encounter with the repentant woman at the home of Simon is most revealing of a woman's faith and love in action (Luke 7:36-50). These few examples among many others reveal that Jesus shows respect for women as persons, without reference to their sex. He received them as full-fledged participants in the blessing of God's people.<sup>840</sup>

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<sup>838</sup> Ibid.

<sup>839</sup> Bacchiocchi, : 49.

<sup>840</sup> Ibid.

3. **Women in the parables.** The parables further illustrated Jesus' acceptance of women as treasured members of the human family (Matt 13: 33).

4. **Women as learners.** Jesus taught women not only in those casual encounters mentioned above, but also in formal settings: for instance, Luke 10: 39 in the home of Lazarus where many sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teachings.

In short, the above examples suffice to show that Jesus' attitude toward women was in many ways revolutionary. He rejected the prevailing prejudices against women by treating them as human persons of equal worth to men, by appreciating their intellectual and spiritual capacities, by admitting them into His fellowship, and by taking time to teach them the truths of the kingdom of God.<sup>841</sup>

However, one could wonder: was Christ's recognition of the human worth of women and His appreciation for their spiritual, intellectual and moral capacities, intended to open the way for women to function as pastors/elders in the church? To answer this question, the present writer will examine first the participation of women in the ministry of Christ, and then in the early apostolic church.

#### ***8.2.4.2. Women in the ministry of Jesus***

Which roles did women assume in the Ministry of Jesus?

1. **Unique Role.** The role that some women filled in the ministry of Christ is absolutely unique.<sup>842</sup> It is remarkable that while Christ ministered to men, women are shown as ministering to Him. Whenever the Gospels speak of ministry being rendered directly to Jesus, it is the ministry of either angels or women (Matt 4: 11 speaks of angels); in Matt 8:15 after Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, "she arose, and ministered unto them"; in Luke 10:40; John 12:2, on two occasions, Martha served Jesus.

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<sup>841</sup> Bacchiocchi, :49, 50.

<sup>842</sup> Ibid.

Also, mention is made of a band of women who followed Christ constantly and who “ministered unto Him of their substance” (Luke 8:3, KJV). The Greek verb used in all above examples is *diakoneo*, which is translated “to serve” or “to minister”. This has a special quality of indicating very personally the service rendered to another.<sup>843</sup> The personal and dedicated service that women offered to Christ included the preparing and serving of food, especially since the original meaning of *diakoneo* was “to wait at table”.<sup>844</sup>

**2. Travelling companions.** Perhaps this was the most amazing aspect of Christ’s relationship with women who followed Him together with the disciples. Luke provides this insightful description:

Soon after, he went on through cities and village, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means (Luke 8:1-3)

It is noteworthy that the travelling party of Jesus included a group of women besides the twelve disciples. (Matt 27:55; Mark 15: 4; Luke 8: 3). It was not uncommon for a rabbi to travel with a band of followers, but it was most unusual for women to be among them. However, the fact that “Jesus accepted both the presence and service of those devoted women clearly shows that His actions were not conditioned by the custom of the days”.<sup>845</sup>

**3. Women at the Crucifixion and Resurrection.** Some of the women who followed Christ during His ministry assumed a prominent role at the time of the crucifixion and resurrection. At the risk of their lives they followed Christ to the cross and His body to the burial place. They showed their tender love for Him by returning later to embalm His body with spices and ointment after the Sabbath, and they were honored with the news of the resurrection (Luke 23: 55-

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<sup>843</sup> Beryer, 1974: 81.

<sup>844</sup> Ibid.

<sup>845</sup> Bacchiocchi, : 51.

56). It is obvious that in the Passion narratives the women clearly show a greater loyalty, courage and faith than the twelve disciples.<sup>846</sup>

Moreover, the same women who ministered to Jesus during His travels and at His death were also present among the disciples in the period between the resurrection and Pentecost. Presumably they were also among those upon whom the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost (Acts 1:12-14; 2: 1-4; 14-17), and yet there were no women apostles.

#### **8.2.4.3. Yet no women apostles**

The foregoing considerations have indicated that women occupied a special place in the life of Christ. Indeed, as mentioned above, He affirmed their personhood, related to them with love and respect, appreciated their intellectual and spiritual capacities, taught and healed them, accepted them in His inner circle of travelling companions and honored them with the first announcement of his resurrection.<sup>847</sup>

In the light of these facts we may ask, why did Jesus call no women to be part of the twelve apostles? Furthermore, why did the apostles and “the women” (Acts 1: 14) who deliberated over the replacement of Judas, not at least also propose the name of a woman as a possible candidate?

Obviously it was not a question of qualifications, since several women fulfilled the conditions of apostleship, namely, someone who had accompanied Jesus and had witnessed His resurrection (Acts 1: 21-22).

Bacchiocchi points out two reasons which have been often given by people for Christ’s omission of women from the apostles: the first is cultural and the second is theological.<sup>848</sup>

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<sup>846</sup> Ibid., pp. 51, 52.

<sup>847</sup> Ibid ; pp 51, 52.

<sup>848</sup> Bacchiocchi, p. 52.



1. **Cultural.** It is argued that in that “particular cultural setting only males would have been acceptable both as the closest companions of Jesus and as leaders of community which was to be formed”.<sup>849</sup> This explanation is unacceptable for three major reasons.

First, if Jesus broke radically with the customs of the time by admitting women into the inner circle of followers, why should He have felt constrained by custom not to commission women to preach or teach publicly? It is unconvincing that Jesus radically rejected the conventions of His time in His treatment of women, but conceded to them by not allowing women to be apostles.<sup>850</sup>

Second, as Foh points out, “to argue that Jesus’ choice of apostles was determined by culture is to ignore the fact that God chose the culture and time in which His son was to be born. No detail escapes God’s consideration”<sup>851</sup>

Third, in the Roman-Hellenistic culture of the time, women played leading priestly roles in the religious life. Thus, if Jesus had been conditioned by the culture of His time, he could have appointed some women among the apostles, in view of the fact that they would have been readily accepted in the Gentile world where the Gospel was to be preached.<sup>852</sup>

2. **Theological.** Some reason that Jesus did not appoint women as apostles was because he believed that “the end of time was coming soon,” and consequently, He “was not concerned to legislate for His church for all time”.<sup>853</sup> If this reasoning were true, then Jesus should not have bothered to appoint twelve apostles as the representatives of the new spiritual Israel, and to commission them to preach the Gospel to the whole world. It is true “that Jesus did not define

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<sup>849</sup> Evans, 1983:50.

<sup>850</sup> Ibid.

<sup>851</sup> Foh, 1979: 93.

<sup>852</sup> Ibid., See also Bacchiocchi, 52.

<sup>853</sup> Fuller, 1976:2.

the distinct functional roles men and women are to fulfill within the church”<sup>854</sup> but He chose and trained twelve men to feed His sheep and to make disciples of all nations (John 21: 15-17; Matt 28: 19-20; Acts 1: 8).

As such, Jesus’ choice of twelve male apostles was not conditioned by the social conventions of the time, but rather “was consistent with the Old Testament headship role man is called to fulfill in the home and in the community of faith. This role structure... was retained and respected in the life and order of the church which the apostles raised up under the guidance of the Holy Spirit”.<sup>855</sup>

### **8.2.5. Women’s Ministry in the Apostolic Church**

It is most important to remember here, as noted above, that distinctive identities for man and woman in their relation to each other were assigned by God at the creation; such identities have not been nullified by Christ’s redemption and were reflected in the Apostolic church; why not later in the SDA Church? As such it is not surprising to discover that the women’s ministry roles and their identities have not changed so greatly from the Old Testament to Jesus’ period, nor in the early apostolic church.

#### ***8.2.5.1. The Participation of Women In the ministry***

This participation of women was visible and active not only in the ministry of Jesus, but also in the life of the apostolic church. After Christ’s ascension, women gathered with the disciples in the upper room, and Mary the mother of Jesus (Acts 1:14). The women were there not to cook for the men, but to pray with them and seek divine guidance over who should be Judas’ successor.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out and all of them began speaking in tongues (Acts 2:1-4). Peter explained the event to the sceptical crowd by quoting Joel: “your sons and your daughters shall prophesy..., and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit”

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<sup>854</sup> Bacchiocchi, : 53.

<sup>855</sup> Ibid. See also supra, p.354.

(Acts 2:17-18). Note that the specific reference to “daughters” and “maidservants” presumably served to justify why the women had also received the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>856</sup>

#### **8.2.5.2. Women in the Expanding Church**

Acts notes that more than ever believers, including women, were added to the Lord (Acts 5:14; 8:12).

One of the early converts in Jerusalem was Mary, the mother of John Mark. She offered her house as a meeting place for believers in that part of the city (Acts 12: 12); and some scholars believe that the upper room was in the house.<sup>857</sup>

In addition, many other women were converted in Europe such as Lydia in Philippi, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods (Acts 16 :14), Damaris in Athens (Acts 17: 34), Priscilla together with her husband Aquila in Corinth. The rest of the book of Acts is replete with examples of women who responded to Paul’s proclamation of the Gospel by becoming active participants in the life of the church.

Paul, who sometimes has been unjustly accused of being an anti-feminist, repeatedly mentions in his letters many women as worthy of commendation for the special work they were doing in the church (Rom 16; Phil 4:2-3; 1Cor 16: 19). There is no doubt that the apostolic church followed Christ’s example by including women in the ministry of the church.<sup>858</sup> The question, however, is: what specific roles did women fill there?

#### **8.2.5.3. Roles of women in the early apostolic church**

Charitable service was a major need in the primitive church which was caring for the needy, the sick, the widows, the orphans and the visitors. Soon after

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<sup>856</sup> Bacchiocchi, . 53.

<sup>857</sup> Sunday, 1903:83.

<sup>858</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

Pentecost, the apostles were made forcefully aware of such a need by the murmuring of the Hellenist over the apparent neglect of their widows (Acts 6:1). To remedy the problem “seven men of good repute” were appointed at that time (Acts 6:3).

Soon women, especially widows, became active in the charitable services of the church, such as Tabitha (Dorcas) and others who were “full of good works and acts of charity” (Acts (9:36; 1 Tim 5:9-10), and by the time of Paul, widows were recognized as a special group within the church, so that Paul wrote that they should be enrolled (1 Tim 5:9-11). Some scholars have argued that the enrolling represented an official appointment to a certain office in the Church.<sup>859</sup> However, as Hurly points out, “A close look at the text indicates that the roll is a welfare roll rather than an employment”.

The ministry performed by these widows apparently consisted of prayer and supplication for the church (1Tim 5:5), as well as “doing well in every way” (1Tim 5: 10). There is no indication that their service was perceived as an official order of ministry in the church; however “no doubt it paved the way for the development of orders of ministry among women, but at this point in history matters are undefined”.<sup>860</sup>

1. **“Women deaconesses”**. Closely related to the ministry of widows is that of women who became known as “deaconesses”. This ministry is highlighted by Paul’s reference to Phoebe, “a deaconess of the church of Cenchreae... she has been a helper of many and of myself as well” (Rom 16:1-2). “The word ‘deaconess’ is a translation of the Greek *diakonos*, a masculine noun which was used both for men and women with two distinct meanings.”<sup>861</sup>

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<sup>859</sup> Scott, 1936:26.

<sup>860</sup> Ryrie, 1958:84.

<sup>861</sup> Bacchiocchi, 55.

In the New Testament, the term *diakonos* simply means “servant” or “one who ministers” to another.<sup>862</sup> Paul for example, speaks of himself and of his co-workers as *diakonoi* (servant, ministers) of Christ, of the Gospel and of the new covenants (1Cor 3:5; 2Cor 3: 6; Eph 3:7; 1Thes 3:2). He also speaks of this apostolic work as *diakonia* (Rom 11: 13).

In a few cases the term *diakonos* is also used to describe the church office of “deacons” (Phil 1:1, 1Tim 3:8-13). Usually the context provides the meaning as to whether *diakonos* is used in the general sense of ministering or in the restricted sense of an established diaconate.<sup>863</sup> Concerning Phoebe, the parallel lists of qualifications (Rom 16: 2 – “Helper of many”; 1Tim 3:11) strongly suggests, as Hurley observes, “that the function of these women was parallel to that of the deacons”.<sup>864</sup>

In short, female deacons were needed in the early centuries when the sexes could not mingle freely.

According to the *Didascalia* they performed a great variety of services in the care of women, including assistance at the baptism and burial of women, the catechizing of women and caring for sick women at home.<sup>865</sup> Nevertheless, they never functioned as heads of the community, but served in a role auxiliary to that of the pastors, elders and bishops.<sup>866</sup>

**2. Women as “fellow-workers”.** Women distinguished themselves in the apostolic church not only at the level of local churches but also in the wider missionary outreach of the church. Much of the missionary activity reported in the New Testament focused on Paul and his co-workers, many of whom were women.

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<sup>862</sup> Ibid.

<sup>863</sup> Ibid.

<sup>864</sup> Hurley, 231.

<sup>865</sup> Hugh- Connolly, ed. *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 1929 ch. 16, 146-148.

<sup>866</sup> Ibid. see also Bacchiocchi, 57.

Outstanding among them is Prisca (a diminutive of Priscilla) and her husband Aquila. Of them Paul says: “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow-workers in Christ..., to whom not only I but also all the churches of Gentiles give thanks, greet also the church in their house” (Rom 16:3-5). It is noteworthy that both Paul and Luke mention Prisca almost always before her husband, Aquila, presumably because she was the more prominent in missionary endeavors,<sup>867</sup> (Acts 8:26). Paul refers to this couple as “fellow-workers”. The term was often used by Paul to characterize those persons who worked with him, including Titus and Timothy. (Rom 16:19, 21; 1Cor 3:9; 2Cor 1:24; 8:23; Phil 2:25; 4:3; 1Thes 3:2).

Other women greeted by Paul are: Mary, Tryphaema, Tryphosa, and Persis, all of whom “worked hard” in the Lord (vv 6,12; 1 Thess 3:2). The term Paul uses here is descriptive of the toil in proclaiming the Gospel (cf. 1Cor 4:12; 5:10; Phil 2:16; 1Tim 4:10.) In Philippians 4:2,3 Paul mentions two other women, Euodia and Syntyche, as persons who “have labored side by side with me in the Gospel.”<sup>868</sup> It is obvious here that women, as “fellow-workers” with Paul, functioned as evangelists in the wider missionary outreach of the early apostolic church.

To reiterate the question, was Paul an “anti-feminist”? The fact that Paul commends such a significant number of women for working hard with him in the missionary enterprise of the church, suggests two things. First, the characterization of Paul as “anti-feminist” is based on prejudice. Paul appreciated women and admired their contribution to the mission of the church. Thus this insistence on the differentiation of roles between men and women in the home, and in the church, must be seen as “an indication not of Paul’s chauvinism but rather of his respect of the role distinctions established by God at creation”.<sup>869</sup>

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<sup>867</sup> Ibid.

<sup>868</sup> Ibid.

<sup>869</sup> Bacchiocchi, 57, 58.

Second, women as well as men can participate legitimately in the ministry of the church.<sup>870</sup> The question however, is: in what roles? As appointive leaders of the church or as “fellow-workers” ministering to the needs of believers and unbelievers?

**3. Women as prophets.** Women as well as men also participated in the prophetic ministry of the apostolic church.<sup>871</sup> Two specific New Testament passages refer to women functioning as prophets. Acts 21:9 speaks of the four daughters of Philip, “who prophesied”. In 1Corinthians 11, Paul recognizes the presence of women who prophesied in the worship services: “Any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head” (1Cor 11:5).

The prophetic ministry of women in the apostolic church confirms the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost, alluded to above. Here Peter shows that the gift of prophecy had been bestowed upon women also, and that “this prophetic ministry of women in the New Testament stands parallel to that of prophetesses in the Old Testament”.<sup>872</sup>

The exact nature of the prophetic ministry is not clearly defined in the New Testament. Its primary function appears to have been to serve the Christian communities through edification, encouragement, counselling, and consolation (1Cor 14). “He who prophesies speaks to men/women for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation ... He who prophesies edifies the church” (1Cor 14:3-4; Acts 15:21).

Some wish to see in the prophetic ministry of women in the Apostolic Church an indication that women functioned as leaders in the church. The writer believes that this view is wrong because the prophets functioned not as the appointed leaders of the congregation, but as private believers with a God-given message of exhortation for the congregation. The office of prophet was not restricted to

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<sup>870</sup> Ibid.

<sup>871</sup> Ibid.

<sup>872</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

anyone but was open in a sense to everyone.<sup>873</sup> Paul clearly says: “For you all can prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and may be encouraged” (1Cor 14:31).

It appears that while women shared in the prophetic ministry of encouraging, guiding, and exhorting the Christian communities – by which I mean the preaching ministry – there are no indications that they were ever appointed to serve as the representative leaders (pastors/elders). The reason for this as has been shown above, is the New Testament acceptance of the Old Testament roles for men and women.

4. **A woman “apostle”?**<sup>874</sup> Here again, an appeal is often made to Paul’s reference to Junias (Rom 16:7) to defend the alleged leadership role women fulfilled in the apostolic communities. The text reads: “Greet Adronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and fellow prisoners; they are men of note among the apostles, and they were in Christ before me” (Rom 16:7). Among a long list of fellow workers, Paul here acknowledges two Jews who shared in his imprisonment. Their service makes them noteworthy “among the apostles”.<sup>875</sup> Is Paul here characterizing a woman, Junias, as an “apostle”? If so, in what sense?

Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Herdesty view the case of Junias as a major example of the fact that “from the beginning women participated fully and equally with men”<sup>876</sup> in the leadership of the church. They write:

One woman “apostle” is even mentioned in the Bible! Junias, saluted by Paul in Romans 16:7 (KJV), is a common Roman name for a woman, but since she is identified as an “apostle” many translators have assumed the name to be a contraction for a much more common male one.<sup>877</sup>

This categorical conclusion is discredited by some considerations. First, the name Jounian in the Greek text grammatically could be the name of either a man

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<sup>873</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>874</sup> Bacchiocchi, 59.

<sup>875</sup> Ibid.

<sup>876</sup> Scanzoni and Hardesty, 1974: 60.

<sup>877</sup> Ibid., p. 63.



or a woman. Thus, the grammatical form does not permit a categorical conclusion in either direction.<sup>878</sup>

Second, it is possible that the passage does not identify Andronicus and Junias as apostles at all, as Murray explains: “they were Christians before Paul and no doubt, were associated with the circle of apostles in Judea if not in Jerusalem”.<sup>879</sup>

Third, the term “apostle” is used in the New Testament in both a narrow and broad sense. In a narrow sense it designates “the twelve,” as when Matthias “was enrolled with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:26) to replace Judas.<sup>880</sup> We may remark that because of this exclusiveness, Paul had to labour to prove the legitimacy of his apostleship (1Cor 15:9-11; 2Cor 12:11-13; Gal 1: 1, 11; 2:9).

In a broad sense the term “apostle” means a “messenger”,<sup>881</sup> someone sent out for a specific mission (2Cor8:23; Phil 2:25). If Andronicus and Junias were apostles, most probably this would have been in the broad sense, since nowhere else are their names associated with the inner circle of the apostles. So in the light of the above considerations we may honestly conclude that Paul’s reference to Junias lends no support to the view that she was a woman apostle. Also the name can refer equally well to a man, and whether the person is a man or a woman, s/he was not an apostle in the narrow sense of the word.

In conclusion, our study of the ministry of women in the New Testament and the early apostolic church can be summarized in the following points:

1. Jesus’ treatment of women was in many ways revolutionary. He rejected the prevailing prejudices against women, by treating them as human persons of equal worth to men, by respecting their intellectual and spiritual

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<sup>878</sup> Bacchiocchi, 60.

<sup>879</sup> Murray, 1982: 230.

<sup>880</sup> Bacchiocchi, 60.

<sup>881</sup> Ibid.

capacities, by admitting them into His fellowship and by teaching them truths of God's kingdom.

2. Women played a very prominent role in the ministry of Jesus. They ministered to His physical needs, a group of them travelled with Him and His disciples, and some of them followed Jesus to the cross at the risk of their lives, showing loyalty and devotion more exemplary than that of the apostles. Women were also the first to encounter the risen Lord and to be commissioned to break the news of the resurrection to the disciples.

3. However, in spite of his revolutionary treatment of women, Jesus did not choose women as apostles. Such an omission was not a matter of concession to the social conventions of His time, but “rather of compliance with role distinction for men and women established at creation”.<sup>882</sup>

The apostolic church followed the pattern established by Christ by including women as integral members in the life and mission of the church. Women joined the church in large numbers, attended worship services, organized charitable service for the needy, learned of the faith and shared it with others, performed a variety of services in the care of women, worked hard as “fellow-workers” alongside numerous men in the missionary outreach of the church, and shared in the prophetic ministry of edification, encouragement and consolation.<sup>883</sup>

However, though women ministered in the church in a variety of vital roles, including that of prophet, there are no indications in Scripture that they were ever ordained to serve as priest in the Old Testament or as pastors/elders/bishops in the New Testament;<sup>884</sup> but why this exclusion?

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<sup>882</sup> Bacchiocchi, 61

<sup>883</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>884</sup> *Ibid.*

#### **8.2.5.4. Women excluded from the appointive roles of Apostles/Pastors/Elders**

Why were women able to participate equally with men in various ministries of the Apostolic church and yet excluded from appointive roles of apostles / pastors / elders? The Scriptures (Old Testament and New Testament) have already suggested several reasons such as the “unique Biblical view of the male representative role of the priest as the head of the household of Israel,”<sup>885</sup> and the functional subordination of woman to man in Genesis 2.<sup>886</sup>

1. **Exegetical and hermeneutical meaning of “subordination”.** Is Biblical subordination a curse upon women? Some view the curse upon the woman as marking the beginning of her subordination to man and, as mentioned, consequently as an undesirable result of sin which has been lifted by Christ (Gal 3:28). Thus, Christians must work for the eradication of all forms of subordination because its origin is satanic. Kantzer emphatically states this conviction in a special issue dedicated to the role of women in the church: “we believe the subservience of women is part of the curse (Gen 3:16) from which the Gospel seeks to free us”.<sup>887</sup>

Evidencing a similar disposition Bilezikian writes: “male rulership was precipitated by fall as an element of the curse... It was not part of God’s design for relationships between men and women”.<sup>888</sup>

This view derives from a strong negative view of subordination. It leads to the conclusion that much of the Old Testament and certain Pauline passages are misogynistic, male chauvinistic or, as Bilezikian puts it, “a partial accommodation to sinful realities as a way to achieving their resolution in the new convenient”.<sup>889</sup>

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<sup>885</sup> See supra, pp. 334, 335.

<sup>886</sup> See supra., pp. 337, 338.

<sup>887</sup> Kantzer, 1986:15.

<sup>888</sup> Bilezikian, 1985: 55, 56

<sup>889</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

The strongest objection to this view is the fact that subordination begins, as we have seen,<sup>890</sup> not in Genesis 3 but in Genesis 2 with the creation of woman. Of course, Knight cogently points out:

Genesis 3 presumes the reality of childbearing (Gen 1:28), in which the woman will now experience the effects of the Fall and sin (3:16). It presumes the reality of work (Gen 1:28; 2:15), in which the man will now experience the effect of the Fall and sin (3:17 ff.) And it presumes the reality of the role relationship between wife and husband established by God's creation order in Genesis 2:18 ff., a relationship that will now experience the effects of the fall and sin (Gen 3:16). "He shall rule over you" expresses the effect of sin corrupting the relationship of husband (the head) and wife. Just as childbearing and work were established before the Fall and were corrupted by it, so this role relationship existed before the Fall and was corrupted by it. Neither childbearing, nor work, nor the role relationship of wife and husband is being introduced in Genesis 3; all are *previously existing realities that have been affected by the Fall.*<sup>891</sup>

Another important objection is that when the New Testament talks about the importance of the subordination of woman to man, it appeals to the order of creation in Genesis 2 (see Eph 5:31; 1Cor 11:8-9; 1Tim 2: 13-14) and not the curse of the woman in Genesis 3:16. The foundation of the New Testament teaching on Christian subordination is found in the purpose of God's creation and not in the consequences of the curse.<sup>892</sup>

As such, it is obvious that the oppressive subordination of women is a distortion of true subordination because of the curse (Gen 3:16). In other words, the curse on the woman marks not the institution of the subordination but rather the distortion of it, as the "latter degenerated [situation] into oppressive dominion by sinful man".<sup>893</sup>

The verb "to rule" ("he shall rule over you" ... Gen 3:16) both in Hebrew (*mashal*) and in the Septuagint (*kyrieuo*) commonly denotes domination as it is found in Genesis 4:7 where the same verb is used for Cain, ... "but you must master

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<sup>890</sup> See above, p. 337.

<sup>891</sup> Knight 1985:31; (Italics supplied).

<sup>892</sup> Bacchiocchi, p. 81.

<sup>893</sup> Ibid.

(*masha*) it” (sin): then “we can hardly escape the impression that there is a connotation of oppression involved”.<sup>894</sup>

2. **Genesis 3 used by Paul.** In Genesis 2, Paul faithfully reflected the implication of these chapters in his teachings on the leadership role men are called to fulfill in the home and in the church. Turning his attention to Genesis 3, his main reference is found in 1 Timothy 2:14 which says: “... Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor”. This is the second of the two reasons offered by Paul to support his teaching that women ought not “to teach or to have authority over men” (1Tim 2:12), the first being the priority of the formation of Adam (1Tim 2:13).

3. **Avoiding dangerous interpretations.** The second reason has produced many dangerous interpretations. Some of the dissenting groups’ followers in the DRC have assumed that this verse teaches that women are disqualified from acting as leaders in the church because they are more easily deceived than men; and as Guthrie writes that Paul “may have had in mind the greater aptitude of the weaker sex to be led astray”,<sup>895</sup> they exclude women from preaching, teaching and even speaking in the Sabbath worship. As such, a variation of this interpretation is that women “are inferior in their gifts so far as the teaching office is concerned”.<sup>896</sup>

These interpretations are untenable because nowhere does the Scripture suggest that women are more prone to err than men or that their teaching gifts are inferior. If the latter were true how could Paul admonish women to teach their children and other women (Titus 2:3-5; 2Tim 3:15)? How could he praise women fellow-workers for their roles in the missionary outreach of the church (Rom 16:1,3,12; Phi 4:3)?<sup>897</sup>

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<sup>894</sup> Vos, 1968: 25.

<sup>895</sup> Guthrie, 1959: 77.

<sup>896</sup> Jewett, 1975: 77.

<sup>897</sup> See supra, p. 357.

What Paul appears to be saying is that both Adam's formation and Eve's deception typologically represent woman's subordination to man. The first reason, appealing to the order of creation (1Tim 2:13), and the second reason to the Fall (1Tim 2:14), show what happens when the order of creation is disregarded. When Eve asserted her independence from Adam she was deceived.<sup>898</sup> *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* supports this interpretation: "The apostle's second argument for the submissiveness of women is that when Eve tried to assert leadership she was beguiled",<sup>899</sup> and because of this tragic event, Paul sees added reason for counseling converted women not to attempt "to usurp authority over the man".<sup>900</sup>

In similar vein Knight writes: "In Timothy 2:14 Paul also refers to the Fall after citing the creation order ... to show the dire consequences of reversing the creation order on this most historic and significant occasion".<sup>901</sup>

The same view is expressed by Moo: "In vv.13-14, then Paul substantiates his teaching in vv.11-12 by arguing that the created order establishes a relationship of subordination of woman to man, which order, if bypassed, leads to disaster".<sup>902</sup>

Finally, those who think that women are more prone to err than men or that their teaching gifts are inferior, should be reminded that all dangerous interpretation should be avoided. As discussed earlier Paul's concern here is to re-establish the creational relationship of equality in personhood and subordination in function.

However, in terms of the above light from the Scripture and the early apostolic church concerning women's ministry in the church, how is the modern SDA Church in DRC and worldwide engaged in this issue? Is there still a link? Are there any changes and why? To these questions we now turn our attention.

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<sup>898</sup> Bacchiocchi, 83.

<sup>899</sup> Francis D. Nichol et al, eds, "Woman being deceived," 1957, Vol. 7, p. 296.

<sup>900</sup> Ibid.

<sup>901</sup> Knight, . 32. Moo expresses the same view, 1980: 70.

<sup>902</sup> Moo, *ibid.*.

### **8.3. The Modern SDA Church And Women's Ministries**

The Biblical and early church model, that some men should serve as the representative leaders of the church and that women to minister in supportive roles, is not discrimination against women. Rightly understood, this divine design ensures the recognition of women's natural endowments to minister in special ways.

Ellen G White provides guidelines for women's ministry in the church. Though never ordained by "human hands during her 70 years of service,"<sup>903</sup> her vision for the ministry of women in the church reaches far beyond the cultural convention of her time.

In line with the Scripture and the early church, she never once suggested or hinted that women should be ordained as elders or pastors of the church. On the contrary, she clearly outlined for women a personal ministry for families and individuals, complementary to, but different from the shepherding role of a male pastor. Repeatedly she urged her church to recognize and utilize the indispensable ministry of women in the church.<sup>904</sup> She wrote, for example:

The Lord has a work for women in the church. They may take their places in His work at this crisis and He [God] will work through them. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach. Their labor is needed.<sup>905</sup>

The following table shows clearly that the contemporary DRC SDA church and worldwide still aligns itself with the Scripture and the Early Apostolic Church regarding the women's ministries in the church, and that almost nothing has been changed.

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<sup>903</sup> Bacchiocchi, 242.

<sup>904</sup> Ellen G. White, 1946: 465.

<sup>905</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 465. On page 472 of the same book, she writes: "There are women who should labor in the Gospel ministry. In many respects they would do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God."

**Table 9**  
**Comparison between the Early Apostolic Church and the DRC SDA Church with respect to women’s ministries**

N°	Early Apostolic Church	N°	Modern DRC SDA Church and worldwide
1	Equality in being (Gen 2: 27) was respected. Women, as men, played a vital role both in the private and public religious life.	1	Unity in diversity, not uniformity. The SDA church still teaches the diversity of spiritual gifts which are complementary between men and women; thus the progress of the SDA Church depends upon every believer, man or woman. <sup>906</sup>
2	Jesus elevated women to a position of equal worth with men commissioning them to witness for Him (Matt 12: 49-50; 27: 55-56). Soon women became active in the charitable services of the church, communicating Christian love by deeds of mercy and hospitality (1Tim 5:9-10) in the church, at home and outreach.	2	Women in the DRC SDA Church and worldwide are still commissioned to witness for Christ. They are evangelists, they preach the Gospel in the churches during worship services, and outreach by winning souls to Jesus-Christ. Moreover they are still mothers and queens of their household, and have in their power the molding of their children’s characters, <sup>907</sup>
3	In office, women served as prophetesses and judges in Israel (Hulda, 2 King 22: 14; Deborah, Judges 4: 4; Philip’s daughters, Acts 21: 9 ) as well as men. They prayed, prophesied, and exercised a teaching ministry (1Cor 11: 5; Acts 18:26; Phil 4:3; Rom 16:12).	3	The Congolese SDA church and worldwide still strongly believe that the gift of prophecy both for men and women is an identifying mark of the remnant church, and that it was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White, the Lord’s messenger. Moreover, this gift of prophecy , like all other spiritual gifts in the church, will continue to operate for the benefit of God’s people until Christ returns.
4	Women are shown as ministering to Jesus while He ministered to men (Matt 8:15; Luke 10: 40; 8:3); Paul speaks of them as his co-workers and deaconesses (servant, Ministers) of Christ, (1Cor 3: 5; 2Cor 3: 6; Eph 3:7; 1Thes 3: 2).	4	Women are leading in different ministries of the DRC SDA Church and worldwide: Sabbath School ministry, personal evangelism ministry, women’s ministry, religious liberty ... from the local church to the General Conference.
5	Women as “Fellow-workers” with men not only in the local churches but also in the wider missionary outreach of the church, preaching the Gospel (Phil 4:2-3) .	5	Women are still evangelist missionaries in local churches and outreach, with emphasis on personal ministries, teaching ministry, nurturing new Christians, home visitation, as well as men, and counselling mothers.

<sup>906</sup> Seventh-day Adventists Believe, p. 243.

<sup>907</sup> Ibid., p. 340.



6	Women's ordination? Jesus did not include any women among His twelve apostles (John 21: 17) in accordance with the OT unique view of the male priest's role representative of the people to God (Ex 13: 12, 13; Deut 16:16; Luke 2: 23).	6	Although the issue of women's ordination as "Pastors and Elders" has been debated at great length in several General Conference worldwide sessions, no woman has been ordained as pastor worldwide in the SDA Church. Consequently, no woman in the DRC SDA Church has been ordained Pastor or Elder by the laying on of hands.
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The comparison in Table 9 above has shown clearly that the contemporary SDA Church women's ministry in the DRC and worldwide has not altered from such ministries exercised in the early apostolic church; this demonstrates that issues of women's ministries should not be a barrier between the church and the dissenting groups' followers.

Furthermore, it has been made evident that women could minister as well as men and witness for Jesus' Gospel by preaching, teaching, evangelizing, as missionaries, and also being "fellow-workers" with men.<sup>908</sup> Consequently it is obvious that the tension on this issue is easily explained as a misunderstanding of the roles of women in the early apostolic church by the dissenting groups' followers.

Indeed, this issue should never have become a valid reason for such followers to drop out of the church nor furnished a motive for their claiming to be more perfect than the actual SDA Church members owing to excluding women from worship office and ministering. Obviously this practice is not biblical; it was not even practised in the early apostolic church as is wrongly claimed by the dissenting groups' followers. However, one should ask whether ordination is really needed for women's ministry.

### **8.3.1. Women's Ordination in the Modern SDA Church and Worldwide**

"Women's ordination" as priest, apostle, pastor, and elder was never practiced in ancient Israel, nor in the early church by Jesus and the apostles. As explained in

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<sup>908</sup> See above, Table 3, n° 1-5, p. 175, 176.

the previous chapter, this is in accordance with the male priest's role as representative of the people to God.<sup>909</sup> How then has the modern SDA Church in DRC and worldwide dealt with this pertinent issue? As indicated previously, no woman in the DRC SDA Church and worldwide has yet been ordained pastor.

### **8.3.1.1. *Ellen G White and Women's Ordination***

The attention of the SDA Church worldwide has latterly, and perhaps inevitably, come to focus on the question of ordaining women to the ministry. However, the major exception to this debate, as mentioned, was Ellen G. White herself who never underwent an ordination rite but who claimed that God Himself had ordained her to a special ministry.<sup>910</sup>

Divine ordination or not, it is known that certain administrative problems arose regarding her status. At that time, all Adventist ministers received ministerial credentials which were addressed annually; Ellen White received ministerial credentials, in some instances, for example, 1885, with the word "ordained" deleted, but in some cases, for example, 1887, not deleted.<sup>911</sup>

In the church's *Yearbook* she was included under the category of ordained ministers, but she conducted neither marriages nor the "ordinance of communion" (the Eucharist). She exercised a profound influence on the church without ever having held formal office, although she did receive a ministerial stipend. Interestingly enough, she would never occupy the pulpit during a Saturday morning worship service when her husband was present.<sup>912</sup>

There was no word from the oracle on the subject of ordination of women in the entire corpus of her published works, or in her correspondence, with one enigmatic exception. In 1895, she wrote:

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<sup>909</sup> See above Table 9, n° 6, p. 406, 407.

<sup>910</sup> Letter 138, 1909. See also Pearson, 1986:181.

<sup>911</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 182, 183.

<sup>912</sup> *Ibid.*

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the Church.<sup>913</sup>

This recommendation seemed to pertain to the traditional Adventist role of deaconess, and created some confusion when first published;<sup>914</sup> it has never become common practice for deaconesses to undergo this rite as deacons do: as Bacchiocchi explains, this statement clearly calls for setting apart to a special work “by prayer and laying on hands”, we might even venture to use the term “ordination”. But ordination to what?<sup>915</sup> He wonders. Note the elements of her statement:

1. This ministry is part-time. “Women who devote some of their time...” Therefore, from the start, it does not seem to be referring to pastoral ministry.

2. The work is something other than what the Church was already doing. “This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labor”.<sup>916</sup>

3. The clause, “in some cases they need to counsel with the church officers<sup>917</sup> or minister”, may be construed as placing them in a category other than that of church officer, although this is by no means certain. Yet it is clear that they are not equated with “the minister”, nor are they being regarded as the officers whose responsibility is to lead the local congregation.

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<sup>913</sup> *Review*, 72, 28 1895: 434.

<sup>914</sup> Letter from J. W. Watt to O.A. Olsen, 2 January 1896.

<sup>915</sup> Bacchiocchi, 258.

<sup>916</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>917</sup> The assertion, advanced by some, that “church officers” here refers to conference officials is unlikely in view of Ellen White’s use twice in this article of the term “conference officers” to refer to this group and her corresponding single use of “officers of the church” to refer to the local church leaders. She seems to have been able to avoid ambiguity on this point. Bacchiocchi, p. 283; footnote.

So, was EG White here calling for an ordained women's ministry? In its broad sense of service, perhaps yes. But she has clearly distinguished this "ordained ministry" from that of the pastor or the leading church officers. To say that this statement supports ordaining women to position of congregational leadership or ecclesiastical authority is, it seems, simply not supported by the element of the statement itself.<sup>918</sup>

Indeed, Ellen White's writings have sometimes been cited to exclude women from ordination to ministry: In 1890, she wrote:

Eve had been perfectly happy by her husband's side in her Eden home; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her... In their desire for a higher sphere, many have sacrificed [sic] true womanly dignity and nobility of character, and have left undone the very work that Heaven appointed to them.<sup>919</sup>

It could reasonably have been expected that her own ministry would have opened the way for other women to participate. However, SDAs have concluded that the virtual silence on the subject of women's ordination indicated that it was an unimportant matter.

Other developments on this issue in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and after showed the same lack of interest being accorded to women's ordination. In 1867, James White, describing an ordination service which he had conducted, wrote:

My views and feelings are that the minister's wife stands in so close a relation to the work of God, a relation which so affects him for better or worse, that she should in the ordination prayer, be set apart as his helper.<sup>920</sup>

The reminder of his report indicated however, that only the man in question was ordained by the laying on of hands.

On 5 December 1881, an inexplicable outcrop of feminist concern occurred at the General Conference session. The minutes read:

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<sup>918</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>919</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 59, cited in H. Jemison, "Our God-Appointed Roles", unpublished manuscript, n.d., p. 9.

<sup>920</sup> James White, *Review*, 13 August 1867, p. 136; quoted by Pearson, pp. 183, 184.

Resolved, that the female possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry.<sup>921</sup>

This was discussed by JO Corlis, AC Bourdean, ER Jones, DH Lamson, DM Canright and JN Loughborough, and referred to the General Conference Committee.<sup>922</sup>

Unfortunately, church records nowhere offered any help in understanding this unexpected resolution. It may be that EG White, who was absent from the session, succeeded, away from the Conference floor, in killing a resolution of which she disapproved. It may be also that the male leadership of the church overturned a resolution which arose from a feminist faction.<sup>923</sup>

It is surprising, however, that the matter did not attract attention in any denominational periodicals. Until further evidence comes to light, it can only be observed that the strength of feeling on the matter does not seem to have been sufficiently great for it to be raised again.<sup>924</sup>

Although the General Conference Committee agendas have often re-opened the subject (1898, 1973, 1977), the evidence already considered from Ellen G White's pen suggests that the generality of Adventist women were content to occupy a passive role in the church,<sup>925</sup> and that in many parts of the world, Adventists were simply not ready to consider such a change.

Likewise, some SDA scholars are still opposed on the issue. Sakae Kubo - a New Testament scholar – advocates that the principle of women's ordination should be determined according to local readiness for such innovation,<sup>926</sup> while

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<sup>921</sup> *Review*, 20 December 1881, p. 392; Pearson, p. 184.

<sup>922</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>923</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>924</sup> Minutes of the G. C. Committee, 30 March 1889, p. 17; quoted by Pearson, p. 185.

<sup>925</sup> Pearson, p. 185.

<sup>926</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

Gordon Hyde – head of the Biblical Research Institute – points out that official church policy stands opposed to Kubo's notion of local readiness:

Because the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a world church which includes in its fellowship peoples of all nations and cultures, and because a survey of its world divisions reveals that the time is not ripe nor opportune, therefore, in the interest of the world unity of the church, no move be done in the direction of ordaining women to the gospel ministry.<sup>927</sup>

He recognized that the obstacle was not theological in nature, and doubted whether the unity of the church was really so fragile as to be shattered by the issue.

For the DRC SDA Church, the above statement about the unity of the church is already confirmed through the departure of some dissenting groups' followers who have already left the church because of the mere process of studying the opportunity of women's ordination within SDA Church, even though the practice has not yet been ratified by the world church. This sufficiently indicates the danger for church unity if women's ordination were to be ratified by the SDA World Church.

Gordon Hyde took the cautious view, however, that the church should proceed gradually, seeking to discern the will of God in the matter. Dederen also agreed while conceding that the church's theology of women's ordination was anomalous and in need of revision.<sup>928</sup>

### **8.3.1.2. Surveys of SDA opinion on Women's Ordination**

In 1974, the General Conference took soundings in the various sections of the world church on the matter. Some areas, like the Far Eastern Division, were in favour of the move, while others, like the Trans-Africa Division, were utterly opposed. The church in the Western World seemed unsure about the matter and counselled caution.<sup>929</sup>

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<sup>927</sup> 1974 Annual Council Action on the role of women in the Church, cited in *Ministry*, February 1978, supplement p. 240.

<sup>928</sup> Manuscript later appeared as Dederen, 1978, supplement, 24 K-24L.

<sup>929</sup> Correspondence to W.D. Eva, General Conference Vice-president, 1974.

Another survey carried out in 1977, as part of a continuing assessment of membership opinion, tested the view of laity, clergy, conference and institutional administrators, and young members.<sup>930</sup> It was conducted in North America, and yielded 562 usable responses to questions relating to the ordination of women as ministers and elders of local churches.

A majority opposed the ordination of women to ministry. Women opposed this more than men; the older groups of either gender more than the younger; the age group 36-55 was more hostile than older groups. Conference administrators were openly opposed to any extended role of women, while institutional administrators favoured this rather more.<sup>931</sup>

The polarization of ideas and the strength of feeling thus discovered were calculated to impress on church leaders the need to proceed with extreme caution.<sup>932</sup> The following table, received from FD Yost, depicts the attitudes towards the ordination of women amongst Adventists in the United States,<sup>933</sup> 1977 and 1985.

**Table 10**  
**SDA Church Members' Attitudes Toward Women's Ordination in the USA (In %)**

Attitude/issue	Oppose		Neutral		Favor	
	1977	1985	1977	1985	1977	1985
Appointment of women to pastoral responsibilities not requiring ordination	51	48	17	11	32	41
Ordination of women to SDA Ministry	56	57	15	10	29	33
Appointment of a woman to ministry in respondent's own church	58	60	18	11	25	29

<sup>930</sup>F.D. Yost "An Inquiry into the Role of Women in the SDA Church ," unpublished statistical report, September 1977.

<sup>931</sup> Pearson, p. 188.

<sup>932</sup> Ibid.

<sup>933</sup> Table comparing attitudes to expansion of the women's ministerial role in the SDA Church 1977, and 1985. Figures in percentages to nearest whole. Sample = 1,048 compiled from FD Yost by Pearson, and an unpublished survey on the role of the women in the church, completed March 1985.

Source: Sample compiled from FD Yost by MD Pearson, *Seventh Day Adventis responses to some contemporary ethical problems*, Oxford: Wolfson College, the British Library Document Supply Centre, 1985, p:188.

Indeed, the high percentage of SDA Church members opposed to the ordination of women as indicated by the table here above reinforces the point that the SDA church should really proceed very gradually, and with extreme caution in this issue, seeking especially to discern the will of God in this important decision to be taken or not.

It may be remarked in the table that with the pressure mounting for the church to reconsider its position, the further sample survey of membership opinion taken in March 1985 showed slightly increased support (41%) for women serving in ministerial capacities, particularly those not requiring ordination. Similarly, the opposition to such innovation (48%) had been reinforced marginally. Fewer people declared themselves to be undecided on the matter (11%). Yet on the other hand, the survey showed that the opposition to ordination of women had increased marginally (57%) while men seemed somewhat more favourable.<sup>934</sup>

It is true that such statistics must always be treated with caution but the basic finding of the research was that, while attitudes to women entering ministry were softening gradually, the resistance to such a move in North America showed that this was not a propitious time for ordination of women.<sup>935</sup>

Another survey of Adventist opinion worldwide indicated a lack of readiness to ordain women to ministry, especially in the Third World. The church in the West was more receptive to the idea but support was still insufficient to encourage administrators to proceed.<sup>936</sup>

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<sup>934</sup> See table 3 here above.

<sup>935</sup> "175-85 GN Role Women in the church – Committee Report," pp. 49- 52; quoted by Pearson, p. 189.

<sup>936</sup> Ibid.



### **8.3.1.3. Recent developments regarding the Ordination of Women**

The admission of women to ministry and positions of responsibility in church life has been a subject of debate now for over three decades: the opening salvo was fired by Leona Running, in 1972, in an article which vigorously criticized the exclusion of women from leadership roles, and the financial inequalities they suffered as a consequence of not having access to ordination, even where they performed a pastoral function.<sup>937</sup>

It could be argued that militants in the women's movement, determined to impose a gender-free society, have spread their humanistic view of motherhood, womanhood and the family, until like a "hidden poison it has permeated every aspect of our lives".<sup>938</sup> Young people growing up in today's society have been so saturated with these ideas that they hardly recognize them for what they are.

Moreover, the Biblical values of the Judeo-Christian tradition regarding the family are regarded as old-fashioned and obsolete. This has also affected the ministry of women in the church. One can see the effects especially in the influence of the women's movement on young women training in several seminaries who have been encouraged to fight for their right to work as ordained pastors in the church.<sup>939</sup>

As such, there has been a widespread attempt on the part of many authors to change centuries-old standards and practices by explaining away as culturally conditioned and time-bound the Biblical emphasis on the role distinctions of men and women, both at home and in the church.<sup>940</sup>

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<sup>937</sup> Pearson, p. 190.

<sup>938</sup> Bacchiocchi, 250.

<sup>939</sup> The objectives of the women's movement are to change the status of women in every area of life, including the area of church ministry. While the Supreme Court has not been very sympathetic to their litigation to force seminaries to admit women in equal numbers, their attempts to influence public opinion on the issue of ordination of women have been much more successful. Ibid., p. 250.

<sup>940</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

Some young women in training have even declared that they had no interest in a specialized supportive ministry of women that does not require ordination, because, by their own testimony, they wanted the “status and prestige” of the pastor’s role.<sup>941</sup> One young woman, campaigning for women’s rights within the SDA church with whom Bacchiocchi shared his joy in church ministry (without ordination), said to him in bewilderment, “Well, then, what do you think we should be fighting for?” Fighting? Is that the way into the ministry? Are status and prestige the motives that should impel people to answer the call of God?,<sup>942</sup> he wondered.

Obviously, such a fabric of character will not endure the acid test of wholehearted devotion to God and unselfish service to our fellow human beings; and would perhaps be poisonous for women’s ministry in the church and at home as E G White points out again,

In attempting to rise above her original position she [Eve] fell far below it ... In their efforts to reach positions for which He [God] has not fitted them [women], many are leaving vacant the place where they might be a blessing. In their desire for a higher sphere, many have sacrificed true womanly dignity and nobility of character, and have left undone the very work that Heaven appointed them.<sup>943</sup>

Nowadays, as indicated, it is a fact that the vote approving the ordination of women to the Gospel ministry has never been taken by the majority in the SDA world church in spite of frank discussions debated on the issue in several General Conference sessions.

The issue has been addressed at the 1881 General Conference Session. In more recent times, a study was initiated in 1971 while the 1975 General Conference Session in Vienna, Austria, discussed the issue. In 1984, the Annual Council, the yearly business meeting of the church, authorized the ordination of women elders, but at the 1990 General Conference Session in Indianapolis, United States, a motion to ordain women to ministry was not approved. The vote

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<sup>941</sup> Ibid.

<sup>942</sup> Ibid.

<sup>943</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 59

then was 1173 in favour of the recommendation “not to approve ordination of women to the gospel ministry”, against 377 votes.<sup>944</sup>

In 1995, “Utrecht, the Netherlands... Casting what is essentially a vote against the ordination of women for SDA Church, delegates to the 56<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the SDA Church voted not to allow World divisions of the church to ordain individuals without regard to gender”.<sup>945</sup> Fewer than one-third of the delegates voted in favour of the request from the North American Division of the church which asked that divisions, not the church as a whole, be allowed to make the decision on ordination. Of the 2154 votes cast, 1481 voted against the request, 673 for it.<sup>946</sup>

In the first two presentations before the discussion, P G Damsteegt,<sup>947</sup> presented the theological case “against” equality of nature and worth before God: he suggested that women are “different in functional roles”. He argued that the Bible does not allow “spiritual headship” of women either in the family or in the church and added that those who are “for” female ordination are departing from the traditional Adventist method of Scriptural interpretation.<sup>948</sup> He explained that this proposal conflicts with three basic doctrines, namely, the doctrine of the church, the doctrine of the Holy Scripture, and the doctrine of the Unity of the church.<sup>949</sup>

Dederen<sup>950</sup> presented the case “for” the ordination of women. He stated, “The Scripture does not speak to the issues of the ordination of women”.<sup>951</sup> He

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<sup>944</sup> [www.nytimes.com/.../Seventh-day-Adventists-vote-to-bar-ordination-of-women.htm](http://www.nytimes.com/.../Seventh-day-Adventists-vote-to-bar-ordination-of-women.htm)// See also a version of this article which appeared in print on Thursday, July 12, 1990 on section A page 16 on the New York edition.

<sup>945</sup> Women’s Ordination Request at Seventh-day Adventist World session, [htm/.News.adventist.org/.../](http://htm/.News.adventist.org/.../)

<sup>946</sup> Ibid.

<sup>947</sup> Dr P Gerard Damsteegt, Associate Professor of Theology, SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University, USA.

<sup>948</sup> Ibid.

<sup>949</sup> Ibid.

<sup>950</sup> Dr Raoul Dederen is Professor Emeritus of Biblical Theology from Andrews University Theological Seminary and former Dean.

addressed several of the same biblical passages referred to by Damsteegt, but offered a different interpretation considering the cultural setting in which the counsel was given.

Today, most Adventist church leaders believe women's ordination is dead. During the 30 years since Camp Mohaven (1973), they have focused on maintaining a lock-step policy on women's ordination. They believe Utrecht ended the discussion and formalized the policy in order to preserve the church's unity because it appeared that ordaining women would be disruptive to the world church and should not be allowed.<sup>952</sup>

Consequently the 2000 General Conference session at Toronto in Canada and the 2005 session held in Washington DC have never discussed this issue again; despite powerful considerations of the issue, resistance to the idea of women's ordination remains strong in the SDA Church worldwide.

Many Adventists would regard it as their first responsibility to overlook even the so-called legitimate grievances by some people in a search for the unity necessary to proclaim "the Everlasting Gospel" successfully.

Nevertheless, while unity in the Spirit is always important, it has two sides. The church has avoided being split on the question of ordaining women; hopefully, it should manage not to be split on the question of not ordaining them.

### **8.3.2. Women's Ordination in the Modern DRC SDA Church**

Has anything changed from the early apostolic church with respect to women's ordination within the modern DRC SDA Church and worldwide as has been claimed by 180 (90%) of the dissenting groups' followers,<sup>953</sup>

What has been discussed above in this chapter appears to demonstrate that almost no changes have been effected, despite these claims.

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<sup>951</sup> Women's Ordination ... htm/.News.Adventist.org.

<sup>952</sup> Ibid.

<sup>953</sup> See above, Table 8, p. 339.

Table 11 below depicts how the 200 SDA church members selected at random from the Lubero-Beni area SDA Churches responded to the questionnaire.

**Table 11**  
**SDA Church Members' Views Regarding Women's Ministries-(Continued)\***

Pertinent Issues	SDA Members Inquired	Yes	%	No	%	No idea	%
Do you think that SDA Church Women's ministries have changed from those of the Early Apostolic Church?	200	25	12.5	152	76	23	11.5
Have some DRC Church practices and liturgy changed from those of the Early Apostolic Church?	200	42	21	141	70.5	17	8.5

\* The information in Table 11 was provided by a random selection of SDA Church members from several churches of Lubero and Beni areas. July, August 2009.

This table 11 shows that 152 persons (76%) confirmed that Modern SDA Church Women's ministries have not changed from those practised in the early Apostolic Church. Only 25 church members (12,5%) suspected some change, while 23 believers (11,5%) had no opinion on the question.

Indeed, as mentioned above, the ordination office mentioned in the New Testament was ordinarily filled by males. This seems true whether one speaks of apostles, elders or overseers (bishop); this is not true, however, of the office of deacon. Phoebe is identified in Romans 16:1 as a deaconess of the church of the Cenchrrea. But what about their serving in other office?

As Richard (1985) responds, the modern DRC SDA Church is being very cautiously about women's ordination because of lack of evidence both in the scripture and in the early apostolic church on the issue:

While there is evidence that women served as deaconesses in the Early Church there is a lack of evidence concerning their serving in any other office. We should be careful how we argue from silence...<sup>954</sup>

If this view is correct, it seems clear that the early apostolic church did not include women among its elders or overseers. In this way, in conformity with the

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<sup>954</sup> Richard, 1985: 635.

scripture and the SDA Church organization, women in the SDA Church in the DRC play a significant role in the development of the local church. Indeed, the significance of women here is to be appreciated in their assuming responsibilities in Dorcas, personal ministries, Sabbath school, evangelism and also exercising leadership etc., but anyone has never been ordained for pastoral ministry.

The problem of women's ordination is neither a matter of Congolese SDA Church women nor of the local church. Most of them (about 75% of the properly instructed women inquired of) consider that a woman should not be ordained, and many of them stated that even if they could be chosen for ordination, they would refuse.<sup>955</sup>

The reason is that they know this practice is not biblical. Moreover they reckon that specific work is given to specific people (men and/or women): for instance, in the kingdom of Israel the priestly functions were the responsibility of one tribe, that of Levi, and of that tribe, only the family of Aaron, the brother of Moses, served the altar of sacrifice. All important decisions urging the church, they frankly declared, should be taken only in the light of the Holy Scripture and the Early Apostolic Church.<sup>956</sup>

For several decades, a failure to grasp the position of the SDA Church about women's ordination, which is appropriate to the early apostolic church and the Scripture, has plagued the followers of dissenting groups. This misunderstanding has often created difficulties for the local SDA Church today although this should not be the case, because women's ordination has never been accepted in the DRC SDA Church and worldwide, it is indeed a false problem.

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<sup>955</sup> Declarations by several women inquired, March, 2006.

<sup>956</sup> Ibid.

## 8.4. The Modern SDA Church Liturgy And Practices

The accusations brought against the SDA Church by the said dissidents on this issue<sup>957</sup> showed that 163 persons (76.5%) confirmed that SDA liturgy and practices have changed from those of the Early Apostolic Church, 43 persons (21.5%) reaffirmed that nothing has changed at all, while 4 persons (2%) had no view on the issue.<sup>958</sup>

Yet again on the other hand, among the 200 SDA Church members asked about the same issue, 143 believers (70%) confirmed that SDA liturgy and practices have not altered very much from those of the early apostolic church; 42 persons (21%) declared that major changes have occurred; while 17 persons (8.5%) had no view on the issue.

Table 12 confirms that almost nothing has been changed.

**Table 12**  
**SDA Church Practices and Liturgy Evaluation in the Light of the Early Apostolic Church.**

N°	Early Apostolic Church	N°	Modern D.R.Congo SDA Church and Worldwide
1	Sabbath observance was practised by Jesus, the apostles and the Early God's community (Luke 23:56; 24:1; Acts 13:14; 17:1,2; 18:4; 13:42, 43)	1	Faithful observance of the weekly Sabbath is still practised to joyously celebrate God's gracious activities in creation and redemption; SDA church members avoid anything that tends to diminish its sacred atmosphere. <sup>959</sup>
2	The Lord's Supper, a participation in the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus as an expression of faith in Him the Lord and Saviour, was practised, preceded by a foot washing service (Matt 26:17-30; John 13: 1-17,6:48-63; 1Cor 10:16,17; 11:23-30).	2	Preceded by the service of foot washing as ordained by Master (John 13:12-17), the Lord's supper is still practised as a participation in the emblems of the body and the blood of Jesus (John 6:48-63, 1Cor 10:16) as an expression of faith in Him, our Lord and Saviour As church members partake, they joyfully proclaim the Lord's death

<sup>957</sup> See above Table 8.

<sup>959</sup> Seventh-day Adventist Believe..., p. 296.

			until He comes again (1Cor 11:26) <sup>960</sup>
3	Christian behaviour and lifestyle were recommended in the Early Church. Paul appeals to all Christians. "... to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God... and not be conformed to this world" (Rom 12:1,2)	3	Not only the SDA Church but also the individual Christian is a temple for indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1Cor6:19). SDA Christians, then, practise good health habits to protect the command Center of their body temples [the mind], the dwelling place of the Spirit of Christ <sup>961</sup>
4	Early Christian worship: has been God's agency for gathering believers to worship the Creator on Sabbath (Acts 13:14; 17:1; 18:4;13:42, 44). Paul identified "psalms and hymns" as being sung by the early church, The Psalms contains every form of prayer, including thanksgiving, confession, petition, submission, even lament <sup>962</sup>	4	The SDA church believes that true spiritual worship is prior total obedience to God, becoming "living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God" (Rom 12:1,NIV). This does not occur according to human timetables and does not depend on human forms, traditional or contemporary. <sup>963</sup> Worship meetings gather on the Sabbath, they lift God alone, and they are "done in Spirit and in truth" (John 4:23), by psalms, hymns, with prayers, thanksgiving, confession, petition and submission.

Source: Evaluation based on author's research findings.

The evaluation in the above Table has shown that the SDA Church practices and liturgy in the DRC and worldwide have not changed compared to those practised in the Early Church.

#### **8.4.1. SDA Church Sabbath Observance**

The modern SDA Church is accused by dissidents of having relaxed the strict observance of the Sabbath rest by healing sick persons or lighting fire and boiling food on the Sabbath (Matt 12:10,11). This practice is now discussed.

<sup>960</sup> Ibid., pp. 225-234.

<sup>961</sup> Ibid., p. 312.

<sup>962</sup> Hustand, 1995: 14.

<sup>963</sup> Ibid., p. 15 .



It is known that Christ regularly worshipped on the Sabbath (Mark 1:21; 3:1-4; Luke 4:16-27; 13:10). But he did more than just worship, he fellowshiped with others (Mark 1:29- 2:23), and went about doing holy deeds of mercy. Wherever he could, he healed the sick and the afflicted<sup>964</sup> (Mark 1:21-31; 3:1-5).

When criticized for His work of alleviating suffering, Jesus replied, “It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (Matt 12:12). His healing activities neither broke the Sabbath nor abolished it. But they did terminate the burdensome regulations that had distorted the meaning of the Sabbath as God’s instrument of spiritual refreshment and delight.<sup>965</sup> God intended the Sabbath for humanity’s spiritual enrichment. Activities that enhance communication with God are proper; those which distract from that purpose and turn the Sabbath into a holiday are improper.<sup>966</sup>

Following Jesus’ example and the early apostolic church practice regarding Sabbath observance, it appears that the DRC SDA church and worldwide still keep the Sabbath as a day of special communion with God in which church members are invited to joyously celebrate God’s gracious activities in creation and redemption, and avoid anything that tends to diminish its sacred atmosphere; they cease their secular works (Ex 20:10), avoiding all work done to earn a living and all business transactions (Neh 13:15-22). As such it appears that this Sabbath observance has never been lessened in the SDA Church, with perhaps the exception of some failing individual church members.<sup>967</sup>

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<sup>964</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...*, p. 297.

<sup>965</sup> Does Christ’s example mandate that Christian hospitals should stay open for seven days without providing any Sabbath rest for their Staff? Realizing the needs of hospital personnel, White said, “the Savior has shown us by His example that it is right to relieve suffering on this day; but physicians and nurses should not do any unnecessary work. Ordinary treatment, and operations that can wait, should be deferred till next day. Let the patients know that, physicians must have one day for rest”. See *Medical Ministry* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1963], p. 214.

<sup>966</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...*, p. 297.

<sup>967</sup> See above, Table 12, p. 428.

Do SDA members violate the seventh-day rest by lighting fire on the Sabbath in order to cook their food (Ex 35:3)? Regarding this question, E G White writes that during the stay in the wilderness, it was forbidden for Israelites to light fire on the Sabbath. However, this prohibition should not be applied in Palestine where the climatological harshness would render food heating indispensable for certain periods of time; in the wilderness, however, it was not necessary to light fire for warming food up.<sup>968</sup>

When the holy hours of the Sabbath approach, family members or groups of believers gather just before the setting of the sun on Friday evening to sing, pray, and read God's Word, thus inviting the Spirit of Christ as a welcome Guest. Similarly, they mark its close by unity in worship toward the close of the Sabbath on Saturday evening, requesting God's presence and guidance through the ensuing week.

#### **8.4.2. The Lord's Supper**

The contemporary practice and liturgy of the Lord's supper in the SDA Church in DRC and worldwide compared to the one practised first by the Lord Jesus in Scripture (John 13:1-17), then by the early apostolic church (1Cor 11:23-30) seems not to embody much change too, except for the large meal and holding the ceremony in the evening as claimed by some dissident groups members.

##### **8.4.2.1. Biblical root of foot washing**

Bible references to foot washing before Jesus washed His disciples' feet spoke of providing guests with water to wash their own feet, an act of hospitality, just as a host or hostess today invites guests to "freshen up".<sup>969</sup>

Luke 22 describes the Last Supper before Jesus washed feet to settle a dispute among the disciples, each of whom wanted to be the greatest, evidently an

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<sup>968</sup> E G White, 1956: 413. See also, *Esprit de Prophétie et ses Enseignements* (Collonges-sous-Saleve: Séminaire Adventiste, n.d.), p. 273 (Translation supplied).

<sup>969</sup> As listed in Strong, 1990, 1993: 1106, 1107.

ongoing argument (see Luke 9:46; Mark 9:34). Jesus washed His disciples' feet to refocus their attention from themselves to His important messages to them – and us.<sup>970</sup>

#### **8.4.2.2. Some churches still wash feet**

Many Christian groups follow the example of Jesus by observing a rite of foot washing. Roman Catholics emphasize the aspect of humility, as clergy wash the feet of poor laypersons on Maundy Thursday.<sup>971</sup>

Some other Protestant organizations in the United States observe foot washing: SDA, Free-will Baptists, Church of Brethren, United Baptists, Mennonites, Apostolic Faith, Church of God, and Church of God in Christ.<sup>972</sup> All of them practice foot washing for various reasons:

Feet are washed to follow the humble example of Jesus in being a servant of servants (Memorial Free-will Baptist church).

- Feet are washed to recall Christ's example of humility and to facilitate the "coming together" (1Cor 11) (Brethren congregation).
- Feet are washed to symbolize the cleansing forgiveness of God (Fisherman of Men Church).<sup>973</sup> The SDA Church practices foot washing quarterly, just preceding the Lord's supper. Men wash the feet of men, women wash the feet of women, or families wash one another's feet. Feet are washed to provide a setting for the confession and repentance of sin – including pride, rivalry, jealousy, resentful feelings, and selfishness<sup>974</sup>– so that the church can "come together" (see 1Cor 11).<sup>975</sup>

#### **8.4.2.3. The Celebration of the Lord's Supper**

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<sup>970</sup> Hooker, 1995: 16-17.

<sup>971</sup> "Easter," *World Book Encyclopedia* (1986), Vol.6, p. 25; quoted by Hooker, 1995: 17.

<sup>972</sup> Hooker, 1995: 17.

<sup>973</sup> Ibid.

<sup>974</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* 196-198.

<sup>975</sup> In the *New American Standard Bible*, the phrase "Come together" is used four times (1Cor 11:17, 18, 33, 34) as the purpose of the Lord's Supper rather than merely "meeting" (verse 20).

As mentioned above, the Lord's Supper replaces the Passover festival of the Old-Covenant era. The Passover met its fulfillment when Christ the Paschal Lamb gave His life.<sup>976</sup> In a world filled with strife and divisiveness, our corporate participation in these celebrations contributes to the unity and stability of the church, demonstrating true communion with Christ and one another<sup>977</sup> (1Cor 10:16,17).

Moreover, the anticipation of the Second Advent is one of the purposes of the celebration of the Lord's Supper, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death *till He comes*" (1Cor 11:26, emphasis supplied). The communion service spans the interim between Calvary and the Second Advent. It links the cross and the kingdom. It proclaims that Christ is present through the Spirit till He comes visibly.<sup>978</sup>

Regarding the claimed large Lord's Supper meal, the "agape" or "love feast", the adverse experience of the abuses it left in the Early Apostolic Church (1Cor 11:17-22) still seems to be influencing the church today and perhaps still causes this feature of the rite not be practiced in the church even nowadays.<sup>979</sup>

This demonstrates that in spite of the dissenting groups' followers misconceived declarations, on the whole the contemporary DRC and worldwide SDA Church practice foot washing and the celebration of the Lord's Supper very much in line with Scripture and the early apostolic church's practice.

#### **8.4.3. Christian Behavior and Lifestyle**

It also seems that in this pertinent issue almost nothing of the teachings and practices of the DRC SDA Church and worldwide has changed; these have not been contrary to Scriptural principles and the practices of the early apostolic church.

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<sup>976</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...*, p. 229.

<sup>977</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>978</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>979</sup> See above, "Historic Lord's Supper in the Early Church," p. 364.

#### **8.4.3.1. Behavior and lifestyle in the Early Church**

Christian behavior and a healthy lifestyle were recommended and practiced by the earliest Christians (1Cor 6:19-20). Behavior and salvation are closely related; and Christians practiced good health habits to protect the command center of the Spirit of Christ (Phil 4: 8).

As such, God's blessing for total health – exercise, sunlight, water, fresh air, temperance, being free of drugs, narcotics and stimulants such as tobacco and alcoholic beverages, appropriate music, rest, good food and simple Christian dress, high moral virtue and natural beauty etcetera, were practiced in harmony with the principles of heaven.<sup>980</sup>

#### **8.4.3.2. Christian behaviour and lifestyle in the DRC SDA Church and worldwide**

The SDA church members are also called to be a godly people who think, feel and act in harmony with the principles of Scripture and the early apostolic Christians. They believe that “while their behavior and their spirituality are closely related”<sup>981</sup> they can never earn salvation by correct behavior. Rather, Christian behavior is a natural fruit of salvation and is grounded in what Christ has already accomplished for us at Calvary.<sup>982</sup>

Moreover, they enjoy God's blessings for total health, depending upon practicing a few rather simple but effective God-given principles of exercise (Prov 6:6-13; 14: 23), water, sunlight (Gen 1:3), temperance and drug-free, stimulant-free living, nutrition food (Gen 1: 29; 3:18; 8:20), avoiding “the pride of life” (John 2:16) and looking for grace and natural beauty characterized by simplicity, modesty, purity, practicality, and attractiveness, because as mentioned above, “worldly display, as seen in transient fashions,”<sup>983</sup> has no value in God's eyes (1Tim 2:9,10).

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<sup>980</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...*, pp. 312-323. Read also (2Cor 10:5; 6:14-17; 1Pet 3:1-4; 1Cor 10:31; Lev 11: 1-47; 3John 2).

<sup>981</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>982</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...*, p. 313.

<sup>983</sup> *Ibid.*

#### **8.4.3.3. Behaviour and Salvation**

It furthermore appears that the SDA Church in the DRC and worldwide has neither changed nor relaxed its teachings on this matter. Misunderstandings on the part of the dissenting groups' followers have been related to confusing lifestyle practices and salvation.

It should be stressed here that in determining an appropriate lifestyle, followers of dissenting groups should avoid extremism and not accept rigid rules and application of principles as a means of salvation. Paul opposes this attitude: "you who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace" (Gal 5:4).

#### **8.4.3.4. Christian Church Worship**

In the early apostolic church, "Christian worship" is used for the reverent devotion, service, or honour paid to God,<sup>984</sup> whether public, familial, or individual. Family worship on one side and public worship on the other did not exclude a very rich practice of personal religion in the apostolic community (prayers, acts of devotion and so forth); many individual acts of religion were provided for even within the context of public worship.<sup>985</sup>

#### **8.4.3.4. Elements of Worship<sup>986</sup>**

1. **Prayer** in the more specific sense of petition is naturally the first constituent element. It may be a common petition or an intercession.

2. **Praise** is closely related to prayer: it is the confession of God's nature and works. Indeed prayer in the form of thanksgiving is itself praise (Eph 5: 19,20), together with psalms, songs, and hymns.

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<sup>984</sup> Hustad, 1995:10-15.

<sup>985</sup> Bromiley, 1982: 979.

<sup>986</sup> See. Bromiley, 1982: 987-989.

3. **Confession of sins** is at the heart of worship, for, as the worthiness of God is exalted, the unworthiness of human beings demands acknowledgement. The prayers and psalms of the Old Testament are full of the recognition of guilt, which obviously goes hand in hand with a plea for forgiveness and restitution, praise and thanks for the Divine mercy and pardon.

4. **Confession of faith** (baptism). The faith of the early apostolic church is faith in Jesus as Saviour and God. Peter makes this primary affirmation in Matthew 16: 16. It may be seen again in Thomas' confession (John 20:28). The work of the Spirit is to induce in Christians the affirmation that Jesus is Lord (1Cor 12:3; see also Phil 2:11; Matt 28:19; Acts 2: 38; 8:37; 10: 48).

5. **Reading of Scriptures** (1Thes 5:27), Paul's epistles are publicly read in the churches (see also 1Cor 11; 2Tim 3: 15 ff).

6. **Preaching** is solidly attested: Paul preached at Troas (Acts 6; 2Tim 3:6).

7. **The collection**: the reference to a weekly allocation in 1Cor 16, the liturgical significance ascribed to alms in Philipians 4:18, have led to the view that a collection formed a basic element in early Christian worship. On the other hand, one should consider that almsgiving had a long Old Testament history, and that the importance of liberality as part of serving God is beyond dispute.<sup>987</sup>

8. **The Lord's Supper**: Both Biblical and patristic evidence support the view that this was from the very first a constitutive part of weekly worship. The one gathering embraces not only prayer, praise, reading, and preaching, but also the holy meal, which "was accompanied by blessings"<sup>988</sup> after the manner of the Passover. The focal point is the declaration of the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ for humankind (1Cor 11:26).

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<sup>987</sup> Ibid., p. 989.

<sup>988</sup> Cf. Didache 9-10, quoted by Bromiley, 1982: 989. See also above, and compare with "Historic Christian worship in the Early Church," pp.324 ff.

#### **8.4.3.5. True Christian Worship**

If worship is to be what it was meant to be, then there has to be knowledge of God, true faith in Him, a humble work before Him, recognition of His gracious acts, a commitment to His will and His ways.<sup>989</sup> Only when these are present, is true worship possible and takes its proper place. Worship by its very nature is confession and service.<sup>990</sup> This confession combines the recitation of what God has done and the praising of God for it. There is first the form of confessional praise of God, the declaration of His grace and mighty acts.

In practice these may be separated into reading and proclamation on the one side and the singing of psalms and hymns on the other. Nevertheless, when worship is genuinely Biblical, there is an indissoluble relation between the two, “Genuine proclamation is praise, and genuine praise is also proclamation”.<sup>991</sup>

#### **8.4.3.6. DRC SDA Church worship evaluation**

The SDA Church worship appears to have always been in line with genuine Biblical worship as it was practiced in the early apostolic church. Indeed, the roots of Biblical worship are to be found, not in human emotion, but in the divinely established relationship of God to people.<sup>992</sup> This is important, for it means that “the basis of worship is theological rather than anthropological”,<sup>993</sup> it is a “reacting” cult rather than “acting”,<sup>994</sup> which is, in other words, in response to a prior action of God’s salvation, and it is not trying to influence Him to act.

The SDA Church in the DRC and worldwide have been accused of relaxing or changing worship practices by the dissenting groups’ followers.<sup>995</sup> According to them, renewal of spiritual worship does occur according to human timetables and

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<sup>989</sup> Bromiley, 1982: 982.

<sup>990</sup> Ibid.

<sup>991</sup> Ibid., p. 975.

<sup>992</sup> Ibid., p. 975.

<sup>993</sup> Ibid.

<sup>994</sup> See above “Christian worship in the Early Church,” pp. 360 ff.

<sup>995</sup> See above, table 8.



depends on human forms, traditional or contemporary. They advocate meetings characterized by highly emotional verbal and physical expressions.

While the elements of worship have not changed and are still the same as those of the Modern SDA Church,<sup>996</sup> it is obvious that praise, prayer, and confession are accompanied by fervent celebration and are highly emotional in the dissenting groups, expecting to experience a dramatic encounter with God that produces both miracles and enjoyment.

Hence they are convinced that they must plan programmes to attract the unchurched, “with performances that are as professionally executed and emotionally stimulating”<sup>997</sup> as those of secular show business.

#### ***8.4.3.7. Avoiding dangers of formalist worship***

This appears to be a pure externalism of worship which emphasizes the performance rather than the inner spirit (1Sam 15:22), as Hustad wonders: “Is there a more graphic depiction of religion formalism, of external acts of worship divorced from true faith and reactive obedience?” (Is 58:3ff).<sup>998</sup>

In Malachi, disobedience to the ethical precepts of the law (Mal 3:5) is still a fundamental reason why the worship cannot be acceptable to God. Human emotions and reactions are involved in worship, which is, of course, undeniable. Awe, fear, gratitude, and love may all be experienced in worship.

The point is, however, that these should not be the controlling factors. They do not constitute the true essence. In the Bible the beginning lies in the object of worship rather than the subject. It is not man’s or woman’s own potentiality. The object of worship, at once its starting–point and controlling factor, is not a projection of man or woman. It is God.<sup>999</sup> Thus, accusations by the dissenting

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<sup>996</sup> Ibid.

<sup>997</sup> Hustad, 1995: 11.

<sup>998</sup> Hustad, 1995:12.

<sup>999</sup> Bromiley, 1982: 975.

groups' followers regarding this issue still constitute a misconception of the reality of genuine worship.

## **8.5. Conclusion**

This chapter has evaluated some important issues within the SDA Church in the light of the Holy Scripture and the early apostolic Church. It has been shown that women's ministries, practices and liturgy have not changed very much, despite some accusations by dissenting groups.

Hence, several conclusions emerge from our study. Concerning women's ministries in the earliest church, it has been stressed that Jesus' treatment of women was in many ways revolutionary because He rejected the prevailing prejudices against women, by treating them as human persons of equal worth to men, by respecting their intellectual and spiritual capacities, by admitting them into His fellowship and teaching them the truths of God's kingdom.

As such women played a very prominent role in the ministry of Jesus and Paul and the apostles in the early church. They ministered as deaconesses, also to their physical needs, since a group of them travelled with Him and His disciples.

However, in spite of His revolutionary treatment of women, Jesus did not choose women as apostles; neither were they not consecrated as bishops or presbyters in the early apostolic church. We therefore stressed that such an omission was not a matter of concession to the social or cultural conventions of His time, but rather of compliance with the role distinctions for men and women established at creation.

The early apostolic churches followed Jesus' pattern, including women as integral members in the life and mission of the Church. Women performed a variety of services in the church, worked as "fellow-workers" alongside numerous men in the missionary inreach and outreach; also as prophetesses and teachers.

In the modern SDA Church, it was also shown that the same ministries are performed by women. They are still commissioned to witness for Christ as well as men, and they are leading in different ministries of the DR C SDA Church and worldwide.

Nevertheless, “women’s ordination” as pastor and bishop has never been formally voted nor practiced in the modern SDA Church whether in the DRC or worldwide in spite of repeatedly frank discussions in several General Conference sessions, until it was decided to postpone the discussion sine die at Utrecht in the Netherlands in 1995. In fact, most Adventist church leaders believe Utrecht ended the discussion and formalized the policy because they thought “ordaining women would be disruptive to the World Church and should not be allowed”<sup>1000</sup> in order to preserve unity of the Church worldwide.

As such the present writer concludes that the accusation brought against the SDA Church by dissenting groups’ followers on “women’s ordination” as pastors appears to be a false problem.

Concerning liturgy and practices in the SDA Church in the DRC and worldwide, the study showed that church practices and liturgy such as Sabbath observance, Lord’s Supper, behavior, lifestyle and worship, are also still practiced in accord with the Early Apostolic church.

It was stressed that Jesus’ healing activities neither broke the Sabbath nor abolished it; rather, they terminated the burdensome regulations that had distorted the meaning of the Sabbath as God’s instrument of spiritual refreshment and delight.

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<sup>1000</sup> Hustad, 1995:12 [www.nytimes.com/.../SDA-vote-to-bar...htm/](http://www.nytimes.com/.../SDA-vote-to-bar...htm/). 12 July 1995.

The study also found that the Lord's Supper preceded by the service of foot washing is still practiced in the SDA Church in the DRC and worldwide as ordained by the Master.

Finally, it was emphasized that Christian worship expressed through prayers, praise, confession of sins and faith, reading scripture and preaching and taking a collection is still practiced in the SDA Church. True worship is expressed by knowledge of God, true faith in Him, a humble work before Him, recognition of His gracious acts and a commitment to His will.

Indeed, dissenting groups and some church members should avoid dangers of formalist worship, because the roots of true worship are not to be found in a pure externalism of worship and human celebration or emotions, but in the divine relationship with God.

## CHAPTER NINE

### THE SDA CHURCH FACING CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

#### 9.0. Introduction

This chapter takes a close look at three contemporary challenges faced by the SDA Church in the DRC which have often favored misunderstanding among believers and breakaway groups and thus demand the serious attention of the church.

If the church is viewed as a spiritual family of believers united to God and to one another by a common bond of faith, then it should be united while facing the rough contemporary culture, misunderstanding of faith and religious harassment.

The aim is to clearly describe the position and the teachings of the SDA Church, to promote unity among the spiritual family of believers while facing these challenges and avoid misinformation by discussing the light shed by Scripture and the early apostolic church.

#### 9.1. Handling Extremism And Fanaticism

Extremism implies the “carrying to extremes of something that in itself may be good, important, and exciting”.<sup>1001</sup> Thus a cause that seeks to acquaint believers with vital, unusual truths that are largely unknown or neglected offers a superb setting for the development of extremism.

Extremism and fanaticism are not uncommon in the local church today. Left untreated they can quickly spread in the body of Christ and destroy that body's

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<sup>1001</sup> Tumpkin, 2003: 19-21.

vision, mission and unity.<sup>1002</sup> This is what has happened in some churches where dissenting groups have left the church in the DRC and other countries in Africa. A threefold redemption approach has been suggested for the SDA Church to face this major challenge.

### **9.1.1. Recognize Particular Ingredients in Local Church**

Dealing with spiritual imbalance in a church congregation requires recognizing certain basic ingredients that are at the core of such inequality. These include the causes, the groups at risk, the signs, the methods, and the result of extremism.<sup>1003</sup>

**Causes:** When God used Martin Luther to spread the Protestant Reformation, the movement was hindered and harassed by extreme elements: “A few men, deeply affected by the excitement in the religious world, imagined themselves to have received special revelations from Heaven, and claimed to have been divinely commissioned to carry forward to its completion the Reformation which, they declared, had been but feebly begun by Luther. In truth, they were undoing the very work which he had accomplished.”<sup>1004</sup> Then, as in our days, some felt that the mainstream reform had not gone far enough.

When such extremism afflicts a movement, many within and without have their faith shaken. In facing this it is helpful to recognize that extremism and fanaticism do not imply that the church is corrupt. On a personal level, extremism may result from an imbalanced preoccupation with a particular aspect of Christian belief or lifestyle.

**The signs:** Moreover, careless or surface reading of spiritual writings may result in the tendency to distort texts or passages to suit a “pet” belief. Sometimes a clash with church authority and an unwillingness to persuade patiently may lead

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<sup>1002</sup> Tumphin, “Handling extremism...,” : 19

<sup>1003</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1004</sup> White, 1950:186.

to a persecution, prophet, or martyr complex and a spirit of independent assertiveness.<sup>1005</sup>

**Groups at risk:** Concerning groups at risk, some of our most dedicated and earnest members are in danger of being deluded by the counterfeit righteousness of extremism. In addition, one of the signs of extremism may well be equally fervent study of “spiritual” material. However, the extremist and fanatic revival always contains the double-edged sword of exhortation to more serious Christianity on the one hand, and negative, destructive criticism of the church on the other.<sup>1006</sup>

**Methods:** Extremists succeed in deluding people precisely because they move from the real to the surreal. They gain the confidence and allegiance of their adherents by first convincing them of their loyalty to the Christian truths we all believe in; and once this is achieved, they “intermingle their more esoteric and peculiar beliefs, in the absence of an opposing view”.<sup>1007</sup>

### 9.1.2 Perspectives Of Dissidents In Extremism

Since the SDA Church made its debut in the DRC, it has also had to deal with dissident extremist tendencies. Mainly not well educated and conservative proponents, they habitually demand reforms even in what they do not understand very well, they insist that whatever they teach is right and they are not easily persuaded.<sup>1008</sup>

Dissidents develop their own beliefs and teachings which they call “new light” which they sometimes claim to have received from God or from the writings of E

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<sup>1005</sup> Tumpkin, p. 19.

<sup>1006</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>1007</sup> Brasier-Creagh and Workman, 1982: 313.

<sup>1008</sup> For a taxonomy of dissidents, see above, pp. 234 ff.

G White or both,<sup>1009</sup> which they express with great, obsessive enthusiasm, and which contain extreme views.

By an extrapolative process from the truth already known which often is taken beyond the Biblical interpretation, they draw some church members into open criticism. Then this situation degenerates into fanaticism that engenders verbal accusations and defence; generally culminating in dissatisfaction with the church leadership, rejection of ecclesiastical authority, misappropriation of church funds, purported discovery of new light, disregard for church structures, misinterpretation of Spirit of prophecy, rebellion, then finally breaking away from the church.<sup>1010</sup>

As such, the perspective of dissident groups leads to an incorrect relationship between the SDA Church and them.

### **9.1.3 How to Rectify the Problem**

A problem recognized is a problem on the way to being solved. Again, *extremism* implies taking a good cause to excess, whereas *fanaticism* usually merely implies “violent, unreasoning enthusiasm”.<sup>1011</sup> While extremism includes fanaticism, it is the more pervasive and basic of two problems. Extremism unchecked breeds fanaticism.<sup>1012</sup> Here are some ways we can deal with extremism.

1. When the Scripture or writings of Ellen G White are, for instance, used without properly considering the context, the best remedy is simply to put them back into their proper context. Nothing will so clearly rebut the abusers of

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<sup>1009</sup> Declaration uttered by a dissident leader preaching at Mupo dissident meeting, June 2005.

<sup>1010</sup> See above, Chap. VA.

<sup>1011</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1012</sup> Tumpkin, p. 20.



Scripture or Mrs White's writings as a wholesome study of one or more of her works as a whole.<sup>1013</sup>

2. Abuse of Scripture or the Spirit of Prophecy often arises from unclear views of inspiration and canon. Recognizing that the Bible is the *only* rule of faith does not diminish the authority of Mrs. White's writings, but enhances it by focusing on the "great light" to which she pointed. What it does mean is that the works of E G White are to be tested by the Bible. It is very important for a minister to understand and teach a sound doctrine of inspiration and the biblical canon so as to minimize the abuse of the Spirit of Prophecy. Extremists will not welcome this approach because it defeats them most effectively.<sup>1014</sup>

#### **9.1.4. Reclaiming Extremists**

The best, and indeed the underlying, reason for rectifying extremism is to reclaim, or to attempt to reclaim, those who have been deluded by it. Paul and Simon the Zealot were once extremists, yet the Holy Spirit reclaimed and transformed them to do a magnificent work for Christ (Act 9: 3-22).

Sometimes one seems to be strong on rectifying, but weak on reclaiming. Without reclaiming, "our effort to rectify may indeed turn to be a means of wreck-tifying".<sup>1015</sup> To reclaim requires a positive approach. One should: extend the hand of love to those caught in the trap of extremism; assure them of God's love and intense care for them; appeal to them to look at the issues with an open mind, letting the Holy Spirit provide the needed illumination. "When people sense our genuine interest in them and our sincere Christian love for them, reclaiming them for Christ becomes altogether possible",<sup>1016</sup> This has been the means used by the SDA Church in the DRC in order to welcome back the dissenting groups' followers.

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<sup>1013</sup> See Tumpkin, : 20,21.

<sup>1014</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1015</sup> Ibid.:21.

<sup>1016</sup> Ibid.

## 9.2. SDA Church And Cultural Misunderstanding

If one thinks that culture can be rejected, he or she is mistaken. Those who reject the culture in which they live, in reality adopt something else which is itself culture. How then should Christians relate to the culture in which they find themselves, without infringing God's principles in His Word or isolating themselves from fellowmen/women?<sup>1017</sup> I shall consider how they should deal with the cultural challenge encountered within the Church.

### 9.2.1. What Is Culture?

The field of anthropology defines culture as “the sum total of the attainments and learned behavior patterns of any specific period, race or people, regarded as expressing a traditional way of life subject to gradual but continuous modifications by succeeding generations”.<sup>1018</sup>

Culture indicates what people have done with the resources that came from the hand of the creator, or as Niebuhr puts it: “Culture is the artificial, secondary environment which man superimposes on the natural”.<sup>1019</sup>

Culture, therefore, includes the whole range of human endeavor, such as art, music, literature, aesthetic, philosophy, sciences, customs, fashions and vocations; it takes in all the structures of social order: government, education, politics, law, marriage, family, and the economic system.<sup>1020</sup> Since culture includes all social arrangements, it must also include religion.

### 9.2.2 Faith and Culture

In Hebrews 11:1 one reads, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”. The English translation of faith in Greek is *pistis*,

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<sup>1017</sup> Dudley, 1986: 78 (Epilogue).

<sup>1018</sup> Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* 1951:32; quoted by Dudley, 1986: 15.

<sup>1019</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1020</sup> Dudley, 1986:15.

which means “a firm persuasion, a conviction based on hearing”.<sup>1021</sup> Rasi describes faith as follows: “Faith is an act of the will that chooses to place its trust in God in response to His self-disclosure and the prompting of the Holy Spirit in our conscience”.<sup>1022</sup>

Faith is also dynamic and either diminishes or increases. David’s faith grew from killing a bear and a lion on the fields to killing Goliath, the dreaded Philistine giant (1Sam 17:35-37). As such, faith or positive thinking has and continues to make a difference in people’s lives.

The challenge faced with respect to the connection between faith and culture made by dissidents and some believers by SDA Churches in the DRC is the failure to reconcile these aspects in the religious life of believers. Some will think, and teach, that rejecting culture helps to improve faith, while others confuse culture with faith principles to the extent of insisting that popular cultural acts be taught or preached as biblical principles.

Understanding contemporary popular culture is a need for every believer. The culture of the “contemporary” era has at least two characteristics. Its foremost characteristic is that all the aspects of life have changed from God-centred to man-centred. This process is called secularization.<sup>1023</sup>

Secularization is a universal phenomenon. Traditional values are criticized and classical authorities are challenged. It is clear that the culture of materialism and human-centred secularization is indeed an obstacle to acceptance and dissemination of the faith.<sup>1024</sup>

The second characteristic is individualism. “Nobody has a right to invade one’s privacy”. This is the core of modern libertinism. Everyone has a right to decide for

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<sup>1021</sup> H.M. Rasi, “Unpublished lecture notes on Faith, Reason and Choice: loving God with all our mind,” (2001), p. 2; quoted by Bempong, :2001:82- 89.

<sup>1022</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1023</sup> Un Bac Kim 2001: 178.

<sup>1024</sup> Ibid.

him or herself. Modern people are comfortable with many options and alternatives as choices; the impact of individualism on religion is that “I will choose whatever religious I want to” or “Nobody can tell me what religion I should choose”.<sup>1025</sup> As a result, the impact of the church as a community has been weakened.

One should ask, “how much do cultures affect faith? Are popular cultures always negative?”. It is the fact that “whenever God reveals Himself He does so in the cultural dress of the people who are the recipients of this message”.<sup>1026</sup> That was true in the Old Testament times. It was also true in the New. God uses the language of the people, employing their modes of thought and metaphors. He speaks through their natural environment – mountains, sheep, water – and makes use of their social institutions. All of scripture bears evidence to the fact that “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14 RSV).

This does not mean, of course, that God is limited to the existing forms of culture. Revelation has often brought about change – even radical change – and sometimes introduced new elements of culture. Though it takes on the diverse forms of human culture, God’s truth itself comes from outside that culture. It sometimes stands above it, sometimes over against it. But whether in or above or over against culture, it always transcends it, as Gottfried points out,

Not only does God reveal Himself in the cultural dress of the people to whom He is reaching out with His message, He also urges people to respond to His message in their own cultural ways.<sup>1027</sup>

In Old Testament times for instance, people praised God with “Joyful noise”, “with timbrel and dance” and “with loud clashing cymbals” (Ps 98;150, RSV). New Testament Christians of Hellenic culture expressed their praise in much more sober forms. Similar differences are characteristic of Adventist worship today. Some of us make a “joyful noise” in loud and rhythmic singing, the

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<sup>1025</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1026</sup> Oosterwal, 1989: 22- 25.

<sup>1027</sup> Gottfried, 1989: 22.

clapping of hands, the playing of the organ, drums, saxophones, and guitars, while others prefer worship more characterized by “silence before the Lord”.<sup>1028</sup>

Although obviously it is not true that anything goes, none of these forms of worship can, in themselves, be considered more devotional, more worshipful, than any other. They are all biblical, and in any case, they may show that “God expects people to express their faith, awe and praises in forms that fit their own culture”.<sup>1029</sup>

In fact, the “applications of the same Biblical principles vary in differing cultures, and these differences, which Scripture warrants, comprise part of the fertilizer that stimulates church growth”.<sup>1030</sup> God wants the church to be a place where people feel at home. No one church, therefore, has the right to superimpose its own particular cultural forms upon sister churches in other cultures. The SDA Church has a common order as well as unity of faith. It must practice and celebrate that unity of faith through a oneness in Spirit expressed in our own cultural ways rather than through maintaining some kind of cultural uniformity.<sup>1031</sup>

In short, Christians should be more prepared to encounter the twenty-first century as the impact of popular culture on this society increases. The first challenge is to create a culture where faith values and deeds are consistent, transparent, and avoid secularization. The second concern is that one not allows cultural differences and biases to divert him/her from the eternal truths (Faith) that God is trying to communicate to him or her. Finally, faith and culture should not be mixed up or confused. The power of God’s word (which nurtures faith) transcends societal values, conventional wisdom and all cultures.

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<sup>1028</sup> See also Ellen G. White, *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of Seventh-day Adventists* (Basle: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), pp. 10- 26.

<sup>1029</sup> Gottfried, 1989:: 22.

<sup>1030</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1031</sup> Ibid.

### 9.2.2. Cultural Misunderstanding In The SDA Church

Addressing the unity of the Church, Folkenberg stresses: “I think every Seventh-day Adventist must ask: Can we be faithful to our Lord and indiscriminately allow culture to continue making negative inroads into the Church...? Can we allow the drift to continue? The answer is simple: No”.<sup>1032</sup>

Since culture is bound up with nearly all aspects of life, attempts by Christians to relate to it in ways appropriate to the meaning of their religion are many and varied. And so debate frequently ensues regarding how a Christian should relate to the customs of contemporary society? Sincere believers have taken different positions. Some may be caricatured by Simon Stylities, a “pillar saint”, who spent his years perched on a small platform high above the evil world. They believe that the followers of Jesus should stay as far away from this world as they possibly can.<sup>1033</sup>

At the opposite end of the spectrum are those modern teachers who claim that Christians should be completely open to the world and should involve themselves in its activities.

“Surprisingly”, writes Costerwal, “both attitudes reflect genuine Biblical thoughts. Both emphasize important eternal truths and offer guidelines for real Christian living”.<sup>1034</sup> But if so, how can these opposites be reconciled? Should Christians withdraw from the world or seek to permeate it? Must they deliberately seek to be different or adapt as far as possible? Ought they to wage war or to seek peace?

More frequently, when the debate about Christ and culture is carried out among Christians; it is not an accommodation of “belief with unbelief but as wrestling and the reconciliation of faith with faith”.<sup>1035</sup> Niebuhr placed this wrestling in several classes: this study will discuss three of them.

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<sup>1032</sup> Folkenberg, 1995: 6-8.

<sup>1033</sup> Dudley, 1986: 15.

<sup>1034</sup> Oosterwal, 1972: 94.

<sup>1035</sup> Niebuhr, p10, quoted by Dudley, 1986: 14.

### **9.2.2.1. Some typical classes**

1. The “**culture-rejecting**” Christians emphasize the opposition between Christ and culture. These Christians regard the human world as fundamentally evil and are convinced that they must withdraw from and avoid it as much as possible. The Christian life can be best summed up warfare against evil, and no compromise with the enemy can be allowed,<sup>1036</sup> often with their own legalistic force. Niebuhr calls this type “Christ against culture”. It is the “culture-rejecting” approach.<sup>1037</sup>

Let us consider how today’s culture-rejecting Christian – specifically a Seventh-day Adventist – lives out this approach in the basic facts of everyday affairs. Some extreme pictures may be drawn:

It is to be understood that no one completely rejects the contemporary culture, that rejection may be manifested in certain areas and not others, and that rejection even within a given area need not be complete but take varying degrees.<sup>1038</sup>

These Christians are very suspicious of government and especially politics as the very epitome of culture. They do not care enough about temporal existence to engage in a struggle to destroy the order and build a new one. Such Christians are likely to be a conservative element that, by not working for social change, operates to preserve the status quo. Faith is expressed as, “leave it up to God. He will eventually right all wrongs”.<sup>1039</sup>

These Christians will not attend drama, opera, or the movie theatre. Nor would they bring these entertainments into the home via the medium of television. In fact, they would not possess television sets. One teacher of this frame of mind

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<sup>1036</sup> Dudley, 1986: 22.

<sup>1037</sup> Ibid. p14

<sup>1038</sup> Ibid. p 22

<sup>1039</sup> Dudley, 1986: 29.

declared that he did not believe it right for Adventists to watch even their own programmes such as “Faith For Today” or “It is Written”. In his view these programmes served a useful purpose in attracting the attention and interest of potential converts, but once people have been baptized into church membership, such productions should be excluded from Adventist practice.<sup>1040</sup>

a. *Strengths of the position.* A brief evaluation shows that, first of all, this position has some definite strong points to recommend it. It is true that the Bible does warn of the dangers of this present evil world and does urge believers to remain clear of its cares and entanglements. Every true follower of Christ must come to terms with the messages of James, and Paul against a hostile, pagan culture.<sup>1041</sup>

Next, this solution reveals a seriousness about religion. It demonstrates that Adventists place a high priority on the values of the Spirit. We do not take Christianity or Seventh-day Adventism lightly if we are willing to renounce all else for it. Moreover, these Christians are willing to express in actions what has been said in words. They are not content merely to preach the Christian life; they insist on doing something about it. They “put their money where their mouth is”.<sup>1042</sup>

b. *Weaknesses of the position.* Nevertheless, this stance still has its weaknesses and dangers. The first of these is the danger of simply substituting some past culture for the present one. Thus, some reject the styles of the twentieth century but embrace those of the eighteenth.<sup>1043</sup>

Moreover, it seems impossible to depend solely on Jesus Christ to the exclusion of all culture. Radical Christians are always making use of the culture or parts of the culture which they ostensibly reject. “The beards of one culture are the

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<sup>1040</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1041</sup> Kelley, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1977:37. Dudley, 1986: 29

<sup>1042</sup> Niebuhr, p. 66.

<sup>1043</sup> Dudley, 1989 38.



smooth faces of another”.<sup>1044</sup> As such, to live aculturally is to live suspended in time and space. Jesus Christ encounters people not separated from their culture but as part of it. The principles of the Gospel must always be applied in the local environment.<sup>1045</sup>

Consequently, even though the present writer has evaluated the modern SDA Church in terms of the early apostolic church, the followers of radical groups should not delude themselves into always thinking that the world of the first (or some other past) century had been always more Christian than that of the contemporary one.

Another danger is that radical Christians may be tempted to make some external factor the whole business of religion. It is possible to consume all of our energies in resisting the world or some part of it to the extent that nothing is left to give a positive portrayal of the Character of God.<sup>1046</sup>

Thus the radical groups' followers must pray to be delivered from the temptation to become unbalanced – to fall into the ditch of fanaticism while avoiding the precipice of worldliness. In their withdrawal from the world in order to escape contamination, these believers may come to think of sin as something external to themselves. These Christians however, underestimate the power of sin and fail to realize that sin is internal. It can manifest itself in a perfect environment as it did with Lucifer in heaven and Adam and Eve in Eden.<sup>1047</sup> We cannot conquer sin because it is within us. Temptation to sin arises not merely from the culture but also from our natures, as James writes: “Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed”.<sup>1048</sup>

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<sup>1044</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1045</sup> Ibid., pp. 38, 39.

<sup>1046</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1047</sup> See Ezekiel 28: 13-16. Dudley: 1986: 38

<sup>1048</sup> James 1:14.

**2. The “culture-affirming” Christians** find many aspects of their culture to be positive in regard to their religious experience and in harmony with their Christian walk. Not that they are pagans or apostates: they would not accept everything in contemporary society as compatible with the Gospel. They would most certainly reject those elements which promote atheism, unchastely, cruelty, oppression, and selfishness.<sup>1049</sup>

These men and women are Christians not only in the sense that they count themselves believers in the Lord, but also in the sense that they seek to maintain community with all other believers. Yet they seem equally at home in the community of culture.<sup>1050</sup> On the one hand they interpret culture through Christ, regarding those elements in it as most important which are most accordant with His work and person; on the other hand they understand Christ through culture, selecting from His teaching and action as well as from the Christian Doctrine about Him such points as seem to agree with what is best in civilization.<sup>1051</sup>

To this view E G White seems to bear witness when she writes:

As the moon and the stars [planets] of our solar system shine by the reflected light of the sun so, as far as their teaching is true, do the world’s great thinkers reflect the rays of the sun of righteousness? Every gleam of thought, every flash of the intellect, is from the Light of the world.<sup>1052</sup>

These believers take what may be called an “incarnational” view of religion: to be a Christian one must become truly human. Christianity is only theory until it is lived out in the world<sup>1053</sup> (Matt 5:13,14).

a. *Scriptural basis for the position.* The scriptural support for the culture-affirming solution, perhaps its charter, is best spelled out in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, 11-13. “There is a time for everything..., a time to be born and a time to die ”.

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<sup>1049</sup> Dudley: 1986: 44.

<sup>1050</sup> Niebuhr, 1951: 83.

<sup>1051</sup> Dudley: 1986: 44

<sup>1052</sup> White, 1952: 14. Niebuhr, 1951: 83

<sup>1053</sup> Dudley, 196: 45.

This sparkling affirmation of the relevance of every area of life fits well into the cultural Christian schema.<sup>1054</sup>

Furthermore, in the Old Testament some of the great people are men and women who stand out in terms of their cultures. Abraham and Sara with their vast holdings and retinue are treated by surrounding tribes almost as a nation. Joseph administers the affairs of the leading monarchy of his age (Gen 41:37-44). Solomon becomes renowned for the wisdom of his songs and proverbs, and a ruler travels from afar to marvel at his wealth and cultural achievements (1Kings 10:1-13).

In the New Testament Jesus explains that the field where the good seed of the Kingdom is sown represents the world (Matt 13:38), and the fourth Gospel contains a number of positive statements concerning this same world: “God so loved the world that He gave his one and only son” (John 3:16 NIV) for it. Jesus is the bread of God who “comes down from heaven and gives life to the world” (John 3: 33, NIV). Further, “while I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (John 9: 5, NIV). And in the eve of the crucifixion He described His disciples as still in the world” (John 17:11, NIV).

Paul also affirms the legitimacy of interaction with society when he commands his readers to obey governing authorities, pay taxes, and honour dignitaries as Christian duties (Rom 13:1-7).<sup>1055</sup>

b. *The position in practice.* Being essentially radicals and culture-rejecting Christians, members of dissenting groups criticise some modern SDA Church members for having chosen to be involved in politics and government, to vote and to be voted for.<sup>1056</sup>

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<sup>1054</sup> Ibid., p.47.

<sup>1055</sup> Dudley, 1986: 45.

<sup>1056</sup> Statements made by some dissenting groups ‘followers at Mupo and Nguva, June, 2005.

It is important to remind the reader here that pronounced and extreme characteristics cannot resolve the cultural and religious practices in a community. Most of us are not entirely one type of Christian and vary between several answers, depending on the area involved, circumstances, and the stage of our development.<sup>1057</sup>

In the area of government and politics, cultural Christians are likely to be involved. God has ordained earthly governments and delegated them their powers, within limitations. They are a means for bringing about peace, justice, order, and a better life for their citizens. Good government depends on good officials. Who could make a fairer, more honest, more compassionate official than a Christian?<sup>1058</sup>

Christians in high places are God's agents for the advancement of society. So Christians have the responsibility to vote and, if qualified, to run for and serve in elective positions. Rather than condemn the corruptness of politics, one can bring religious values to bear: "it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness".<sup>1059</sup>

Such culture-affirming Christians are also likely to be found promoting the cause of world peace. Rather than giving up on the world and awaiting its destruction as culture-rejecters are prone to do, they believe that the world is worth saving and that the Christian should be foremost in promoting peace among nations and seeking stability and tranquility in the world.<sup>1060</sup>

Those who rejoice in various cultural expressions of the human body are also more likely to be comfortable with their human sexuality than are culture-rejecting Christians. While they turn from modern media portrayals that degrade the pure marriage relationships, they find in marital intimacy a joyous symbol of the

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<sup>1057</sup> Dudley, 1986: 48.

<sup>1058</sup> *Adventist Review*, June 13, 1985, pp. 20, 21.

<sup>1059</sup> Dudley, 1986: 48.

<sup>1060</sup> *Ibid.*

oneness of Christ and His Church (Eph5:25-33). Sex is not simply for purposes of reproduction but stands on its own merits as the epitome of holy pleasure, a deeply spiritual experience that lies at the very heart of marriage.<sup>1061</sup>

While culture-rejecting Christians are prone to shun the cities for the less evil countryside, “culture-affirming Christians are more likely to be attracted to the metropolitan areas. Ah, the city! With this concert halls, libraries, arenas, art, galleries, museums, restaurants, and stores, it contains the finest flowering of human culture”.<sup>1062</sup> And besides, here are the multitudes of people to whom we have been commissioned to witness and whom are to win for Jesus Christ.

Beyond this, they place more emphasis on the ethical aspect of Christianity rather than on the purely theological ones. They are especially fond of the Gospels and the teachings of Jesus. “They tend to be advocates of a social Gospel”;<sup>1063</sup> thus they may emphasize the horizontal dimension of religion more than the vertical one. In Christ, “culture and ethics surrender their independence, and are found to be, not unrelated, but complementary to each other. He shows the inner bond between what is right and what is proper, between good morals and good taste”.<sup>1064</sup>

### *c. Strengths of the approach*

First, this position recognizes that the “world” with which the Christian must deal is the “here and now” in time and space. It does not idealize some other place or period such as the customs of the first, the seventeenth, or the nineteenth centuries.<sup>1065</sup>

Second, this solution forms a bridge over which the Gospel may be carried to the secular world by enabling people to hear the message of Christ in their own language and to comprehend His character and ethics in the light of their own

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<sup>1061</sup> Dudley, 1986:54.

<sup>1062</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1063</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1064</sup> Taylor, 1975: 42, 43.

<sup>1065</sup> Dudley, 1986: 55.

highest ideals, thus avoiding the “danger of letting it be buried in the dead language of an alien society”.<sup>1066</sup>

Third, the culture-affirming Christians enjoy a better opportunity of appealing to the leading groups in society – the cultured, the educated, the thinkers, the shapers and movers. They are able to reach, the middle class and even the aristocracy<sup>1067</sup>

A fourth factor in favour of the Christ-and-culture question is that such Christians give a universal meaning to the Gospel. Jesus is proclaimed as Saviour not merely of a selected little band of saints but of the world. “It sets forth a bigger God – a God not under siege by hostile elements, but a God in control. While they prepare for heaven, they also wish to make his temporal world a better place”.<sup>1068</sup>

d. *Weaknesses of the position.* Although commended for several positive points, it likewise is afflicted by some real weaknesses and faces some perils.

The first and chief among these is the temptation to compromise the Gospel and dilute its unique call to a holy life. Cultural Christians attempt to select the best from their age, but it can be difficult to tell when the “best” ends and the “less-than-the best” begins. It can be easy to begin with the finest and noblest products of culture and gradually find oneself patronizing that which erodes the lordship of Jesus in the life and mute the witness to Him.<sup>1069</sup>

A second danger is that it is usually a mistake to think that the Gospel can be made acceptable to the world by relating it to the latter’s own finest culture. While culture may reflect the divine mind, in some sense every new convert must

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<sup>1066</sup> Niebuhr, 1951: 104.

<sup>1067</sup> Dudley, 1986: 56.

<sup>1068</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1069</sup> Dudley, 1986: 56. See Matthew 16 : 24 “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” and “I did not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matt 10: 34).

repudiate the world. Some pain, some self-sacrifice – indeed, a cross – is involved in following Christ.<sup>1070</sup>

Finally, culture-affirming Christians are prone to incline to the side of law in the creative tension between law and grace. In this situation, they share a danger with culture-rejecting Christians but for a different reason. The former [culture-rejecting] are “likely to fall into legalism by their rejection of the sinful and their obedience to the first table of the Decalogue, they may come to trust in their own righteousness”.<sup>1071</sup> The latter [culture-affirming] may drift into humanism. They live a good life, help the unfortunate, and strive to make the world better. Thus this approach can be both defended and criticized.<sup>1072</sup>

Let us consider how the SDA Church in the DRC and worldwide faces the contemporary cultural misunderstanding challenges. In other words, let us seek to understand the rationale for the “culture-transforming” approach.

**3. The “culture-transforming” approach.** In addition to the two approaches that Christians have taken to contemporary culture discussed above, Niebuhr postulates another solution. He calls it “Christ the Transformer of Culture”.<sup>1073</sup> He names those Christians who advocate it “conversionists”. These Christians cannot reject and retreat from all culture, but neither can they embrace culture in its present form. So they attempt to find a means of dealing with it that is in harmony with the Gospel.<sup>1074</sup> One should investigate how to translate this into a practical Adventist example.

a. *The “conversionist” position in practice.* Like culture-rejecting Christians, conversionists understand that “all cultural work in which men promote their own glory... lies under the judgment of God... yet they believe also

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<sup>1070</sup> Dudley, 1986: 57.

<sup>1071</sup> Niebuhr, 1951: 115.

<sup>1072</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1073</sup> Ibid. p.191.

<sup>1074</sup> Niebuhr, 1951: 191.

that such culture is under God's sovereign rule, and that the Christian must carry on cultural work in obedience to the Lord".<sup>1075</sup>

SDA Christians make a sharp distinction between creation and the fall. All things were created good but have been corrupted. The world of nature and culture is not bad ipso facto but has been warped, twisted, and misdirected. It consists not of evil but of perverted good. "The problem of culture is therefore the problem of its conversion, not of its replacement by a new creation; though the conversion is so radical that it amounts to a kind of rebirth".<sup>1076</sup> They believe in the Divine possibility of a present renewal. Human life and culture may be transformed to the glory of God.

In the arena of government and politics, these believers understand it to be their duty to inculcate Christian principles into the governing process. The Church exists not merely to win converts and prepare them for heaven: it has a message for the larger society. The "World would be an unbearable place to live if it were not for the moderating influence of Gospel ethics".<sup>1077</sup> Followers of Christ should encourage all efforts in the direction of world peace, social justice, humanitarian treatment for all, and the elimination of that which would denigrate personal worth and dignity.

Thus for instance in 1985, Seventh-day Adventists acted in this fashion. General Conference president, Neal C Wilson, sent an open letter to United States President Ronald Reagan, and Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev asking them to end the international arms race during their Geneva summit meeting and pledging the cooperation of Adventists in helping make 1986 the international year of peace.<sup>1078</sup> This action is a far cry from those of culture-rejecting Christians such as members of dissenting groups in the DRC.

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<sup>1075</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1076</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>1077</sup> Dudley, 1986: 64

<sup>1078</sup> *Adventist Review*, (November 21, 1985), p.31.



Moreover, among many other official denominational organizations which played leadership roles regarding civil rights in the 1960s, Adventists have been willing to organize voting campaigns for what they consider appropriate moral issues – the banning of alcohol sales, for example.<sup>1079</sup> Seventh-day Adventists maintain their own congressional lobbyist on Capitol Hill to provide input into bills that concern religious liberty. A few Adventists have even run for congress or other political office where, presumably, their Christian principles would influence legislative, executive or judicial activities.<sup>1080</sup>

Films and television have not been abandoned to a pagan society either. Christian film makers such as Ken Anderson have mastered the arts of drama, plot, setting special effects, and other cinematic techniques to produce spell minding motion pictures with a Gospel message.<sup>1081</sup>

I am not familiar with any Adventist churches that have used dance as a worship aid, but some other Christian denominations have done so. This may jar our conservative sensibilities a bit, but these Christians could make a biblical case for the practice.

The visual arts have a long history of serving as medium for the Christian message. Indeed, religion has been a favorite theme of artists, sculptors, and architects down through the ages, to present the Bible stories to the illiterate masses.<sup>1082</sup>

b. *Scriptural support for the position.* The culture-transforming motif may be inferred from a number of New Testament passages. Chief among them are those figures of speech in the parables of Jesus that depict the Gospel infiltrating, pervading and changing the world. Metaphors such as salt (Matthew 5:13) and light (Matthew 5: 14-16) and similes such as the mustard seed

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<sup>1079</sup> Dudley, 1986: 64, 65.

<sup>1080</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1081</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>1082</sup> Dudley, *The World...*, 1986: p.66.

(Matthew 13:31, 32) and yeast (Matthew 13:33) all convey the thought that Christianity is powerful, gradually transforming all that it touches and inexorably expanding.<sup>1083</sup> This theme of light is picked up by Paul, who wrote that believers are to “shine like stars in the universe” (Philippians 2: 15).

In the business world culture-transforming Christians seize the opportunity to engage in “secular” vocations for the glory of God: “whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men” (Col 3: 23). Adventist conversionists find support for this approach to the vocational world from Ellen G White:

Jesus is our example... His work began in consecrating the lowly trade of the craftsmen who toil for their daily bread. He was doing God’s service just as much when laboring at the carpenter’s bench as when working miracles for the multitude.<sup>1084</sup>

c. *Strengths of the approach.* When one evaluates the culture-transforming approach, one finds that because of its centrist position, it avoids both some of the major dangers of the other two approaches and partakes of the strengths of both.

Perhaps the chief strength of this solution to the problem of Christ and culture is that “it asserts a triumphant religion. The church is not a beleaguered, besieged fortress bravely but futilely fighting off the onslaughts of a hostile society. Christianity does not fear erosion by the world. Possessing the power of the king of kings, it is far mightier than the world and therefore will overcome”.<sup>1085</sup> While the crowd pulled back in horror from the infectious leper, Christ could reach out and touch him without fear of contamination. Power and influence followed out from Him to transform His environment, not vice versa. So it is to be with His followers.<sup>1086</sup>

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<sup>1083</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>1084</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 74.

<sup>1085</sup> Dudley, 1986: 68.

<sup>1086</sup> Ibid.

A second strength of this approach is that it rejects negative action against sin in favor of positive, God-oriented practice. It does not engage in defensive warfare; it carries its transforming message to the front lines. Then in the ever-present tension between law and grace, it tends, unlike the two other solutions,<sup>1087</sup> to emphasize grace. Finally, conversionists change society for the better.<sup>1088</sup> One may ask how the DRC SDA Church should live with the dissenting groups' followers facing contemporary cultural misunderstandings.

d. *Christian tolerance for ambiguity.* I am well aware that some of my readers will not find this to be a very satisfying conclusion. The human mind has a natural desire for closure. We like to tie things up in neat little bundles. We prefer clear-cut lists of what is right and what is wrong rather than general principles that force us into making personal decisions.<sup>1089</sup>

The nature of the SDA Church in the DRC and worldwide mostly seems to be culture-transforming, although it does welcome the strengths of each of the two other cultural approaches discussed in this chapter.

All of this calls for tolerance for a certain amount of ambiguity. We must resist the temptation to "settle this once and for all";<sup>1090</sup> we should face each decision on a case by-case basis and work out a personal answer that harmonizes with our relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

This means also that we are called to regard with tolerance the fellow believers whose present experience – and therefore decisions – may not be the same as ours.<sup>1091</sup> The Christian who answers the question in a particular instance differently from the way I do is not necessarily a dangerous heretic threatening to

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<sup>1087</sup> [The culture-rejecting and culture-confirming approaches].

<sup>1088</sup> Dudley, 1986: 68.

<sup>1089</sup> *Ibid.*, 71, 72.

<sup>1090</sup> Dudley, 1986: 72.

<sup>1091</sup> *Ibid.*.

undermine the foundations of the church. This complex search in which we are all engaged must be seasoned with Christian charity.<sup>1092</sup>

e. *The search for a timeless principle.* Let us consider how to reconcile the early apostolic church's cultural practices and the present twenty first-century guidelines for SDAs in the DRC and worldwide. Is it still a must for the contemporary SDA Church members to conform with the cultural practices of the early church as is mainly claimed by the dissenting groups in the DRC? In other words, do the cultural practices for believers in a first-century empire apply in the same manner to those living in a twenty-first century democracy?

It is obvious that we cannot seek to be totally culture-free. We may choose to reject portions of the culture as inimical to the Christian way of life, but we will still have to live in and deal with a contemporary world. To some extent Dudley is correct that "we should not make the mistake of accepting some earlier 'world' culture as the ideal and therefore the standard for relating to the present one."<sup>1093</sup>

For example, the New Testament contains many specific and detailed instructions for believers. They cover relationships between husbands and wives, masters and slaves, and Christians and secular organizations. They offer prescriptions for eating, dressing, fund-raising, missionary work, and so on; however, I do not have to assume culturally that these guidelines exactly represent the way in which present-day SDAs in the DRC or in the United States implement them.

The Bible writers conveyed the will of God to their readers within the cultural context in which those readers lived. Had Peter, Paul, and John written to African believers in the twenty first century, their instructions would have been tailored to our cultural context. Indeed, "the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be attractively

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<sup>1092</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1093</sup> Dudley, 1986: 73.

presented into the context of any given group of people”.<sup>1094</sup> A basic principle was to start where the person was in his/her own orientation to life. The woman at the well was witnessed to in a very different manner from Nicodemus.<sup>1095</sup>

Truth is timeless, but the vessels in which truth is transmitted vary according to the needs of each society. It is the duty of the church as a whole and of individual Christians to study the sacred passages and extract the *timeless principles* from them.<sup>1096</sup> Then these principles must be applied to current situations so that we may find guidance for Christian living. Thus the “Bible always remains relevant to the Christian walk in any age or society and never becomes anachronistic to the real world in which we operate”.<sup>1097</sup>

When Paul writes that women should remain silent in the church and not be allowed to speak (1Cor 14:34), does that mean that Adventist women today are not to preach? discussion? To give a testimony? To serve as a Sabbath School superintendent or church ministries leader? What is the principle Paul was applying in first-century Corinth? How would it be applied today?

When Peter counsels women that their “beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes but should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit” (1Peter 3:3,4),<sup>1098</sup> what application should we make today? Must women let their hair grow straight? Is it permissible to wave it if you do not braid it? Is all jewellery wrong? Would silver jewellery be permissible? Should a Christian woman wear poor quality clothing? Could it be that Peter is not even discussing the dress question?

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<sup>1094</sup> Phil Parshall, 1980: 31.

<sup>1095</sup> Ibid. See also Taber, ‘Contextualization: Indigenization and / or Transformation,’ in *The gospel and Islam: A 1978 Compendium*, ed. M. Mecurry (1979), p. 146, Quoted by Parshall, 1980: 32.

<sup>1096</sup> Parshall, 1980: 32, 33.

<sup>1097</sup> Dudley, 1986: 74.

<sup>1098</sup> Ibid.

Take a passage like Romans 13: 1, “Everyone must submit to the governing authorities...” Does this instruction apply to believers in a twenty-first-century democracy?<sup>1099</sup> Is it wrong to vote to put the current administration out of office? May Christians speak out against an unjust law? May they join in an organized protest? May they campaign for the opposition? Should they campaign for the incumbent?

The above represent just three sets of questions that serve as examples of many that could be posed. One could also ask whether the Scriptural injunctions relate to the decisions we face in our culture and whether we have no guidance in areas like radio/television, popular music, a worldwide church with large institutions and a paid clergy, and a host of other situations unknown in early Bible times.

In short, the present writer realizes that in the contemporary cultural challenges the Christian and the Church cannot simply revert to the apostolic world – or any other. We must determine the will of God [timeless principles] and then relate our cultural context to it.<sup>1100</sup> As such I believe, with Niebuhr, that while I cannot escape the responsibility for personal wrestling with the decisions made necessary by my encounter with the contemporary culture, yet I have a solemn obligation to let those personal decisions be informed by the truth as spoken by Scripture and the church.<sup>1101</sup>

The church however, should not attempt to prescribe in detail the path to be followed by the individual Christian. It should not draw up long lists of specific rules and regulations for in so doing it encourages legalism rather than principled behavior.<sup>1102</sup> Moreover, the church should identify the *timeless principles* involved in messages originally presented in another social context.<sup>1103</sup> And it

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<sup>1099</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>1100</sup> Niebuhr, 1951: 238.

<sup>1101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1102</sup> Dudley, 1986: 76.

<sup>1103</sup> Such as the first century social and cultural context. Niebuhr, 1951: 238

should give guidance in how to apply these principles to contemporary culture, perhaps by formulating relevant examples.<sup>1104</sup>

Such guidance is important because the church action is more stable than individual action, thus providing a continuity of faith. Also, it would seem that both the individual soul-searching and the seasoned wisdom of the corporate church are necessary components of a responsible solution to the ever-occurring problem of Christ and culture.<sup>1105</sup> As Niebuhr put it again:

The Christ who speaks to me without authorities and witnesses is not an actual Christ; he is no Jesus Christ of history. He may be nothing more than the projection of my wish or my compulsion; as on the other hand, the Christ about whom I hear only through witnesses and never meet in my personal history is never Christ for me.<sup>1106</sup>

Therefore, in terms of one final guideline it is necessary to sound a clear, positive note on behalf of all my readers, the DRC SDA Church believers and the dissident groups' followers. Any adjustment in the Christ – culture equation must be in harmony with the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ in the life of the individual Christian and in the larger community of the Church. Faced with a particular choice, arising out of the situation of being a Christian in a worldly society, I may, after prayer and study of the Scriptures and the counsel of the church, decide to take one of several possible alternatives. And as we have put it above,<sup>1107</sup> I may reject, affirm, or attempt to transform the culture in any given instance.

However, whichever I choose, I must be transparently honest with myself. I must be sure that I am operating under the Lordship of Christ and that my action is within His will. I must know that my motives are pure, and as Dudley puts it, “that I am not seeking to justify my human propensity to sin but that I would truly bring glory to Him and promote the advancement of His kingdom.”<sup>1108</sup> Thus safe in His

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<sup>1104</sup> Dudley, 1986: 76.

<sup>1105</sup> Niebuhr, 1951: 245.

<sup>1106</sup> Ibid., 245, 246.

<sup>1107</sup> Dudley, 1986: 76

<sup>1108</sup> Ibid., 77.

keeping and power, I can advance with confidence to meet the contemporary challenges of society.

### **9.3. SDA Church Conduct With Respect To Harassment**

Among other questions to which the SDA Church has turned its attention is the contemporary challenge of harassment. The verb “harasses” means “to trouble and annoy somebody continually”.<sup>1109</sup> As such, someone who looks harassed is tired and irritated by constant worry. The word may mean also to “make repeated attacks on somebody”.<sup>1110</sup>

Harassment may be social or sexual in nature. In the church today, harassment is often promoted by legalism, fanaticism, extremism, and formalism. Extremist believers have often displayed such actions and attitudes as regards women’s hair, adornment, clothes, neatness and elegance. In the dissenting groups, this harassment has been severe so that women have complained of being harassed by these groups’ leaders. The position of the DRC SDA Church and worldwide as regards this contemporary challenge is therefore discussed.

#### **9.3.1. SDA Church Position Against Harassment.**

The General Conference of the SDA Church worldwide recognizes its responsibility to all believers to maintain a Christian environment free from harassment. It endeavours to achieve this environment through educating church members about the fact that harassment violates God’s law and will not be tolerated by the church.<sup>1111</sup> The General Conference also endeavours to prevent harassment by informing all believers of their right to complain of harassment and by developing appropriate sanctions for misconduct.<sup>1112</sup>

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<sup>1109</sup> Hornby, 1989: 567.

<sup>1110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1111</sup> *SDA Statements Guidelines...* , 144.

<sup>1112</sup> Ibid.



### **9.3.1.1. Fanatical harassment particularly improper**

Among many other improper acts of harassment there are (1) unwelcome or derogatory statements related to gender, race, colour, national origin, age, or disability (for example, kidding, teasing, jokes, degrading or offensive comments or tricks),<sup>1113</sup> and (2) “demeaning or degrading comments about an individual’s appearance”<sup>1114</sup> (for example women’s clothes).

In some churches and particularly in dissident groups in the DRC this improper conduct is often due to a legalistic formalist conduct which acts as a counterfeit means of salvation for fanatical believers.

In some breakaway groups, exaggerated regulations about temperance, social and religious life imposed on followers have turned into real harassment. Harsh verbal and negative critiques, threatening women if they do not remain quiet in worship, and ascetic regulations such as those mentioned earlier have enforced extremism and fanatical harassment.

This is a danger for legalist believers, because “legalism can never be a Gospel; it can never be the Good News of Salvation. It is indeed the sad news... because legalism sweats the guilt...”<sup>1115</sup>

Paul’s case against the Galatians heresy furnishes a classic example of how some can perceive legalism as a way of salvation. “I am astonished,” says the apostle, “that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the Gospel of Christ” (Gal 1: 6,7).

Indeed, the Galatians who accepted the grace of Christ and joyfully entered into a salvation experience through faith in Him (Gal 3:1, 2), were now in serious peril

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<sup>1113</sup> *SDA Statements Guidelines...*, p. 145.

<sup>1114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1115</sup> JM Fowler, “Legalism ,,, “, pp.10-12.

of losing that experience because somehow they were misled into a confusing situation as to the basis of salvation. The apostle asks, “did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard?”(Gal 3:2).<sup>1116</sup>

To the apostle there is only one Gospel: faith in the efficacy of the cross of Jesus. Forgiveness, justification, new birth, sanctification – are all a result of the cross of Jesus. As such, legalism is the denial of the cross,<sup>1117</sup> it “has the power to bewitch the unguarded soul into looking to good works as a way of salvation. The only safeguard for the Christian is to cling to the cross. For on the cross we see God’s supreme manifestation of love and grace toward the sinner”.<sup>1118</sup>

## **9.4. Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed three contemporary challenges faced by the SDA Church in the DRC and globally, and it tried to show how the Church is facing them.

While the applications and recommendations were addressed to the specific concerns of the said Church, it is our hope that Christians of other churches may find some of these applicable to their own communions since many of these challenges have profoundly impacted on the worldwide religious congregations and secular communities.

The SDA Church recognizes basic ingredients that are at the core of dissidence in the DRC and it has tried to rectify the problem in order to reclaim these people back to the church.

Dealing with cultural misunderstanding within the church, it has been stressed that any adjustment in the Christ-culture equation must be in harmony with the

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<sup>1116</sup> John M. Fowler, “legalism...”, pp. 10 -12

<sup>1117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1118</sup> Ibid.

absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ in the life of the individual Christian and in larger community of the church. A believer may reject, affirm or attempt to transform the culture in any given instance, but whichever he/she chooses, he/she must be sure that he /she is operating under the Lordship of Christ and that his/her action is within God's will, and his/her motives are pure.

Moreover, he/she should not seek to justify his/her human propensity to sin but should aim to bring glory to God and promote the advancement of His kingdom. Nevertheless, in the contemporary cultural situation, the Christian and the Church cannot simply revert to the apostolic world – or any other. We must determine the will of God (in terms of timeless principles), and then relate our cultural context to it.

Dealing with harassment, the SDA Church's conduct recognizes its responsibility to encourage all believers to maintain a Christian environment free from all kinds of harassment (including fanatical conduct), by informing them of the right to complain of harassment and by developing appropriate sanctions for misconduct.

## **CHAPTER TEN GENERAL CONCLUSION**

The present study has conducted an evaluation of the modern Church through the light of the Early Church and the Holy Scripture. The case of the SDA Church in the DRC and worldwide has been examined and explained, thereby responding to some criticism of the SDA's fundamental doctrines, leadership, women's ministries and some religious practices from the dissident groups.

The historical background was discussed in chapter one. This survey showed that the birth of Adventism took place in the setting of the great Advent awakening which took place in the early years of the nineteenth century in many countries of Europe, Asia, and America. In North America particularly, the Miller's followers (with their interest in Biblical prophecies) became an interconfessional crusade which reached a climax in the years 1843 and 1844. It was noted, however, that at this time, "Advent Congregations" were established but not yet organized as new churches.

The following chapter of the study stressed the historical development of basic doctrines of the Modern SDA Church based on the "Sola Scriptura" principle according to the Protestant and the Millerite hermeneutical tradition. This principle is understood in terms of Jesus Christ who has been presented as the centre and the aim of all Biblical doctrine, in line with the early apostolic church. In spite of resistance to formulation of a doctrinal creed by the pioneers of that time, a small pamphlet of basic SDA belief in twenty-five articles was published in 1872.<sup>1119</sup>

The study found, that subsequently, since the 1960s, the doctrinal issues and church leadership are not so well understood by the dissident groups, and some church members. The claim related to the denigration of Biblical doctrine and

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<sup>1119</sup> Damsteegt, pp. 301, 302.

practices in the SDA church appears to have not been confirmed if one considers the Biblical interpretation and lifestyle of the believers. On the contrary it has been established that in doctrinal issues and church leadership, this Church in the DRC and worldwide appears not to have departed from the fundamental doctrines of the early apostolic church. Indeed, even eighty percent of the dissenting groups' followers interviewed on this issue confirmed the compatibility of this reality.<sup>1120</sup>

Regarding the SDA Church leadership and historical changes in the organisation (1864-1993), it has been easily recognized that the process of development in this issue had much in common with the early apostolic church; for instance: a gradual and progressive growth, a Gospel spreading emphasis, seeking unity, a representative organizational system established, both a centralized and decentralized organization, a servant leadership, and belief in righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ were identified.

In order to confront misunderstanding and criticism of liturgy and religious practices, one should understand that worship and practices in the SDA Church are intended to honor God for what He has done. They are a response of praise and thanksgiving for the revelation of God in creation and Scripture, in Christ and the Holy Spirit, typically including elements of praise (in prayer and songs, thanksgiving, confession of sin and faith, reading Scripture, preaching, taking a collection and intercession).

Although various communities emphasize different ways in which music should be played and songs sung, the study found that none of this should be practised as mere formalism. That is why the SDA Church puts emphasis on the spiritual nature of worship and practice, which means that the presence of the Spirit of Christ who makes these holy is essential.

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<sup>1120</sup> See Table 7.

True worship is expressed by knowledge of God, trust and faith in Him, a humble work before the Lord, recognition of His gracious acts and a commitment to His will. This still seems to be practised in the SDA Church as it was in the early church. The study stressed the dangers of formalist worship which should be avoided: those found in a pure externalism of worship and mere human celebration of emotions. Indeed this has been presented as being in conformity with the light of Scripture and the early church.

The historical development of women's ministries was stressed in chapter four and later. The research indicated that, as far back as 1881 in the SDA Church history, qualified women were always seen as a logistical resource to employ in meeting the ever-increasing need for workers.<sup>1121</sup> Unfortunately however, the Adventist ministry had become by the 1930s a virtual male preserve, although the initial internships policy seemed to provide for young women to be considered for internships. Adventist women were relegated to the roles of wife, Bible instructor, teacher, nurse, and secretary,<sup>1122</sup> that is to say still to a supportive and subordinate role in the church compared with that of women clergy and their ordination. Since that period nevertheless, facing the external and internal pressure to ordain women clergy, some denominations have found themselves torn between a literal interpretation of Pauline passages dealing with the subordination of women in church life, and the evangelical feminist pressure to eliminate gender distinctions based upon Paul's teaching of spiritual equality in Galatians 3: 28.

The comparison of the compatibility of women's ministries between the modern SDA Church and the early apostolic church has shown that this practice has not altered in the DRC SDA Church.

Jesus' treatment of women was revolutionary. As noted, He rejected the prevailing prejudices against women, and He treated them as human persons of equal worth to men.

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<sup>1121</sup> *Review*, January 2, 1879, p.1.

<sup>1122</sup> Schwarz, 1979: 495.

In the early apostolic church, women played a very prominent role in the ministry of Jesus and of Paul and the apostles; they ministered as deaconesses, "fellow-workers" alongside numerous men in missionary activities, also as prophetesses and teachers. However, in spite of Jesus' revolutionary treatment of women, He did not choose them as apostles, neither were they consecrated as bishop and or presbyters in the early apostolic church.

The study found that such an omission was not a matter of concession to the social or cultural conventions of Jesus' time, but rather of compliance with the role distinctions for men and women established at creation.

It was established that in the modern SDA Church, the same ministries are still performed by women today. They, as well as men, are commissioned to witness for Christ and are leading in different ministries within the DRC SDA Church and globally.

Nevertheless, "Women's ordination" has never been voted by a GC session nor practiced in the modern SDA Church in the DRC or elsewhere. This attitude also seems to be in conformity with the early apostolic church's practice. As such, the present study could find nothing to reinforce dissident groups' followers' criticism in this regard: it has been proved to be false.

Worship and other SDA religious practices were discussed in chapter five and further and compared with those of the early apostolic church and the Holy Scripture. It was found that this should not be mere formalism but a service, and an honour to the Lord during which women should not be regarded as inferior.

Findings about liturgy and practices such as Sabbath observance, the Lord's Supper, behaviour and lifestyle, show that these are also still practiced in conformity with the light of Scripture and the early apostolic church. Jesus' healing activities neither broke the Sabbath nor abolished it; rather, they did

terminate the self-righteous pharisaical burdensome regulations that had distorted the meaning of the Sabbath as God's instrument and delight.

It was also observed that what the dissident groups are declaring about pertinent issues of the church tends to alter, so that “what you saw in one of them twenty years ago differs from what they stress today”.<sup>1123</sup>

Total commitment to God has been explained as one of the most important religious practices recommended to all believers as a declaration of spiritual accountability in the family of faith, with prayers and music that should lift the listeners' being into the very presence of God and not merely move the congregation to a degrading, exalted human experience which stirs up lust, passion or hatred. Regarding the Lord's Supper Liturgy, therefore, it has been referred to as a symbolic meal commemorating the death and coming kingdom of Jesus Christ. Dissidents should acknowledge the symbolic and spiritual characteristic of the communion and understand that by washing the feet of His disciples, Jesus gave it a spiritual signification of humility (John 13: 14,15).

In a similar way, it was found that the Lord's Supper preceded by the foot washing service still appears to be practiced in the SDA Church as ordained by the Master, Jesus.

Regarding church planting in the DRC the present evaluation has shown that the SDA Church's expansion in terms of evangelism had in common some similarities with the period of the early apostolic church's expansion, with the apostles Peter, John and Paul.

In spite of the many difficulties encountered, the spirit of sacrifice and the determination of the pioneers, the collaboration with the neighbouring non Adventist missionaries and communities, the pleasing cooperation with local civil and political authorities, the education of evangelized people within chapel

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<sup>1123</sup> Twumasi, 2001: 494.



schools on the primary level and healing through health centres, helped the churches to grow and speeded up the expansion of the Gospel from the South to the North and from the East to the West of the DRC's territory. The present writer found a number of similar qualities in the early church's growth (Acts 4, 8, 12, 13; John 12:25; Luke 7:18-25).

Moreover men, women and children were involved in preaching the Gospel, and the SDA Church pioneers understood the appropriateness of this combined action. Acts 2:44-46 confirms this important lesson, although an active involvement in church activities such as social and financial development, a clear vision for the future, self-support and development were still needed.

The reasons for misunderstandings as regards religious, leadership and social issues were described. As pointed out, this situation has favored the rise of several dissident groups amongst SDA churches.

Dealing with spreading extremism and fanaticism in local churches, the study recognized particular ingredients that are at the core of dissidence in some local churches such as uncontrolled excitement, imbalanced preoccupation with a particular aspect of Christian belief or lifestyle, careless or superficial reading of spiritual writings that may result in the tendency to force Biblical texts or passages into suiting a "pet" belief. The SDA church has tried to rectify the problem by teaching and reclaiming extremists. This, indeed, requires a positive approach, to extend the hand of love, and letting the Holy Spirit provide the needed illumination.

Handling cultural misunderstanding within the SDA Church, it has been found that a believer may reject, affirm or attempt to transform culture in any given instance, but whichever he or she chooses, he or she must be sure that he or she is operating under the Lordship of Christ, that his or her action is within God's will, and his or her motives are pure.

Moreover, as the writer has put it in the study, it was found that the believer should not seek to justify his or her cultural human propensity to sin but that he or she would bring glory to God and promote the advancement of His kingdom. Nevertheless, in the contemporary cultural challenges, the Christian and the Church cannot simply revert to the Apostolic World – or any other. Rather they must determine the will of God (Timeless Principles), and then relate their cultural context to it because since "cultures constantly change, the church must therefore continually respond to those changes in the light of Scripture".<sup>1124</sup>

Dealing with the issue of contemporary harassment, the SDA Church conduct is to maintain a Christian environment free from all kinds of harassment.

Regarding the SDA Church's fundamental historical development and so forth, it has been shown that the said Church still remains the heir of the early apostolic church. Similarly, actual women's ministries and leadership, worship and liturgy development are still in harmony with those of the early church.

Consequently, in the light of the findings of the study, the following integrative values and spiritual behavior are recommended to the SDA Church and dissident groups.

#### **A. To the SDA Church**

1. The knowledge that the SDA Church still remains the heir of the early Apostolic Church and has not departed from its Biblical teachings should not merely be a matter of pride; rather it should encourage contact and dialogue with dissidents and other congregations, and reinforce the members' confidence in God and the church itself.
2. The SDA Church should be aware that past experience has shown that the church cannot stop dissidents from emerging, and that any attempt to "combat" them has not produced the desirable results. Instead, the following are needed:

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<sup>1124</sup> Oosterwal, 1989: 22-25.

- Identify reasons for dissidents' growth and be proactive before they become uncontrollable.
  - Adopt a non-confrontational approach, seek dialogue, and acknowledge that good character development of church members will discourage dissidents from picking on minute details and attacking the church.
3. Educate lay and pastoral leadership to be diligent students of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. This will, in turn, enable them to educate church members about the proper hermeneutics to be applied to the Bible and writings of prophecy, and to inform members regarding policy changes and doctrines. Failure to do this encourages dissidents to distort facts and spread unfounded stories to destroy the church's integrity and create followers for themselves.
  4. Adopt Gamaliel's "wait and see" attitude.<sup>1125</sup> The church should not be so obsessed with dissident groups as to have its attention distracted from its commission. Believers should undertake self-assessment and adopt Gamaliel's attitude before making any hasty decisions on any divergent groups or individuals.

## **B. To Dissident Groups**

1. To be aware that Scriptural continued study, prayer and commitment to God could lead to a more complete understanding of the truth<sup>1126</sup> and help to prevent them falling into extremism and misunderstanding.
2. To understand that salvation is acquired by faith in Lord's Jesus and is the gift of God's grace for the believer, and that apart from Christ human beings cannot obtain righteousness<sup>1127</sup> (Titus 3:5). He "shares His obedience to those believers who are justified freely by His grace".<sup>1128</sup>

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<sup>1125</sup> Twumasi, 2001: 496-497.

<sup>1126</sup> Froom, vol. IV, 1046.

<sup>1127</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 136.

<sup>1128</sup> *Ibid.* See also Rom 5: 18-19; 3:24.

3. To be aware that God's work must not "be disorganized or broken up into independent atoms"<sup>1129</sup> but those members should work to preserve the unity of the church.
4. To understand that all kinds of harassment (verbal, religious, and sexual) should be avoided, and rather work to maintain a living and united Christian development.

After all, as the historical evaluation of the modern SDA Church has positively confirmed, the present writer considers that the need of the SDA Church and other Christian congregations should be to preserve their identity and unity with respect to Biblical doctrines, leadership and religious practices in respect of the light given by Scripture regarding the early Christian church. Even though he [the present writer] does not claim to have been exhaustive, he rather thinks he has opened some doors to encourage future research based on another sound historical evaluation.

Finally, however, he [the writer] considers that the study should help to avoid confusion and misunderstanding in the Church and to reaffirm the value of returning to the fundamental root of the early Christian teachings, leadership and religious practices.

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<sup>1129</sup> White, *The Remnant Church*, 1950: 53, See also E. G. White, *Messages Choisis*, vol. 2, 1971: 429-430.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A – Sample of Questionnaire Type I**

To all selected dissenting groups' followers in the Butembo-Beni and Lubero areas at Kayna, Mupo, Nguva, Maboya, and Beni town.

To the SDA church members selected in some areas.

Dear Sir/Madam

AN EVALUATION OF THE MODERN CHURCH THROUGH THE LIGHT OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

Kindly please supply me with the following information on pertinent issues faced by the SDA Church from dissident groups' followers which will enable me to complete my thesis submitted in accordance with requirements for the degree of Doctor of Theology. You may choose to remain anonymous.

Yours sincerely,

KAKULE MITHIMBO Paul

## QUESTIONNAIRE I

1. Are Biblical doctrines, teachings and observance lowered in the SDA Church? ----yes ----No ----Don't know
2. Are SDA Biblical interpretation and understanding true? ----Yes ----No ----Don't know.
3. Is E.G. White's Spirit of Prophecy ministry misunderstood in the SDA Church?  
----Yes ----No ----Don't know.
4. Is the justification by faith doctrine still misunderstood in the SDA Church?  
-----yes -----No -----Don't know.
5. Is the SDA Church exercising a monarchical and authoritarian leadership?  
----yes ----No ----Don't know.

## **Appendix B – Sample of Questionnaire Type II**

To selected dissenting groups' followers, Beni/ Lubero Areas at Kayna, Mupo, Nguva, Maboya, and Beni-town.

To the SDA Church members selected from the same areas.

Dear Brother / Sister

**EVALUATION OF THE MODERN CHURCH THROUGH THE LIGHT OF THE EARLY CHURCH.**

Kindly supply me the following information which will enable me to complete my Doctoral Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Theology.

Do not write your name.

Yours Sincerely.

KAKULE MITHIMBO Paul

### **QUESTIONNAIRE II**

1. Have actual SDA Church women's ministries changed from those of the Early Apostolic Church?  
-----Yes -----No -----Don't know.
2. Have some D.R.Congo SDA Church practices and liturgy changed from those of the Early Apostolic Church? -----Yes ----No -----Don't know