



## SAVED TO SERVE

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### NADexit: Separation between the Kingly Power and the Rebellious Division

“If God abhors one sin above another, of which His people are guilty, it is doing nothing in case of an emergency. Indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God as a grievous crime and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God.” {Testimonies for the Church, Volume, 3, page 280.3}

Divorces are seldom (if ever) peaceable and are most times bitter, costly and drawn-out, leaving both parties emotionally and financially drained and on unpleasant terms. Unfortunately, the majority of the time the biggest losers or casualties of divorce are the children who may not have seen it coming, perhaps through naivety, denial, reassuring untruths regarding the state of the marriage or the well-acted facade that one or both parents present before them as if everything were normal. If carefully observed, however, obvious signs would have revealed to the children that a separation, spiritually, emotionally, physically, financially, and otherwise, had already taken place and that a divorce was inevitable. Just as the dissolution of a marriage begins with separation and then one party filing for divorce, citing irreconcilable differences as the reason, a divorce of sorts is highly probable between the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists and the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Much like the instances of divorces in marriage, a separation has been in the making for some time, widening as issues continue to unravel, leaving only one possible conclusion, a divorce.

One possible item of discussion at the General Conference's Annual Council of the Executive Committee, to be held October 5-12, 2016 will be the reprimanding of unions that have continued to ordain women to the office of pastor, against the voted policy of the General Conference in session. “With Annual Council a week away, preliminary meetings are taking place at the General Conference this week to finalize agenda items. The Division Presidents met on Tuesday and voted overwhelmingly to recommend the disciplining of unions they see as being in rebellion...What is being proposed is that the General Conference take over such unions—unions where women are ordained—and operate them as missions attached to the General Conference. That would mean that the GC would then be able to remove union leaders and replace the leadership with their own appointees. Then a new constituency meeting could be called to attempt to reverse the ordination vote...So, in an unprecedented move ‘to preserve unity,’ the General Conference is proposing to exert its own power over that of the constituencies in the unions, an action that will fracture the North American Division and other portions of the world church that are not in agreement on this church policy.”<sup>1</sup>

It must be stated from the onset, that I am not siding with either the General Conference or the North American Division in this matter. I am advocating making the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy paramount in governance of every part of the work; and I am challenging the readers and the hearers to do the same.

This consideration of a General Conference takeover of unions that have and are ordaining women comes as a surprise to many members, while others are not even aware of this development. Some view the issue as a situation of bullying by the General Conference leadership, while others are in agreement with the proposal and feel that it is about time that something be done to hold in check the rebellious unions. One thing is certain, whatever the outcome of this power struggle, whether a General Conference takeover of unions (which represents the kingly-power structure in the General Conference), or the North American Division fully separating from the General Conference for the purpose of carrying out apostasy, both moves are in violation of God's Word; therefore both parties in the separation are not without blame.

In late 2014, it was reported that “leaders of the North American Division have taken initial steps to relocate from the headquarters of the General Conference building in Silver Spring, Maryland, to another site in the nearby metropolitan Washington area...‘The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America has a need to have its own unique message and strategies that are relevant and work in our territory,’ Jackson told the church leaders from across the U.S., Canada, Bermuda, and Micronesia. ‘While the Seventh-day Adventist movement began in North America, we are among the youngest divisions in the church, and it's time that we grow up and leave our parent's house.’”<sup>2</sup>

In an effort to quiet any speculation that something was wrong, General Conference President Ted Wilson reassured members of the world church that “‘this should never be treated as an initiative to get them out of the building. Quite the opposite,’ Ted N.C. Wilson, president of the Adventist world church, told Annual Council delegates after the vote.’ General Conference treasurer Robert E. Lemon said the General Conference also fully supported its initiative to relocate and further define its own identity. ‘This move does not represent any distancing of mission or purpose from that of the General Conference,’ Lemon said. ‘The North American Division has always been and continues to be the backbone of support, both financially and missionally for the worldwide work of the church.’”<sup>3</sup>

This was not only deceptive, but apparently an outright lie that all was well between the North American Division and the General Conference leadership; if both were on the same page, Dan Jackson would never have stated that the North American Division needs to have its own “unique message and strategies.”

If someone moves out of the house in a marriage, something indeed is wrong. If a child witnessed one parent moving out of the house, would not that child question that decision and despite what answer was given, sense that something were terribly wrong? If members could not see that something was awry in this decision to have the North American Division relocate its headquarters, they were either in denial, indifferent or willfully ignorant. Since the initial announcement, “the North American Division has started the process of renovation of their own building in June 2016 and the relocation is set to be finalized in April of 2017.” 4

The *Adventist News Network*, the official news service of the Seventh-day Adventist world church, ran an article showing just how significant the NAD’s role is in supporting the world missions of the General Conference. “NAD provides nearly half of the denomination’s overseas missionaries. It also provides nearly half of the General Conference World Budget, a significant portion of which is appropriated to the 12 other divisions.” 5

It cannot be overlooked that executive leaders of the NAD stated that their contributions to the General Conference had significantly decreased over the years because of their desire to fund their own missions and projects in their local fields. “The percentage of tithe given to the General Conference is down from 90 percent in 1990... That percentage has dropped from 10 percent in 2000, according to General Conference Treasury officials. By 2020, that figure will be reduced to 6 percent.” 6

Again, as asked before, is the mission of the NAD different from the mission of the General Conference? Has their mission changed over the years from the mission that the denomination held when it was established in 1863 and in after years? If so, it must be ascertained what that mission entails today. One does not have to speculate what the mission is, as it was stated in a video and in an article put out by the NAD during the 2015 General Conference session. One stated goal was “to ordain more women as pastors within the division.” 7 The overall mission was essentially promoting a progressive agenda that mirrors the new organization described by Ellen White in Selected Messages, Book 1, page 204.

Additionally, there have been institutions within the North American Division that have removed themselves from the direct governance of the General Conference and are now directly under the North American Division. One such institution is Oakwood University. As a result of the move, the NAD stated that the money that would normally go to the General Conference would now go directly to Oakwood University. Of course the General Conference would have to respond, and respond they did! “Constituents easily approved the transfer of Oakwood University from the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s General Conference to its North American Division in a move that... will lead to a downgrade of its Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office..., a depository of White documents and other historical materials from the main office at the General Conference headquarters. Only General Conference-sponsored schools are allowed to have the higher status, and the Oakwood facility will be renamed a White Estate research center.” 8

Additionally, it must be noted that “the Review and Herald Publishing house, which was principally operated by the General Conference was closed in 2014. The Pacific Press Publishing, the only major publishing house in North America to serve the world church, is presently under the control of the NAD.” 9

Although putting forth an apparent false pretense that all was fine in the relationship between the NAD and the General Conference, General Conference leaders knew that there were movements afoot in the NAD that deviated from voted policies. Mark Finley expressed the fears of General Conference leadership when he stated the following: “In the Seventh-day Adventist Church we don’t have fiats that come down from the General Conference that dictate what each of the entities, whether they’re local churches, conferences, or unions do... So what can the General Conference do if a constituent group steps out of policy? It can simply express its disapproval for that... What if an entity chooses to violate a particular policy... It’s a question that we wrestle with in General Conference leadership, because we don’t have constituent authority. Each individual group does... I think our concern is, this opens the door for other open violations of policy in the area of tithe, in the area of certain sexuality issues that people are going to say, ‘Look this is a matter of conscience.’” 10

This statement from Elder Finley reveals that he and other General Conference leaders knew that the NAD was pushing agendas outside of General Conference policies regarding women’s ordination, which was the context from which the statement was made, and also the LGBT movement within the denomination. If this were not the case, Elder Finley would not have mentioned sexuality issues as an example. After Elder Finley revealed the fears of the General Conference leadership at the GYC meeting January 2014, a 21-page document was composed in 2015 titled “An understanding of the Biblical view on homosexual practice and pastoral care,” put together and approved by the North American Division, the Lake Union Conference, the Biblical Research Institute and Andrews University, which covertly sanctions the baptizing and accepting of practicing LGBT persons as members and leaders in Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Back to the issue of women’s ordination; the question that delegates voted upon was stated as follows: “After your prayerful study on ordination from the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and the reports of the study commissions, and; After your careful consideration of what is best for the Church and the fulfillment of its mission, Is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No.” 11

Notice, the question was not whether the practice of ordaining women to the gospel ministry was biblical; the question was whether or not divisions should have the authority to ordain women if they so choose. The problem lies in the fact that an unbiblical practice was even brought to the table to be voted upon. If the Bible has a clear position on the topic, and it does, why should a vote be taken which would sanction the unbiblical practice of ordaining women if the vote were to go that way? Of course the vote was not passed; however, what was significant was, that in comparison to the two other times that the issue of women’s ordination was brought to a vote at the General Conference session (1990 and 1995), the margin between “yes” and “no” was notably smaller than the previous years. “By a margin of 1,381-977... with five abstentions, delegates by secret ballot ended a five-year process characterized by acrimonious debate.” 12

Since the vote, there have been protests, tantrums, uproars, and outright disregard of the voted policy by NAD representatives, pastors and members. One such demonstration of the protest is the continuance of unions ordaining women to the gospel ministry and “commissioning” them to perform the very functions of an ordained minister. Another demonstration was male pastors renouncing their ordination and accepting “commissioned” status to show solidarity with their “oppressed” female counterparts. Additionally, other unions around the world have followed in the steps of the NAD and joined the protest by continuing to ordain women.

It can be inferred that some of the unions within the NAD may have known that a General Conference takeover of unions that ordain women was under consideration, by the fact that the Pacific Union Conference, during its constituency meeting in August of 2016, proactively prepared by voting and passing a resolution to change its dissolution clause of its bylaws from this: “In the event of the dissolution of this Union, all assets remaining after all claims have been satisfied shall be transferred to the General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists...” to this: “In the event of the dissolution of this Union, all assets remaining after all claims have been satisfied shall be transferred proportionally based on membership to the individual conferences comprising the Pacific Union at the time of dissolution.”<sup>13</sup>

Again, even the mere proposal and consideration of the General Conference dissolving unions and taking control indicates that the “kingly power” that Ellen White so firmly denounced, is still existent today within the leadership of the General Conference; which means that the reorganization that was called for and apparently set up after 1901 was not lasting; therefore the kingly, hierarchical structure set up at the General Conference is not and cannot be regarded as the voice of God. This observation by no means sanctions the NAD’s behavior in practicing apostasy; it simply shows that a Bible and Spirit of Prophecy-believing Seventh-day Adventist should neither side with the General Conference or the North American Division, but should call for a resurrection of the writings of Ellen White to set straight the contrary and unbiblical principles, policies and practices in both the General Conference and the North American Division respectively.

Supposing the General Conference takes over the various unions, there are many questions to be considered, such as, who would have the rights to the name Seventh-day Adventist? Or would both hold to the name? Would there be two separate “denominations?” Where would the members send their tithes? Surely those favoring women’s ordination would not send their tithes to the General Conference, while those opposing women’s ordination would not send their tithes to the North American Division. Would there now be another storehouse, as many believe and teach that there is only one storehouse, which is the General Conference? These inquiries underscore the hypocrisy of many individuals on both sides of the issue, who adamantly resist the idea of churches and other institutions being wholly self-supporting and receiving tithes and offerings to fund the gospel commission. They criticize self-supporting ministers, ministries and churches as being led by the devil, offshoots, outside of the church, breakaways and even taking legal action against those who use the name “Seventh-day Adventist.” Which of the two entities (the General Conference or the NAD) would the institutions of ASI honor? Will the General Conference and the North American Division reach an agreement that both entities can retain the name Seventh-day Adventist, while operating wholly apart from one another? Time will tell as other developments will surely and shortly come to light.

One thing is certain however, were this takeover and final dissolution to come to fruition, the General Conference leaders would undoubtedly have their work cut out for them. They would have to undertake the almost impossible task of changing the minds of the delegates that voted overwhelmingly in favor of unions being able to ordain women, along with the members that those delegates represent (in some unions the vote was 80/20). They would have even more protests and rebellion on their hands to contend with. The only solution that God has given to bring about unity in the truth, and to fulfill the gospel commission, leaders and people from both sides have rejected, when they voted at the 2005 and 2015 General Conference sessions that Ellen White is no longer the Lord’s messenger, her writings are no longer authoritative in the church and her writings can only “enrich but not define the faith and practice” of Seventh-day Adventists. The time is now that we should reject the supposed wisdom of ministers, administrators, and theologians. “Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper” 2 Chronicles 20:20. The prophets were given to not only perfect the members but also to bring unity of the faith, not unity by coercion, corruption or compromise, but unity in the spirit of truth (Ephesians 4:11-13). Let us watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. These signs show that Jesus will come soon.

“When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage and firmness the most unflinching. To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason.” {Last Day Events, page 180.4}

1. <http://spectrummagazine.org/article/2016/09/29/breaking-general-conference-leadership-considers-takeover-unions-ordain-women>

2. <http://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/nad-takes-first-steps-to-relocate-headquarters>

3. Ibid

4. <http://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story4070-nad-starts-renovation-of-new-headquarters>

5. <https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2014-06-19/a-division-territorys-self-evaluation-comes-amid-other-changes/>

6. <https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2014-06-19/a-division-territorys-self-evaluation-comes-amid-other-changes/>

7. <http://www.nadministerial.org/article/370/for-nad-pastors/pastor-life/women-clergy/why-the-nad-needs-women-pastors/wanted-more-female-pastors-essential-for-the-harvest>  
<https://vimeo.com/131616219>

8. <https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2014-10-15/oakwood-constituents-back-transfer-to-nad/>

9. <http://spectrummagazine.org/article/news/2014/05/23/innovate-innovate-innovate-review-herald-and-dilemma-adventist-publishing>

10. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwv76Z6dtJE&list=UU7fhV6W5NntSo3vMEjWXqSQ>

11. <http://spectrummagazine.org/article/jared-wright/2014/10/14/breaking-annual-council-votes-womens-ordination-question-2015-gc-ses>

12. <http://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story2988-%E2%80%8Bgc-delegates-vote-%E2%80%98no%E2%80%99-on-issue-of-women%E2%80%99s-ordination>

13. <http://www.fulcrum7.com/news/2016/8/28/pacific-union-prepares-to-forestall-gc-discipline>