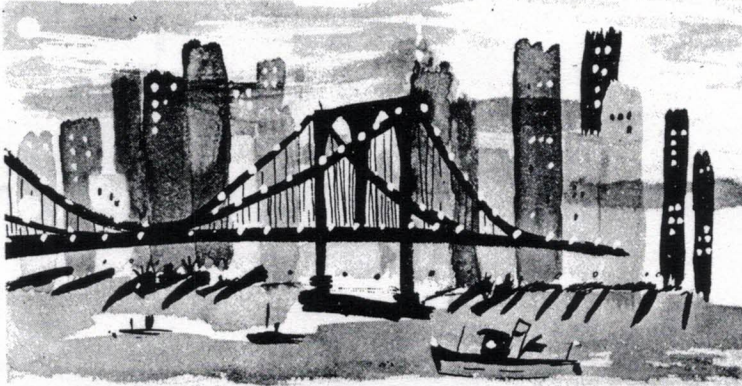


November/December/72.



"Watchman, what of the night?"

The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12

QUESTIONS ANSWERED

What is the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi, Inc., and why is it in existence? While the answers to these questions will not constitute a thought paper in the strictest sense of the term, nevertheless, the answers will project concepts which will require thought, consideration, and soul searching.

In June, 1971, a group of Seventh-day Adventists meeting informally voted to ask five of those present to apply for a charter to incorporate on a non-profit basis under the laws of the State of Mississippi. This was done, and on August 11 of the same year, the Foundation was granted tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. Upon the receipt of the Charter, the incorporators met on June 24, and voted the By-Laws for the Foundation which designated the men chosen to incorporate as the Board of Directors.

The Charter was written to include a wide range of possibilities so that as the indications of Divine Providence were manifest, it would not be necessary to ammend the Charter. The Charter provided for the support of "religious, educational and benevolent programs in the United States and abroad as may be deemed proper and necessary to the work and propagation of the tenets upon which the Seventh-day Adventist church is based, viz: the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White." The religious, educational, and benevolent programs as listed in the Charter include - the support of public worship, the building and maintenance of churches, schools, clinics, rest homes, hydro-therapy treatment rooms; adult educational programs; radio, TV, and public evangelism; and the publication of literature in harmony with

the tenets upon which the Church is based.

In giving consideration to another cause that needed attention, it was written into the Charter that the Foundation would "support the work of any minister ordained according to the rites of the Seventh-day Adventist church who had not violated his ordination vows, and who is in part or in whole devoting his time to the furtherance of the aims of this foundation." This decision was based upon the work given to the Messenger of the Lord, which since her death has been neglected by the Church. In 1906, Sister White wrote that she "was charged not to neglect or pass by those who were being wronged." She was further "specially charged to protest against any arbitrary or overbearing actions toward ministers of the gospel by those having official authority."¹

It cannot be concluded that since the death of Ellen G. White, the need has ceased; if anything, it has increased. It can be documented that it is impossible for any committee appointed by the Church to investigate its own actions, or any division thereof, to find in favor of the individual minister. The evidence that the individual's rights have been violated may be ever so clear, and that the conference leadership, or even local church authorities have acted contrary to the guide lines of justice decreed by the Church itself, yet a committee with the majority of payroll employees of the Church find it impossible to enter findings in favor of the individual minister against the establishment. Thus some way must be found to help alleviate the traumatic experience of men who have rendered unquestioned service to the cause of God when they come to a place in their experience where their convictions dictated by the Spirit of God and based upon the Word of God come to a point which conflicts with the demands of the hierarchy.* To assist in this work, the Foundation has dedicated a part of its resources.

*Used as defined by Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary - "a ruling body of clergy organized into orders or ranks each subordinate to the one above it."

In addition to the declaration of support of ministers wronged by those having "official authority", it was written into the Charter in the same subsection that the Foundation has power "to issue papers of recognition authorizing the performance of duties in harmony with the powers conferred by ordination." *Let it be clearly understood that the Foundation does not presume upon the authority of the Church to ordain men to the gospel ministry.* However, once a man is ordained, it is believed that "ordination of the ministry is for life", as stated in the Working Policy of the General Conference,² unless a man negates his vows by open violation of the commandments of God, or is teaching false doctrine contrary to the inspired revelations of the Holy Spirit. To deny a man who has been ordained the right to perform duties conferred by ordination is but one example of "arbitrary or overbearing action toward ministers of the gospel by those having official authority."¹

This position raises some very important questions as well as the wrath of the hierarchy. Biblically, a man should be first called of God, before he is ordained by the church. The Bible records of Christ - He "*calleth* unto Him whom He would. . . and He *ordained* twelve."³ The same sequence is clear in the ordination of Barnabas and Paul. It is stated - "The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto *I have called* them. And when they [the church at Antioch] had fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away."⁴ All that the church is empowered to do is to second God's original motion. To depart from this divine arrangement brings serious consequences to the church.

The present position of the ecclesiastical authorities is that unless a man is on the payroll of the church, even though called of God, and having been ordained by men, he cannot function as a minister of the gospel. Such a position produces hirelings! Instead of committed generals for the warfare of the kingdom of God, those who lead the forces against the enemy are merely paid mercenaries. This is not true of all in the ministry of the church for there are still devoted men of

God mingled among the ranks of the hirelings. But a continuation of this policy over a period of time will produce the ultimate deterioration of the ministry.

What the ultimate deterioration of the ministry controlled through economic chains will mean has been written in the history of the Jewish church. Andreasen has described this sad record of the past. He wrote:

The priests were divided into twenty-four courses, each one of which was to serve one week at a time, twice a year. When the office of the high priest became a political one, and he was appointed by the government, corruption became widespread. Since it was a very lucrative position, men began to bid for the office of high priest, and it was actually sold to the highest bidder. To get this money back, the high priest took control of the selection of the courses; and only such priests were called to serve at Jerusalem at the time of the feasts as could be depended upon to share with the officials the large revenues contributed at that time. Corruption came again to prevail, and many were the priests who were called to serve at the temple at the great feasts only because they were willing to divide the spoil with the higher officials. The order in which the priests were to serve was changed, and the entire plan of God was corrupted. Christ's later designation, "a den of thieves," was not a mere poetic expression; it was literally true.⁵

While the present extortion of the ministry of the church may not involve money as did the Jewish situation described by Andreasen, it does involve individuality, integrity, and loyalty to God only, which is worse in many respects for it involves a traffic in the very souls of men.

We have gotten ourselves into our present predicament not only over the "great feasts", our money raising campaigns, but also over the basic purposes of the tithe and the channels through which it is to go. The Bible states - "All the tithe. . . is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord."⁶ With this money which is God's, He pays His spokesmen. A called ministry speaks forth for God. Through the tithing system, such a ministry is freed from the *domination* of men, or a group of men. But when conference leadership consider that the tithe belongs to them as their right to pay their field representatives to speak for them, then any man who receives tithe under these conditions becomes a hireling, and jeopardizes his divine calling.

The Church has relied heavily upon the injunction that all the tithe is to

be brought into the treasury of the Lord which has been interpreted to mean the conference organization. Such an interpretation is not validated by the Spirit of Prophecy. Sister White wrote to a conference president that she had "appropriated [her] tithe to the most needy cases [of ministers] brought to [her] notice." Then she stated - "*as the money is not withheld from the Lord's treasury, it is not a matter that should be commented upon.*"⁷ She recognized that while this was not the "best" procedure, she, however, commended "those sisters who have placed their tithe where it was most needed to help do a work that is being left undone."⁷ Those in authority object to this arrangement because, they say, that since Sister White was a prophet, she had divine wisdom to know where to place her tithe, and the tithe of others, through "irregular" channels. Such, they say, is not the case today, and thus all the tithe must be channeled through "regular" lines, which in their terminology means the conference. However, in this same letter, Sister White referred to the special appropriation of the tithe as "this work, which the Lord appointed me to do and *others to do.*"⁷ In another letter to her son, J. E. White, the servant of the Lord plainly stated - "The Lord has not specified any regular channel through which means should pass."⁸

The study of Madison College is very interesting in the light of these actions and counsels of the Lord's messenger. Madison College in its beginnings was not placed under the control of the conference. Because of this, funds were withheld from the school. In 1907, Sister White wrote these words:

Means have been withheld from them because in the organization and management of the Madison School, it was not placed under the control of the conference. But the reasons why this school was not owned and controlled by the conference have not been duly considered. . .

The leaders in the work of the Madison School are laborers together with God. More must be done in their behalf by their brethren. The Lord's money is to sustain them in their labors. They have a right to share the means given to the cause. They should be given a proportionate share of the means that comes in for the furtherance of the cause.⁹

There is another lesson to be learned from the story of Madison College. When the conference did obtain control of the school through the "Trojan horse" method, contrary to God's original design, within one year the conference leadership, among whom were some who claimed Madison as their alma mater, destroyed it. Madison is no more.

To adopt a policy to destroy that which cannot be controlled does not breathe the spirit of Christ. Even in Christ's day, there were those who were preaching in His name, who were not a part of His direct company of workers.¹⁰ John found such a one and forbade him to continue to work for the Master. When Jesus heard of it, He said - "Forbid him not. . . for he that is not against us is on our part."¹¹ This aptly pinpoints the aims and objectives of the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi, Inc. We are not against the Truth, but rather for it, and believe that the Lord has laid upon the Foundation certain burdens and responsibilities that can be carried out for the cause of God, only as the guide lines as outlined in the Charter are held inviolate.

The Foundation was also formed in part to give a more adequate support to the monthly thought paper - "Watchman, What of the Night?" The purpose of this paper is well stated in a Testimony to the Church. It reads:

Sins exist in the church that God hates, but they are scarcely touched for fear of making enemies. Opposition has risen in the church to the plain testimony. Some will not bear it. They wish smooth things spoken unto them. And if wrongs of individuals are touched, they complain of severity, and sympathize with those in the wrong. As Ahab inquired of Elijah, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" they are ready to look with suspicion and doubt upon those who bear the plain testimony, and like Ahab overlook the wrong which made it necessary for reproof and rebuke. When the church depart[s] from God they despise the plain testimony, and complain of severity and harshness. It is a sad evidence of the lukewarm state of the church.

Just as long as God has a church, He will have those who will cry aloud and spare not, who will be instruments to reprove selfishness and sins, and will not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, whether men will hear or forbear.¹² 256 283-4

We do not desire to make enemies either of, or within the church of God, but some things must be said. We believe that God still has a church, and therefore, there is a need to cry aloud and spare not. Since it is impossible at the present time within the incorporated conference structure, there must be some means provided so that the voice of warning might be heard by those within the church, if they are willing to read and hear.

These then are the reasons for the existence of the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi, Inc. The Board of Directors believed that the readers of the monthly thought paper were due an explanation of the purposes and objectives which motivated the founding of the Foundation.

¹Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, bk. i, p. 33

²General Conference Working Policy, 1955 edition, p. 58

³Mark. 3:13-14

⁴Acts 13, 2-3

⁵M. L. Andreasen, The Sanctuary Service, pp. 78-79

⁶Lev. 27:30

⁷Ellen G. White, Letter to President of the Colorado Conference dated at Mountain View, Calif., January 22, 1905

⁸Ellen G. White, Letter to J. E. White dated at Cooranbong, Australia, August 15, 1898. Quoted in Spaulding-Magan Collection, p. 498

⁹Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 11, pp. 31-32

¹⁰See Luke 8:1-3

¹¹Mark 9:39-40

¹²Ellen G. White, Spiritual Gifts, Vol. II, pp. 283-284

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"Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flock? . . . Ye feed not the flock. . . but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them." Eze. 34: 2-4

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" Hosea 4:6

"Our condemnation in the Judgment will not result from the fact that we have been in error, but from the fact that we have neglected heaven-sent opportunities for learning what is truth." The Desire of Ages, p. 490

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