

The King of Crises in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Description



PDF VERSION

The first part of this publication outlines the current crisis within the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. Our church's leadership is deeply divided and some fear there may be a denominational split. It is imperative that we understand the crisis and seek God for a solution. The second part of this article is focused on just such a solution.

“With his eye upon the church, the Lord has again and again
allowed matters to come to a crisis, that in their extremity
his people should look alone for his help.”

– Ellen White, *General Conference Daily Bulletin* April 13, 1891, par. 20

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The Seventh-day Adventist Church is in a crisis! 2015 saw what has been called “the most divisive General Conference session since 1888.”¹ George Knight in *Catholic or Adventist: The Ongoing Struggle Over Authority + 9.5 Thesis*, *Spectrum*, Oct. 2, 2017 The issue was women's ordination. More specifically, the delegates of the 2015 General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas were to vote on the following question:

Is it acceptable for division² For those who are not aware, the organizational structure of the SDA church is as follows: The General Conference is the governing body; it operates through 13 Divisions, each responsible for the work in different regions. Each Division contains Unions and each Union contains Conferences and/or Missions, each of which contain local churches. 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 No³ <https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2015-07-08/womens-ordination-not-approved/6/>

At the end of the day, 1381 voted “no,” 977 voted “yes,” and 5 abstained. Clearly, the church is deeply divided over this issue and tension has only increased since the vote. Some have pointed to the vote as setting in stone the official theological stance of the church on women's ordination, while others have reminded us that it only determined whether it would be allowed for individual divisions to make provision for women's ordination. Some unions have taken the stance that ordination falls within the jurisdiction of unions and that the General Conference does not have the authority to determine whether they should ordain women. These unions have been generally characterized as “non-compliant” and the GC has been busy trying to figure out what to do with these and other non-compliant entities ever since. Thus, the issue has largely shifted from debating the merits of women's ordination to debating the authority of the various levels of the church's structure and what to do when entities act contrary to church policy.

As with anything, it is important to consider each act and each moment in this church's history within its broader context. In 2017, *Spectrum Magazine* published an article written by George Knight, the denomination's leading historian, which reviews much of the relevant history. Here are some excerpts:⁴ I've changed George's italics to underlines.

The plain fact is that the earliest Adventists feared structured churches. And with good reason. That fear is nicely expressed in the October 1861 meeting that saw the establishment of the first local conference....

{They later established the first} General Conference in 1863....

As might be expected, tensions eventually developed between the authority of the local conferences and that of the General Conference....

Interestingly, Ellen White on several occasions questioned whether the rulings of the General Conference were always the voice of God. In 1891, for example, she wrote that “I was obliged to take the position that there was not the voice of God in the General Conference management and decisions. . . . Many of the positions taken, going forth as the voice of the General Conference, have been the voice of one, two, or three men who were misleading the Conference.”⁵E. G. White, “Board and Council Meetings,” MS 33, [no date] 1891. Again in 1896, she noted that the General Conference “is no longer the voice of God.”⁶E. G. White to Men Who Occupy Responsible Positions, July 1, 1896. And in 1901 she wrote that “the people have lost confidence in those who have management of the work. Yet we hear that the voice of the [General Conference] is the voice of God. Every time I have heard this, I have thought that it was almost blasphemy. The voice of the conference ought to be the voice of God, but it is not.”⁷E. G. White, “Regarding the Southern Work,” MS 37, April 1901.

An analysis of those negative statements indicates that they refer to occasions when the General Conference did not act as a representative body, when its decision-making authority was centralized in a person or a few people, or when the General Conference had not been following sound principles.⁸Barry David Oliver, *SDA Organizational Structure: Past, Present and Future* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1989), 98-99. ...

The second round of organizational refinement took place between 1901 and 1903.⁹For the best treatment on this reorganization, see Oliver, *SDA Organizational Structure*. when several major changes were made. The two most important were the replacement of the autonomous auxiliary organizations (such as those that controlled education, publishing, medical, Sabbath school, and so on) with the departmental system and the development of union conferences to stand as intermediary administrative units between the General Conference and the local conferences. Both of those innovations had been experimented with in South Africa and Australia before the 1901 session. And both of them had been developed in response to regional mission needs. And both were developed in opposition to General Conference pronouncements and procedures....

Ellen White was overjoyed with the development of union conferences. In calling for reform on the first day of the 1901 session she noted to the delegates that “God has not put any kingly power in our ranks to control this or that branch of the work. The work has been greatly restricted by the efforts to control it in every line. . . . If the work had not been so restricted by an impediment here, and an impediment there, and on the other side an impediment, it would have gone forward in its majesty.”¹⁰*General Conference Bulletin*, 1901, 26. At the 1903 session she declared that “*it has been a necessity to organize union conferences, that the General Conference shall not exercise dictation over all the separate conferences.*”¹¹E. G. White, “Regarding Work of General Conference,” MS 26, Apr. 3, 1903; italics supplied.

On the basis of those and other comments, the late Gerry Chudleigh has argued that the unions “were created to act as *firewalls* between the GC and the conferences, making ‘dictation’ impossible.” He buttressed his firewall image with two major points. First, “each union had its own constitution and bylaws and was to be governed by its own constituency.” And, second, “the officers of each union were to be elected by their own union constituency, and, therefore, could not be controlled, replaced or disciplined by the GC.”¹²Gerry Chudleigh, *Who Runs the Church? Understanding the Unity, Structure and Authority of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (n.p.: AdventSource, 2013), 18; italics supplied.

“To put it as bluntly as possible,” Chudleigh wrote,

after 1901, the General Conference could vote whatever it wanted unions and conferences to do, or not do, but the unions and conferences were autonomous and could do what they believed would best advance the work of God in their fields. The GC executive committee, or the General Conference in business session, could vote to fire a union president or conference president, or vote to merge a union or conference with another one, but their vote would change nothing: the union or conference would still exist and the member delegates could elect whoever they wanted as president.¹³*Ibid.*...

The situation looked good in 1901 with the union conferences in place. But the push for both unity and uniformity by the General Conference over time would erode the accomplishments of 1901....

An ongoing temptation of the General Conference throughout its history has been to overstep the bounds of its authority....

...the unity in diversity ideal had begun to run into major difficulties in 1902 when Daniells began to assert his authority as General Conference president in his struggle with Kellogg. At that point, diversity began to take a back seat to unity and Ellen White in 1903 had to warn the reforming General Conference president that he could not “exercise a kingly power over [his] brethren.”¹⁴E. G. White to Elder Daniells and His Fellow Workers, Apr. 12, 1903. ...

In spite of Daniells’ temptation to wrongly use the power of his office, the balance between unity and diversity institutionalized by the creation of union conferences fared tolerably well for most of the twentieth century. In his summary of that period, Gerry Chudleigh notes that the constitutions and bylaws created and voted at the 1901 session for the first unions “contained no requirement that the unions adopt or follow GC policies, procedures, programs, initiatives, etc.”¹⁵Chudleigh, *Who Runs the Church?* 31.

But that would begin to change in the legal documents of the denomination in the 1980s and come to a climax in the 1990s and the first two decades of the twenty-first century. The 1980s witnessed the development by the General Conference of a “Model Union Conference Constitution and Bylaws.” In 1985 the *Working Policy* stated that the model should be “followed as closely as possible.” But by 1995 the same section would note that the model “shall be followed by all union conferences. . . . Those sections of the model bylaws that appear in bold print are essential to the unity of the Church worldwide, and shall be included in the bylaws as adopted by each union conference. Other sections of the model may be modified.” In 1985 the model stipulated that all “**purposes and procedures**” of the unions would be in harmony with the “**working policies and procedures**” of the General Conference. By 1995 General Conference “**programs and initiatives**” had been added. And in 2000 all “**policies**” was included. All of those additions were in bold print.¹⁶Stanley E. Patterson, “Kingly Power: Is It Finding a Place in the Adventist Church?” *Adventist Today*, Sept.-Oct. 2012, 5; Chudleigh, *Who Runs the Church?* 32-33; *Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*, 1999-2000 edition (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 125-126. Thus between 1985 and 2000 the *Working Policy* not only erased the 1901 model of unity in diversity set forth for unions in the Ellen White led drive for decentralization, but had become progressively more engineered toward centralization of authority in a drive for unity with less and less diversity.¹⁷See fn. 1. { } added. [] in original. Fnn. 4-15 mirror the fnn. in the original article.

Let us summarize the main points of this important history:

1. The early SDA pioneers generally opposed formal church organization in the 1840’s and 1850’s.
- 2.

In the early 1860's, the church adopted an organized structure, which included the establishment of local conferences and a general conference.

3. Throughout the rest of the 19th century, there were times of tension between local conferences and the General Conference in which the General Conference overstepped its bounds and exerted a king-like authority that was met with the disapproval of Ellen White.
4. In the early 1900's, the church structure was reorganized. A major part of that reorganization was the creation of union conferences to serve as a firewall, preventing the General Conference from dictating the work throughout the world field.
5. From the 1980's to 2000, changes in policy resulted in a breaking down of the union firewall and a centralization of authority in the General Conference.

There is one more aspect of this history that we must not miss if we are to have the clearest understanding of the current condition of things in the church.

Since 1995 the *General Conference Working Policy* has contained a new section titled “Discontinuation of Conferences, Missions, Unions, and Unions of Churches by Dissolution and/or Expulsion.”¹⁸ Designated in the *Working Policy* as B 45 in earlier post-1995 editions but now as B 95. Utilizing the ever-more centralizing requirements of the model constitution, the new section (B 95) proclaims the power to disband any union, conference, or mission that is out of harmony with General Conference policy. With what has become policy B 95 in place, the General Conference had arrived at the point where it could threaten the existence of two North American Division unions in September and October 2016.¹⁹ See fn. 1. Fn. 17 mirrors the fn. in the original article.

Threatening the existence of unions?!? Yes! But we are already getting ahead of ourselves. Before we can consider the responses to the 2015 vote, we have to look at the vote itself and what led to it. Women's ordination has long been a contentious issue in the church – it seems to fade in and out between the foreground and background. In 2010, it was somewhat in the foreground and a delegate at the GC session requested serious denominational study of the issue. In response, the General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM)²⁰ ADCOM is a committee appointed by the General Conference Executive Committee consisting of 46 members and 12 invitees including the GC President, several General Vice Presidents, the GC Secretary and Undersecretary, the GC Treasurer and Undertreasurer, and others. ADCOM meets weekly at the GC world headquarters to oversee church matters. The GC Executive Committee is a group of 345 members, together with 129 invitees, who meet twice a year to make decisions regarding the operations of the church. It is the highest governing body beneath the GC in Session. established the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) in 2011. The committee was tasked with prayerfully investigating the subject of women's ordination in collaboration with the Biblical Research Committees of each of the 13 world Divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist church with the intention that their findings should inform the 2015 vote.²¹ The final report of their findings is available here: <https://www.adventistarchives.org/final-tosc-report.pdf> But did it inform the vote? And if so, how and to what extent? To answer these questions we return to the afore-quoted article by George Knight.

As impossible as it seems after having spent so much money and time on the project, the results of TOSC were never clearly presented to the General Conference session at the time of the vote. And for good reason. Apparently, TOSC's consensus did not support the desired conclusions of certain individuals at the top of the denominational power structure.²² As will be noted below, many of the TOSC participants were disillusioned when the General Conference president reversed his opinion on the importance of the committee from its first meeting, when it looked as if it would come up with the "proper" answer, to its last, in which the majority voted against his position. Thus the 2015 delegates were not informed that a super majority of 2/3 (62 for and 32 opposed) of the members of TOSC was in favor of allowing divisions to make the choice on whether to ordain female pastors.²³ TOSC "Report," 12. In addition, the delegates were not informed that at least nine²⁴ This point needs further investigation into the 13 division reports. Nine divisions in favor of diversity is the lowest number I have come across. Some sources report 11 and others 12 divisions in favor of flexibility. of the 13 Divisions of the church in their TOSC reports were favorable toward letting each division make its own decision on female ordination. Nor did the final TOSC report present that data. It did, however, present the positions of three distinct groupings of delegates that developed during TOSC's two year journey. But the delegates at the 2015 session were not explicitly informed that two of those orientations were in favor of each division making its own choice.²⁵ TOSC "Report," 122, 123.

Had the actual findings of TOSC been reported, the vote, in all probability, would have been different. After all, a 10% shift in the vote would have changed the outcome. The final tally at the General Conference session in San Antonio was 977 (42%) in favor of flexibility in ordination to 1,381 against, a remarkably close vote considering how the process was handled.

Not the least of the problems associated with the vote was the non-neutrality of the General Conference president, who reminded the session delegates on voting day that they knew his position on the topic (which was clearly understood to be against the ordination of women). That non-neutrality was bad enough, but it was stated with the full knowledge that a significant majority of TOSC, a committee that he had authorized to solve the problem, had concluded to recommend that divisions should have the right to ordain females if they chose to do so.²⁶ *Ibid.*, 12, 122, 123.

And in a world church in which the vast majority of the delegates come from tribal and Roman Catholic cultures, a word from the denomination's top administrator has significance. The Norwegian Union Conference made an important point when it suggested that if unity was high on the agenda of the General Conference president he could have clearly reported the findings of TOSC and called for a solution in line with its results.²⁷ Norwegian Union Conference, "A Response to 'A Study of Church Governance and Unity,'" Oct. 4, 2016; See William G. Johnsson, *Where Are We Headed? Adventism after San Antonio* (Westlake Village, CA: Oak and Acorn Publishing, 2017), 153-161 for a published version of the document.

...

William Johnsson, retired editor of the *Adventist Review*, has pointed out that 2015 will go down in history as the most divisive General Conference session since 1888.²⁸ Johnsson, *Where Are We Headed?* 1. And he is correct. What is interesting is that in both sessions, top people in the General Conference manipulated data. In the 1888 era it was president G. I. Butler, who Ellen White faulted for his desire to decide what information came to the delegates.²⁹ E. G. White to G. I. Butler, Oct. 14, 1888. One can only guess who decided to suppress and manipulate the reporting of the findings of TOSC in 2015, but the only possibility is a few people near the top of the General Conference structure.

The significance of the manipulation and suppression of crucial data that had been produced at immense expense for the purpose of informing the church has vast implications, especially since Ellen White, as we saw earlier, repeatedly claimed in the 1890s that she no longer held that the General Conference was the voice of God because it's decisions were really the decisions of a few men. That is exactly what we find in the events leading up to the vote in San Antonio. A few people decided what information went to the delegates. Even the General Conference's "Study of

Church Governance and Unity” document pointed out that Ellen White was upset when “two or three men” tried to control the church’s mission or when “merely a half a dozen’ at the world headquarters” sought “to be a ruling and controlling power.” The “Study” document was correct in its use of that inspired material. But it was dead wrong when it claimed that what happened in the late 1800s “is a world away from the situation today.”³⁰ Secretariat, “A Study,” 34. It was actually the same situation and dynamic, with a few people in their decision-making capacity controlling information and events. As a result, from the perspective of Ellen White’s writings, we do not have a voice of God vote from the world church in 2015. Instead, we have the same old manipulation and kingly power approaches that she detested in 1888 and the 1890s.³¹ See fn. 1. Fnn. 22-30 mirror the fnn. in the original article.

The fact that these words were written, not by a critic of the church, but by the denomination's most influential and prolific author since Ellen White, should be a wake-up call in and of itself. I highly recommend for you to read the entirety of the above-quoted article along with a more recent article by Ed McField entitled *Women’s Ordination: The Truth About the Real Position of the 13 Divisions in the Seventh-day Adventist Church*³² *Spectrum*, *Women’s Ordination: The Truth about the Real Position of the 13 Divisions in the Seventh-day Adventist Church* Given the fact that so much of the church is in favor of freedom for each Division to make its own decision regarding women’s ordination, along with the fact that the issue was handled as it was, it is no surprise that, after the 2015 session, a number of unions and conferences came out with statements openly declaring their non-compliance.³³ *Spectrum*, Dec. 30, 2015 The GC felt it had to do something; hence, the threatenings of 2016. There are a couple articles published by *Spectrum Magazine* which describe the threat to these non-compliant unions in more detail,³⁴ *Spectrum*, Sept. 29, 2016 and *Spectrum*, Sept. 30, 2016 but here are a couple sentences to illustrate the seriousness of the circumstances:

The proposal is that the General Conference take over such unions and operate them as missions attached to the General Conference. That would mean that the GC would then be able to remove present union leadership and replace them with their own appointees.³⁵ *Spectrum*, Sept. 30, 2016

As you can imagine, the amount of tension brought about by this situation has been extremely stressful for conference workers in these unions and, indeed, for everyone involved. So far, the GC has not made such dramatic moves as those threatened. One likely reason is that to do so would itself be an act of non-compliance since the policy which governs such actions (B 95) requires that the process start at the division level, not the GC level.³⁶ *Spectrum*, Oct. 10, 2016 In other words, the GC simply does not have the political authority to reach down to a union of its choosing and dissolve it based on perceived, or actual, non-compliance. It is a good thing too, because otherwise, corruption at the GC level could quite literally destroy the entire organizational structure of the church. Furthermore, there would be huge practical difficulties in taking over the unions and replacing the leadership, not to mention potential uproar. The uproar might be so great as to seriously split the church. The risk of this far exceeds whatever risk there might be for a split over perceived non-compliance.

With the “take over the unions” strategy being so undesirable, ADCOM felt the need to find another way of dealing with non-compliance. This isn’t the place to chronicle every effort to end non-compliance, but there are some major moves that are important to be aware of. In July 2018, ADCOM created five “Compliance Review Committees”³⁷[*Spectrum*, Aug. 23, 2018](#) and [*Spectrum*, News 2018](#). See also [Compliance Committees Terms of Reference](#) – each tasked with investigating instances of a certain category of non-compliance – one committee for non-compliance related to GC core policies, another for non-compliance related to ordination, and so on. These committees are then to advise ADCOM regarding how to handle, and potentially penalize, these non-compliant entities. The structure, methods, and purposes of these committees has led George Knight to nickname those involved “the Adventist FBI.” It must be remembered that George Knight and others like him have no axe to grind against the church or against those parts of its leadership responsible for these actions. They are, however, deeply concerned. One reason for their concern is that ADCOM is a small, in-house group that is not representative of the world church, but they, without the involvement of larger church entities, decided to bring about these committees to carry out a work that has significant implications for every level of the church worldwide. Even more disturbing is the fact that a document which serves as part of the foundation for the operations of these committees had not yet been approved by the General Conference Executive Committee when these committees were established and when two of them were activated.³⁸[*Spectrum*, ADCOM Action Renders Annual Council 2018 Irrelevant](#) The document was eventually approved on October 14 at the Autumn Council, but the committees were created back in July, and the committees on core policies and ordination were set into motion in September.³⁹<https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2018-09-18/adcom-refers-to-compliance-committees/>

The document in question is called *Regard for and Practice of General Conference Session and General Conference Executive Committee Actions*. Its contents outline the steps to be taken when entities in the church are perceived to be in non-compliance with GC actions. While it states that the process for reporting and correcting non-compliance is to begin at the level immediately above the non-compliant entity, the next level up can easily take over, and this applies all the way up to GC ADCOM so that ultimately, they can initiate the process of correcting non-compliance anywhere in the world church if they deem it necessary. To illustrate, the section titled “Process for Reporting Perceived Non-Compliance” stipulates that the process begin “with the administrative level of the Church closest to the matter.” However, the next sentence says, “If any level of organization does not report an issue of non-compliance, it becomes the responsibility of the next higher organization.” (p. 1, lines 25-26) If all that it takes for the responsibility to move to the “next higher organization” is a lack of report, then all that ADCOM needs in order to take the responsibility upon itself is to have received no report from lower levels. After ADCOM, or a lower level in the administrative structure, goes through the initial process of trying to obtain compliance, if the attempts have failed, ADCOM can get immediately involved via one of its Compliance Committees. There is provision made for the perceived non-compliant entity to appeal, but only to the assigned Compliance Committee, and after that, to ADCOM – the very committees perceiving the entity to be in non-compliance in the first place! This prosecutor-as-judge scenario means that an appeal can only be a request for the members of the Compliance Committee and ADCOM to change their minds rather than an appeal to a third party who can hold ADCOM and the Compliance Committee accountable.

With all this in mind, one might rightly ask, “What happens if there is non-compliance at the GC level?” In fact, during the afternoon meeting of the GC Executive Committee on October 14 during the Autumn Council (the meeting dedicated to discussing and voting upon the document), this very question was raised by Lee-Roy Chacon, president of the Texico Conference. The exchange between him and GC president Ted Wilson went as follows:⁴⁰All of the quotations from this meeting are taken from the video published by the Adventist News Network YouTube Channel, transcribed by myself. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uqke4VUmUM>)

“Lee-Roy Chacon: As I read the document, I see that if there’s a church, a conference, a union, and a division, the higher organization is the one that is to implement the compliance. So my question is, ‘What happens if the General Conference is out of compliance?’

Ted Wilson: Then this is about the highest committee we can go to right here, sir.

Lee-Roy Chacon: So, it is this committee then that decides whether the GC, or members of the GC committee, are out of compliance?

Ted Wilson: Well we only have the executive committee and we have the General Conference in Session. So... [slight nodding]” – 3:42:55-3:43:35⁴¹All references follow the format of hours:minutes:seconds.

So, according to Ted Wilson, the only ones who have the ultimate authority to decide whether or not an entity in the church is in non-compliance is the General Conference. This said, the document states that “If, in the opinion of the executive officers of the conference and/or union and/or division and/or General Conference, compliance has been requested but has not been made evident or has not been sustainably achieved, the General Conference Administrative Committee may request the appropriate General Conference Compliance Review Committee to implement its terms of reference.” (p. 1, lines 42-45) To illustrate how problematic this is, suppose that the executive officers of the GC accused a certain fraction, even a majority of the General Conference members to be in non-compliance with GC policies. Even if the majority of the GC concluded that the non-compliance was not actual, or concluded that it had been handled appropriately, the GC executive officers could still, through ADCOM, initiate the corrective processes built in to the terms of reference of these Compliance Committees. And since ADCOM is the last stop in the appeal process, they are the only ones who can ultimately decide whether or not an entity is in compliance and what should be done about it. This is clearly a centralization of power and it has caused great concern and has been seen by a number of respected leaders as a dangerous power-grab by those at the top of the church’s organizational structure.

Another point of concern is the inclusion of policies for disciplinary measures (including warning, public reprimand, and removal), not for violating scriptural principles, but for violating church policy. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that this act places authority on the church that is independent of the authority of scripture and thus not based on the word of God. Some may believe that God has bestowed the church with authority to make policies that are not found in scripture and to discipline men and women for not complying with these policies, but this would be a reenactment of the apostasy of the church of Rome and a marked departure from Sola Scriptura.

The very beginning of the great apostasy was in seeking to supplement the authority of God by that of the church. – *The Great Controversy*, p. 289

Now, back to the afternoon meeting of Sunday, October 14, 2018 – Autumn Council. The first two hours of the meeting were mostly taken up with Ted Wilson and others speaking favorably of the document to be voted upon. Following this, the floor was opened up to members of the Executive Committee to make statements up to two minutes each, voicing their opinions and urging their fellow-members to vote one way or another. Perhaps nothing highlights the seriousness of these most recent ADCOM actions better than the words of these leaders. Please prayerfully consider their expressions of concern:

Ron Smith, President of the Southern Union Conference:

“... this new machinery of a document continues to heighten mistrust of world church leadership. If this document passes, it will change the culture of our constituency and how we perceive and relate to our church. We don’t know who will be in or out of compliance next. Paranoia surrounding what gets enforced and what doesn’t will increasingly exist. We are distracted, hurt, and demoralized. We’re just trying to do responsible mission in the Southern Union. Can we *please* focus on what unites us rather than what divides us? I urge this committee to remove this document from consideration. I urge my colleagues to vote this document down. It is not good for the church.” – 2:04:21-2:05:14

Randy Roberts, Senior Pastor of Loma Linda University Church:

“The document we considered last year was approved by one vote⁴²He is speaking of the vote by the General Conference and Division Officers meeting which approved the document for consideration by the Autumn Council. – the narrowest of margins. The total was reached by allowing votes of those who were not present to be counted. This year’s document passed with the next narrowest of margins – two votes. I understand that the vote was 32 in favor, 30 opposed, and 2 abstentions. The reality is that for two consecutive years, the GCDO votes have split, almost perfectly into two factions, one of the highest levels of governance in the SDA church. Such a split at the highest level of our church’s structure underlies the kind of divisions that this approach to the issue has created at every other level of our church. Rather than being a unity process, I fear it has been a disunity process.” – 2:05:58-2:06:48

Mark Johnson, President of Canadian Union:

“This afternoon it is remarkable that we have come again to Battle Creek. Here, the woman who God chose, and humans sometimes rejected, bore a fearless witness to what God had shown her. When people listened to her, they avoided many organizational pitfalls. What would we hear her say today? Once again, we face a proposal that shifts roles and responsibilities away from those who best grasp the solutions to the complex questions facing our cultures and our churches today. This will forever change the church. We cannot afford to make this mistake. We must be dynamic – able to serve freely where we have been chosen to lead. Many Canadian Adventists have contacted me over the past few days. They advise caution. They say, ‘We must find a way to enable those various communities of our world to be sensitive to local context.’ Thus, I cannot vote to approve this document as it stands.” – 2:09:31-2:10:38

Ricardo Graham, President of Pacific Union Conference:

“I intend to vote against the adoption of this policy, and I would encourage all others here to do the same for the following reasons: #1) There is currently a policy, B 95, that deals with non-compliance, that has not been enacted. #2) There’s not in the document presented before us a process to give oversight to the General Conference and ADCOM itself. ADCOM is not a representative body. It is an in-house committee and I do not believe that it speaks for the world church. 3) This process represents the consolidation of power and authority into the hands of a few without accountability to the members of the Executive Committee. If the document passes, #4) it empowers and provides a platform for individuals who have any issues with the church to bring accusations against leadership at any level. Finally, Mr. Chairman, my 5th point is that if this is actually placed into action, no one is safe. If they come for me today, they will come for you tomorrow. Finally, I will quote from *Desire of Ages*, page 22: ‘The exercise of force is contrary to the principle of God’s government. He desires only the service of love, and love cannot be commanded. It cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened.’” – 2:10:48-2:12:04

Daniel Jackson, President of the North American Division:

“... I think we should steer as far away as we can from language that would say, ‘If you don’t agree with this, or you don’t abide by that, then yuh ought to get out!’ And I’ve read that recently in a General Conference document and it greatly disturbs me that we would use that language. We need to move away from it. As president of the North American Division, I believe that the adoption of this document will change relationships in the church – organization to organization and person to person. It holds the potential to turn the church into a judiciary whether we want it to or not. All divisions and regions will be affected. This is not just about women’s ordination. It may be about finances, the actions of conferences, unions, and divisions that are not compliant. Decisions made by the five committees located in ... Silver Springs and created by the ADCOM, it appears, can ultimately direct a local organization located either in Atlanta or Abidjan to take care of non-compliance ... and if you do not take care of it according to their interpretation of policy then, if it rises to that level, they will take care of it for you. I believe that this document apparently recommends a centralization of decision-making in the General Conference that runs contrary to the spirit of the pioneers in 1901 and again in 1903. It also runs contrary to sound business practice. We do not succeed by creating an atmosphere of fear. The adoption of this document will alienate; it will not unite. This is particularly true in the North American Division where faithful, God-fearing members have tirelessly supported the mission of the church but who will, with the passing of this action, feel that they have been pushed to the periphery of the church that they love. And finally, I am appealing to this body to say ‘No’ to the document.” – 2:17:21-2:19:45

Jiri Moskala, Professor of Old Testament Exegesis and Theology and Dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary of Andrews University:

“For me, the major problem with the proposed document is the fact that the punishments are not built on a clear ‘Thus says the Lord’ – on the plain biblical teaching, but on human and ecclesiastical reasoning. Therefore, this proposal is in violation of the very important sola scriptura principle. Second, the real issue is that the violations dealt with in the document, and in the setup of the committees, carry a mixture of different levels of authority. Foundational doctrinal statements are mixed up with ecclesiastical and financial policies. Thus, different items carrying varying different levels of authority are put together and on the same level. And this is highly confusing, misleading, and wrong. Third, if we need to discipline duly elected leaders, it must be on clear biblical, theological grounds – on a plain ‘Thus says the Lord’ and not on a debatable biblical interpretation and ecclesiastical foundations and authority. Fourth, if we were to adopt this document and this proposed election it would be the first time in the history of our church that we punish our dedicated and committed leaders on non-biblical grounds. Fifth, this document creates an atmosphere of suspicion and fear instead of generating trust and confidence. It will only distract us from the main focus on the proclamation of the biblical truths and will actually injure our unity. So, out of faithfulness to Christ and the Bible, I speak strongly against this document. It lacks a healthy balance and must be rejected on the methodological, historical, missiological, theological, and biblical grounds.” – 2:25:33-2:27:29

Robert de Raad, President of Netherlands Union:

"I feel that if this document is voted, it will legitimize the compliance committees to police the whole church – unions, conferences, even local churches, and it will change the way we do church. And even if you are against women's ordination, I believe you should still vote against this document because the power and the authority of the world church will be centralized in the headquarters of the General Conference in Silver Springs because of the composition of the compliance committees without any world representation. This whole discussion started with women's ordination. No matter how many punishing measurements are voted, whether they be taking away voice and vote, or compliance committees to investigate the unions, we will stand firm because we believe we are on firm biblical principles and because the Seventh-day Adventist church champions freedom of conscience. I feel that this document is a tool to control and to enforce. That is not the way of the kingdom of God – God never forces anyone. He reasons with sinners and he calls them to Himself and we should do no less." – 2:39:54-2:41:10

Neil Biloff, President of the Dakota Conference:

"My heart is heavy today over this issue. It is dividing my conference and I would like the division to stop. And yet, it keeps coming back and coming back to this committee.... I think it could be fixed, even at the chair level. But, I go back this morning to my conscience and why I believe it's important. I was drafted as a young man in college. I deferred to get through college, but in that period of time, I asked to be a conscientious objector to the military – to go into Vietnam. I had to appear before the draft board and plead my case. I sat one evening before World War II vets, Korean War vets – they listened to my case and the amazing part to me was I was the first and only conscientious objector ever allowed out of that draft board. They respected my conscience. The sad thing to me today is my own church does not respect my conscience. Something is wrong with that. And so today I am grieved; I am somewhat frustrated that the things that go on at this level reach clear down into my conference and I struggle with that. I am reminded of Jesus being accused of non-compliance with the church of his time – accused of not keeping the traditions and the policies and not showing due respect to the church fathers. The church's response was to send out spies to see if he was in compliance. He was even publicly reprimanded by the leaders of the church and it finally became evident to the church that they needed not only to shut him up but to kill him. This is the result of leaving our Protestant tradition and heritage." – 2:49:28-2:51:30

Dave Weigley, President of the Columbia Union Conference:

"This document is flawed in three ways. First, it puts authority and power in the hands of just a few who will decide what is non-compliance, who is non-compliant, and which areas of perceived non-compliance should be addressed when and how. Secondly, this will allow for a concerning level of overreach of authority and bypass already-established policies, protocols, and the form of democratic governance we have been operating under for more than a century. Ellen White introduced the union model so as to localize operation of the church and so it could be handled according to the needs of the people in each area of the world. And now, after 100 plus years of this approach, this document proposes only a small group of people at the GC who will know how best to govern. You send an unintended, yet strong, message to the divisions: 'You don't know how to lead your people but we do!' Third, while we recognize that what was the impetus and focus of this entire tactic and the real reason for this document, now it's said that there's no more to come. So after those of us who have been targeted are dealt with, the big question is, 'Who is next?' 'What is on the next list?' ... and 'What areas of perceived non-compliance will find in other areas of the world?' and 'Who gets to decide where we will aim our guns next?' The document says it's a small committee at the GC, potentially with no division input, no union input, no input from those who are on the ground and understand the needs of the mission field. I rest my case." – 2:52:06-2:53:47

Victor Marley, President of the Norwegian Union Conference:

“Today’s proposal, however, strikes at the very idea of authentic unity. It proposes a top-down structure where GC administration can, if it so wishes, bypass divisions, unions, and indeed conferences, to get its way. Our present policies have served us well, distributing power with compliance handled locally and with cultural sensitivity. This power resides with our members, and leaders therefore are compelled to work for consensus. This is the Adventist way. A particular weakness of this massive compliance oversight system is the appeal process for compliance committee rulings. Not wanting to bite the hand that feeds them, the committees chosen by, and accountable to, GC ADCOM will likely render judgments true to the will of GC ADCOM. The defendant may, of course, appeal, but only to the very committee who pronounced judgment. The same committee investigates, judges, and hears appeals – all under the watchful eye of GC leadership. This centralization of power is dangerous. It is not the Adventist way – it is not Christ’s way. It reverses the very organizational safeguards our pioneers set up here in Battle Creek in 1901. Therefore, I cannot betray the faithful members of the Norwegian Union or local churches around the world by delivering their church into the hands of the few. I cannot betray Sister White’s counsel who in connection with the reorganization of the church in this very town wrote, ‘It has been a necessity to organize union conferences that the general conference shall not exercise dictation over all the separate conferences.’ And I will not betray our Lord who demonstrated servant leadership and told us all not to lord it over one another. Mr. Chairman, this proposal focuses attention on internal politics rather than the call of Jesus to save a lost world. Therefore, I cannot vote for this document and I hope that the house will vote it down.” – 4:07:33-4:09:36

Such strong words from so many church leaders should surely awaken us all to get down on our knees to seek God for guidance. Leaders on both sides of this issue are taking the matter very seriously – we should too.

Now that you hopefully understand the basic facts of the crisis, we are left with two questions. First, where did we go wrong that led us to this point in the first place? And second, what is the solution? Regarding the first question, I’d like to quote a couple remarks that Ted Wilson made during the meeting we have been reviewing.

“The understanding that we need to have as a group is that whatever decision is made that we will work with that decision. And really, that’s probably the crux of the matter as to why we have even come to this point because it does focus, although the subject of women’s ordination (and I’m speaking very openly with you, and frankly) is what has driven much of the anxiety and tension, but that’s not really the issue to which we are addressing ourselves today. The issue that we’re addressing ourselves is: Should organizations be willing to abide by the rules that they themselves have set up? And that when we vote something, especially at the highest level (and you can’t get much higher than the General Conference in session) that that needs to be respected.” – 35:46-36:57

“The reason for the discussion since 2015 is that we have had entities who have decided to go their own way in opposition to what was voted at the General Conference Session. And we’ve never had that before;... we’ve never faced that. So, it’s a matter of us understanding that when we take a vote at the highest level possible (remembering that we don’t have a prophet to ask; we don’t have the urim and the thumim) we only can rely upon a vote at the General Conference Session for any matter that if it is not agreed to by individuals after the vote, then we have a problem. Our – our whole church holds together by a wonderful aspect of goodwill. Even though we don’t agree at times, we say, ‘This is our church, the church has voted, and we’re going to work with the church.’ And that’s the reason for the difficulty that we’re facing right now.” – 3:21:21-3:22:39

It is apparent from these statements that Ted Wilson sees the problem being the actions of certain church entities which run contrary to the decision of the General Conference. Why is it not about whether the actions are contrary to the express will of God? Because, as he said, "... we don't have a prophet to ask; we don't have the urim and the thumim." If we did have these things, the circumstance might be different. In other words, from Ted Wilson's perspective, the *absence* of the express will of God through a prophet or some other clear-cut means of communication such as the urim and thumim is what leaves us with the General Conference as the highest authority, and to act contrary to it is a lack of goodwill.

It will be fruitful to compare this with the perspective of George Knight, who clearly stands on the other side when it comes to the controversy over ordination and authority. At the beginning of his most recent article in *Spectrum*, he highlights some foundational points – among them are these:

- Ellen White had it right historically when she wrote that "the very beginning of the great apostasy was in seeking to supplement the authority of God by that of the church" (GC pp. 289-290).
- Throughout history the only times churches have had to use force or threats of force to create unity is when they lacked a clear word from the Lord.
- Such is the unfortunate case in the Adventist Church in 2018.
- As a result, it is with sadness that I feel compelled to write yet another article on the current crisis in Adventism. As a church we need to not only admit the seriousness of the issues that the denomination is facing, but our leaders will need the courage of the prophets and apostles to face them firmly.⁴³[*The Adventist FBI and the Sticky Wicket Thicket*](#)

As you can see, from George Knight's perspective, the problem is that some within the church leadership are supplementing the authority of God by that of the church and using, or at least threatening to use, force. Wilson and Knight clearly have two different views of what the problem is and, consequently, what the solution should be. On one hand, Wilson advocates for the non-compliant entities to be brought into compliance through the methods outlined in the recently approved document. On the other hand, Knight would like to see the efforts to achieve unity through compliance abandoned and replaced by an attempt to bring about what he sees as genuine Christian unity – the only basis for which he describes as "the clear teaching of the Bible, mutual trust, and the love of God"⁴⁴*Ibid.* (it seems that "mutual trust," in his view, includes allowing freedom for different parts of the worldwide church to adopt different policies suited to their local circumstances).

What is most interesting is the fact that, from both perspectives, our current conundrum is predicated upon the apparent reality that we have no clear word from God for the present crisis. To repeat the most relevant portions of their statements:

Ted Wilson:

"... we don't have a prophet to ask; we don't have the urim and the thumim..."

George Knight:

• Throughout history the only times churches have had to use force or threats of force to create unity is when they lacked a clear word from the Lord.

• Such is the unfortunate case in the Adventist Church in 2018."

I would imagine that if Ted Wilson and George Knight were asked, "If Ellen White was alive today and she plainly declared that God had revealed to her the right path to take regarding women's ordination and

concerning how to handle non-compliance, would you be willing to follow her counsel?" both would say yes. Or, if they were being very careful to avoid presumption, they would at least hope they would follow her counsel. Thus, it is quite evident that our lack of a clear word from God lay at the foundation of much of the disunity and conflict. One can see how all the various threads of this conflict flow out from that point. *Since* we don't have a clear, authoritative word from God, our highest authority is the General Conference, or so it might be, and has been, argued. *Since* we don't have a clear word from God, we should adopt policies which allow each division or union to follow their own convictions ? better, but this approach clearly hasn't resolved anything. If it has come down to us trying to do our best in the absence of a clear word from God, what chance of success do we really have? We humans don't seem to ever do things right when we are left to ourselves. Moreover, why would God leave us without a clear word since it has obviously caused so much trouble? Why would God leave us without straightforward instruction when we evidently need it most? Has God abandoned us?

Maybe this is where we have gone wrong – in fact, that is precisely my contention. If we think God has left us without a clear word, we are simply wrong. In thinking of the history of God's people, what is more likely, that God has left us without clear instruction in a time of crisis, or that God has been speaking, but we haven't been listening? I think any honest Bible student would have to admit the latter. In the remainder of this article, I want to show what I believe to be a clear word from God for our present crisis.

God's Solution

The truths which answer to our present dilemma are found throughout Scripture. Yet, since each prophet had certain points which they emphasized and explained more clearly than other prophets, it is natural to expect to find a higher concentration of certain themes within the writings of one prophet as compared to others. My intention here is to show that Hosea has a high concentration of themes that are both timely and instructive for our present needs.

In order to understand Hosea's message, we need to keep in mind the commonly recognized principle that the ancient prophecies were not written *to* us, though they are certainly *for* us and for all who will receive their teachings in any age. Hosea was a real person, who lived in a real place, with real social, political, and religious circumstances. He bore his message to real people, whose salvation was just as important to God then as our salvation is to Him now. Since Hosea's message was *to* them in their circumstance, we must understand it, first and foremost, as it was within its original context. Only then can we apply its lessons to our present circumstance.

This brings us to another point. All of us as Seventh-day Adventists believe that Hosea was a true prophet of God, and we would even defend that belief against those who would say otherwise. But how many of us know his message? Do you know what Hosea taught as distinct from, say, Micah or Amos? What were the special points of his message? If you don't know, it is okay to admit it. In fact, it is essential to admit it. And let's face it, the vast majority of us are in this boat of ignorance together. Only when we acknowledge our ignorance do we have an opportunity to learn what Hosea really taught. And then, we need to take it seriously. What does it mean to take it seriously? Well, it means to not pretend it is something other than what it is – to recognize that it can't be (or shouldn't be) twisted to meet our preconceived ideas – that it needs to be judged on its own merits. If it is true, then we need to accept it and live by it. If you don't think it is true, reject it without giving it lip-service. We have all seen how most people deal with Jesus' teachings on the Sabbath. They don't take it seriously, do they? The evidence that Jesus believed in, and taught, the ongoing validity of the Sabbath is crystal clear. Yet, people twist his words to mean just the opposite. In doing this, do they really accept his message? Some even acknowledge the legitimacy of the Sabbath but fail to reform their practice to reflect their knowledge. This is also symptomatic of not taking Jesus' message seriously – of not really accepting it. It would be best for those who do this with Jesus' teachings to flatly acknowledge that they aren't taking it to heart so that at least they wouldn't be fooling themselves, thinking they are in harmony with the Savior. This standard of honesty must be maintained as we consider the message of Hosea or any other prophet.

Context of Hosea

Hosea was a prophet of the 8th century BC. At this time, the two major world powers were Egypt and Assyria. Centuries earlier (before Israel was around), Egypt had controlled the land of Canaan. It is natural that Egypt would have an interest in Canaan since it was the only practical way to get from Egypt to the northern Mediterranean world and to Mesopotamia. The influence of Egypt never really went away and, in the time of Hosea, it was still present in virtually every aspect of life, whether political, cultural, or religious. Halfway through the 8th century (about the time Hosea began his ministry), Assyria was led by her new king, Tiglath-Pileser III, on a campaign from the north-east down toward the border of Egypt. Assyria and Egypt were vying for dominance and Israel was caught dead in the middle.

Another important thing to know is that almost 200 years before Hosea's time, the united monarchy of Israel came to an end. What was once a united kingdom of 12 tribes was now two separate kingdoms: Israel in the north (composed of 10 tribes) and Judah in the south (composed of 2 tribes). These two kingdoms each had their own kings, laws, borders, religious centers, international relations, etc. Sometimes, there was relative peace between them, while at other times they were at all out war. Hosea's prophecies were mostly concerned with Israel, though he did have his fair share of things to say about Judah as well. He had warnings for both kingdoms, but he was especially focused on warning Israel of her imminent end (1:4; 5:9; 7:8-9, 13; 9:3, 15, 17).

Overview of the book of Hosea

The book of Hosea is naturally divided into three separate sections. Here is a brief overview of each of them:

Section 1 – Hosea 1-2: These first two chapters narrate the story of the beginning of Hosea's prophetic ministry. They explain that God used Hosea's marriage to his unfaithful wife as an illustration of God's relationship with unfaithful Israel. It is a pretty rocky road but it ends with restoration (2:14-23).

Section 2 – Hosea 3: This chapter is Hosea's own account of the very beginning of his marriage. It also speaks of his marriage as an illustration of God's relationship with Israel, but it approaches the issue from a somewhat different angle as compared to the first two chapters.

Section 3 – Hosea 4-14: This section is a mix of warnings, rebukes, admonitions, and pleas directed to Israel and, to a lesser extent, Judah. The main themes and teachings of the first two sections are also present here, but they are more developed. This is the section in which Hosea's message is most fully expressed.

Hosea 3

Let's start with coming to understand the message of Hosea 3 since it is the shortest section and since it was most likely the earliest written section of Hosea – we'll return to that shortly.

3:1 The Lord said to me again, "Go, love a woman who has a lover and is an adulteress, just as the Lord loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes." 3:2 So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer of barley and a measure of wine. 3:3 And I said to her, "You must remain as mine for many days; you shall not play the whore, you shall not have intercourse with a man, nor I with you." 3:4 For the Israelites shall remain many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim. 3:5 Afterward the Israelites shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; they shall come in awe to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days. – Hosea 3:1-5 (NRSV)

What is the main point here? What was the message Hosea was given to bear? One thing that should be clear is that Hosea's marriage is used as an analogy for God's relationship with Israel. A careful examination of the chapter reveals the following parallels:

| <u>Hosea's Marriage</u> | <u>God's Relationship with Israel</u> |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Hosea (vs. 1) | God (vs. 1) |
| adulterous woman (vs.1) | Israel (vs. 1) |
| lover(s) (vs. 1) | other gods (vs. 1) |
| many days without intimacy (vs. 3) | many days without kings, prince, sacrifice, etc. (vs. 4) |
| return to Hosea and intimacy (implied) | return to God and David (vs. 5) |

What a fascinating analogy with a profound lesson. God could see that Israel was going after other gods, but wanted an intimate relationship with them anyway. God wanted to take Israel as his wife, but could see that she couldn't go straight from intimacy with other gods to intimacy with him. Therefore, there would have to be a period of chastity before their marriage would be consummated. The fact that remaining without sexual intercourse in vs. 3 is paralleled with going without kings, princes, sacrifices, etc. in vs. 4 shows that all of the things mentioned in verse 4 are viewed as ways to be intimate with gods. The fact that Hosea's wife needed to abstain from intimacy with any man, including Hosea illustrates that Israel would have to go without kingly and priestly intimacy with any god, whether foreign gods or the God of Israel. This makes sense in light of the fact that the Israel of Hosea's day combined the worship of Yahweh with that of other gods. It would thus be very difficult for them to have pure and undefiled intimacy with the true God. The goal of this period of chastity was so that afterward, Israel could return to God to have intimacy with Him alone, as indicated by the fact that they would also seek David their king (remembering that having a king is one of the ways to be intimate with a God – vss. 3-4).

What did all this mean for Israel in Hosea's day? God saw that their kingship and their priesthood was so far off base and so defiled with adultery with other gods that the only way to solve it was to go without kingship and priesthood entirely, at least for a while. Just reforming the kingship and the priesthood wouldn't be enough. They needed a period of abstinence to rid themselves of their false conceptions and practices. Only after this could they come to God and have true intimacy. But why doesn't the last verse repeat the list of vs. 4? Why doesn't it say, "Afterward the Israelites shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and their sacrifice, and pillar, and ephod, and teraphim..."? Maybe they would seek those things; maybe not. What we can say is that the only point Hosea addressed directly is the kingship which shows that that was the means of Divine intimacy he wanted to emphasize above the others.

How do you think this message would resonate with the kings of Israel? Hosea was essentially saying that God wanted them to be dethroned. As we'll see later, his message was definitely deemed radical and certainly didn't go over well with the kings.

The last aspect of this prophecy I want to point to for consideration is the fact that the restored, God-approved kingship, is that of David. Hosea could have said, "Solomon their king" or "Saul their king" or, if he really wanted his message to go over well, he could have mentioned a king of his own day: "Uzziah their king" or "Jeroboam their king." None of these designations would capture his meaning. There is a difference between David and all these other kings that made his name the one and only suitable name to use. He was a king of a different character. We will return to what that is. We will also see that this message about the kingship of Israel formed a major part of Hosea's message. As we continue to look at his prophecies, his point should shine forth brighter and yet brighter.

As for Hosea's marriage, we can see that God wanted the best for him and for her. Israel's period without kings and priestly activity was to be mirrored by Hosea's wife's period of sexual chastity. Just as Israel was to end that period by returning to God and having an intimate relationship with him, just so Hosea's wife was to eventually end her period of chastity by returning to him and having undefiled intimacy and so to remain forevermore. We all love a happy ending, and God didn't want any less. Yet, things don't always go as God would like.

Hosea 1-2

As I mentioned earlier, Hosea 3 was very likely the earliest written part of Hosea. It would distract from our main point to go through all the reasons why and to explore the details of dating the various sections of Hosea. Yet, it is important to recognize that Hosea 1-2 reflect a further development in the experience and message of Hosea as compared to chapter 3. Chapter 3 speaks of Hosea acquiring his wife and a period of chastity right at the beginning of their marriage, with an implication that the chastity would one day end and their marriage would be consummated. Hosea 1-2 briefly mentions the beginning of the marriage (vss. 2-3), but it goes beyond this to describe the bearing of children and their interaction with each other and with their mother and Hosea. These interactions dominate the analogy of these chapters. Another point to keep in mind is that

Hosea 1-2 is a story written about Hosea, not a prophecy written by Hosea himself. Yet, we have every reason to believe that this story was written in Hosea's lifetime and that it accurately reflects his family situation and the prophetic message he bore in relation to it.

So, Hosea 3 left us with a Hosea who had just gotten married and who is told that his wife would have to go through a period of chastity before they could be maritally united. Hosea 1 picks up the story with Hosea uniting with his wife (whose name we find out is Gomer) and having a son. God uses this experience to continue the analogy.

1:4 And the Lord said to him, "Name him Jezreel; for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. 1:5 On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." – Hosea 1:4-5 (NRSV)

So far, this is giving the same basic message as chapter 3. The kingship must come to an end; the kingdom of Israel would be no longer, at least for a time. The house of Jehu is a dynasty of Israelite kings that had been ruling for almost 100 years when Hosea gave this prophecy. Jehu, the founder of the dynasty, had shed blood in Jezreel by killing off the previous dynasty (2 Kings 9:1-10:17). Hosea's prophecy is that punishment would be brought upon the Jehu dynasty for this act of violence. He didn't see the need for Jehu's dynasty to be replaced by another, but for the kingship and the house of Israel to come to an end. Hosea's son, Jezreel, was a sign that the kingship of Israel was about to come to an end, something for which Hosea had already seen the need, as we saw while examining Hosea 3. How and why was Jezreel a sign of this event? This will become more evident as we continue.

What happens next is where the story of Hosea takes an unpleasant turn. Gomer has two more children, but not with Hosea! The description of the conception of Jezreel clearly indicates that he was the child of both Gomer and Hosea. It says,

1:3 So he [Hosea] went and took Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him [Hosea] a son. – Hosea 1:3 (NRSV)

Notice the contrast between this and the description of the conception of Gomer's next child, Lo-ruhamah, and her child after that, Lo-ammi:

1:6 She conceived again and bore a daughter... – Hosea 1:6a (NRSV)

1:8 When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. – Hosea 1:8 (NRSV)

We are left wondering, where is Hosea in all this conceiving? Then, in the next chapter, it is explicitly stated that these children are illegitimate.

2:4 Upon her children also I will have no pity, because they are children of whoredom. 2:5 For their mother has played the whore; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, "I will go after my lovers; ..." – Hosea 2:4-5 (NRSV)

Notice, it does not say, "upon my children" but "upon *her* children." Upon them "I" will have no pity. Why? Because they are children of whoredom. Why are they children of whoredom? Because "their mother played the whore." The illegitimate nature of these children is exactly why God had Hosea name them what he did. Lo-ruhamah means "no mercy" and Lo-ammi means "not my people."

It was never God's plan that Gomer would be unfaithful to Hosea and bear children without him. But in this, God saw a perfect opportunity to illustrate the unfaithfulness of Israel and those whom she bore without him. So, who do these children allegorically represent? Well, Lo-ruhamah is plainly identified with the house of

Israel (the northern kingdom) in 1:6. This would logically leave Lo-ammi to represent the house of Judah (the southern kingdom). This is confirmed in the next couple verses. After describing the birth of these children and their sorry names, their fate is dwelt upon in this way:

1:10 Yet the number of the people of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which can be neither measured nor numbered; and in the place where it was said to them, “You are not my people,” it shall be said to them, “Children of the living God.” 1:11 The people of Judah and the people of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head; and they shall take possession of the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel. – Hosea 1:10-11 (NRSV)

While Israel and Judah would at first not have mercy and not be God’s people, that would eventually change and God would accept them as his own (2:23; 14:3). What a beautiful lesson for God to teach Hosea! It is as though he was saying, “Look Hosea, I get it; they aren’t your children, your wife has been unfaithful, and your family is broken, but we can restore her to faithfulness and you can (and should) accept these children as your own.” By God teaching Hosea about this redemptive love, Hosea could, in turn, teach this same love to Israel. Hosea 2 describes a plea to Gomer/Israel to turn back from her lovers and seek only Hosea/God. It is a message of hope, mercy, and love, but there is no easy fix for a family broken by adultery.

Israel was quite wealthy in the time of Hosea (2:5) and they interpreted their wealth as a sign that God was blessing them and therefore they must not be guilty of any great sin (12:8). God, through Hosea, rebuked them and showed them their true standing in His eyes.

But how could Israel and Judah be represented as illegitimate children? Didn’t God establish these kingdoms? Hosea’s answer is, “No!” You can’t have a kingdom without a king and Hosea proclaimed the shocking “thus saith the Lord” that –

8:4 They made kings, but not through me; they set up princes, but without my knowledge. – Hosea 8:4a (NRSV)

Ellen White had some enlightening things to say along this line:

The first form of government over men was established by God himself, and acknowledged him as the only Sovereign. He made known his will by written commands and revelations, by messages to his chosen servants, by dreams, by signs, and wonders. He would have continued to be their king, had they been content with his paternal care. {ST July 13, 1882, par. 1}

...

... The Lord permitted his people to follow their own course, because they refused to be guided by his counsels. Hosea declares that God gave them a king in his anger... { ST July 13, 1882, par. 10 }

It is a hazardous step to place the scepter in the hands of finite man, and crown him monarch. ... {ST July 13, 1882, par. 11}

The Lord had, through his prophets, foretold that Israel would be governed by a king. But it by no means follows that this form of government was according to his will... {ST July 13, 1882, par. 12}

⁴⁵Underlining added (The same applies to all Ellen White statements quoted in the rest of this article.)

We'll get back to this and other Ellen White statements later, but for now, we can at least see that God never intended Israel to have kings and thus he never intended them to be kingdoms (in the worldly sense); hence, the illegitimate children.

This brings us back to Jezreel and how it is that he represented the end of the kingship of Israel. Unlike Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi, Jezreel was a true son of Hosea. He thus represents the line of the prophets. To build upon this image, Hosea sent Jezreel as his spokesperson ("prophet" means "spokesperson") to bear a message to his siblings to plead with their mother (2:1-2). At the end of the prophecy, something remarkable is said about Jezreel:

2:21 On that day I will answer, says the Lord, I will answer the heavens and they shall answer the earth; 2:22 and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel; – Hosea 2:21-22 (NRSV)

This chain of answering from Jezreel to God is sort of a long-winded way of saying that God will answer Jezreel. If Jezreel asks for an abundant harvest of grain, wine, and oil, he will get it because they will answer because they "ask" the earth and the earth will answer because it "asks" the heavens and the heavens answer because they "ask" the Lord and he answers. Jezreel's ability to effectually ask for God to control the weather and thus agricultural productivity is yet another way for Hosea to portray him as a prophet since that sort of ability was shared by prophets such as Elijah (James 5:17-18) and Samuel (1 Sam. 12:17). Thus, Hosea saw the restored family of God as being one in which the northern and southern kingdoms were no longer products of Israel's intimacy with her other lovers (the foreign gods) – she would no more have unapproved kings. Israel would have God as her only lover and the people of Israel and Judah would no longer be divided, but they would be united, not under an uninspired king, but they would appoint one head – Jezreel, God's spokesperson. Again:

1:11 The people of Judah and the people of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head; and they shall take possession of the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel. – Hosea 1:10-11 (NRSV)

This gives us an opportunity to see why Hosea had earlier said, "David their king" rather than "Saul their king" or someone else. Hosea 1-2 shows us that Hosea taught that God's people should be led by an inspired spokesperson (a prophet) rather than by uninspired kings. David was just such a leader. While he had the title "king," he was a leader far more like Samuel than like Saul or any king after him. David was a recipient of prophetic inspiration, writing many psalms, and communicating God's message to the people. Jezreel, as the "one head" over the united Israel and Judah, fills the same role in Hosea 1-2 as "David their king" fills in Hosea 3.

Ezekiel, prophesying many years after Hosea, was heavily influenced by Hosea. He transformed Hosea's image of "one head" into the image of "one shepherd" and combined ideas that Hosea attached to Jezreel with ideas attached to "David their king" from Hosea 3. Ezekiel thus interpreted Hosea's images of Jezreel and David to represent the same thing, and rightly so.

34:22 I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. 34:23 I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. 34:24 And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken. 34:25 I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild animals from the land, so that they may live in the wild and sleep in the woods securely. 34:26 I will make them and the region around my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. 34:27 The trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase. They shall be secure on their

soil; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and save them from the hands of those who enslaved them. – Ezekiel 34:22-27 (NRSV)

In reading the whole chapter, it becomes apparent that what sets David apart is that he actually feeds the flock. Clearly, the flock of sheep is a symbol for the people of Israel. Since Ezekiel is employing symbolic imagery, it should be obvious that the pasture upon which the flock feeds is also symbolic. Ellen White interpreted the pasture in this very chapter to represent “the truth which it is for their [the flock’s] salvation to receive” (Ms33-1900.12). Thus, David is the one appointed by God to be the “one shepherd” over His flock, being distinguished from other shepherds by virtue of the fact that he communicates God’s message to His people. Thus, his role is more that of a prophet than of a “king” in the ordinary sense. It is also worth taking note of the fact that David’s role is here connected with a covenant of peace whereby people will be safe from wild animals and dwell securely in the land – the very things connected with Jezreel in Hosea 2:18. The same is also true of the increase of agricultural produce (see Hosea 2:21-22). Another passage in Ezekiel paints the same basic picture. It is the last part of the prophecy of the two sticks (Ezekiel 37:15-28). One stick is described as representing Israel (the northern kingdom) and the other as representing Judah (the southern kingdom). The two sticks are joined together into one stick and then a further explanation is given. Here it is:

37:22 I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all. Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms. 37:23 They shall never again defile themselves with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. I will save them from all the apostasies into which they have fallen, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 37:24 My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes. 37:25 They shall live in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, in which your ancestors lived; they and their children and their children’s children shall live there forever; and my servant David shall be their prince forever. 37:26 I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary among them forevermore. 37:27 My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 37:28 Then the nations shall know that I the Lord sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is among them forevermore. – Ezekiel 37:22-28 (NRSV)

Again, Ezekiel speaks of a time when the two kingdoms of Israel would be joined into one kingdom with one leader, one head. That head would be the one shepherd, David, a prophet-king. Did you notice some of the reference back to Hosea? Hosea said Israel and Judah would be joined together and have one head – Jezreel (Hosea 1:11). Hosea also said that God would call them “my people” and he would be their God (Hosea 2:23) as well as a covenant of peace (Hosea 2:18). All of these references go back to Hosea 1-2. Ezekiel is thus once again linking David with Jezreel.

I have quoted these passages from Ezekiel since he builds upon Hosea’s theme of a prophet-king and in doing so highlights that image all the brighter within Hosea itself.

Let's recap what we have learned from Hosea 1-2. These chapters continue the analogy of God's relationship with Israel as represented by Hosea's marriage. Hosea's wife, Gomer, had three children – the first with Hosea, and the other two through adulterous relationships. The two illegitimate children represented the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. They came about through circumstances that were not in harmony with the wishes of God, but God was willing to accept them as his children and for the family to be restored. The first son of the family, Jezreel, was the legitimate son of Hosea and represented the true prophetic line. Just as Hosea commissioned Jezreel to be his spokesperson to his siblings, God commissioned the prophets to be his spokespersons to the Israelites and Judahites. A time was looked forward to when God would accept the children of Israel and Judah as his people and He would be their God. They would join together and appoint one head, not uninspired kings as they had in the past, but a leader whom God would answer (2:21-22) – Jezreel (1:11). Jezreel thus signaled the end of the kingship of Israel (1:4-5), the ruling dynasty at the time being the house of Jehu.

If we understand God to be primarily interested in educating us to understand the principles of truth and righteousness, then it makes sense that he would want to lead us through prophets rather than through uninspired policy-makers. This is exactly what Hosea taught. But let's face it, this was borderline seditious. Hosea was literally calling for, and predicting, the end of the current governmental structure of Israel and Judah in his day. In his view, the only way for things to be made right was for the then-current order of things to come to an end and an all new government to be established – a government of an entirely different order.

Hosea 4-14

As I mentioned earlier, this section is the one in which Hosea's message is most fully developed. It is also rather long, so we can't cover the whole thing. Instead, we'll do a bird's eye overview, chapter by chapter, focusing only on those parts which are most relevant for the present subject. It should be kept in mind that the chapter divisions were created later and don't always reflect a break in the content.

Hosea 4

Do you remember how I mentioned earlier that if God is primarily interested in educating us in the principles of truth and righteousness that it would make sense for him to want to lead us through prophets? Well, this section of Hosea starts out by declaring quite clearly what God's interest is:

4:1 Hear the word of the Lord, O people of Israel; for the Lord has an indictment against the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or loyalty, and no knowledge of God in the land.
4:2 Swearing, lying, and murder, and stealing and adultery break out; bloodshed follows bloodshed. – Hosea 4:1-2 (NRSV)

It seems that God is quite concerned about truth and righteousness and he sees a lack of knowledge as being a definite problem. In fact, a few verses later, he says this:

4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. – Hosea 4:6 (NRSV)

The rest of the chapter rebukes both the people and the priests for engaging in spiritualistic practices (4:12a, 17), sexual immorality (4:12b-14, 18), and condemnable sacrifice (4:13, 19). While they engaged in these practices and rejected knowledge and forgot God's law (God's instruction), it was difficult to lead them.

4:16 Like a stubborn heifer, Israel is stubborn; can the Lord now feed them like a lamb in a broad pasture? – Hosea 4:16 (NRSV)

The Lord would have loved to feed them like a lamb in a broad pasture (a.k.a. by means of a shepherd), but they were too stubborn and wouldn't accept His leading. Such is what God faced in Hosea's day.

Hosea 5

5:1 Hear this, O priests! Give heed, O house of Israel! Listen, O house of the king! For the judgment pertains to you; – Hosea 5:1a (NRSV)

As you can see, chapter five opens with God extending his rebuke to include the house of the king. The house of the king, the house of Israel, and the priests are judged by God to be guilty of whoredom (5:3-4) and it is said, "they do not know the Lord" (5:4).

Next, Judah is added to the list of those under rebuke (5:5-13). This is important since it shows that he didn't view Judah as a "righteous remnant." The religion of Judah wasn't mixed with Phoenician religion as was the case with the religion of Israel. They did not call upon Baal, but as Hosea said, they "seek the Lord, but they will not find him" (5:6). Their wickedness had separated them from God. Hosea described some of their sins and some of the sins of Israel. The Lord then says,

5:14 For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I myself will tear and go away; I will carry off, and no one shall rescue. 5:15 I will return again to my place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face. In their distress they will beg my favor: – Hosea 5:14-15 (NRSV)

What does it mean for the Lord to be like a lion to Israel and Judah? The answer is found in the next chapter. Remember, the last part of chapter five says, "In their distress they will beg my favor." The first three verses of chapter six quote their beg and the following verses contain God's response.

Hosea 6

6:1 "Come, let us return to the Lord; for it is he who has torn, and he will heal us; he has struck down, and he will bind us up. 6:2 After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. 6:3 Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord; his appearing is as sure as the dawn; he will come to us like the showers, like the spring rains that water the earth."

6:4 What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away early. 6:5 Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets, I have killed them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light. 6:6 For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. – Hosea 6:1-6 (NRSV)

It is important to understand the flow of the argument here. First, the Lord says he will be like a lion to destroy Israel and Judah (5:14). He says he will return to his place, his "lion's den," until they acknowledge their guilt, seek him, and beg favor (5:15). Their beg is envisioned as being somewhat hopeful. They recognize that God has struck them down, but think it will be a short-lived (short-deaded?) destruction from which they will be revived (6:1-2). They seem sincere in their desire to seek the Lord; they want to know him and believe he will come as sure as the dawn to refresh them and cause productivity as showers of rain (6:3). God's response shows that he sees their response to be lacking depth. They may be sincere, but he knows their love doesn't

last and that if he were to revive them, they would soon discard his knowledge and return to wickedness (6:4). He then explains again why he had to bring destruction upon them, but this time, he doesn't symbolize himself as a lion tearing them apart, he speaks straightforwardly. The lion's mouth that would rip them to pieces is now the words of God's mouth spoken by the prophets, hacking and destroying Israel and Judah (6:5). Why does he do this? Because he does not want the sacrifices by which they seek him (5:6; 6:6). He wants them to truly know him (6:6). The fact that God's desire for Israel and Judah to have a knowledge of him is given as an explanation as to why he sent his prophets to bring judgment upon them shows that God's appointed means of imparting that knowledge is indeed the prophets. This precisely matches, and clearly expresses, what we have already found to be one of the core principles of Hosea's message. And this point will only shine out more brightly as we continue.

The rest of Hosea 6 emphasizes the truth developed in 5:14-6:6 by pointing again to the sin of Israel, and especially of the priests, who are compared to robbers (an image later picked up by Jeremiah – Jer. 7).

Hosea 7

The rebuke of the sins of Israel continues into chapter seven and once again the house of the king is brought under sharp scrutiny.

7:3 By their wickedness they make the king glad, and the officials by their treachery. – Hosea 7:3 (NRSV)

By saying that the king is happy about all the wickedness of Israel, Hosea was declaring that the king shared in all their guilt. The king and the officials were corrupt. From Hosea's perspective, this wasn't a matter of one unusually wicked king; the problem was systemic. He pointed to what must have been a well-known and scandalous fact – that conspiracy was rife within the ruling class in Israel (7:4-7). In fact, out of the five kings who ruled Israel after the end of the Jehu dynasty, four of them gained rulership by assassinating the previous king (2 Kings 15:8-31)! As this was happening, Hosea bore the message of God,

7:7 All of them are hot as an oven, and they devour their rulers. All their kings have fallen; none of them calls upon me. – Hosea 7:7 (NRSV)

The rest of the chapter is taken up by further rebuking their sins and warning them of the futility of seeking aid from foreign nations. Their end was nigh.

Hosea 8

In the midst of all this wickedness, one would think that Israel would be full of shame, but instead, they tried to reassure God.

8:2 Israel cries to me, "My God, we—Israel—know you!" – Hosea 8:2 (NRSV)

Do you think God was comforted? Hosea knew that God wasn't and he knew that Israel was in a sad state of self-deception. The word of God through Hosea was,

8:3 Israel has spurned the good; the enemy shall pursue him. 8:4 They made kings, but not through me; they set up princes, but without my knowledge. ... 8:9 ... they have gone up to Assyria, a wild ass wandering alone; Ephraim has bargained for lovers. 8:10 Though they bargain with the nations, I will now gather them up. They shall soon writhe under the burden of kings and princes. – Hosea 8:3-4a, 9-10 (NRSV)

Israel may have thought that it was God who established their kings, but God declared through Hosea that he had nothing to do with it. Through her kings (2 Kings 15:19-20; 17:3), Israel went seeking after other nations and their gods (the lovers). The line of reasoning culminating in verse 10 is something like this: Israel, you

think you know me, but you don't. You think I set up your kings, but I didn't. You set them up independent of me. The attempt by your kings to make friends with the other nations will only result in you be subjugated under them. Since you love having kings so much, I'll give you kings, but they will be the kings of the nations, under whose burden you will soon writhe!

Israel thought they were good with God through their monarchic system, but also through their priestly system. In the first section of this chapter, God says he rejected Israel's kings and they would therefore be scattered to the nations; in the second part of the chapter, God says he rejected their sacrifices and so they would be scattered to the nations.

Hosea 9

9:1 Do not rejoice, O Israel! Do not exult as other nations do; for you have played the whore, departing from your God. You have loved a prostitute's pay on all threshing floors. ... 9:3 They shall not remain in the land of the Lord; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and in Assyria they shall eat unclean food. – Hosea 9:1, 3 (NRSV)

Israel's sin was so great that exile was the only solution. God knew that they would continue in their perverse priestly practices, but if they did it among the nations, they would at least not be doing it in his honor (9:4-5).

As I'm sure you can see by now, Hosea's message was intensely radical. It undermined both the monarchic and the priestly structures, which were the foundational structures of the nation of Israel. What was their response to Hosea and his message?

9:7 ... Israel cries, "The prophet is a fool, the man of the spirit is mad!" – Hosea 9:7b (NRSV)

It is easy for us to look back and think, "Wow! Israel was so stubborn and hard of hearing! They had a prophet right in their midst speaking to them the word of God, and yet they rejected him! How could they call God's prophet a fool and a mad man?" But in all seriousness, if we had a prophet alive among us today declaring that we have been establishing our leaders independent of God and that God rejects our governmental and religious structures – insisting that those structures need to come to an end and that we need to be led by God through prophets, how do you think we would respond? Do you think we would accept such a prophet and such a message? This is a question worth pondering in self-examination.

What is the spirit-filled response to Israel's anti-prophet cries?

9:7 ... Because of your great iniquity, your hostility is great. 9:8 The prophet is a sentinel for my God over Ephraim, yet a fowler's snare is on all his ways, and hostility in the house of his God. – Hosea 9:7c-8 (NRSV)

The only reason why Israel was so hostile to Hosea was because their sin was great and he pointed out their sin. But he didn't do this of his own accord; he was the sentinel of God. Yet, they tried to trap him as did those like them in other generations.

9:15 Every evil of theirs began at Gilgal; there I came to hate them. Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of my house. I will love them no more; all their officials are rebels. – Hosea 9:15 (NRSV)

Wow! Those are some strong words concerning Gilgal! Whatever happened there was clearly really bad in the eyes of God. After learning what we have about Hosea's message, it shouldn't be too surprising to find out what happened there. Gilgal was the place where Israel established its monarchic form of government – it is where Saul was made king. Looking back at that experience will help to provide some context for Hosea's

view of the kingship.

Samuel was the last in a long line of judges over the tribes of Israel. As he was getting old, the Israelites sought for him to set a king over them. Samuel was not happy about this arrangement and, evidently, neither was God. The record reads as follows:

8:4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, 8:5 and said to him, “You are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; appoint for us, then, a king to govern us, like other nations.” 8:6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to govern us.” Samuel prayed to the Lord, 8:7 and the Lord said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. 8:8 Just as they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so also they are doing to you. – 1 Samuel 8:4-8 (NRSV)

In replacing Samuel with a king, they were really rejecting God since it is God who ruled through Samuel. God then had Samuel warn the people about all the terrible things that would happen to them as a result of having a king (1 Sam. 8:10-17). The last part of this terrible warning was this:

8:18 And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the Lord will not answer you in that day. – 1 Samuel 8:18 (NRSV)

If parents see their children about to do something disastrous, love compels them to warn their children. This is a way of saving them from getting into a mess. But if the children are determined to reject the counsel of the parents and get into a mess anyway, rescuing them from the consequences won't help them. The message of God through Samuel was that if Israel went ahead with their plans of setting up a king for themselves, He would have to let them endure the negative consequences. This was really the only way to help them. By Hosea's time, the people were exactly at that point. They were experiencing all the negative effects of their monarchic structure and Hosea was telling them that God wasn't going to step in and rescue them from the trouble they had brought upon themselves (Hos. 5:6, 7:14-16; 8:13; 11:7). This isn't to say that God wouldn't help them. It is just that they had to learn the hard way and then the system of their own hearts' desire would need to be replaced with God's system.

In spite of God's warning, Israel was determined to have a king (1 Sam. 8:19-20), so God reluctantly granted their request (1 Sam. 8:21-22).

11:15 So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal. There they sacrificed offerings of well-being before the Lord, and there Saul and all the Israelites rejoiced greatly. – 1 Samuel 11:15 (NRSV)

Samuel then spoke to the Israelites and ended his speech with a denunciation of their act.

12:17 Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will call upon the Lord, that he may send thunder and rain; and you shall know and see that the wickedness that you have done in the sight of the Lord is great in demanding a king for yourselves.” – 1 Samuel 12:17 (NRSV)

Samuel proclaimed that Israel's act of demanding a king was not only wickedness, but it was *great* wickedness. Hosea, in looking back upon this event at Gilgal, agreed with Samuel's (and God's) assessment. In light of this connection with Samuel, it becomes apparent that when Hosea called for the end of uninspired kingship and for it to be replaced with a theocratic system of God ruling through a prophet, he wasn't calling for something new; he was calling for a restoration to Israel's pre-monarchic form of government, as it was in the days of Samuel.

Hosea 10

Hosea says of Israel,

10:2 Their heart is false; now they must bear their guilt. The Lord will break down their altars, and destroy their pillars. 10:3 For now they will say: "We have no king, for we do not fear the Lord, and a king—what could he do for us?" – Hosea 10:2-3 (NRSV)

By saying "now they must bear their guilt" Hosea was saying that Israel was about to experience the negative consequences of their rebellion. God would take away their altars, pillars, and yes, their king. The translation of the beginning of verse 3 may be slightly confusing at first. The phrase "for now" in this passage isn't the common phrase "for now" as in "for now things will be one way, but later it will be different." "For" connects this verse with the previous verse and would be better translated "Indeed." "Now" indicates imminence as it did in the previous verse – "now they must bear their guilt." Thus, the words here placed in Israel's mouth are what Hosea imagines Israel thinking when their king is taken from them. He sees them acknowledging that God took away their king for the reason that they had not been fearing (respecting) Him. They would acknowledge that a king couldn't do them any good. The fact that their king would be taken from them is made more explicit later in the chapter.

10:7 Samaria's king shall perish like a chip on the face of the waters. 10:15 ...At dawn the king of Israel shall be utterly cut off. – Hosea 10:7, 15b (NRSV)

Hosea 11

By now, I'm sure you can see how Hosea goes back and forth between decrying the monarchic system and commending the prophetic system. This continues in chapter 11, but in a more subtle way. The prophetic mechanism is less under focus and the God behind the mechanism speaks as the active agent, leaving the mechanism only implied.

11:1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. 11:2 The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols. 11:3 Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. 11:4 I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them. – Hosea 11:1-4 (NRSV)

How did God call Israel out of Egypt? Through a prophet, as we all know and as Hosea also spells out in the next chapter (12:13). The point here is that when God leads through a prophet, it is not the prophet leading – it is God. God speaks in such close, tender, loving terms to convey this very point. We are supposed to look beyond the prophet to the One by whom he or she is sent. So soon after leaving Egypt, Israel forgot this important truth.

14:11 They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? – Exodus 14:11 (NRSV)

Was it Moses that took Israel out of Egypt? No! He was merely the instrument. God led them. This is precisely why the prophetic system of governance is so important; it is God leading in his compassion.

36:15 The Lord, the God of their ancestors, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place; 36:16 but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord against his people became so great that there was no remedy. – 2 Chronicles 36:15-16 (NRSV)

Thus, the Lord through Hosea declared,

11:5 They shall return to the land of Egypt, and Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me. – Hosea 11:5 (NRSV)

As we learned from Samuel, Israel rejected God as their king when they made a king for themselves. God wouldn't allow them to keep a king forever. I'm sure one reason was that these uninspired kings didn't truly represent Him, but they were doubtless viewed as representing him by many Israelites and by the other nations (the common understanding in the ancient world was that kings were representatives of gods). The other reason is the one we have spent more time on – that God wanted to lead Israel through prophets rather than uninspired kings. Unfortunately, in spite of Hosea's pleas, Israel didn't accept Yahweh as their king (as evident from their antagonism toward the prophet – 9:7-8). So, all God had left when dethroning their king was to let their king be a foreign one – Assyria. In short, they would be destroyed as a nation and scattered to Assyria where they would be servants to their new king. Yet, God has mercy and he promised not to destroy them completely:

11:8 How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. 11:9 I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath. 11:10 They shall go after the Lord, who roars like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west. 11:11 They shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria; and I will return them to their homes, says the Lord. – Hosea 11:8-11 (NRSV)

While Ephraim (Israel) would be scattered, they would be regathered when they respond to God roaring like a lion. Hosea already used this image of God as a lion. Do you remember what it meant? God's actions as a lion were symbolic of his actions through the prophets (5:14-6:6)! Thus, for the children of Israel to respond to God roaring like a lion is for them to respond to God speaking through a prophet. Doing so is what enables their return from their lands of exile and only those pictured as doing so actually return.

Hosea 12

After the hopeful declarations about the preservation of at least a part of Israel and of the return of those with lion-listening ears, the prophetic pen snaps back to the then-current reality.

12:1 Ephraim herds the wind, and pursues the east wind all day long; they multiply falsehood and violence; they make a treaty with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt. 12:2 The Lord has an indictment against Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways, and repay him according to his deeds. – Hosea 12:1-2 (NRSV)

Hosea once again pointed to the sad condition of Israel in the eyes of God. He then described how they were wicked from the earliest days and had continued to be (12:3-8). After referencing the need for a second exodus again (12:9), as described in the previous chapter, he said,

12:10 I spoke to the prophets; it was I who multiplied visions, and through the prophets I will bring destruction. 12:13 By a prophet the Lord brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he was guarded. – Hosea 12:10, 13 (NRSV)

As Seventh-day Adventists, we are familiar with these verses, but I think we can now see the fuller context. Hosea's point isn't simply, "God uses prophets." Hosea is saying, "We should have no king – we need to be led by God through a prophet." Notice how God is emphasizing his own part and the part of a prophet. "*I* spoke to the *prophets*; it was *I* who multiplied visions, and *through the prophets I* will bring destruction (see 6:5)... *By a prophet the Lord* brought Israel up from Egypt, and *by a prophet* he was guarded." The repetition should not be missed. Hosea really wanted to make sure his audience didn't miss the fact that prophetic theocracy is God's appointed form of government.

Hosea 13

This chapter continues to address Israel's sin and, consequently, her imminent destruction. In keeping with the theme of Hosea's message, kingship is part of the picture.

13:9 I will destroy you, O Israel; who can help you? 13:10 Where now is your king, that he may save you? Where in all your cities are your rulers, of whom you said, "Give me a king and rulers"? 13:11 I gave you a king in my anger, and I took him away in my wrath. – Hosea 13:9-11 (NRSV)

In light of what we have already gone through, the message of these verses is clear, isn't it?

Hosea 14

The book of Hosea ends with a plea for Israel to return to God with confession, repentance, and an acknowledgement of God's mercy. If these conditions are met, God's promise is... well, Hosea expressed it so beautifully. You can read it for yourself.

14:1 Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. 14:2 Take words with you and return to the Lord; say to him, "Take away all guilt; accept that which is good, and we will offer the fruit of our lips. 14:3 Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; we will say no more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy."

14:4 I will heal their disloyalty; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. 14:5 I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily, he shall strike root like the forests of Lebanon. 14:6 His shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive tree, and his fragrance like that of Lebanon. 14:7 They shall again live beneath my shadow, they shall flourish as a garden; they shall blossom like the vine, their fragrance shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

14:8 O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like an evergreen cypress; your faithfulness comes from me. 14:9 Those who are wise understand these things; those who are discerning know them. For the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them. – Hosea 14:1-9 (NRSV)

Summary of Hosea's Message

Much more could be said about Hosea and his message than what has been said here. Still, our overview has revealed a lot. Before we got into examining the contents of Hosea, I mentioned the importance of studying Hosea's message for what it is. We have all accepted the book of Hosea simply because it is in the Bible, all the while being ignorant of its teachings. The only honest thing to do is to find out what Hosea actually taught and then to take those teachings seriously. This demands for us to allow Hosea to maintain its own integrity by not interpreting it to mean something other than what its author meant.

So, what was Hosea's message? Hosea delivered his message at a time which we, in retrospect, can identify as the tail-end of the Israelite monarchy. He prophesied concerning the end of the monarchy and of the kingdom of Israel. Hosea did not teach that the monarchic government was a good thing but that due to wickedness the blessing of monarchy had to be removed. No! On the contrary, he taught that the monarchic system was bad from the start. In demanding a monarchy, Israel had rejected God and God was passionately displeased by this. Furthermore, Hosea did not say, "The monarchic system is bad. Period!" No, he actually had another system which he contrasted with the monarchic one and which he was evidently burdened that his fellow Israelites should adopt. The system he advocated was prophetic theocracy such as operated in the days of Samuel and Moses. He had reasons for this as well. He didn't argue that prophets had better personalities than kings or that they were nicer or smarter or had better policies or that they came first and "what's older is better." No! Hosea's contention is that under a prophetic theocracy, God is ruling. The prophet is merely a spokesperson. In contrast, kings rule by their own authority – by the authority of their position and are not inspired by God as are prophets. The only human king Hosea could accept is an inspired prophet-king like David (3:5). Hosea's message was radical, even borderline seditious. But doesn't it make sense? Isn't it simply true that if we want to be led by God, a prophetic theocracy is the way to go? Judge for yourself. But if you are going to profess that Hosea's message is true, you need to take it seriously.

Lessons for the SDA Church Today

What can we learn from Hosea's message for the Seventh-day Adventist church today? Does it have any relevance? If you think there is no principle of kingship alive in Adventism, then I can see how you might think that maybe it doesn't. But I think we have seen more than enough evidence at the beginning of this article to conclude that kingship is alive and well. And if this is the case, how could Hosea's message not be relevant? We know that kingly power has reared its ugly head in Adventism's past, and we know that many leading men today have warned about what they see as a new rise of kingly power. On this point, there is one more statement I would like to quote from the 2018 Autumn Council, but this time, from someone in favor of the compliance document.

Solomon Maphosa, Executive Secretary of the Southern Africa Indian Ocean Division:

"And Mr. Chairman, the General Conference in session set and it voted against ordination of women. And some of us have gone ahead and violated that. So, Mr. Chairman, I think there should be a consequence to that and I stand in full support of this document because we all voted together. These policies are ours as a collective body – otherwise we will be like the children of Israel when they had no king and each person did as they pleased. So, for order to continue in the church, Mr. Chairman, this document is valid. I vote in favor of it." – 3:53:35-3:54:28

"Otherwise we will be like the children of Israel when they had no king" – O, what a contrast between the view expressed by Solomon Maphosa and that of Hosea! Or, that of Samuel, or of Ellen White for that matter! At a time when kingly power was on the rise in Adventism, Ellen White wrote an article for *The Signs of the Times* explaining some of the essential principles involved in these matters. Here are some excerpts:

The first form of government over men was established by God himself, and acknowledged him as the only Sovereign. He made known his will by written commands and revelations, by messages to his chosen servants, by dreams, by signs, and wonders. He would have continued

to be their king, had they been content with his paternal care. {ST July 13, 1882, par. 1}

...

But increase of population, and intercourse with other nations, brought a change. The Israelites adopted many of the customs of their heathen neighbors, and thus sacrificed to a great degree, their own peculiar, holy character. Their worship became less earnest and sincere. Gradually they lost their reverence for God, and ceased to prize the high honor of being his chosen people. Dazzled by the pomp and display of heathen monarchs, they tired of their own simplicity, and desired to be freed from the rule of their Divine Sovereign. As they departed from the Lord, the different tribes became envious and jealous of one another. Strife and dissensions increased, until it was vainly imagined that the installation of a king was the only means by which harmony could be restored. {ST July 13, 1882, par. 3}

...

The days of Israel's greatest prosperity had been those in which they acknowledged Jehovah as their king,... {ST July 13, 1882, par. 9}

... The Lord permitted his people to follow their own course, because they refused to be guided by his counsels. Hosea declares that God gave them a king in his anger. In their pride they desired to be like other nations, not considering that with the pomp of royalty they must endure also its tyranny and exaction. This would be a bitter exchange for the mild and beneficent government of God. {ST July 13, 1882, par. 10}

It is a hazardous step to place the scepter in the hands of finite man, and crown him monarch. God understands the human heart far better than men understand it themselves. A departure from the Lord's wise arrangement would pervert authority into tyranny, and subjection into slavery. Even if a ruler were naturally merciful and benevolent, unlimited power over his fellow-men would tend to make him a despot. Such power God alone is able to use with justice and wisdom. {ST July 13, 1882, par. 11}

The Lord had, through his prophets, foretold that Israel would be governed by a king. But it by no means follows that this form of government was according to his will. Though he foresees all things, he often permits men to take their own course, when they refuse to be guided by the counsels of infinite wisdom. In this instance, he instructed Samuel to grant their request, but to faithfully warn them of the Lord's disapproval, and also make known what would be the result of their course: "Now therefore hearken unto their voice. Howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them." {ST July 13, 1882, par. 12}

...

But the people were bent upon following their own course. The solemn warnings from God, through his aged prophet, had no effect to turn them from their purpose. They returned the answer, "Nay; but we will have a king over us, that we may also be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles." {ST July 13, 1882, par. 16}

“Like other nations”—the Israelites did not realize that to be in this respect unlike other nations was a special privilege and blessing. God had separated Israel from every other people, to make them his own peculiar treasure. But they, disregarding this high honor, eagerly desired to imitate the example of the heathen. What blindness! What ingratitude! {ST July 13, 1882, par. 17}

...

Would that this passage in Israel's history had no counterpart in the present experience of God's people! But alas, we see it frequently repeated!... {ST July 13, 1882, par. 20}

The dissatisfied longing for worldly power and display, is as difficult to cure now as in the days of Samuel... The instructions of God's word, the counsels and reproofs of his servants, and even warnings sent directly from his throne, seem powerless to subdue this unworthy ambition.... {ST July 13, 1882, par. 21}

...

... Those who despise and reject the faithful servant of God, not merely show contempt for the man, but for the Master who sent him. It is God's words, his reproofs and counsel, that are set at naught; his authority that is rejected. {ST July 13, 1882, par. 23}

I think it is worthwhile to quote Solomon Maphosa's statement again – not because I want to focus on him; on the contrary, it is for the very reason that his view isn't his alone. The fact that the compliance document passed the vote shows that a good number are at least in general agreement with him.

Solomon Maphosa, Executive Secretary of the Southern Africa Indian Ocean Division:

“And Mr. Chairman, the General Conference in session set and it voted against ordination of women. And some of us have gone ahead and violated that. So, Mr. Chairman, I think there should be a consequence to that and I stand in full support of this document because we all voted together. These policies are ours as a collective body – otherwise we will be like the children of Israel when they had no king and each person did as they pleased. So, for order to continue in the church, Mr. Chairman, this document is valid. I vote in favor of it.” – 3:53:35-3:54:28

In all seriousness, does this sound like a description of God as our King, making known His will through His prophets? Obviously, it isn't. Do you remember what Ted Wilson said earlier? “Remembering that we don't have a prophet to ask.” Those were his words. So, what are we doing then? Do we really think we will succeed by having the “top” exercise authority to keep the rest in compliance? Notice in Solomon Maphosa's statement that it is the General Conference, not God through a prophet, who decided against women's ordination. Notice it is the General Conference, not God through a prophet, whose rules some have violated. It is the General Conference, not God through a prophet, whose policies must be enforced if we are to avoid the supposedly objectionable condition of having no king! So who is our king? Evidently not God. Samuel, Hosea, and Ellen White all considered the time before Saul's anointing as being the glorious period when God was Israel's only king, making known His will through His prophets. Those who share the sentiments expressed by our brother Maphosa are today rejecting the kingship of God as truly as did Israel in the time of Samuel. I know I am speaking straight, but don't we need to see our condition plainly?

One other thing – the idea that we need church leadership to exercise its authority in order “for order to continue in the church” sounds an awful lot like ancient Israel’s mistake. As Ellen White said, “*it was vainly imagined that the installation of a king was the only means by which harmony could be restored.*” Once again, Maphosa isn’t alone. Unity is heralded as the driving force behind all the efforts toward compliance. Really? Compliance with the GC will bring unity? What ever happened to spiritual gifts being the means by which God brings about unity (Ephesians 4:11-13)?

Let’s not forget how clearly Hosea spoke against Israel’s monarchic structure and spoke in favor of prophetic theocracy. If we acknowledge Hosea as a true prophet of God, this should be enough to settle the question. Yet, we may think that times have changed – that God has altered the principle of his government, or that for some other reason Hosea’s message shouldn’t apply today. But again, if kingly power is alive today, so too must Hosea’s message live. Ellen White’s teachings on this subject only confirm this truth. In 1864, she published *Spiritual Gifts* Vol. 4 in which the following words are found:

The Hebrews demanded a king of Samuel, like the nations around them. By preferring a despotic monarch to the wise and mild government of God himself, by the jurisdiction of his prophets, they showed a great want of faith in God, and confidence in his providence to raise them up rulers to lead and govern them. The children of Israel being peculiarly the people of God, their form of government was essentially different from all the nations around them. God had given them statutes and laws, and had chosen their rulers for them, and these leaders the people were to obey in the Lord. In all cases of difficulty and great perplexity, God, was to be inquired of. Their demand for a king was a rebellious departure from God, their special leader. He knew that a king would not be best for his chosen people. They would render to an earthly monarch that honor that was due to God alone. And if they had a king, whose heart was lifted up and not right with God, he would lead them away from him, and cause them to rebel against him. The Lord knew that no one could occupy the position of king, and receive the honors usually given to a king, without becoming exalted, and their ways seem right in their own eyes, while at the same time they were sinning against God. At the word of a king innocent persons would be made to suffer, while the most unworthy would be exalted, unless he continually trusted in God, and received wisdom from him. {4aSG 65.4}

If the Hebrews had continued to obey God after they left Egypt, and had kept his righteous law, he would have gone before them and prospered them, and made them always a terror to the heathen nations around them. But they so often followed their own rebellious hearts, and departed from God, and went into idolatry, that he suffered them to be overcome by other nations, to humble and punish them. When in their affliction they cried unto God, he always heard them, and raised them up a ruler to deliver them from their enemies. They were so blinded they did not acknowledge that it was their sins which had caused God to depart from them, and leave them weak and a prey to their enemies, but they reasoned that it was because they had no one invested with kingly authority to command the armies of Israel. They had not kept in grateful remembrance the many instances God had given them of his care and great love, but often distrusted his goodness and mercy. {4aSG 66.1}

God had raised up Samuel to judge Israel. He was honored by all the people. God was to be acknowledged as their great Head, yet he designated their rulers, and imbued them with his Spirit, and communicated his will to them through his angels, that they might instruct the people... {4aSG 67.1}

God was angry with his people because they demanded a king. He gave them a king in his wrath. Yet he bade Samuel to tell the people faithfully the manner of the kings of the nations around them; that they would not be as a judge of difficulties of church and State, to instruct them in the ways of the Lord, like their rulers: that their king would be exalted, and would require kingly honors, and would exact a heavy tax or tribute; that they would be oppressed; and that God would

not manifest to them his mighty power, as in Egypt, to deliver them, but when they should cry unto him in their distress he would not hear them. {4aSG 67.2}

...

They had possessed greater courage and confidence while they had God-fearing rulers to instruct and lead them, for they obtained counsel direct from God, and it was like being led by God himself. Now, they realized that they were commanded by an erring king, who could not save them in their distress. {4aSG 69.1}

Do you realize that we as Adventists are presently being commanded by an erring king? God allowed Israel to experience what it was like to have an earthly ruler so that they would realize how much better it was to be ruled by God through a prophet. Hosea's message called them to that realization. Sadly, they failed to learn that lesson. God forbid we make the same mistake.

As you may all understand by now, 1901 was a key year in the history of Adventism's struggle with kingly power. In the years leading up to the 1901 General Conference Session, Ellen White had more and more to say on this subject. Here are some statements spanning the 1880s and 1890s. I won't comment on each statement, but I ask that you read them carefully and prayerfully.

As the Heaven-appointed, visible leader of the Israelites, Moses had been connected with that people through scenes of peril, and had borne with their discontent, their jealousies, and murmurings, without retaliation, or seeking to be released from his trying position. When the Hebrews were brought into scenes of difficulty or danger, instead of trusting in God, who had done wondrous things for them, they murmured against Moses. The Son of God was the leader of the Israelites, although invisible to the congregation. His presence went before them, and conducted all their travels, while Moses was their visible leader, receiving his directions from the angel, who was Christ himself. {ST September 9, 1880, par. 5}

The Lord is leading his church in these last days as he led ancient Israel. While he gives them warnings, reproofs, and encouragement through his delegated servant, Christ, the angel of the covenant, who in the pillar of cloud and of fire went before the Hebrew host, is the leader of his people today. {RH November 2, 1886, par. 7}

I was shown years ago that there will be dissension and a lack of harmony and unity of action among the workers in our institutions unless all are subject to the authority of God. He will stand as Commander if each will obey His directions; but there must also be a visible head who fears God. The Lord will never accept a careless, disorderly company of workers; neither will He undertake to lead forward and upward to noble heights and certain victories those who are self-willed and disobedient. The soul's progress means the Saviour's rule. {Lt63-1886.11}

The government of Israel was characterized by the most thorough organization, wonderful alike for its completeness and its simplicity. The order so strikingly displayed in the perfection and arrangement of all God's created works was manifest in the Hebrew economy. God was the center of authority and government, the sovereign of Israel. Moses stood as their visible leader, by God's appointment, to administer the laws in His name. From the elders of the tribes a council of seventy was afterward chosen to assist Moses in the general affairs of the nation. Next came the priests, who consulted the Lord in the sanctuary. Chiefs, or princes, ruled over the tribes. Under these were "captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens," and, lastly, officers who might be employed for special duties. Deuteronomy 1:15. {PP 374.2} (1890)

The question of religious liberty needs to be clearly comprehended by our people in more ways than one. With outstretched arms men are seeking to steady the ark, and the anger of the Lord is kindled against them because they think that their position entitles them to say what the Lord's servants shall do and what they shall not do. They think themselves competent to decide what shall be brought before God's people, and what shall be repressed. The Lord inquires of them, "Who has required this at your hand? Who has given you the burden of being conscience for My people? By what spirit are you guided and controlled when you seek to restrict their liberty? I have not chosen you as I chose Moses—as men through whom I can communicate divine instruction to My people. I have not placed the lines of control in your hands. The responsibility that rested on Moses—of voicing the words of God to the people—has never been delegated to you." {Ms51-1895.2}

Moses was especially chosen to be the visible leader of the children of Israel. Through long years of discipline he learned the lesson of humility, and he became a man whom God could teach and guide. He endured as seeing Him who is invisible. God trusted him—a daily learner in the school of Christ—with the leadership of the host of Israel. God talked with him face to face, as a man talketh with his friend. He was the meekest of all men. He did not seek to control the Holy Spirit, but was himself controlled by the Spirit. {Ms51-1895.3}

As a people we should study God's plans for conducting His work. Wherever He has given directions in regard to any point, we should carefully consider how to regard His expressed will. This work should have special attention. It is not wise to choose one man as president of the General Conference. The work of the General Conference has extended, and some things have been made unnecessarily complicated. A want of discernment has been shown. There should be a division of the field, or some other plan should be devised to change the present order of things. {Lt24a-1896.1}

Instead of advancing the work themselves, insufficient workers have cast their responsibilities on the president of the General Conference. Thus burdens that were altogether too heavy have been brought upon one man. And if that one man's mind becomes warped or clouded in any way, then a wrong mold is given to the work. It may be urged that there is a General Conference Committee, and each of our institutions has a Board of Directors, and they will carry the burden. But if one or more of these men are leavened with a spirit that God cannot favor, and yet they are retained in the work, they will leaven the president of the Conference. If he is in any way dull of comprehension, if he for any cause permits his staunch, faithful workers, men who are true to principle, to leave him, the cause of God is imperiled. {Lt24a-1896.2}

...

And yet men in positions of trust have been and are being educated to submit all their plans to the counselors at Battle Creek, to be pronounced upon, approved or disapproved, by men. How long shall this departure from the Lord's arrangement continue? Men have such a burning desire to stretch themselves beyond their measure. They wish to be regarded as authority on all things relative to the work of God in all parts of the world. But this is not God's plan. The

men who compose the councils at Battle Creek have for years been very defective in character. Their own spirit and judgment have leavened the plans and recommendations presented to the workers in different fields. If the people are so blinded that they cannot discern this, God sees it, and it is an offense to Him. {Lt24a-1896.8}

The Lord has his appointed agencies; and if these are not discerned and respected by those who are connected with his work, if men feel free to disregard God's requirements, they must not be kept in positions of trust. They would not listen to counsel, nor to the commands of God through his appointed agencies. Like Saul, they would rush into a work that was never appointed them, and the mistakes they would make in following their human judgment would place the Israel of God where their Leader could not reveal himself to them. Sacred things would become mingled with the common. {YI November 17, 1898, par. 11}

Depending on men has been the great weakness of the church. Men have dishonored God by failing to appreciate His sufficiency, by coveting the influence of men. Thus Israel became weak. The people wanted to be like the other nations of the world, and they asked for a king. They desired to be guided by human power which they could see rather than by the divine Theocracy, the invisible power which till then had led and guided them, and given them victory in battle. They made their own choice, and the result was seen in the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the nation. {Ms159-1899.13}

How plain! In light of these statements, how do you think we should go about seeking a solution to the current problems in the church? Think on it as you continue reading and we'll come back to it.

Ellen White wrote the above statements because they needed to be written. Kingly power was on the rise and it all came to a head in 1901. On April 1 (the day before the GC session), Ellen gave a talk to some of the leading men. Here is some of what she said:

I would prefer not to speak today, but still not because I have nothing to say, because I have; I have something to say. And the state of things as has existed in our conference and the leading responsibilities are not nearly understood in their influence by themselves or by those that are taking responsibilities in the work.... And in reference to our conference, it is repeated o'er and o'er and o'er again, that it is the voice of God, and therefore everything must be referred to the Conference and have the conference voice in regard to permission or restriction or what shall be and what shall not be done in the various fields. {SpM 162.4}

Now from the light that I have, as it was presented to me in figures: There was a narrow compass here; there within that narrow is a king-like, kingly ruling power. Here the outlets are blocked. And the work all over our field demands an entirely different course of action than we have had.... {SpM 163.1}

...

Now God wants a change, and it is high time,... {SpM 164.3}

... God is going to have a change. He wants us to know what it means to work on the principles of heaven. {SpM 165.1}

... God means what he says, "I want a change here." Will it be the same thing, going over and over the same ideas, the same committees—and here is the little throne: the king is in there, and these others are all secondary, those minds that are so much sharper because they have not been working on this narrow, conceited plane. {SpM 165.2}

I feel intensely in this matter. I do not want to talk here but I dare not hold my peace. I feel this condition. I think we should hold for the tenderness of God and break your hearts before him, and if you get where you can see these things clearly, you will see that God hates selfishness, and when we bring it into his cause, oh, it makes the crime a hundred fold greater. And when we bring that selfishness in, as though we were going to benefit the cause, we do not benefit it at all: it makes God ashamed of you. {SpM 166.1}

... God wants that these committees that have been handling things for so long should be relieved of their command and have a chance for their life, and see if they can not get out of this rut that they are in,—which I have no hope of their getting out of, because the Spirit of God has been working, and working, and yet the king is there still. {SpM 166.2}

...

Now the Lord wants his Spirit to come in. He wants the Holy Ghost king. {SpM 166.3}

...

He wants you to eat his principles: to live his principles; – but those that are there now never will appreciate it. They have had their test, they have had their trial, they have had their warnings, and now there must be a change.... When they do this, they will understand that God hath his servants, his church, established in the earth, composed of many members, but of one body; that in every part of the work one part must work as connected with another part, and that with another part, and with another part, and these are joined together by the golden links of heaven, and there is to be no kings here in their midst at all. {SpM 168.1}

Just like Hosea, Ellen White didn't oppose kingly power and leave it at that. No! She advocated another system. "Now the Lord wants his Spirit to come in. He wants the Holy Ghost king." And through what means do you suppose the Holy Ghost, as king, will rule? Don't Ellen's statements leading up to 1901 provide a clear answer? If you don't know what it is, I recommend reading them again.

Those present at Ellen White's talk were evidently stirred by her words. I say this because, throughout the course of the session (April 2-23), they brought about a number of major changes which were geared toward reducing kingly power. Church finances were spread more equally throughout various regions rather than being centered mostly in one place; the General Conference Executive Committee was expanded to include more members; and, perhaps most significantly, unions were created to prevent the General Conference from exercising dictation across the world field, as we saw earlier. The GC Executive Committee even got rid of the office of GC president, replacing it with that of "chairman"⁴⁶See [GCRS 1901 Constitution](#) in an effort to be in harmony with Ellen White's counsel that "*It is not wise to choose one man as president of the General Conference*." (Lt24a-1896.1 – see p. 55). The switch from "president" to "chairman" wasn't just semantics either. The idea proposed in the meetings was that a chairman would fill that role for only about a year or so before being replaced.⁴⁷[GCRS19010409.pdf](#) ([adventistarchives.org](#)), [GCRS 19010410.pdf](#) ([adventistarchives.org](#)), [GCRS19010411.pdf](#) ([adventistarchives.org](#)) though he could be replaced any time. The practice of placing people in responsible positions for only short durations was recommended by Ellen White some years earlier (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 619.2 – originally from Ms1-1878.33-34). Unfortunately, not everyone picked up on the significance of the change and thought that a president and a chairman were basically the same thing. An example of this can be found less than a month after the GC session in an SDA periodical from New York:

In the organization of the General Conference Committee, Eld. A. G. Daniells was chosen Chairman, which constitutes him, practically, president of the General Conference. – The New York Indicator, May 8, 1901, p. 4.

To be clear, it isn't the label that really matters. If someone had the label of "president," but only chaired a committee for a short time before being replaced, all the while exercising no kingly power, it wouldn't be objectionable. Likewise, if someone had the label of "chairman" but ruled authoritatively for many years with kingly power, the label wouldn't make it any better. As it happened, Daniells took up the label "president," and not only the label, the function as well. Rather than chairing a committee for 12 months, he presided over the GC for 21 years, and at least some of the time with kingly power.

At this point one may ask, "What is kingly power?" Simply put, it is power derived from position. A king does not derive his authority from his knowledge, skill, wisdom, or righteousness, but from his position. This is evident from the fact that many a king have lacked those things, but retained their power and authority. So long as they held the position, they had the power and no one could question it. A number of the statements we have already quoted from Ellen White have a bearing directly on this principle, but so that no one misses it, consider the following:

A spirit of authority is not to be exercised, even by the president of a Conference; for position does not change a man into a creature that cannot err. {Lt10-1903}

One man may think that his position gives him authority to dictate to other workers, but this is not so. Ignorant of their work, he would enlarge where he should retrench, and retrench where he should enlarge, because he can see only the part of the vineyard where he is working. {8T 170.2}

Do not allow any man to come in as an arbitrary ruler, and say, You must go here, and you must not go there; you must do this, and you must not do that. We have a great and important work to do and God would have us take hold of that work intelligently. The placing of men in positions of responsibility in the various conferences, does not make them gods. {GCB May 21, 1909, par. 5}

Position does not give a man kingly authority. The meekness of Christ is a wonderful lesson given to the fallen world. Learning this meekness from the great Teacher, the worker will become Christlike. {Lt178-1909.16}

Quite plain, isn't it? The authority which some take upon themselves as derived from their position is not genuine authority. To put it another way, genuine authority does not derive from position. Let's contrast this kingly authority with prophetic authority. The word "prophet," unlike "king," does not refer to a certain position within a power structure. Rather, it simply means "spokesperson." God may select a person from any walk of life, any social class, any gender, and any place to be His prophet/spokesperson in order to communicate His message. This selection does not necessarily change the position of the person, at least not in a power structure; it only puts them in the role of teacher and instructor. A prophet has no authority of his/her own, but when God sends a message through a prophet, it has His own authority attached to it. Thus, while a prophet has no inherent authority, s/he bears the highest authority. Let's view this from another angle. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth Who, it is promised, will guide us into all truth (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit is also the One who inspires the prophets (2 Peter 1:21). It is therefore evident that a true prophet is a divinely appointed spokesperson who communicates the truth, a knowledge of which was inspired in him/her through the Holy Spirit. Prophetic authority, then, is truth-based authority. This is further demonstrated in the fact that the genuineness of a prophet is ultimately determined by the truthfulness of their teaching. If the teachings of a professed prophet are shown to be false, their authority is shown to be fraudulent. Since it is the truth that makes us free (John 8:32), and since God wants us to be free, it is no wonder that God "*wants the Holy Ghost [to be] king.*" The Holy Spirit rules through prophetic theocracy. Again, the authority of this system is not arbitrary – it is not based on position, it is based on truth.

We should be pervaded with a deep, abiding sense of the value, sanctity, and authority of the truth. {YI February 2, 1893, par. 8}

The truth of the Word of God is of sufficient authority and power. *It bears its own credentials.* The testimonies given me of God are designed to call the attention of the people to a "Thus Saith the Lord." {Lt6a-1894.17}

Those who profess the truth should never shrink from keeping the testing message clear and distinct before the world. They should study the truth with respect and reverence, because it is truth. They should cherish a deep, abiding sense of its importance for the present time. Then the truth will ever be their sanctification, their authority, their stronghold. The gospel of Christ is profitable for all things; it carries its credentials with it. {Ms139-1899.15}

When he [Jesus] taught, his words came with authority; for he spoke with positive knowledge of the truth. {RH January 7, 1890, par. 5}

Never did a word of prevarication or untruth pass His [Christ's] lips. Truth was His authority and gave force to His requirements, His commandments, His reproofs. Truth never languished on His lips, never suffered in His hands. {Ms140-1903.51}

It is the life of the soul to be sanctified through the truth, and to maintain the authority of the truth. {BTS May 1, 1913, par. 2}

The Word of God is to be presented unalloyed with ... the authority that the truth gives, with meekness, yet with assurance and power. {Lt9-1894.10}

The Scriptures are not to be adapted to meet the prejudices and jealousies of men. They can be understood only by those who are humbly seeking the hidden treasure. These receive the truth in prophecy, and submit to its authority. {Ms48-1898.6}

At the end of the 1901 General Conference session, it seemed that all had gone well. The Holy Spirit spoke through the then-living spokesperson, and her counsel was taken seriously. Changes were made based upon that counsel. Truth was upheld. Two days after the conference ended, Ellen White had this to say:

I was never more astonished in my life than at the turn things have taken at this meeting. This is not our work. God has brought it about. Instruction regarding this was presented to me, but until the sum was worked out at this meeting, I could not comprehend this instruction. God's angels have been walking up and down in this congregation. I want every one of you to remember this, and I want you to remember also that God has said that he will heal the wounds of his people. {GCB April 25, 1901, Art. A, par. 33}

This statement, among others, reveals that Ellen was filled with joy over what had transpired during the session. Yet, the very next day after she made the above-quoted statement, her tone changed.

It has been presented to me that a certain power has been trying to rule in Battle Creek. Some have possessed a spirit similar to that possessed by the priests and rulers in Christ's day. As it was presented to me, there was a kingly power which wished to rule, and if things did not come into line, there was a desire to repress men who were being enlightened by the Holy Spirit, men who had His word, who had been given a message to bear to the people. {Ms36-1901.1}

(April 26, 1901)

Ellen was shown that kingly power still lingered – that the Holy Spirit was not being allowed to lead in every regard. She soon wrote letters to A.G. Daniells warning him about the evils of kingly power, both as it was manifest through others, and as it might be manifest to him should he fall to its seduction.

Men have taken to themselves kingly power and have exercised arbitrary authority. O, if men's hearts had only been cleansed from the alloy of worldliness, if greed and selfishness had been cut away, what a different condition of things would today be seen in the cause. {Lt59-1901.14} (June 5, 1901)

I felt much pained in one meeting that I attended, and that night matters were clearly presented to me. The next morning I presented the instruction I had received to those who were gathered together.... There is to be no ordering, no exertion of kingly authority. {Lt55-1901.5} (June 24, 1901)

Divine wisdom must have abundant room in which to work. It is to advance without asking permission or support from those who have taken to themselves a kingly power. {SpM 174.3}

God helping his people, the circle of kings who dared to take such great responsibilities shall never again exercise their unsanctified power in the so-called "regular lines". Too much power has been invested in unrevived, unreformed human agencies. {SpM 175.3} (June 28, 1901)

Ellen White's hopes and dreams that had arisen during the 1901 General Conference session were short lived. Kingly power hadn't died. She was incredibly disheartened over the experience and God was sorely disappointed as well. The failure on the part of God's people was actually so dire that God instructed Ellen White to not attend church council meetings or even camp meetings.

The word of the Lord to me is: "Look on these things, and meditate on them. You may claim the rich grace of truth, which nourishes the soul. Have naught to do with controversy and dissension and strife, which bring darkness and discouragement to your soul. Truth is clear, pure, savory. Avoid all council-meetings where there is dissension, and where men will neither credit My words and obey My lessons, nor heed your counsel. Speak the truth in faith and love, leaving the result with God. The work is not yours, but the Lord's. In all your communications, speak as one to whom the Lord has spoken. He is your authority, and He will give you His sustaining grace." {Lt186-1902.2}

...

... I am thrown into perplexity over their course; and I desire now to attend to my special work, to have no part in any of their councils and to attend no camp-meetings nigh or afar off. My mind shall not be dragged into confusion by the tendency they manifest to work directly contrary to the light that God has given me. I am done. I will preserve my God-given intelligence. {Lt186-1902.5}

My voice has been heard in the different Conferences and at camp-meetings. I must now make a change. I cannot enter the atmosphere of strife and then have to bear testimonies that cost me much more than those to whom they are sent can imagine. When I attend the different meetings, I am compelled to deal with men standing in responsible places who I know are not exerting an influence that God can endorse. And when I bear a testimony in reference to their course of action, advantage is taken of this testimony. These men have not clear understanding. Should I say the things that I know, they would not, with their present experience, use this instruction wisely and would bring upon me inconceivable burdens. {Lt186-1902.6}

I shall, therefore, leave them to receive word from the Bible, in which the principles upon which they should work are laid down in straight lines. {Lt186-1902.7}

My brethren, I feel great sorrow of heart. I shall not appear before you again in our general gatherings unless I am impressed by the Spirit of God that I should. The last General Conference that I attended gave you all the evidence that you will ever have in any meeting that shall be convened. If that meeting did not convince you that God is working by His Spirit through His humble servant, it is because the candlestick has been moved out of its place. I thought that after the last General Conference there would be a change of heart; but during that meeting the work was not done that ought to have been done that God might come in; nor has this work been done since that time. God is knocking at the door of the heart; but as yet the door has not been opened to let Him enter and take full possession of the soul temple. {Ms166-1902.38}

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. {Lt17-1903}

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. {Lt17-1903}

How sad! If this does not stir your innermost self and inspire you with heartfelt humility before God, what will? I hope that you can see that the failure in 1901 was in people choosing to go their own way. They followed the same wrong principles that had prevailed before the conference – that of kingly power. And in so doing, they rejected the leadings of the Spirit of God through the humble instrument whom had been appointed to bear the Spirit's testimony. Can you not see that this is the same principle which was at work in the days of Hosea? The people in his day followed their uninspired rulers and discarded the testimony of the prophets. They upheld monarchy, not wishing to be under God's prophetic theocracy. It was the same thing in 1901. The Holy Spirit was there to be king and to lead the church through the appointed means of the Spirit of Prophecy, but men in responsible positions refused that leadership and instead ruled by their own kingly power. Unfortunately, many followed their leading rather than the leadings of the Holy Spirit. It is no surprise that Ellen was instructed not to attend meetings. What good would it do? She had borne God's message, but it was rejected. They had no respect for the authoritative truth she bore, so how could she benefit them? They would be left to receive instruction from the Bible without the benefit of God speaking to them through a living spokesperson.

The conflict between these two principles of government did not end in 1901, or 1902, or 1903. It continued through the rest of Ellen White's life and it still continues today. Here are some final words of counsel from the pen of Ellen White. I hope you will see how relevant they are today.

The Lord of heaven is to be the Leader and Guide and Counselor of His people. His institutions are to be managed under His theocracy. {GCB April 6, 1903, Art. A, par. 18}

I see the greatest dangers before the people of God, and I must take my stand and let them know their peril. No man is to exert an overmastering or kingly power. This God forbids; for man is but man. {Ms93-1903.6}

No one is to claim kingly power over God's heritage. God's people are to be under Christ. There is one Shepherd, and He has one flock.... Humanity is not divinity. Not all your methods are inspired of God. The greatest temptations come to the men who bear the greatest responsibilities. {Ms156-1901.37}

... Wake up, brethren, wake up. The enemy is on our track. We must be wide awake, on our guard against him. We must put on the whole armor of God. We must follow the directions given in the spirit of prophecy. We must love and obey the truth for this time. This will save us from accepting strong delusions. God has spoken to us through his Word. He has spoken to us through the Testimonies to the church, and through the books that have helped to make plain our present duty and the position that we should now occupy. The warnings that have been given, line upon line, precept upon precept, should be heeded. If we disregard them, what excuse shall we offer? {SpM 324.1}

The pope claims authority over the practice of many who do not recognize Christ as our only Authority. He places himself in a position of God, and the weak and uninformed are kept from the knowledge that would reveal to them their privilege as children of God. We are to have no kings, no rulers, no popes among us. It is time for us diligently to heed the messages that have brought us out from the world. {SpM 325.1}

Great light has been shining forth in Battle Creek. The Lord has presented to me ... that it was His will that many who had not known me should become acquainted with the messages God has been giving to His people. And then after that meeting I was instructed that those who attended that meeting would not have any greater evidence of the genuineness of the messages that the Lord gave His humble servant to bear than they had during those meetings. {Ms174-1903.21}

Those who did not humble their hearts before God and accept the light given would go into greater darkness, losing their discernment of the true evidence of the truth and the grace and work of God. If they would not accept of the light and turn from their unbelief and darkness and correct their wrong course of action, which had been a great injury to the work and cause of God, then greater blindness would come upon them that greater light would not be recognized as light, and they would not be corrected. They would follow their own course to their own ruin. {Ms174-1903.22}

In the work of God no kingly authority is to be exercised by any human being, or by two or three... The men in positions of trust have not been carrying the work wisely. {Ms26-1903.4}

... The General Conference has fallen into strange ways, and we have reason to marvel that judgment has not fallen,... {Ms26-1903.5}

No human, kingly power is to bear rule in any line of God's work. There is but one supreme authority—the authority of God. Those occupying positions of trust are the ones, above all others, who should render perfect obedience to God. {Lt61-1904.8}

The men who have accepted kingly authority need to be converted; for the self-esteem and self-exaltation they have manifested is dishonoring to God.... {Ms75-1907.6}

The men bearing chief responsibility in our conferences must not seek to embrace too much authority. {Ms75-1907.7}

There were strong men ... who stood decidedly against the light the Lord was giving His messenger regarding the work to be done. They were following their own counsel and judgment and were imperiling the cause of God. {Lt178-1909.12}

The Lord has wrought in a remarkable manner to uphold the messages sent to correct the strange work that was being done. The evil has been checked, but it has not yet been fully rooted out; and if there were not a continuation of the messages from the Lord to His people, the will and ways of men would yet prevail to bring in strife and contention, and a deformed work would be the result. I was shown that human power is constantly working to weave itself into the work of God. This brings in disjointed and inharmonious action. The messages of pure and unadulterated truth are in danger of being trampled under foot by self-willed, unconverted men who work to destroy confidence in the warnings that God would speak to the hearts of His people to correct error and to encourage righteousness. {Lt178-1909.13}

A great many of the difficulties ... have come in through a misunderstanding on the part of men in official positions concerning their individual responsibility in the matter of controlling and ruling their fellow laborers. Men entrusted with responsibilities have supposed that their official position embraced very much more than was ever thought of by those who placed them in office, and serious difficulties arose as the result. {Lt178-1909.14}

...

... Position does not give a man kingly authority. The meekness of Christ is a wonderful lesson given to the fallen world. Learning this meekness from the great Teacher, the worker will become Christlike. {Lt178-1909.16}

For several years there have been leading men ... who exercised an authority which they supposed was theirs by virtue of their office, to control the work according to their own disposition and judgment. The work was becoming confused, and the Lord gave me a message regarding the movements that should be made.... {Lt178-1909.17}

Elder Haskell and his wife have been engaged in the work for years, and their faith in the truth and in the testimonies given by the Holy Spirit is strong. They have unitedly served according to the Lord's appointment, and we have sought to sustain them in their work. Conditions in the churches have changed decidedly, but the Lord has shown me that some in responsible positions are not yet converted; and without thorough conversion, they cannot conduct the work in right lines. Some who have been reproved and warned are not established and settled and fully yielded to the guiding power of the Holy Spirit. Satan is not yet fully cast out of the minds of some, and it would take very little to produce again the conditions that existed two years ago. {Lt178-1909.18}

... The Lord desires to work through men of clean purposes and decided experience, men who will learn from the testimonies of His Spirit, where they have not been in harmony with the Lord's will, and who will be converted. Then decided changes will be made. The perils threatening the work will be seen, conversions will be experienced, and our people will be preparing to stand firmly and unitedly with God to build up His kingdom in the earth. {Lt178-1909.19}

Where do we stand today? Do we see the perils that threaten the work? Perhaps, but perhaps not as clearly as we might. Do you remember the question I asked you to think about earlier? It was after I quoted a number of statements that Ellen White wrote in the 1880s and 1890s regarding the need to be led by God through the Spirit of Prophecy rather than by uninspired men ruling with kingly authority. Here is what I said,

In light of these statements, how do you think we should go about seeking a solution to the

current problems in the church? Think on it as you continue reading and we'll come back to it.

Well, what do you think? How should we go about seeking a solution? I want to remind you of something Ellen White said in the statement we most recently quoted from her. She said that, *"I was shown that human power is constantly working to weave itself into the work of God."* And that *"if there were not a continuation of the messages from the Lord to His people, the will and ways of men would yet prevail to bring in strife and contention, and a deformed work would be the result."* And, in a statement we quoted earlier, she spoke of those who do not humble themselves to accept the light that God sends going into greater darkness. She said, *"greater blindness would come upon them that greater light would not be recognized as light."* If God knows that the will and ways of men will prevail unless he sends a continuation of messages, would He not send a continuation of messages? And if we as a people did not humble ourselves in Ellen White's days to receive the light God sent through her, then don't we have to acknowledge that greater blindness has come upon us and that we are in a condition in which *"greater light would not be recognized as light"*? But what if that is exactly the solution? What if God has been sending greater light? What if He has been sending a continuation of messages, but in our blindness we haven't recognized them?

We need to wake up, open our eyes, and realize that the Holy Spirit needs to be our King. We need to be led by the Spirit of Prophecy. And what is the Spirit of Prophecy? I have actually written another booklet on that subject. But I will say here that neither the Scriptures, nor Ellen White, nor the SDA pioneers believed that it is the writings of Ellen White, as commonly thought today.

We have many problems as a church, and our current crisis is a serious one. We cannot find the solution ourselves. The only real solution is to end the monarchy and seek the Lord to lead us through prophetic theocracy as He did in the past. Ellen White said of ancient Israel,

By preferring a despotic monarch to the wise and mild government of God himself, by the jurisdiction of his prophets, they showed a great want of faith in God, and confidence in his providence to raise them up rulers to lead and govern them... {4aSG 65.4}

... When in their affliction they cried unto God, he always heard them, and raised them up a ruler ... {4aSG 66.1}

If we cry out to God to be our King and to lead us in His own appointed way, surely He will do it. But if men in responsible positions refuse to be dethroned and choose instead to resist the manifestation of the Spirit of God, do not give up and do not give in. Let us not repeat the cry of ancient Israel who said, "The prophet is a fool, the man of the spirit is mad!" And let us not fulfill the forecast:

There is to be in the [Seventh-day Adventist] churches a wonderful manifestation of the power of God, but it will not move upon those who have not humbled themselves before the Lord, and opened the door of the heart by confession and repentance. In the manifestation of that power which lightens the earth with the glory of God, they will see only something which in their blindness they think dangerous, something which will arouse their fears, and they will brace themselves to resist it. Because the Lord does not work according to their ideas and expectations they will oppose the work. "Why," they say, "should we not know the Spirit of God, when we have been in the work so many years?"—The Review and Herald Extra, December 23, 1890. {LDE 209.3}

If you support the ordination of women, you recognize that there are people whom God has ordained, but whose ordination has not been recognized by the church leadership. If this could be the case for church pastors, could it not also be the case for people whom God has ordained to fill other roles in the church, including prophets? If you do not support the ordination of women, I'm sure you can see from the statements quoted in this article that even the leadings of God through Ellen White were not always respected.

I would like to leave you with two more statements, one from Hosea and one from Ellen White:

14:1 Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. 14:2 Take words with you and return to the Lord; say to him, "Take away all guilt; accept that which is good, and we will offer the fruit of our lips. 14:3 Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; we will say no more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy."

14:4 I will heal their disloyalty; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. 14:5 I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily, he shall strike root like the forests of Lebanon. 14:6 His shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive tree, and his fragrance like that of Lebanon. 14:7 They shall again live beneath my shadow, they shall flourish as a garden; they shall blossom like the vine, their fragrance shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

14:8 O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like an evergreen cypress; your faithfulness comes from me. 14:9 Those who are wise understand these things; those who are discerning know them. For the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them. – Hosea 14:1-9 (NRSV)

Precious light is to shine forth from the word of God, and let no one presume to dictate what shall or what shall not be brought before the people in the messages of enlightenment that He shall send, and so quench the Spirit of God. Whatever may be his position of authority, no one has a right to shut away the light from the people. When a message comes in the name of the Lord to His people, no one may excuse himself from an investigation of its claims. No one can afford to stand back in an attitude of indifference and self-confidence, and say: "I know what is truth. I am satisfied with my position. I have set my stakes, and I will not be moved away from my position, whatever may come. I will not listen to the message of this messenger; for I know that it cannot be truth." It is from pursuing this very course that the popular churches were left in partial darkness, and that is why the messages of heaven have not reached them. {CSW 28.1}

- 1

George Knight in *Catholic or Adventist: The Ongoing Struggle Over Authority + 9.5 Thesis*, *Spectrum*, Oct. 2, 2017

- 2

For those who are not aware, the organizational structure of the SDA church is as follows: The General Conference is the governing body; it operates through 13 Divisions, each responsible for the work in different regions. Each Division contains Unions and each Union contains Conferences and/or Missions, each of which contain local churches.

- 3

<https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2015-07-08/womens-ordination-not-approved/6/>

- 4

I've changed George's italics to underlines.

- 5

E. G. White, "Board and Council Meetings," MS 33, [no date] 1891.

- 6

E. G. White to Men Who Occupy Responsible Positions, July 1, 1896.

- 7

E. G. White, "Regarding the Southern Work," MS 37, April 1901.

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Barry David Oliver, *SDA Organizational Structure: Past, Present and Future* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1989), 98-99.

- 9
For the best treatment on this reorganization, see Oliver, *SDA Organizational Structure*.
- 10
General Conference Bulletin, 1901, 26.
- 11
E. G. White, "Regarding Work of General Conference," MS 26, Apr. 3, 1903; italics supplied.
- 12
Gerry Chudleigh, *Who Runs the Church? Understanding the Unity, Structure and Authority of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (n.p.: AdventSource, 2013), 18; italics supplied.
- 13
Ibid.
- 14
E. G. White to Elder Daniells and His Fellow Workers, Apr. 12, 1903.
- 15
Chudleigh, *Who Runs the Church?* 31.
- 16
Stanley E. Patterson, "Kingly Power: Is It Finding a Place in the Adventist Church?" *Adventist Today*, Sept.-Oct. 2012, 5; Chudleigh, *Who Runs the Church?* 32-33; *Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*, 1999-2000 edition (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 125-126.
- 17
See fn. 1. {} added. [] in original. Fnn. 4-15 mirror the fnn. in the original article.
- 18
Designated in the *Working Policy* as B 45 in earlier post-1995 editions but now as B 95.
- 19
See fn. 1. Fn. 17 mirrors the fn. in the original article.
- 20
ADCOM is a committee appointed by the General Conference Executive Committee consisting of 46 members and 12 invitees including the GC President, several General Vice Presidents, the GC Secretary and Undersecretary, the GC Treasurer and Undertreasurer, and others. ADCOM meets weekly at the GC world headquarters to oversee church matters. The GC Executive Committee is a group of 345 members, together with 129 invitees, who meet twice a year to make decisions regarding the operations of the church. It is the highest governing body beneath the GC in Session.
- 21
The final report of their findings is available here: <https://www.adventistarchives.org/final-tosc-report.pdf>
- 22
As will be noted below, many of the TOSC participants were disillusioned when the General Conference president reversed his opinion on the importance of the committee from its first meeting, when it looked as if it would come up with the "proper" answer, to its last, in which the majority voted against his position.
- 23
TOSC "Report," 12.
- 24
This point needs further investigation into the 13 division reports. Nine divisions in favor of

diversity is the lowest number I have come across. Some sources report 11 and others 12 divisions in favor of flexibility.

- 25
TOSC “Report,” 122, 123.
- 26
Ibid., 12, 122, 123.
- 27
Norwegian Union Conference, “A Response to ‘A Study of Church Governance and Unity,’” Oct. 4, 2016; See William G. Johnsson, *Where Are We Headed? Adventism after San Antonio* (Westlake Village, CA: Oak and Acorn Publishing, 2017), 153-161 for a published version of the document.
- 28
Johnsson, *Where Are We Headed?* 1.
- 29
E. G. White to G. I. Butler, Oct. 14, 1888.
- 30
Secretariat, “A Study,” 34.
- 31
See fn. 1. Fnn. 22-30 mirror the fnn. in the original article.
- 32
Spectrum, Women’s Ordination: The Truth about the Real Position of the 13 Divisions in the Seventh-day Adventist Church
- 33
Spectrum, Dec. 30, 2015
- 34
Spectrum, Sept. 29, 2016 and *Spectrum*, Sept. 30, 2016
- 35
Spectrum, Sept. 30, 2016
- 36
Spectrum, Oct. 10, 2016
- 37
Spectrum, Aug. 23, 2018 and *Spectrum*, News 2018. See also Compliance Committees Terms of Reference
- 38
Spectrum, ADCOM Action Renders Annual Council 2018 Irrelevant
- 39
<https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2018-09-18/adcom-refers-to-compliance-committees/>
- 40
All of the quotations from this meeting are taken from the video published by the Adventist News Network YouTube Channel, transcribed by myself. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uqke4VUmUM>)
- 41
All references follow the format of hours:minutes:seconds.
- 42
He is speaking of the vote by the General Conference and Division Officers meeting which approved the document for consideration by the Autumn Council.
-

43

The Adventist FBI and the Sticky Wicket Thicket

- 44

Ibid.

- 45

Underlining added (The same applies to all Ellen White statements quoted in the rest of this article.)

- 46

See GCRS 1901 Constitution

- 47

GCRS19010409.pdf (adventistarchives.org), GCRS 19010410.pdf (adventistarchives.org), GCRS19010411.pdf (adventistarchives.org)