

The Gospel Principles of Leadership and Early SDA History

Gospel Study Group
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Contents

Gospel Principles
Old Testament Example
Brief View of Followers
Bible Model of Authority
Model Under Attack
More Observations on Leadership
Application to SDA Organization
Early SDA Struggles: Lessons from James White
Impact of Gospel Principles Neglected or Rejected
Leadership Counsel in 1894
Leadership Counsel in 1895
Leadership Counsel in 1896
Leadership Counsel in 1898
Leadership Counsel in 1899
Leadership Counsel in 1901
Did 1901 Effect a Change?
Conclusion Connection to Our Time

Gospel Principles

Jesus is a revelation to us of how the universe is administered. This administration is the model for leadership. Godly administration is spiritual leadership. The word "administer" means "minister to." This other-centered direction of ministry is captured by Christ in His key statement explicitly denying the self-centered opposite. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."¹

Jesus' true identity and position as revealed to us in the gospel² clarify the dynamic relationships that elucidate this administration.³ As God⁴ and Creator⁵ He is equal to the other Members of the Godhead. As Son of God⁶, Heir of all⁷ and Agent of creation⁸ He is shown to be subservient to the Father. As the Word⁹ He is the expression of the Godhead to all created things. As Mediator¹⁰ He is the bridge between the Godhead and alienated creatures, to convey the benefits of the New Covenant to its recipients. And as the Head¹¹ of all He is shown to be in charge of His creation.

The verbs used for His actions best describe how He fulfills each of the above positions. Understanding these verbs will give us the picture we need to correct the inherent and acquired

¹ Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45

² The "gospel" here is that background and foreground good news that frames all of Scripture. See Ps. 40:7; Heb. 10:7; John 5:39; Luke 24:27, 44. This good news was expressed most explicitly in the revelation that came to humanity in the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and mediation of Jesus Christ. See Luke 2:10; 4:18; 1 Cor. 15:1-5; 1Tim. 3:16; Heb 8:6.

³ In understanding the words used to describe Him we must be constrained by the fact that these all reveal His character, His personality, and His oneness with the Godhead and with His creation, but they do not reveal His essential nature which has never been revealed. See 8T279.1

⁴ Heb. 1:8

⁵ John 1:3; Col. 1:16

⁶ Matt. 3:17; Heb. 1:2; 4:14

⁷ Heb. 1:2

⁸ Heb. 1:2

⁹ John 1:1, 14; 1 John 1:1; Rev. 19:13

¹⁰ 1Tim. 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24

¹¹ Eph 1:22; 4:15; Col 1:18; 2:10

distortions we all struggle with in relation to the authority inherent in such administration. For brevity, we will examine only two such verbs as found in the New Testament.

"Minister" -- The verb noted in our first quoted text is translated from *diakoneo*.¹² One of its noun forms (*diakonos*) Jesus used in the same context to describe one who is great in God's kingdom. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister."¹³ This function that Jesus Himself revealed is most closely tied, based on the words used, to the action of deacons in the early church. These were chosen likewise to serve.¹⁴ But the apostles, in being thus freed from the need to "serve tables" were by no means freed from serving, for the express goal was to enable them without this distraction to steadfastly devote themselves "to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."¹⁵ This word "ministry" is translated from another noun form (*diakonia*). We must not miss the other-centered, humble focus that these words convey. Nor must we forget the prophetic use of this verb in Jesus' highly significant word picture of what He will do after His coming to the faithful servants. He will "make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."¹⁶

"Tend" -- This verb rooted in the care of livestock is translated from *poimaino*.¹⁷ It describes the function of a shepherd, best illustrated by Him whom Peter called "the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."¹⁸ It was by excruciatingly painful experience that Peter learned what level of suffering such a shepherd and overseer must be willing to endure in tending those in his care. When Peter acted like a hireling¹⁹ the night of Jesus' betrayal, he saw in what ensued the part he

¹² Used some 37 times in the NT.

¹³ Matt. 20:26

¹⁴ Acts 6:2 uses the same verb *diakoneo* to describe the specific need for which the deacons were chosen.

¹⁵ Acts 6:4

¹⁶ Luke 12:37

¹⁷ Used some 11 times in the NT.

¹⁸ 1Pet. 2:25; "Shepherd" is the noun form of this verb.

¹⁹ His self-centered choice to flee (Mark 14:50) at such a time clearly placed him with the sheep that were prophesied would scatter when the Shepherd was smitten (Zech. 13:7; Mark 14:27), and matched what a hireling does ("leave") when the wolf approaches (John 10:12).

contributed to the suffering of the Shepherd. He was gripped more, however, by the tender care the doomed Shepherd extended in faith to this shepherd-in-the-making.²⁰ The greatest transformation of his life had begun, and would be completed within 50 days. After this rapid, crisis-based maturing,²¹ Jesus pointedly commissioned Peter with his new duty to give what he had been given. "Feed my sheep" was the responsible task Peter's newfound maturity obligated him to take up.²² This same self-sacrificing shepherding was what Peter would then in turn exhort the elders to do: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight."²³ Paul likewise would counsel the overseers in words almost identical to Peter's to the elders: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."²⁴

We must not lose the lesson of how both of these men did not start out understanding how to be spiritual leaders. Far from it, they both clearly carried out (one in the open service of Jesus, the other doing whatever he could to fight against Jesus' followers) their view of how God would want them to deal with others who especially were seen as enemies (driving, not leading). It is highly significant that their violent spirit of exclusiveness would give way to an inclusiveness that would make these two the prime promoters of the universal dimensions of the gospel, though Paul seems to have grasped it more fully and in a more consistent manner.²⁵

²⁰ What must have been contained in the non-verbal exchange when Peter, though physically returned to the proximity of Jesus, reached his furthest extent of emotionally and spiritually fleeing from His Lord as he cursed and swore in his third denial of knowing Him, and "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (Matt. 26:74; Luke 22:60, 61)!

²¹ We must analyze the events in Luke 24 (and extending through Acts 1) for indications of how Christ built on the events surrounding the cross to effect the greatest transformation ever recorded in scripture. What we will find there between Passover and Pentecost is not without current, eschatological significance.

²² John 21:16

²³ 1Pet. 5:2; "feed" is the verb under consideration; "oversight" is from the verb *episkopeo*.

²⁴ Acts 20:28; "feed" is the verb under consideration; "overseers" is from the noun *episkopos*.

²⁵ Peter's insight: Acts 10:28; Paul's insight: Acts 17:26-29; 2 Cor. 5:14-16; Peter's slip: Gal. 2:11-14

These verbs, along with others such as *episkopeo* ("taking the oversight"),²⁶ *hegeomai* ("have the rule over"),²⁷ *agrupneo* ("watch"),²⁸ and *archo* ("reign over"),²⁹ provide dynamic examples of the way the work of leading is described. Other verbs such as *douloo* ("made servant")³⁰ and *tapeinoo* ("humble")³¹ describe the attitude needed to succeed at leading. The prophetic role of leaders leaves them extremely vulnerable to excesses (especially one extreme we shall examine) unless these prerequisite character qualities are present.

Old Testament Example

Perhaps Moses is the prime example in the Old Testament of the dynamics we see in Scripture for a spiritual leader. In considering his story we should observe how to recognize and avoid the two basic errors or extremes of leadership in general. Moses at age 40 after his Egyptian training was heavy-handed and coercive in his attempt to lead. After another 40 years of retraining under God's direction we find him sensitive and self-distrustful. This attitude of dependence upon God for his identity, security, and guidance gave him the freedom to lead in a godly manner, quick to discern the spirit of those under his leadership, and wise to lead them. His response to repeated personal assaults by those being led was a nearly total absence of self-justification, and a casting of himself upon the Lord in such situations. It was thus he was described as "very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."³² This quality kept him at midline between the extreme from which he had come, and the opposite extreme that he ever avoided. Perhaps this trait of being meek (*πραυς* in LXX), echoed by

²⁶ 1 Pet. 5:2

²⁷ Heb. 13:7, 17

²⁸ Heb. 13:17

²⁹ Rom. 15:12

³⁰ 1 Cor. 9:19

³¹ Jesus: Phil. 2:8; Paul: 2 Cor. 11:17; Phil. 4:12

³² Num. 12:3

Christ in His self-characterization, "I am meek"³³ (πραος in TR), is the core quality that Moses referred to when he declared, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken."³⁴ This parallel of meekness enabled the faithfulness of both, described in another key passage on leadership.³⁵ In contrast is the other extreme--indulgent leadership--that Aaron manifested, explicit in the golden calf experience, and implied in the experience of his sons.³⁶

The administration that reflects God's method of leadership will thus reveal a humble attitude of service toward those under that authority, while avoiding the extremes of coercion and abuse on one hand, and of neglect and indulgence on the other.

Brief View of Followers

Before building the basic model of the dynamics of Scriptural authority, we must briefly state the ideal of those under authority, with the two parallel extremes that they must avoid. The gospel reveals God's ideal in this realm as well. The key dynamic here is described by the verb *hupotasso* ("be subject," "submit"). Jesus' experience as the Son of man revealed the submission required of those under the leadership of others.³⁷ As already noted, His subservient role as Son of God is the prime illustration for us of those in a subservient role.³⁸ It must not be missed that this primal responsibility of His was the setting in which the first war began. It was a rejection of such an attitude on the part of the highest created being that began the rebellion in which we are still immersed. The spirit of submission was abandoned, and that in the face of the two greatest possible evidences against such a choice: the Father a perfect Leader manifesting humble

³³ Matt. 11:29

³⁴ Deut. 18:15; Peter quoted this in Acts 3:22 as fulfilled in Jesus; Stephen quoted this in Acts 7:27 in his final opening of the books on the Jewish leaders, which was prematurely ended before he could trace the story to Jesus.

³⁵ Heb. 3:1-6

³⁶ Exod. 32; Num. 10:1, 2

³⁷ Luke 2:51

³⁸ 1 Cor. 15: 24-28

service to His creatures, and the Son a perfect Follower revealing humble submission to the Leader. Indeed, Lucifer "abode not in the truth" when he became "the father" of "the lie."³⁹

Bible Model of Authority

With the ideals and extremes laid down, we are prepared to build a brief model of Bible principles of authority.⁴⁰

	Extreme	Ideal	Extreme
In Authority	Oppress, Coerce ^{A1}	Serve ^A	Neglect, Indulge ^{A2}
Under Authority	Rebel ^{B1}	Submit ^B	Passively acquiesce ^{B2}

(These positions are illustrated in this section and the next by the superscripted labels noted above.)

Godly order follows the ideals we have discovered. One more observation must be made about the Bible examples of each. The God-ordained serving in a position in authority^A, when combined with the power of other-centered love, imparts a power that may appear coercive^{A1}, but in reality is not; rather the supernatural power⁴¹ manifested through such a position is powerful to defend the rights of the oppressed, not to be oppressive^{A1} itself. In a somewhat inverse parallel fashion, the God-ordained submitting in a position under authority^B may appear to be weak and vulnerable, but in reality is not; rather God guarantees the protection of those thus submissive. This protection may allow suffering, but not above what we are able to bear, and always with a redemptive goal in mind. Multiple Bible stories illustrate both of these observations, but exploration of them is left for another time and place.

³⁹ John 8:44

⁴⁰ It appears that the noun *exousia* conveys in the NT the framework we are describing here.

⁴¹ This is perhaps best illustrated by the encounter in Matt. 8:5-13, in which a centurion (who clearly declared he was "a man under authority, having soldiers under me") understood the power of "the word only" of One he perceived also in authority, though in a different realm. His discernment resulted in one of only two commendations of "great faith" Jesus ever gave, significantly to two Gentiles (see also Matt. 15:21-28).

Model Under Attack

The war we call the Great Controversy began, as noted, by Lucifer moving from submission^B to rebellion^{B1}. In the trafficking of his rebellion (to get others to join him in his new position), he labeled his fellow angels' submission as passive acquiesce^{B2} to God's demands, and appealed to them to join him in standing up for their liberty and rights. From his new perspective as rebel against authority, he pictured God's leadership^A as oppressive^{A1} when it is not.⁴² As a rebel attempting to function in authority, the devil tries validate his oppressive^{A1} stance by characterizing God's authority^A as weak and indulgent^{A2} when it is not.

With this background and spirit of rebellion, it is easy to see why we naturally see in the submission required of those under authority, a weakness that is a perverted view of the strength and security in such a choice. As rebels we invariably, as did Lucifer, confuse godly submission^B with the other extreme to be avoided, that of a passive acquiescence. While it is true that with a perfect Leader^A there is no danger of such an extreme (the only extreme possible in responding to God is rebellion^{B1}), with all other leaders we must ever hold submission to God primary. While this will at times require us "to obey God rather than man,"⁴³ it will never cause us to rebel^{B1} against ungodly leaders^{A1 or A2}. We will be called rather to submit^B even to the point of laying down our lives in obeying God rather than the coercive^{A1} demands of leaders themselves in rebellion^{B1} against God.

From a perspective similar to Lucifer's but oppositely warped, those spineless ones under authority who passively acquiesce^{B2} will see those who submit^B in a godly way as rebellious^{B1} because they refuse to follow leaders in their rebellion against God. And indulgent leaders^{A2} will see those who lead by true biblical service^A as oppressive^{A1}.

⁴² Rebels defending the legitimacy of their position tend to call anything "softer" than that, an erroneous stance.

⁴³ Acts 5:29

An oppressive^{A1} leader fails to represent God's mercy, thus misrepresenting God's justice as taking rather than giving. An indulgent^{A2} leader cannot show God's justice, giving a warped picture of God's mercy in a counterfeit giving way.

An oppressive^{A1} leader tends to drive his followers to extremes, usually rebellion^{B1}, but also occasionally to passive acquiescence^{B2}. An indulgent^{A2} leader actually takes a position of inverted authority, in which he falls down to passive acquiescence^{B2} to the demands of his followers.

More Observations on Leadership

The core dynamic of biblical leadership is an expression of the self-sacrificing love that the New Testament calls *agape*. The details of this dynamic are covered in 1 Cor. 13. Two characteristics should be highlighted. A leader motivated by *agape* "is never self-seeking"⁴⁴ but lives by the truth that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."⁴⁵ Such a leader also "believes all things."⁴⁶ Far from gullibility, this is the "faith of Jesus" functioning in a headship role.

The revelation of this most precious item in the gospel is so exceedingly valuable. This activity of *agape* is characterized as gold in scripture.⁴⁷ The endurance required of leaders is explained by this power. Jesus is "the author and finisher of faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross."⁴⁸ Endurance is repeatedly connected to faith, specifically the faith of Jesus.⁴⁹ Moses showed that one possessing this faith is steadfast in an upward looking fashion (one submitting to God), "as seeing Him who is invisible."⁵⁰ Of course Jesus revealed this in its fullness. But the faith works also in the other direction as "the substance of things hoped for, the

⁴⁴ 1 Cor. 13:5 TCNT

⁴⁵ Acts 20:35

⁴⁶ 1 Cor. 13:7 RSV

⁴⁷ Rev. 3:18; cf. 1 Pet. 1:7; 1 Tim. 1:14; Gal. 5:6; Mark 11:22

⁴⁸ Heb. 12:2

⁴⁹ Rev. 13:10; 14:12

⁵⁰ Heb. 11:27

evidence of things not seen."⁵¹ As a leader, one must see in those under his care many unseen things that are still hoped for. And that vision must mold his attitude and drive his spirit in leading. Specifically, the faith of Jesus has godly submission as the goal in the followers, while still discerning the struggle they experience with the extremes of rebellion and passivity. The godly leader ever sees the goal, and wisely knows how to lead each unique individual toward that goal.

A spiritual leader's position of headship involves his own submission to God's headship, and his connection and identity with those under his care.⁵² His submission to God molds him (we might say re-molds him) in God's image--His character and example heals the rebellion inherent in all of us. The incarnation in itself reveals to us this dynamic--how God can take sinful flesh and hold it in submission even unto death.⁵³

Application to SDA Organization⁵⁴

As our Seventh-day Adventist pioneers considered the issue of church organization and administration, they came with their own unique blend of Biblical and historical understandings and their own life experiences. The Spirit worked through these factors in His attempt to further the work of God at that time. What were in general terms the molding influences that led to organizing the Seventh-day Adventist Church? Why did they choose the model of church leadership that they did?

The Advent believers that survived the Great Disappointment, who went back to Scripture, and came to an understanding of the Sanctuary and the Sabbath, lived here and there in families

⁵¹ Heb. 11:1

⁵² Matt. 25:40, 45. Christ's universal headship is affirmed by His connection with all, even "the least of these my brethren."

⁵³ Phil. 2:7, 8

⁵⁴ Adapted from an article entitled "Godly Authority," *Lest We Forget*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1st Quarter 1992, pp. 2, 7

and small companies, and were often designated "the scattered flock."⁵⁵ Other than the influence of the Spirit, their understanding of Scripture, the printed periodicals, and those who traveled among them, there was not much that held them together. In a strict sense, they were congregational, each group quite independent in terms of organization.

This independence reflected in part the society of the United States at that time, its population more sparsely populated, and by families that were quite self-reliant. Those of that time were also well versed in the history of the abuses of authority in the Old World, both in civil government as well as church structure. The position many took on church organization reflected their independent spirit, springing from their understanding of how creed-bound churches, often laden with a hierarchy that lorded it over the membership, were ungodly structures that hindered rather than facilitated the gospel's spread, since they did not reflect how God runs the universe.

Not a few had been publicly expelled from such churches with trials based on creeds and not on an "It is written."⁵⁶ John Byington himself came from a family, which in standing for truth had had to meet autocratic church leaders. John himself joined the break-off Wesleyan Methodist Church which separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church when it tried to prohibit anti-slavery activity among its ministers.⁵⁷ So when the idea of formally organizing into a church was brought forward among the Sabbatarian Adventists, a lively discussion ensued, extending over quite a period of time.⁵⁸ To many, such organization clearly fell under the Biblical label of "Babylon," and to organize at all would be to identify with a false system.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ See for example, James White, July 1849, in *The Present Truth*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 1; Ellen White, 1850, in *EW* 50; Annie Smith, 1855, in her poem, "The Scattered Flock," *Home Here, and Home in Heaven*, p. 53

⁵⁶ For the account of the Harmon family, see Arthur White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Years Volume 1 - 1827-1862*, pp. 43, 44.

⁵⁷ John O. Waller, "John Byington of Buck's Bridge," *Adventist Heritage*, Vol. 1(2), p. 9.

⁵⁸ Andrew G. Mustard describes 1854-1860 as "An Era of Discussion and Controversy Over Church Order." *James White and SDA Organization*, 1987, Andrews University Press, p. 129ff.

⁵⁹ For example, R. F. Cottrell, in "Making Us a Name," *Review and Herald*, March 22, 1860, p. 140

However, upon further reflection, Bible study, and direction through the gift of prophecy, it became clear to them that God Himself runs the universe with order, that He has instituted authority as a principle of heaven and the universe, and that ungodly authority does not prove that all authority is evil. And so they were led to move from the independent, congregational model, while avoiding the autocratic, hierarchical structure, to a representation form of church government.

	Extreme	Ideal	Extreme
Organization	Hierarchical	Representative	Independent

Two events in this transition show the understanding of Biblical authority they had developed. James White declined to be the first president. He was not seeking position, the plague of the carnal nature that the gospels so clearly revealed as existing in the hearts of Christ's disciples. John Byington was chosen to be the first president,⁶⁰ a man whose history showed he knew how to be a servant leader. He was no office-bound bureaucrat, but a true pastor who loved nothing more than visiting the flock.

Early SDA Struggles: Lessons from James White⁶¹

When James White did accept the presidency, his executive abilities and the lack of men to assist him, often led others to misunderstand him, and to his taking charge. It is clear he struggled how to fulfill his part in the godly leadership the young church desperately needed. At times his fellow workers would be offended. Just before his death, he recounted how it had "seemed hard to me that my motives should be misjudged, and that my best efforts to help, encourage, and strengthen my brethren should again and again be turned against me." He added (with what appears as a longing after Moses' experience), "I should have dwelt upon the mercy

⁶⁰ Arthur White, *Ellen G. White: Volume 2, The Progressive Years 1862-1876*, p. 31; Mustard, *op. cit.*, p. 162

⁶¹ From this point on in this paper, we will view the events largely through the record from the pen of Ellen White.

and loving-kindness of God, praising him more, and complaining less of the ingratitude of my brethren. Had I ever left all my perplexities with the Lord, thinking less of what others said and did against me, I should have had more peace and joy. I will now seek first to guard myself that I offend not in word or deed, and then to help my brethren make straight paths for their feet. I will not stop to mourn over any wrong done to me. I have expected more of men than I ought."⁶² He also confessed, "When misunderstood and misrepresented, I have permitted a combative spirit to be aroused in me, and have sought to vindicate my course. I now see my mistake in this. I will never again call attention to myself. If I walk in humility I shall have a friend who will never leave nor forsake me. I will leave my work and all my interests in the hands of Jesus, and let him vindicate my cause."⁶³ He apparently was not the meekest man the church has known.

Finding other godly leaders appeared to be a chronic challenge. In recalling the same weeks just before her husband's death, Ellen stated, "I tried to urge upon him the importance of seeking a field of labor where we would be released from the burdens necessarily coming upon us at Battle Creek. In reply he spoke of various matters which required attention before we could leave,--duties which some one must do. Then with deep feeling he inquired, 'Where are the men to do this work? Where are those who will have an unselfish interest in our institutions, and who will stand for the right, unaffected by any influence with which they may come in contact?'"⁶⁴

⁶² Ellen White, *In Memoriam: A Sketch of the Last Sickness and Death of Elder James White* (1881) PH168 p. 50.3. (All references from here on from Ellen White are referenced without her name, using the usual source abbreviations.)

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 47.2

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.2. The lack of spiritual leadership lead James to being overworked. Recounted Ellen, "No one but myself knew how great a load he had carried in the efforts we had put forth to advance the truth. He had done the work of three men. Night after night, at the beginning of our work, when advancement seemed to be hindered on every hand, he would say, 'Ellen we must pray. We must not let go until we realize the power of God.' He would lie awake for hours, and say, 'Oh Ellen, I am so afflicted. Will you pray for me, that I may not fail or be discouraged.' Together we offered up our prayers, with strong crying and tears, until from his lips came the words, 'Thank the Lord; He has spoken peace to me. I have light in the Lord. I will not fail. I will press the battle to the gates.'" *7MR* 419.1 *Letter 396, 1906, To Sister Belden*. December 26, 1906.

The need that leaders have of providing "meat in due season" for those under their care became acutely important to James White in these last weeks of his life. Unaware of his impending death, he spoke of a change of focus he and his wife needed, to leave more spiritual food in a permanent form for the flock. Ellen reported, "We had designed to devote the coming winter to writing. My husband had said, 'Let us not be turned aside from our purpose. I think we have made a mistake, in allowing the apparent wants of the cause and the earnest entreaties of our brethren to urge us into active labor in preaching when we should have been writing. While our mental powers are unimpaired, we should complete our contemplated books. I design to arrange my business affairs, go to the Pacific coast, and devote the winter months to writing. It is a duty which we owe to ourselves and to the cause of God to rest from the heat of battle and to give to our people the precious light of truth which God has opened to our minds. I feel assured there is a crisis before us. We should preserve our physical and mental powers for future service. The glorious subject of Redemption should long ago have been more fully presented to the people; but I have allowed myself to be called into the field, to attend camp-meetings, and have become so worn that I could not engage in writing.'"⁶⁵ The implications for leadership of this "precious light of truth" and "glorious subject of Redemption" were yet to be seen.

The type of leadership some saw in James White, and actually longed for is suggested by a comment G. I. Butler made in a letter to Ellen White during the Minneapolis meetings in 1888, regarding the work of E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones. "I fancy a few days of Elder James

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 54.2. Notice especially that James White felt to share "the precious light of truth which God has opened to our minds," and to present the "glorious subject of Redemption" which had been neglected. It appears these conversations are those referenced by Ellen White when she stated 8 years later during the summer of 1889, "I have had the question asked, 'What do you think of this light that these men [Waggoner and Jones] are presenting?' Why, I have been presenting it to you for the last 45 years--the matchless charms of Christ. This is what I have been trying to present before your minds. When Brother Waggoner brought out these ideas in Minneapolis, it was the first clear teaching on this subject from any human lips I had heard, excepting the conversations between myself and my husband. I have said to myself, It is because God has presented it to me in vision that I see it so clearly, and they cannot see it because they have never had it presented to them as I have. And when another presented it, every fiber of my heart said, Amen." Sermon, Rome, NY, June 19, 1889, "Christ and the Law," *EGW 1888 Materials*, p. 348.4 (Hereafter *1888*.)

White's administration when such a move as this would come up, if those young men would not have heard thunder around their ears, if he had been on earth, that would have made them tingle, then I have forgotten the nature of this procedure. I have not forgotten the way he handled things of this kind, if he would not go for them in public and private and make them regret such boldness then I misjudge. He would not have waited one week before he had put that thing through the Review and showed it up in its true light."⁶⁶

Impact of Gospel Principles Neglected or Rejected

James White's observation was prescient at the beginning of the decade when he sensed "a crisis before us" and identified the lack of grasping and experiencing "the precious light of truth" and "the glorious subject of Redemption." Butler's attitude, which was not new for him in the late 1880's, gave evidence of both the need and cause of the crisis. In no area would this be more evident than in the administration of the church. White's death appears to have left the church with only one first-generation pioneer that would recognize the advancing providence of God in His attempt to bring the final message of mercy to the church and world.⁶⁷ It is highly significant that the messenger pictured in Scripture bringing this message is said to have "great authority."⁶⁸

We could analyze the impact of the battle over the gospel⁶⁹ that peaked in the late 1880's through the 1890's in many ways, but tracking briefly its consequences for spiritual leadership in

⁶⁶ G. I. Butler, *Letter to E. G. White*, Oct. 1, 1888. Ellen G. White Estate, *Manuscripts and Memories of Minneapolis*, p. 99.1

⁶⁷ The message of the angel in Rev. 18:1 is this final message (identified as such in 1896 by Ellen White. See *2SM* 116.2). In 1858 it was still future (*EW*261.1, 271.2, 277.1). Its core element began to be agitated as early as 1886 (*1888*, pp. 165.3, 166.1). In 1892 she stated clearly that "the loud cry of the third angel has already begun." (*1888*, p. 1073.7). As late as 1893 (*Ibid.*, p. 1140.2) and 1896 (*Ibid.*, p. 1575.2) Uriah Smith (Ellen White's closest surviving associate from the beginning of the work) was not grasping the message. See also article "Living Channels of Light," *RH*, May 27, 1890 par. 6.

⁶⁸ Rev. 18:1

⁶⁹ The gospel was identified as the neglected part of the third angel's message, in the biblical phrase "the faith of Jesus": "The third angel's message is the proclamation of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ. The commandments of God have been proclaimed, but the faith of Jesus Christ has not been proclaimed by Seventh-

the church at that time matches the theme of this paper. This area of need must be a vital part of "that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost." This 1896 observation is all the more significant by the context in which it is found, of other counsels to the "brethren," particularly those frequently noted as "in responsible positions." This "might-have-been" lament indicated explicitly that the light of that final message had "by the action of our own brethren ... been in a great degree kept away from the world."⁷⁰ What implications did this have for spiritual leadership?

Perhaps the best overview to answer that broad question is to consider Ellen White's testimonies to and regarding three men during the 1890s. A. R. Henry was a financial officer and advisor for numerous SDA institutions. He served as president, auditor, and treasurer of the General Conference Association, as well as manager and treasurer of the SDA Publishing Association during the 1890's. He was a delegate at the Minneapolis General Conference Session. Harmon Lindsay was a financial administrator for numerous SDA institutions. He served as General Conference treasurer from 1888 to 1893, and as secretary, treasurer and auditor of the Review and Herald Publishing Association in the later 1890's. He also was a delegate at the Minneapolis session. O. A. Olsen was the General Conference president from 1888 to 1897.⁷¹ We will consider the evidences regarding these men, in chronological order by

day Adventists as of equal importance, the law and the gospel going hand in hand. I cannot find language to express this subject in its fullness. Ms 24, 1888, "Looking Back at Minneapolis" Dec. 1888, 1888, p. 217.3.

⁷⁰ Letter to Uriah Smith, June 6, 1896, 1888, p. 1575.2. For an example of the "responsible positions" phrase in this context, see Ms 87, 1897, January 27, 1897, *Ibid.*, p. 1636.1. As early as 1892 she observed, "God meant that the watchmen should arise and with united voices send forth a decided message, giving the trumpet a certain sound, that the people might all spring to their post of duty and act their part in the great work. Then the strong, clear light of that other angel who comes down from heaven having great power, would have filled the earth with his glory. We are years behind; and those who stood in blindness and hindered the advancement of the very message that God meant should go forth from the Minneapolis meeting as a lamp that burneth, have need to humble their hearts before God and see and understand how the work has been hindered by their blindness of mind and hardness of heart." Letter to Frank and Hattie Belden, November 05, 1892, *Ibid.*, p. 1070.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 16.

year, from the writings of Ellen White, as lessons on the relationship between the gospel and leadership.

Leadership Counsel in 1894

In a letter to Olsen June 10, 1894, Ellen White, wrote, "I wish I could see so decided a reformation in Bro. Henry that I could regard with satisfaction the confidence you seem to repose in him."⁷²

She wrote on October 21 "To the Brethren Who Shall Assemble in General Conference" the following observation: "It has been a mystery to me how Elder Olsen could receive and sanction two men of similar religious character, when he has no evidence that they are consecrated to God. They have manifested little of a vital connection with God, and yet he has linked them together and sent them upon distant and important missions, to do important work demanding clear and sanctified agents.... Elder Olsen's proposition to have A. R. Henry come to this country I could not sanction. I was compelled to say that we did not want him. God had presented his case before me. Since the Minneapolis meeting he has never taken his position in full reception of the light God has so graciously given for these last days. He has not honored the position he has occupied in the Office, because he has carried the spirit of A. R. Henry in full size. In him there has been no diminution of self."⁷³

On the 27th of the same month she wrote pointed testimony to Henry. "There has been unrighteousness in your course of action toward your brethren in the faith.... It was the duty of the president of the General Conference when he was convinced that a wrong estimate was placed upon men, to stand firmly against such a course of action; but he has not always done this, because he was afraid of you.... You have done many acts of injustice by your voice.... I fear for

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 1262.2

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 1287.3

my brethren who are intrusted with grave responsibilities; for I have been shown how difficult it is for human nature to be under the control of the Spirit of God and to bear God-given responsibilities meekly. Those whom God would make representative men, illustrious for good, spoil their own lives because they do not make God their fear and their continual counselor, and do not walk humbly before Him as did Daniel. They indulge selfishness, self-esteem, and do not maintain strict faithfulness, or manifest a Christlike spirit in their dealings with those who are God's purchased possession and whom Christ calls His brethren."⁷⁴

Leadership Counsel in 1895

On May 1, 1895, Ellen White wrote Harmon Lindsay. "Since the meeting at Minneapolis, you have followed in the tread of the scribes and Pharisees. Never will you have greater evidence of the working of the Holy Spirit than you had at that meeting. Again and again the Spirit of the Lord came into the meeting with convincing power, notwithstanding the unbelief manifested by some present, but you were deceived and prejudiced, and manifested the spirit of those who refused to acknowledge Christ.... With others you walked in the same path as did the rebellious Jews; the same spirit that inspired them inspired you, and the results have been similar.... Since the Minneapolis meeting, your influence and that of Brother A.R. Henry have been like a malarious atmosphere upon the hearts of God's people. You have not sought to establish them in the truth, but rather to weaken their faith.... My brother, why do you cherish such bitterness against Elder A.T. Jones and Elder Waggoner? It is for the same reason Cain hated Abel.... Why will you and Brother Henry despise God's delegated ministers, and seek to justify yourselves?"⁷⁵

She penned a manuscript on May 30 entitled, "The Danger of Self-Sufficiency in God's Work," addressing the impact of such unbelief on administration. "The Lord will never sanction

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1295.1&2; 1297.1

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1344.2; 1349.1; 1353.3

the exercise of arbitrary authority, nor will he serve with the least selfishness or dishonesty in the dealing of men with their fellow-men. Yet these things have been manifest in the management of affairs in connection with the work in Battle Creek. Words cannot express too strongly the offensive character of the disposition to rule or ruin which has for years been revealed, and which has been strengthening by exercise....

"Men who know little of the working of the Spirit of God upon their own hearts have exalted themselves beyond measure in undertaking to force others to accept their terms and come under their control.... Plans are set on foot for restricting the liberty of the workers. Through these oppressive plans, men who should stand free in God are trammelled by restrictions from those who are only their fellow-laborers. Men in the office at Battle Creek have acted as if they had jurisdiction of other men's intellect and conscience, and could manipulate them to serve any purpose which they might choose.... While grasping all the benefit possible for themselves, they have, both in the matter of royalties and other lines felt it their prerogative to crowd down the very ones whom God was using to diffuse light....

"They have tried to force their ideas upon those who have the cause much nearer their hearts than some of these who are so forward to dictate. How does the spirit of self-exaltation and grasping for arbitrary authority compare with the spirit and example of Christ? Our people, who talk of religious liberty, have lessons to learn as to what liberty in Christ really is. The Lord has marked the oppression that has been practiced.... Bro. Olsen's eyes have not always been clear to discern; he himself has been misled, and has sanctioned wrong by sustaining men that were not walking in the light. His course has not been pleasing to God, in favoring many of the propositions that have been acted upon since the Minneapolis meeting. Since that meeting, he has not, at all times, borne a straightforward, unflinching testimony for the right. From his

compromising position, the men who were trying to carry things according to their own will, have thought that he sustained their plans."⁷⁶

The next month she wrote to Olsen on the 19th regarding Henry and others. "When you are fully awake to these things, you will see and know that the reproof of God has for years been upon these responsible men, yet they have not humbled their hearts neither have they been converted, nor have they confessed where they have resisted the messages God has been giving his people. They have shown contempt for both the messenger and the message, from the time Eld. Jones and Waggoner were given a special work to do for these last days...."⁷⁷

A two-part series of articles she wrote entitled "The Great Need of the Holy Spirit" was published in the *Review and Herald* in July. Her opening paragraphs of the conclusion were most pointed in addressing the issues of leadership manifesting oppression and partiality. "God has not appointed any man guide, nor made any man conscience for another; therefore let human hands be withheld from restraining his servants who feel the burden to enter his vineyard to labor.... They are not to be treated in a lordly, commanding manner. Laws and rules are being made at the centers of the work that will soon be broken into atoms. Men are not to dictate. It is not for those in places of authority to employ all their powers to sustain some, while others are cast down, ignored, forsaken, and left to perish.... Who can say how many avenues of light have been closed by arrangements which the Lord has not advised nor instituted? The Lord does not ask permission of those in responsible positions when he wishes to use certain ones as his agents for the promulgation of truth.... None are to exercise their human authority to bind minds and souls of their fellow-men. They are not to devise and put in practice methods and plans to bring every individual under their jurisdiction....

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 1357.1&2; 1358.1&2; 1359.1

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1395.1

"If the cords are drawn much tighter, if the rules are made much finer, if men continue to bind their fellow-laborers closer and closer to the commandments of men, many will be stirred by the Spirit of God to break every shackle, and assert their liberty in Christ Jesus. ... If men will not come to the terms made by the leading workers, they will not entertain them, they do not care what results may follow their injustice. With them it is rule or ruin. God has not appointed any man to do such work. And no human being shall be permitted to prescribe my liberty or intrench upon the perfect freedom of my brethren, without hearing my voice lifted in protest against it."⁷⁸

On September 10, she wrote again to Olsen about the influence extending from Battle Creek. "I am now deeply troubled over the shape which matters are taking there, and the influence which is being exerted on the work everywhere. I ask you, my brother, how can you entrust A. R. Henry and Harmon Lindsay with so much responsibility in the work, and sent them hither and thither to all parts of the field? They are not by precept and example giving the third angel's message...."⁷⁹

That same month she penned an article "Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods Before Me" which was published in *Special Testimonies To Ministers And Workers (Series A, No. 9, 1897)*. The insights shared zeroed in even closer to the origin of the leadership principles being followed, the reason for their existence in light of the gospel, and the direction they were heading in the light of history and prophecy. For sake of brevity, the key observations in this important testimony will be extracted:

--Cause of abuses:

The righteousness of Christ by faith has been ignored by some; for it is contrary to their spirit and their whole life experience.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ RH, July 23, 1895 par. 1&2

⁷⁹ 1888, p. 1421.1

⁸⁰ TM 363.2

Men think they are representing the justice of God, but they do not represent His tenderness and the great love wherewith He has loved us. Their human invention originating with the specious devices of Satan, appears fair enough to the blinded eyes of men, because it is inherent in their nature.⁸¹

--Oppression characterized:

Men have taken unfair advantage of those whom they supposed to be under their jurisdiction. They were determined to bring the individuals to their terms; they would rule or ruin.⁸²

Let no plans or methods be adopted in any of our institutions that will bind mind or talent under the control of human judgment; for this is not in God's order.⁸³

No greater dishonor can be done to God than for one finite agent to bring other men's talents under his absolute control, even though the benefits of the same be used to the advantage of the cause.⁸⁴

Satan's methods tend to one end--to make men the slaves of men.⁸⁵

The spirit of domination is extending to the presidents of our conferences.⁸⁶

Rule, rule, has been their course of action.⁸⁷

In order to reign and become a power, they employ Satan's methods to justify their own principles. They exalt themselves as men of superior judgment, and they have stood as representatives of God. These are false gods.⁸⁸

--Results of Oppression:

Propositions, which are not in accordance with the will of God, ... are a misrepresentation of His character.⁸⁹

In such arrangements one man's mind is ruled by another man's mind, and the human agency is separated from God and exposed to temptation.⁹⁰

This lording it over God's heritage will create such a disgust of man's jurisdiction that a state of insubordination will result.⁹¹

The result will be a loss of confidence even in the management of faithful men.⁹²

When men who profess to serve God ignore His parental character and depart from honor and righteousness in dealing with their fellowmen, Satan exults, for he has inspired them with his attributes. They are following in the track of Romanism.⁹³

Satan has had an opportunity of representing himself. When one who professes to be a representative of Christ engages in sharp dealing and in pressing men into hard places, those who

⁸¹ *TM* 363.4

⁸² *TM* 360.2

⁸³ *TM* 360.3

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *TM* 362.1

⁸⁷ *TM* 363.2

⁸⁸ *TM* 364.1

⁸⁹ *TM* 360.1

⁹⁰ *TM* 360.3

⁹¹ *TM* 361.1

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *TM* 362.2

are thus oppressed will either break every fetter of restraint, or they will be led to regard God as a hard master. They cherish hard feelings against God, and the soul is alienated from Him, just as Satan planned it should be.⁹⁴

--The solution:

But the Lord will raise up laborers who realize their own nothingness without special help from God.⁹⁵

If a man is sanguine of his own powers and seeks to exercise dominion over his brethren, feeling that he is invested with authority to make his will the ruling power, the best and only safe course is to remove him, lest great harm be done and he lose his own soul and imperil the souls of others.⁹⁶

Those in authority should manifest the spirit of Christ.⁹⁷

In a blazing example of the practical working of "the faith of Jesus" in such situations as that caused by the three leaders we have focused on, Ellen White wrote her son Edson on September 25, "If you can do so in an unobtrusive way, try to help Bro. Olsen, and stay up his hands. He needs sympathy, and words of hopefulness and courage. But please do not cast reflection upon the men who have not a living connection with God. If you are considerate, you may do good to A.R. Henry, and Harmon Lindsay. Show by your attitude that you hold no bitterness toward them. Whatever their attitude toward you, let it not discourage you or embitter your experience. Hold fast to Jesus. He has helped you, and he will help you every hour. But do not be off your guard for one moment. Do not indulge in hasty speech. If possible, we want to save these men, who know so little of the Spirit of God. In order to do this, while you should not depend on them as gods, be kind and courteous, treat them as respectfully as though they had been your best friends.

"I have been, and am still speaking very plainly to them, and your attitude must not give them the impression that I have written to you anything detrimental to them. These men have many temptations, and their souls are precious. If they can be won to see how they can come to

⁹⁴ *TM* 363.2

⁹⁵ *TM* 361.1

⁹⁶ *TM* 362.1

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Jesus and take him as their counsellor, what a victory will be gained on the Lord's side. Do not live over the past. Do not in any way give occasion for your good to be evil spoken of. You may save souls from death, and hide a multitude of sins, if you walk circumspectly. The Lord bears long with the erring children he has purchased at an infinite cost. These men, A.R. Henry and Harmon Lindsay, are in the greatest peril of losing their souls because they do not discern their situation. Let the melting love of God abide and rule in your heart, controlling every action."⁹⁸

On November 13 she wrote her nephew Frank Belden, "A.R. Henry and Harmon Lindsay believe not the Third Angel's Message. They are not only saying in their hearts, 'My Lord delayeth his coming', but in spirit, in words and actions wherever they go. It pains me to see these two bodies of death sent from place to place upon important business in connection with the cause of God, when they are imbued with the spirit of Satan working in secret. They have not the Spirit of God. They are separated from God, and have been ever since the Minneapolis meeting, walking in the imaginations of their own hearts...."⁹⁹

Leadership Counsel in 1896

On April 20 of the next year, she wrote another letter of appeal to Lindsay. "You look upon things seen as of value, but he who is a citizen of the heavenly kingdom will be constantly looking at things not seen. The power of earth over the mind and character is broken."¹⁰⁰

On May 22 she wrote Olsen, comparing his leadership to that of Aaron, with lack of firmness, and yielding to the men around him who were unconverted. "Your words and actions have encouraged men of a strong, determined purpose to carry things; you let them plan, and carried out their devisings, as did Aaron with the leaders of Israel. You have tried to make

⁹⁸ *I888*, pp. 1463.1, 1464.1

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1472.3

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1502.1

yourself believe that this was the only thing you could do. But you have not in all places taken up your God-given work, to be firm and decided for the right.... You should have known what the wisdom of God required of his people; but you were lead to view things as men viewed them who had resisted the Holy Spirit, and who were not led and taught of God. The souls of these men are marred with wrong-doing. They have blinded their eyes, so that they cannot distinguish righteousness from unrighteousness."¹⁰¹

On July 1 she wrote again "To the Men who occupy Responsible Positions in the Work," connecting once more the rejection of the gospel message with the leadership crisis that had developed. "When men like A.R. Henry and Harmon Lindsay refuse to be worked by the Holy Spirit, and yet consent to accept important responsibilities, Satan takes possession of their minds, and plans and devises for them. When these men entered upon this work, they did not foresee the results, but step by step has been taken under the generalship of Satanic agencies, who knew from the beginning what the results would be. Had they kept in touch with the divine character, they would not have done the work they have done, but while at Minneapolis they both closed their eyes to the light, and padlocked their hearts against evidence, in order that the Holy Spirit might not find entrance; and their course has testified to the result. When Elder Olsen linked himself with these men, he perverted his spiritual eyesight, and saw things in a strange light. He knew that they were resisting the Spirit of God, but thought that by uniting with them, he could convert them. The result has been contrary to this; for to a large degree, they have converted him: his clear discernment between right and wrong has been injured."¹⁰²

On August 27, she wrote to A. O. Tait of the ongoing situation, and clearly perceived that the spirit of domination was extending from the control of people to the control of other institutions.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1521.2

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 1577.2; 1578.1

"I feel very sorry for brother Olsen. I have written him much in regard to the situation. He has written back to me, thanking me for the timely letters, but he has not acted upon the light given. The case is a mysterious one.... I am distressed beyond any words my pen can trace. Unmistakably, Elder Olsen has acted as did Aaron, in regard to these men who have been opposed to the work of God ever since the Minneapolis meeting. They have not repented of their course of action in resisting light and evidence.... The disease at the heart of the work poisons the blood, and thus the disease is communicated to the bodies they visit. Yet, notwithstanding the sickly diseased state of things at home some have felt a great burden to take the whole of believing bodies under their parental wings. But if the institutions which God has established have spiritual discernment, they will not concede to these paternal propositions. It is not in the order of God that a few men shall manage the great interests throughout the field."¹⁰³

On December 1 she sent another letter to Olsen, commenting on his lack of spiritual discernment, that allowed her and her team to be sent to Australia. "I have not, I think, revealed the entire workings that led me here to Australia. Perhaps you may never fully understand the matter. The Lord was not in our leaving America. He did not reveal that it was his will that I should leave Battle Creek. The Lord did not plan this, but he let you all move after your own imaginings. The Lord would have had W. C. White, his mother, and her workers remain in America. We were needed at the heart of the work, and had your spiritual perception discerned the true situation, you would never have consented to the movements made. But the Lord read the hearts of all. There was so great a willingness to have us leave, that the Lord permitted this thing to take place. Those who were weary of the testimonies borne were left without the persons who bore them. Our separation from Battle Creek was to let men have their own will and way,

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 1607.2; 1608.1&2

which they thought superior to the way of the Lord."¹⁰⁴ Then she added, "The result is before you."

What was that result? She described several aspects significant for leadership. Olsen's dependence on men around him and failure to realize his need for divine counsel made him willing "to have the strong experience and knowledge that comes from no human source removed" from Battle Creek."¹⁰⁵ "The sum of the matter is proved, and its figures are before you. We are here. The Battle Creek matters have been laid before me at this great distance, and the load I have carried has been very heavy to bear.... Because of the moves that have been made, many publications that should have been issued before this have been retarded; the great amount of writing that has been necessary in order to communicate with America has hindered this work."¹⁰⁶

We must consider more of "the Battle Creek matters" in the light of the gospel principles of leadership previous outlined. It is significant that Olsen's associates were men "who had resisted the Holy Spirit, and who were not led and taught of God," men who "have blinded their eyes, so that they cannot distinguish righteousness from unrighteousness."¹⁰⁷

Leadership Counsel in 1898

Ellen White did not stopping sending testimonies to Henry. On April 20, 1898, she wrote to him, opening the history that explained the present. "When in Minneapolis, you took a turn that has influenced all your movements since then in the wrong direction. You must know that you are pursuing a course similar to that of Judas, who betrayed his Lord.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1622.1

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1623.1

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1624.1&2

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1521.2

"Your supposed wisdom in financial matters has led your brethren to cling to you, and to regard your judgment as superior. They have made a mistake. Notwithstanding all the light God has given his people in regard to the righteousness of Christ, they have not had spiritual eyesight to discern that all wisdom is from God. They have not discerned the truth. Linked up with Harmon Lindsay, you have betrayed sacred trusts, and you have both greatly hurt the cause of God. You must answer for your course of action before God. Would it not be well for you to consider what the end of all this will be? You have already gone as far under the inspiration of Satan as it is in any way safe for you to go. It is your privilege now to make a decided change. In the name of the Lord I warn you not to take one step further in the path you have entered upon. This is a life and death question. Call a halt, I beseech of you. Call a halt before it is everlastingly too late....

"You and Harmon Lindsay have rejected the light sent you from heaven, which, if received, would have made you wise men. Your natural traits of character would have been brought into subjection to the Spirit of God, and your great desire would not have been to make provision for yourselves, in a way that is not honorable or righteous....¹⁰⁸

On May 16 she sent Henry another letter. "Wrong and unjust plans were followed in dealing with God's workers, and many of these workers were discouraged. Unfair, underhand scheming, opposed to true principles, were corrupting the office. There was constant devising and planning to obtain control of all the publishing business. ...The Conference taking on all the crippled institutions was a blind to obtain control of every interest, every institution, by the consolidation of all. God would not have this. He would have his institutions independent of each other, and yet in perfect harmony with each other.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 1653.1&2; 1657.2;

"In your dealing, you have sacrificed Christian principles. The dealing with authors has been dishonest and supremely selfish.... You have no more right to the large wages you demand than have I or your brethren.... These words are to a large degree applicable to Harmon Lindsay...."¹⁰⁹

Leadership Counsel in 1899

On February 10 the next year, she wrote again "To the Men in responsible positions in the work." "While at Minneapolis many things were opened before me in regard to the propositions made by A. R. Henry and others. These plans were not inspired by the Spirit of God. If you had then stood in the love of God, you would have been able to distinguish between righteousness and unrighteousness. Plans were formed regarding the management of the work which could not bear the light of day; for the signature of heaven was not upon them. Those who made these propositions had no idea of where their plans and imaginations would carry them. They did not realize that they would be led to subvert right principles, to obtain control of facilities that they might manage matters according to their own ideas, to build up what they pleased and to bind about what they pleased. This planning and devising was not carried on in a frank open way, but in a way which caused God to write opposite their names, they have dissembled. They have falsified. They have worked according to the deceptive practices of Satan, in order to establish a confederacy which would enable them to obtain advantages when dealing with authors. These men went to Eld. Smith and induced him to accept the lowest royalty.

"Your committee selected to judge books is a fraud. Scarcely one of the members know how to estimate books. They have contrived to place in the market books like Bible Readings, which would cost very little for publication, and yet bring in a large revenue. But books that the world

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1668.1&2; 1677.3&4

needed have received but little attention. By wrong management they have been kept away from the people."¹¹⁰

Leadership Counsel in 1901

Upon her return from Australia, at the next General Conference Session held 10 years from when she was sent away, Ellen White spoke to the delegates on April 3, 1901, in one of her most important addresses ever. Her very first words were, "I feel a special interest in the movements and decisions that shall be made at this Conference regarding the things that should have been done years ago, and especially ten years ago, when we were assembled in Conference, and the Spirit and power of God came into our meeting, testifying that God was ready to work for this people if they would come into working order. The brethren assented to the light God had given, but there were those connected with our institutions, especially with the Review and Herald Office and the Conference, who brought in elements of unbelief, so that the light that was given was not acted upon. It was assented to, but no special change was made to bring about such a condition of things that the power of God could be revealed among his people.

"The light then given me was that this people should stand higher than any other people on the face of the whole earth, that they should be a loyal people, a people who would rightly represent truth. The sanctifying power of the truth, revealed in their lives, was to distinguish them from the world. They were to stand in moral dignity, having such a close connection with heaven that the Lord God of Israel could give them a place in the earth.

"Year after year the same acknowledgment was made, but the principles which exalt a people were not woven into the work. God gave them clear light as to what they should do, and what they should not do, but they departed from that light, and it is a marvel to me that we stand in as

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 1684.2; 1685.1

much prosperity as we do today. It is because of the great mercy of our God, not because of our righteousness, but that his name should not be dishonored in the world."

Before ending her appeal, she observed, "Why, I ask you, are men who have not brought self into subjection allowed to stand in important positions of truth and handle sacred things? They have grown to the stature of men, but they have brought with them their childish tendencies. God does not want any such thing. He has made provision for all to have in them the grace of Christ. No others will enter heaven. There has been one rebellion there, and there will not be another. We have been given an opportunity to get rid of every kind of rebellion."¹¹¹

Did 1901 Effect a Change?

In response to her appeal, the agenda of the 1901 Session was changed, and a new constitution was voted. In June after the conference, the following observations were made as to the outcome of the Session, in a reproof to her son Edson for his attempt to force a decision in the publishing work.

"I am again much burdened as I see you selecting words from writings that I have sent you, and using them to force decisions that the brethren do not regard with clearness.... Your course would have been the course to be pursued if no change had been made in the General Conference. But a change has been made, and many more changes will be made and great developments will be seen. No issues are to be forced.

"All the light that God has given me is that the work has been greatly hindered by the books having to pass through so many hands.... It hurts me to think that you are using words which I wrote prior to the conference. Since the conference great changes have been made. Do not urge that Mother has said thus and so. I know that reforms are to be made; but when I am not present

¹¹¹ *GCB*, April 3, 1901 par. 1-3, 12

to hear the words that are spoken, I cannot advise you to select a few words from a letter I have written and use these words to forbid a course which the brethren wish to pursue regarding the publication and handling of books. Changes have been made, and I trust that our brethren who are interested in the book work will manifest an unselfish interest in the disposal of books for the Southern field.

"A terribly unjust course has been pursued in the past. A want of principle has been revealed. But in pity to His people God has brought about changes.... When the Lord takes hold of the work as He did at our last conference, your mother can stand back and not be brought so prominently into matters. And, oh, how pleased I am when this can be so."¹¹²

She twice again counseled him against pushing change, and observed the continuing need of future change:

"In the name of the Lord, I charge you, in whom I have the deepest interest, not to make the burdens resting upon me doubly hard to carry. The course of action which before the conference might have been a necessity is no longer necessary, for the Lord Himself interposed to set things in order. He has given His Holy Spirit. I am confident that He will set in order the matters that seem to be moving wrong....

"Keep the way of the Lord in justice and judgment. Make no urgent calls upon the Review and Herald. Let them do what they will. We hope that they will so repent of the past that the Lord can blot it out of His book."¹¹³

Did the repentance that apparently began go deep enough? Were the changes persistent and to the heart of things? Was the Lord allowed to "set in order the matters that seem to be moving wrong" even after the conference?

¹¹² *19MR*, pp. 147.1-4; 148.1

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 148.2; 150.3

The events of 1902 gave occasion for a deeper analysis of what had not changed. After fires destroyed the medical (in January) and publishing (in December) facilities, she recalled in a testimony "To the Brethren in Battle Creek" dated January 5, 1903, the visions she had received of impending judgment. "Once, in the daytime, while my pen was in my hand, I lost consciousness, and it seemed as if this sword of flame were turning first in one direction and then in another. Disaster seemed to follow disaster because God was dishonored by the devising of men to exalt and glorify themselves."

"At the General Conference, held in Battle Creek in 1901, the Lord gave His people evidence that He was calling for reformation. Minds were convicted, and hearts were touched; but thorough work was not done. If stubborn hearts had then broken in penitence before God, there would have been seen one of the greatest manifestations of the power of God that has ever been seen. But God was not honored. The testimonies of His Spirit were not heeded. Men did not separate from the practices that were in decided opposition to the principles of truth and righteousness, which should ever be maintained in the Lord's work."¹¹⁴

This testimony, entitled "The Review and Herald Fire," has the following important connections:

1. It connects the Review fire that occurred just six days before this letter, to the failures dating back to 1901.

2. In using the phrase "principles of truth and righteousness" she continues the theme of the April 3, 1901 address¹¹⁵ to the 1901 General Conference Session, which in turn connects explicitly back to the 1891 General Conference Session,¹¹⁶ in the shadow of Minneapolis.

¹¹⁴ *8T*, 97.1, 4

¹¹⁵ See *GCB*, April 3, 1901 par. 3, 5, 14, 18, 19, 24, 27, 32.

¹¹⁶ See *GCB*, April 3, 1901 par. 1

3. It ties the theme of self-exaltation to what was happening: "the devising of men to exalt and glorify themselves."

The theme was repeated in a letter 9 days later to Judge Jesse Arthur. To him she recounted how God's "power and grace sustained me. His power was with me all the way through the last General Conference, and had the men in responsibility felt one quarter of the burden that rested on me, there would have been heartfelt confession and repentance. A work would have been done by the Holy Spirit such as has never yet been seen in Battle Creek. Those who at that time heard my message, and refused to humble their hearts before God, are without excuse. No greater proof will ever come to them.

"The result of the last General Conference has been the greatest, the most terrible, sorrow of my life. No change was made. The spirit that should have been brought into the whole work as the result of that meeting was not brought in because men did not receive the testimonies of the Spirit of God. As they went to their several fields of labor, they did not walk in the light that the Lord had flashed upon their pathway, but carried into their work the wrong principles that had been prevailing in the work at Battle Creek.

"The Lord has marked every movement made by the leading men in our institutions and conferences. It is a perilous thing to reject the light that God sends...."¹¹⁷

Some would restrict the above comment "No change was made" to the medical work. Evidence to the contrary is in the letter itself:

1. "the men in responsibility"
2. "the whole work"
3. "their several fields of labor"

¹¹⁷ *13MR* 122.2, 3; 123.1

4. "the wrong principles that had been prevailing in the work at Battle Creek" This phrase appears to connect to many of the testimonies we have examined.

She clearly addressed the core spiritual need:

1. "heartfelt confession and repentance"
2. "work done by the Holy Spirit"
3. "humble their hearts before God"
4. "the spirit that should have been brought into the whole work"
5. "did not receive the testimonies of the Spirit of God"
6. "did not walk in the light that the Lord had flashed upon their pathway"

These intensely practical problems with their solutions reflect precisely what the disciples were willing, in contrast, to face and accept during the 50 days between the cross and Pentecost.

Could we as leaders today still be stuck in our version of Luke 22-24?¹¹⁸

Conclusion Connection to Our Time

Several pieces of evidence point to the vital nature of the principles we have studied. The spirit of rebellion shown in ancient Israel delayed her entry into Canaan. This was repeatedly shown to be the experience of the Advent Movement prior to 1901.¹¹⁹ The events of the last 100 years must be seen in this light. If rebellion had been removed, it follows that the delay would

¹¹⁸ The parallels between the greatest transformation recorded in scripture (Luke 22 through Acts 1) and the Advent movement are compelling, with many evidences from history and prophecy. For one allusion to this connection, which led the author of this paper to explore the parallels, see *1888*, pp. 26.4, 27.1 (Feb. 18, 1887 letter to E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones).

¹¹⁹ *Ms4*, 1883 (in *ISM* 68, 69); *4SP* 291 (1884). The *4SP* statement was republished in both editions of *The Great Controversy* in 1888 and 1911 (pp. 457, 458). Very significantly it was also included in 1904 in "Counsels Often Repeated" with this added setting: "Upon us is shining the accumulated light of past ages. The record of Israel's forgetfulness has been preserved for our enlightenment. In this age God has set His hand to gather unto Himself a people from every nation, kindred, and tongue. In the advent movement He has wrought for His heritage, even as He wrought for the Israelites in leading them from Egypt. In the great disappointment of 1844 the faith of His people was tested as was that of the Hebrews at the Red Sea. Had the Adventists in the early days still trusted to the guiding Hand that had been with them in their past experience, they would have seen of the salvation of God." (*8T* 115, 116).

have ended. But the possibility of "many more years" in this world was voiced 8 months after the 1901 conference, to a leader who had almost died working against rebellious elements.¹²⁰

Have we learned the lessons of history? Have we been cured of rebellion? Have we gone to the desert with Moses to be re-educated? The longer we remain here, the more obvious the answer should be. Only after such a transformation can we both be and mentor the kind of spiritual leaders that God can use to lead modern Israel to the borders of the heavenly Canaan, to the point where divine intervention--"without hand"¹²¹--must lead us the rest of the way.

¹²⁰ Letter to P. T. Magan, December 7, 1901; *20MR* 312.7, 313.1. Sadly, less than 3 years later Magan's wife would die "a martyr, right among her own brethren." (*SpM* 353.7; Arthur White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Elmshaven Years, Volume 5, 1900-1905*, pp. 336, 337)

¹²¹ Dan. 2:34, 45; 8:25