

**THE REPRESENTATIVE FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNANCE ACCORDING
TO INSPIRATION**



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PREFACE

I believe the Lord is gathering his army for the last work and as the enemy is uniting his forces under one umbrella, the Lord is also marshaling his army for the grand work. The hierarchal and episcopal forms of church governance were wholly unacceptable to the early believers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They naturally had an inclination toward the congregational form of church governance. These pioneers were usually very independent people who had been persecuted by the various churches from which they came. They wanted as much freedom as possible to exercise their religious convictions. However, God did not choose the congregational form of church governance but rather the representative form of church governance for His remnant people. Like Adam and the 24 elders coming before God at an appointed time to represent unfallen worlds. Is this not the form of organizational structure in heaven in Zion and should pass to the church?!

There was division of the field, like, the European field came to be regarded as a self-sufficient continental unit, and it was called the "General Conference in Europe," while the organization in the land of origin was called the "General Conference in America." And there was beside, the Australasian Union Conference [The Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists, Volume 3, p, 348]. As other areas of organization developed, first the local conferences, then the General Conference, much later the unions, and finally the divisions of the General Conference, each one was delegated responsibility. Every level was designated to serve the needs of the level whose representatives had elected its leaders. But ultimately all the levels received their authority from the local churches and served the needs and interests of these rapidly expanding local church communities. The conferences were not only established to serve the needs of the local churches but also, more importantly, to plan and organize the expansion of the work into areas, towns, and cities where there was no Seventh-day Adventist presence. Thus developed the representative form of church governance that God had ordained for the Seventh-day Adventist Church and Paul can be seen working on this basis of structure and supplying the churches in need from other churches. Even churches who were poor like Macedonian church yet so generous contributed for church in Corinth and Achaia

This is the only way to decentralize authority and kingly power that may try to emerge in theocratic organization

What we want now is reorganization. We want to begin at the foundation, and to build upon a different principle. [General Conference Bulletin. 1901, p. 25]

I want to say that from the light given to me by God, there should have been years ago organizations such as are now proposed. When we first met in conference, it was thought that the General Conference should extend over the whole world. But this is not in God's order: [General Coherence Bulletin, 1901, p. 68]

Conferences must be organized in different localities, and it will be for the health of the different conferences to have it thus. This does not mean that we are to cut ourselves apart from one another, and be as separate atoms or

congregationalists. Every conference is to touch every other conference, and be in harmony with every other conference without imposition of creeds, threatenings of cutting off support and hindering of religious liberty and freedom of expression in controlling conscience. God wants us to talk for this, and He wants us to act for this. We are the people of God, who are to be separate from the world. We are to stand as representatives. Though this small booklet may not be exhaustive but it's a stepping stone towards the right direction and I recommend it to every candid bible truth seeker. This is "Organization-1 - Representative form a Church Organization" by Corey McCain. Be sure to read also "Organization-2 - The True Theocratic Organization" by Sami Wilberforce. Blessings.

Sami Wilberforce

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REPRESENTATIVE CHURCH GOVERNANCE

Organization

From the first our work was aggressive. Our numbers were few, and mostly from the poorer class. Our views were almost unknown to the world. We had no houses of worship, but few publications, and very limited facilities for carrying forward our work. The sheep were scattered in the highways and byways, in cities, in towns, in forests. The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus was our message. {CET 192.2}

Our numbers gradually increased. The seed that was sown was watered of God, and He gave the increase. At first we assembled for worship, and presented the truth to those who would come to hear, in private houses, in large kitchens, in barns, in groves, and in schoolhouses; but it was not long before we were able to build humble houses of worship. {CET 195.1}

As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization there would be great confusion, and the work would not be carried forward successfully. To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, organization was indispensable. {CET 195.2}

Yet there was strong feeling against it among our people. The First-day Adventists were opposed to organization, and most of the Seventh-day Adventists entertained the same ideas. We sought the Lord with earnest prayer that we might understand His will, and light was given by His Spirit, that there must be order and thorough discipline in the church,--that organization was essential. System and order are manifest in all the works of God throughout the universe. Order is the law of heaven, and it should be the law of God's people on the earth. {CET 195.3}

Let none entertain the thought that we can dispense with organization. It has cost us much study and many prayers for wisdom that we know God has answered, to erect this structure. It has been built up by His direction, through much sacrifice and conflict. Let none of our brethren be so deceived as to attempt to tear it down, for you will thus bring in a condition of things that you do not dream of. In the name of the Lord I

declare to you that it is to stand, strengthened, established, and settled. At God's command, "Go forward," we advanced when the difficulties to be surmounted made the advance seem impossible. We know how much it has cost to work out God's plans in the past, which have made us as a people what we are. Then let everyone be exceedingly careful not to unsettle minds in regard to those things that God has ordained for our prosperity and success in advancing His cause. {CET 197.3}

The purpose of this study is to explore and expose to the brethren the dangers of “congregationalism” versus God’s design of a “representative form of church governance”. The topic of organization happens to be a key issue of discussion among the Father and Son community. We are currently in the early stages of the struggle to organize, and to many, it appears as if the various camps are leaning towards either pro-organization or anti-organization. The real issue is whether or not we will remain congregationalists or move toward a representative form of church governance (RCG).

The term congregationalist often sounds anti-organization, but the fact is that congregationalism is a type of church organization. It happens to be a very loose form of church governance and an extremely fallible form, not much better than the corrupt Papal hierarchy organization.

TERMS, DEFINITIONS, AND FUNCTION:

Congregationalism

So, what is congregationalism? Congregationalism is a form of church governance where a local congregation is completely autonomous, that is, it is ruled 100% by the local congregation via a Pastor or church board/elders. These churches may be loosely affiliated with other congregational churches. In this form of organization, unity and organization is said to be “in Christ”, not in manmade structure, thus no attempt is made for an organized structure. This form of governance allows for a lot of independence and freedom of choice. It is extremely appealing to those who have come out of a corrupt hierarchal government where they were suppressed.

“One of the principal claims by those who warned against organization was that it abridged their liberty and independence, and that if one stood clear before the Lord, that was all the organization needed, ect.” (Review and Herald July 9, 1901, Vol 78 n.26 p.2 written by Loughborough)

So how does congregationalism function? Essentially it begins with someone who feels called/lead by God and starts up a ministry. He obtains followers who agree with him on his views and mission and in return they fund the ministry through tithes and offering. However, when people decide they no longer agree with the views taught or other aspects of the ministry, they split off and go form a new congregation. This process repeats itself. The fact that this happens continually in congregationalism, displays the disunity and failure of this type of structure. There is very little if any accountability in congregationalism and every “man does what’s right in his own eyes”. The Pastor may lead in a very loose way, allowing lots of freedom to his followers or he may control and rule with a rod of iron.

Issues with Congregationalism:

What are the fallacies of congregationalism? A major issue, if not the main, is tithing. The more followers gained, the more money flows in. This tends to and has led to a watered-down message regarding sin, the law, prophecies, and anything that may upset or offend people. This may not be true in every case as some pastors can be content with a following who are likeminded in all details, though their congregation doesn’t grow. Other Pastors are sincere and are truly trying to follow God to the best they know how.

We are told in 1 Timothy 6:10 *“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”*. It is going to be very hard for a congregational minister to avoid the corrupting temptations that stem from being in charge of the treasury. In the majority of independent ministries, the tithe comes directly to the minister or main figure head. The leader is in charge of the money that flows in and therefore may do with it as they see fit. Obviously no matter what structure there is, anytime money is involved, there is the potential for anyone to be corrupted but I believe the congregational model amplifies this problem.

The second issue seen is that congregational ministers are almost always “hovering pastors”; that is, they remain stagnant over their congregation believing it is their task to feed the congregation continually. People in general love to have it this way just as Israel wanted a king to reign over them. Having a “hovering pastor” tends to make people weak spiritually where they do not learn to study and feed themselves. It also tends to lack in evangelism efforts by both the Pastor and congregation. Smaller churches may not be able to support a pastor thus areas of less population or poor areas tend to get neglected in evangelism efforts.

Modern independent ministries within the Father and Son/One true God movement have adapted to the benefits of technology. Today a minister does not even have to have a local congregation, but rather an expanded following via the internet and camp meetings. This allows the minister to reach a much larger and broader audience and instead of hovering at a local congregation, he hovers over camp meetings and live streaming/videos via internet. The more ecumenical or soft his message is, the more of a following he typically might obtain. A cheap grace model of salvation is a perfect fit to congregationalism and why most of the protestant churches are Congregationalists. As stated previously, not all pastors will have this weakened watered down message but it is the tendency in congregationalism over the long term. A cheap grace model of salvation allows for important truths to be set aside in order for us all to get along and stop dividing. The watered down messages are the antidote to the natural process of divisions in the congregational model. Of course, it will be claimed that we have unity in Christ as the primary cry to the people in order to keep the system functioning and from splitting further. Anyone serious about truth in whole should see that congregationalism is not the way for them as there will never be popularity in presenting the whole truth. You’re going to

need a true organized body in order to accomplish a work that is not possible in the congregational model.

In Daniel chapter 6 we see that there was a search to see if they could find any fault in Daniel pertaining to the laws of the land and God, but they could not find any. This same thing is going to happen with us in the finale. Typically, most of our churches are not going to have very thorough “book keeping” which SOP says is essential to organization. I believe this will be something the government will exploit when the fire is turned up on us. It is true that a group of believers are a legal church which the government calls an “unincorporated association” not needing any paper work with the government; your home church is a legal “unincorporated association”, that is if you haven’t incorporated. This however doesn’t make the church immune from the laws of the land. Things such as taxes are still binding upon the ministers. Many may be getting away with paying little to no tax and I’m afraid the government is going to come after individuals in this area. Many may be trying to take advantage of “gift tax” laws which allows an individual to gift up to \$14,000 a year to a person and neither party has to pay any taxes on it. Now take hundreds of people sending you “gifts” which could add up to be a lot of money that is not taxable or so you think. I really doubt the IRS is going to allow ministers to get away with claiming all the money is coming to them as “gifts”. From my research if a local church were to take up a “love offering” and give it to the Pastor that money is taxable, but if each individual, outside of the church, sent money to the pastor, it is seen as a “gift” and not taxable. I have read cases where churches and ministers tried to take advantage of this loophole and the government nailed them for tax evasion. We may be able to find loopholes in the law but the government is very good at interpreting their law the way they want. I’m not a fan of taxes but we should render to Caesar that which is Caesar’s.

There are other issues with remaining an “unincorporated association” which I will not delve into as I am still studying and sorting through all the information and misinformation. The same goes for “incorporating” which is what our pioneers did as they saw the absolute need for such a thing in order for the organized work to prosper. Many among us are probably fearful of incorporating based on ignorance or misinformation. Just because a church incorporates doesn’t make it a 501c(3) which I do not recommend as its totally unnecessary. Even an “unincorporated association” that is a church has tax exempt status so long as it meets the requirements the IRS has put forth to constitute a church. The point here is whether you incorporate or remain

unincorporated you are still going to be subject to the laws of the land. I just happen to believe at the present time in order to properly organize and function on a national and global scale incorporating will be our best and possibly only option. I have put many hours of study into this but I'm not yet ready to say a lot on it, nor is it necessary for this paper although I do suspect we will have many objecting to the issue of incorporating.

In summary, the system of congregationalism in the Father and Son/OTG community is very appealing to the carnal heart as it allows great freedom and less work involved both to the pastor and the congregation. As I have studied the issue of organization I have come to the conclusion that congregationalism is a deadly plague among us and should be repulsive to us. I realize many won't see it this way because of the freedom they enjoy and no doubt a congregational minister can make much more money in this system than he can under the "representative form of church governance". I do believe that because the issue of organization has been so little studied, the majority are ignorant to the issues at stake and thus it is my hope that in reading this document they will see the corruptions inherent in the congregational system and the hindering effect it has not only on the people but also the work that needs to be done. As such, I appeal to anyone who currently supports congregationalism to cease funding this system with their tithes and offerings and begin to really study church organization. Until you see a correct structure of church government established on foundational beliefs you can agree with, it would be better for you to temporarily store your tithe and offering rather than feed this system that is so contrary to the way God works. As an option, if you find a ministry that embraces the truths in this document and is willing to push this message then by all means go ahead and support it. There will be no guarantee that they will be hired once reorganization takes place but it will be a good opportunity for them to test their calling.

Many people I'm associated with ask me about PHM concerning the issue of congregationalism and true organization because they see PHM is doing something different than the rest of the Father and Son community. I believe PHM desires to see the church reorganized at some point and they see the problems with congregationalism but they have a different plan on how reorganization will get to the end goal of a representative form of church governance. I suggest you talk with them personally if you want to know what their thoughts are. My suggestion to cease funding congregationalism is not a command to people but rather you should support that which you believe is being lead of God. Do what God wants you to do. It is entirely possible that

various organizations (conferences) will be established and could potentially merge in the future. Everyone is going to have to choose for themselves what God would have them to do and where to go.

Representative Form of Church Governance:

Before moving forward about a representative form of church governance (RCG), I want to remove some issues of prejudice that will likely arise. The first mention is that proper structure does not in of itself fix heart problems, only Christ can do that, but when He is leading a person He is leading them into all truth. The truth about church organization is no different of a study than any other doctrine out there, something is right and many other ideas are wrong. With the issue of organization being agitated, ignorance will no longer be an excuse for us and people are going to have to choose which direction they are going. It should be noted the whore of Revelation 17 being the Papacy is a hierarchal model of church government while most of her daughters are Congregationalists yet all are Babylon. Notice what our pioneers faced from the pen of Mrs. White:

*“August 3, 1861, I was shown that some have feared that our churches would become Babylon if they should organize; but those in central New York **have been perfect Babylon, confusion.** And now unless the churches are so organized that they can **carry out and enforce order, they have nothing to hope for in the future; they must scatter into fragments.** {1T 270.2}*

History is repeating today as congregationalism is the error standing in the way of true organization just as it was in their day but these Congregationalists “*have nothing to hope for in the future; they must scatter into fragments.*” The above statement has just as much weight today as it did in Sister White’s day. There is a blessing promised to us in following order and having a proper structure. One of the pinnacle lies that is going to be spread concerning proper organization is that it is “kingly power”, but this is not so for the RCG is setup in contrast to that type of system. Notice the following quote from SOP:

*“God has not set **any kingly power in the Seventh-day Adventist Church to control the whole body or to control any branch of the work.** He has not provided that the burden of leadership shall rest upon a few men. **Responsibilities are distributed among a large number of competent men.** {8T 236.3}*

*“Every member of the church has a voice in **choosing officers of the church**. The church chooses the **officers of the state conferences**. Delegates chosen by the state conferences choose the **officers of the union conferences**, and delegates chosen by the union conferences choose the **officers of the General Conference**. By this arrangement every conference, every institution, every church, and every individual, either directly or through representatives, **has a voice in the election of the men who bear the chief responsibilities in the General Conference.**” {8T 236.4}*

In the above we see the basic principle on establishing an RCG and it's designed to be contrary to “kingly power”. I will go into this more shortly but I want to dispel another lie that is sure to surface which is the issue of a creed. How does an organized body avoid creedalism yet not be ecumenical (set aside doctrine to bring people to Christ mentality)? What is creedalism? This is an important question because the truth lies close to error and those who are ecumenical are likely to cry we are setting up a creed. Creedalism is where a set of beliefs are established and defined by leadership whereby anyone who does not conform to the creed is to be disciplined and it is also the sole qualification in entering the church. The use of inspiration and painstaking effort to study with one another on issues is little used if at all as the creed is used to test a person's qualification. Based on the creed a person can be accepted or rejected into fellowship independent of inspiration, study, or behavior, as all that is needed is conformity to the creed. In true organization we do not rule by a creed yet neither are we ecumenical in that our beliefs have no fundamental basis in our church organization or discipline. It's actually fairly complex in nature which I will share the details later in this paper.

So how does the RCG structure work? It begins with having a group of people who are likeminded in their mission and core fundamental beliefs, where it is agreed upon that no one moves ahead of the body to push or promote what they believe is new light on major issues (more on this later). On the local level they will elect and setup a board and church officers to run the local church if the church has people qualified for those offices. Other local churches which are of the same mind will do likewise and will elect representatives to represent them in a Conference. In the above quote by Mrs. White we have a few levels of Conferences: States, Unions, and GC. Today the GCSDA has “divisions” in their system as well, yet certain things have turned the system into a hierarchal government which people look at and become prejudiced against organizing into Conferences but this is based on ignorance.

The number of levels needed is based on the work load and size of the churches as they grow. It's possible with modern technology of computers and travel speed that fewer levels could be used but we won't know that until we actually get there in size and see our need. Our pioneers started out setting up State Conferences which then added more levels to tie it all together, thus I believe our best route will be to organize locally and within our states and then work to organize on a larger scale. The internet today allows us to go beyond local boundaries in setting up Conferences however in organizing we should be planning for the day when no man can buy or sell and we lose much of the modern advantages.

What does a basic Conference look like? Once members are elected to a Conference they are members of that Conference board or committee though they remain members of their home local church (for those who are alone having no congregation to fellowship with other ideas such as an internet fellowship can be started until a local congregation can be established). The members of the conference would elect a chairman from among them to help facilitate meetings but has no special authority over the rest of the board. This board would elect either from itself or from the churches below officers such as treasurer and secretary or other needed offices which have the potential to be full time jobs, or we may have the local churches elect these officers. They should elect at least one to two assistant treasurer positions so that multiple people have a knowledge of the storehouse funds as this will prevent the chances of fraud or stealing in the event that a Judas was elected to the position. The most basic duties of the Conference would be the hiring and firing of ministers and Bible workers under the tithe payroll and establishing wages. They are essentially doing the business aspect of the church. We will look at the use of the tithe later as this is extremely important. The Conference also looks for opportunities in the field to plan and carry out evangelism work and aid the local churches in their work. Great caution should be taken in the level of authority the Conference may have over ministers and Bible workers and the local churches. The Conference should plan and provide ideas and visions concerning evangelism, tent meetings, etc. but the ministers and laity should first and foremost look for direction from God.

TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Their Functions:

Let us examine the correct use of tithe as it very important to organization. Tithe is to be used in a very simple and straightforward way that unfortunately man has complicated and twisted over time. Tithe is to be used to pay full-time bible workers pastors, and evangelists to spread the message and set up groups throughout their mission workings. Part time positions do not qualify as tithe paid positions, this is why the general laity, although they are to go out and minister the word of God, are supported by other means of work in society that take up a large portion of time and energy. Trying to setup part time tithe paid ministers is a recipe for disaster as you're going to have a hard time justifying why everyone shouldn't then get a cut of the tithe. Tithe is not to be used for the buying of books, literature, the poor, or church expenses. These expenses are to be supported from offering or the second tithe. Tithe is not to be paid to those who are spending the majority of their efforts preaching to the choir so to speak, as this is called hovering, their job is to go out and win new souls, which will bring in more resources, which will allow more workers to be hired. What I said above is the basic outline but there are some exceptions which I will go over later. Some of these points can be seen in the following testimonies:

*“Not a few ministers are neglecting the very work that they have been **appointed to do**. Why are those who are set apart for the work of the ministry **placed on committees and boards**? Why are they called upon to attend so many **business meetings**, many times at great distance from their fields of labor? Why are not **business matters placed in the hands of business men**? **The ministers have not been set apart to do this work**. The finances of the cause are to be managed by men of ability; **but ministers are set apart for another line of work**. . . . {GW 425.1}*

*Ministers are not to be called hither and thither to **attend board meetings for the purpose of deciding common business questions**. Many of our ministers have done this work in the past, but it is **not the work in which the Lord wishes them to engage**. Too many financial burdens have been placed on them. **When they try to carry these burdens, they neglect to fulfil the gospel commission**. God looks upon this as a dishonor to His name.--"Testimonies for the Church," Vol. VII, pages 254, 255.*

As we can see from the above writings, business meetings are not a place for tithe paid ministers to be consumed at, but are a line of work better suited for those who have business experience. The context of the above quotes is referring to field ministers and local churches, it is not addressing those at the Conference. When I first studied this I thought it would also refer to the Conference but I found many issues such as many of our famous pioneers served as ministers in the Conference and this never changed nor was it rebuked. With that said it would still be best to have business talent in the Conference but it is not wrong to have ministers in the Conference. We simply want to utilize talents where they are best able to function in the body.

“The management of the regular lines must be entirely changed, newly organized. There must be a committee, not composed of half a dozen men, but of representatives from all lines of our work, from our publishing house, from our educational institutions, and from our sanitariums, which have life in them, which are constantly working, constantly broadening.”
{General Conference Bulletin, April 10, 1903 par. 3} Mrs. White

In the above quote we see that we should have good diversity on a committee to represent all fields.

*“The tithe should go to those **who labor in word and doctrine, be they men or women.**”-- 1MR 263 (1899).*

The above is a very simple plain understanding of the use of tithe. In order for organization to really be successful it will be important for us to encourage women to labor in the gospel work. In the Father and Son community, we may not think much of the importance of women in the field of labor reaching souls for Christ and this has to change. Of course, there are office positions such as an Elder which are reserved for male headship, but women can be used by God just as well as men can in reaching the lost. Laborers will be needed and women will need to be part of this labor force. This is something that will never happen in full scale in the Congregational models of church organization. Only under the true form of church organization are women going to have the opportunity to follow God's leading and work in the gospel field for their master, at least while being paid tithe.

*“I send you this morning a letter written for America, and sent there yesterday morning, which will show you how I regard **the tithe money being used for other purposes.** This is the Lord's special revenue fund, for **a special purpose.** I have never so fully understood this matter as I now understand it. Having had questions directed here to me to answer, I*

have had special instruction from the Lord that the **tithe is for a special purpose**, consecrated to God to sustain **those who minister in the sacred work as the Lord's chosen, to do His work not only in sermonizing but in ministering**. They should understand all that this comprehends. There is to be meat in the house of God, a treasury well supplied, and **it is not to be diverted to other purposes**. There is to be special labor given to awaken the people of God who believe the truth, to give a faithful tithe to the Lord, **and ministers should be encouraged and sustained by that tithe**. {DG 256.2}

That there will always be a **temptation to divert the tithe money to other channels, we know**; but the Lord has guarded this, His own portion, to be sacredly used for the **support of the gospel ministers**. There may be such measures taken as shall reduce the working force that bears the message of truth, as is being done, and in America has been done, to meet the measurement of the tithe in the treasury; but this is not the Lord's plan, and if entered upon and continued will reduce God's blessing to the churches that work upon such a plan. **There may be a great dearth of means if there is a departing from the Lord's plan**. {DG 257.1}

The Lord regards the tithe as His own, to be used for a certain purpose, and it is an easy matter, in the place of practicing the self-denial that we should, to help in educating students, or in the temporal matters, as providing conveniences for the church, which is necessary, to dip into the Lord's consecrated portion which should be **used only to sustain the ministers in new fields as well as in other places**. And this should not be done in a niggardly way. All the inconveniences that the laborers must wrestle with in these new fields should be taken into consideration. **The expense of living is greater in some localities than in others**. {DG 257.2}

In the above we again clearly see where the tithe is to be used and the principle of God not wanting to lose qualified ministers who are laboring in the field. The principle above tells me that if means in the treasury are not measuring up then it would be better for ministers to take a hair cut in pay rather than fire workers due to a lack of funds. We also see that local economic conditions have an effect on the wages of workers. We shouldn't set a set wage that all workers will get arbitrarily but rather circumstances must be taken into consideration so some ministers will be paid differently than other ministers at least nationally or globally.

*“A very plain, definite message has been given to me for our people. I am bidden to tell them that they are making a mistake in applying the tithe to various objects, which, though good in themselves, are **not the object to which the Lord has said that the tithe should be applied.** Those who make this use of the tithe are departing from the Lord's arrangement. **God will judge for these things.** {GW 226.2}*

*One reasons that the tithe may be applied to school purposes. Still others reason that canvassers and colporteurs should be supported from the tithe. **But a great mistake is made when the tithe is drawn from the object for which it is to be used -- the support of the ministers.** There should be today in the **field one hundred well-qualified laborers where now there is but one.** {GW 226.3}*

There is a curse for us when we do not use the tithe appropriately and God will hold those in office positions accountable. When the tithe is used correctly and the ministers and people are doing their job effectively, there will be plenty of resources to hire more men and women. When we pay ministers tithe and begin sending them to do jobs such as building, farming, or laboring jobs we rob God of His tithe. This doesn't mean a minister can't get his hands dirty as he can do these things in his spare time but he is not to be employed to do these duties otherwise the treasury will be depleted.

*“Read carefully the third chapter of Malachi, and see what God says about the tithe. If our churches will take their stand upon the Lord's word, and **be faithful in paying their tithe** into His treasury, **more laborers will be encouraged to take up ministerial work.** More men would give themselves to the ministry were they not told of the **depleted treasury.** There should be an **abundant supply in the Lord's treasury,** and there would be if **selfish hearts** and hands had not withheld the tithes, or **made use of them to support other lines of work.** {GW 227.1}*

*God's reserved resources are to be used in no such haphazard way. The tithe is the Lord's, and those who meddle with it **will be punished with the loss of their heavenly treasure, unless they repent.** Let the work no longer be hedged up because the **tithe has been diverted into various channels other than the one to which the Lord has said it should go.** Provision is to be made for these **other lines of work.** They are to be sustained, but **not from the tithe.** God has not changed; the **tithe is still to be used for the support of the ministry.** The opening*

of new fields requires more ministerial efficiency than we now have, and there must be means in the treasury. {GW 227.2}

It should be clear to us what tithe shouldn't be used for and what it is for, the ministry of God's work. Originally I did not believe it would be lawful to pay Conference board members and officers at the Conference as I understood these quotes in a very narrow strict manner. I have now come to understand that the Conference personnel if they are working a large amount of hours to accomplish their duties can be paid from the tithe. If these people are not in place to do their job the ministers will not get paid. Notice this passage in Nehemiah:

*“Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude. And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah: And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the **tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests.**.... Then brought all Judah the **tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries.** And I **made treasurers over the treasuries**, Shelemiah the **priest**, and Zadok the scribe, and of the **Levites, Pedaiah**: and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful, and **their office was to distribute unto their brethren.** Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof.” (Neh 13:3-5, 12-14)*

What we have above is the modern day equivalent of treasurers and clerks which are needed to distribute tithe to the ministers. At least two of these “treasurers” were already classed as people being paid tithe, one being a priest and the other a Levite. The point being is that there are necessary personnel in the Conference that will have a work to do in order for the ministers to get paid and if needed they can be supported from the tithe as well. I suppose if there was an abundance of offering or second tithe the Conference could use that instead. With that said the Conference should focus on boots on the ground and try and have as little overhead expense as possible. Our focus should be getting the work done so if we create so many programs or positions that use up the tithe money and these are not bringing in new people and new resources the mission will lack. Here is a historical example from our pioneers

on a rare circumstance where tithe was used for similar position not directly working in word and doctrine:

*"F. McVagh, president of the Southern Union Conference, wrote W. C. White on October 24, 1912: "Brethren Nicola, Hart, and others of the older brethren tell me that they distinctly remember that years ago Sister White said that the **tithe collector and clerk of the Battle Creek church should be paid out of the tithe, and up to the time of the Haughey administration, I guess it is a fact that the Battle Creek church paid its clerk and treasurer out of the tithe, and then turned the balance over to the conference.**"*

A tithe collector was someone who traveled to the homes of church members to collect tithe. In responding, W. C. White said his recollections were the same:

"My memory of the matter is in full harmony with the statements of Brother Nicola, Hart, and others. In the olden days, when the Battle Creek church was growing, it was found that unless the work of collecting the tithe was followed up regularly that the amount received was very much less than if the matter were followed up in a businesslike way by a collector who made the work his regular duty. We also found that this work demanded more time than it was right for us to ask any one, two, or three of the deacons to give to the matter, and it was thought by the church council that it would be good policy, and for the best interests of the tithe payers, and for the best interests of the conference, to have a good collector chosen and employed and paid a reasonable amount for his time.

*This plan, with the reasons therefore, was placed before Father and Mother, and **received their hearty approval.** I cannot name the time or the place, nor can I repeat the words, but I am very positive that **Mother gave her hearty approval to this plan,** and it seems to me that the wisdom of the plan can be clearly discerned from the business standpoint, and that it should be maintained **even though we may not find a written testimony bearing upon the subject.** In years past there was no effort made to conceal from other churches the fact that Battle Creek managed its affairs in this way. Our brethren largely recognized that different methods must be followed in churches of different circumstances. I am glad to tell you that the St. Helena Sanitarium church employs a faithful tithe collector and **pays for actual service done from the tithe.** Should this plan be discontinued, I think the conference would lose from five to ten times as much as it paid to the collector. But we do*

not find that our smaller churches need to follow this plan or that they are brought into perplexity because this plan is followed in our very large churches."--W. C. White to C. F. McVagh, October 31, 1912.

In the above history Willie White says they gained much more in tithe collection by doing this than if they had not. If our ministers don't get paid then the whole work will suffer thus my mind has expanded on this issue to understand that supporting staff in the Conference may have to be paid from the tithe but we should always try and keep overhead costs to a minimum. Whenever possible especially while the work is young it would be beneficial for overhead positions to be on a volunteer basis just as it is in the local churches. Let us not be too stingy though as a "laborer if worthy of his hire". Another historical statement I found of interest is this by E.J Waggoner:

"Sometimes people have asked me, "You are working for the General Conference, aren't you?"

"No."

"O, I thought you were a General Conference laborer: I thought you were working for the General Conference Committee."

"No; I am working for the Lord."

"Well, the Conference Committee are paying you, aren't they?"

*"No; the Conference Committee do not pay me any more than I pay them. **They pay their tithe, and I pay my tithe, and they are supported out of the tithe, and I am supported out of the tithe, and we are both, mutually, supported out of it,** by each other. I pay them, and they pay me;--no, I do not pay them, and they do not pay me. I get pay from the one I work for. **I am working for the Lord, and I get pay from the Lord.** I get it before I begin." {April 5, 1901 N/A, GCB 82.9}*

As you can see above Waggoner notes that Conference committee members were paid from the tithe. Now I do not say that they must get paid, but I believe this also depends on the work load as the organization grows.

*"The Lord has been pleased to present before me many things in regard to the calling and labor of our **ministers, especially those who have been appointed as presidents of conferences.** Great care should be exercised in the selection of men for these positions of trust. There should be earnest prayer for divine enlightenment." {GW 413.1}*

In the above we see some ministers are appointed to be conference presidents or leaders, but I recall one letter where A.G Daniels was rebuked for not getting out in the field to labor in the cities so we shouldn't have the mindset that this position is merely an office or desk job but one which labor in the field is required.

*“Several meetings were held for the ministers. In these we tried to impress upon them the necessity of carrying the burden of the work. **They cannot do this while at the same time they are carrying the burden of farms or other business enterprises, having their hearts on their earthly treasure.** The want of a full consecration to the work on the part of the minister is soon felt all through the field where he labors. If his own standard is low, he will not bring others to accept a higher one. It is easy to preach; but it is an important part of the minister's work to visit families, and to converse, and if possible pray with every member. Let them see that you care for their souls.” {RH, October 21, 1884 par. 12}*

It is not a responsible ideal to have tithe paid ministers who are also involved in other business related functions (secular income) or duties that will side track their efforts. I cannot over emphasize that tithe paid field ministers must be fully consecrated to their line of work, they are not part time ministers and part time secular workers. This of course doesn't mean they are to ignore home duties, such as tending to their garden, and family duties. Though if other secular things prevent them from giving an honest full-time effort in the field, then they will not qualify to be on or continue to be on the tithe payroll.

*“So it was with the disciples previously called. When Jesus bade Peter and his companions follow Him, **they immediately left their boats and nets. Some of these disciples had friends dependent on them for support; but when they received the Saviour's invitation, they did not hesitate, inquiring, How shall I live, and sustain my family?** They were obedient to the call; and when afterward Jesus asked them, "What I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything?" they could answer, "Nothing." [Luke 22:35.]*

*Today the Saviour calls us, as He called Matthew and John and Peter, to His work. If our hearts are touched by His love, **the question of compensation will not be uppermost in our minds.** We shall rejoice to be co-workers with Christ, and we shall not fear to trust His care. If we make God our strength, we shall have clear perceptions of duty, and*

unselfish aspirations; our life will be actuated by a noble purpose, which will raise us above sordid motives.” {GW 114.1}

Do all full-time ministers have to be on tithe payroll? Absolutely not. If ministers have a trade labor skill set such as Paul had (tent-making), they may choose to pass on tithe support and be self-supporting.

*“As a laborer in the gospel, **Paul might have claimed support, instead of sustaining himself; but this right he was willing to forego.** Although feeble in health, he labored during the day in serving the cause of Christ, and then toiled a large share of the night, and frequently all night, that he might make provision for his own and others' necessities. The apostle would also give an example to the Christian ministry, dignifying and honoring industry. While thus preaching and working, he presented the highest type of Christianity. He combined teaching with his labor; and while toiling with those of his trade, he instructed them concerning the way of salvation. In pursuing this course, he had access to many whom he could not otherwise have reached.” {LP 101.1}*

Below we see that a Bible teacher in school is to be paid from the tithe but this person is really a minister. This is obvious because they are working in the ministry to mold the minds of children into the gospel work.

*“The best **ministerial talent should be employed** to lead and direct in the teaching of the Bible in our schools. Those chosen for this work need to be thorough Bible students; they should be men who have a deep Christian experience, and **their salary should be paid from the tithe.**” {CT 431.1}*

On December 4, 1904, W. C. White wrote William Covert, president of the Wisconsin Conference:

*"In working out this problem in schools that mother was closely connected with, **the tithe was only used for the minister connected with the school, who had the chief burden of the Bible instruction, whose special work was the fitting of young people for evangelical work.**"*

Thus we should be careful when it comes to schooling not to use the tithe for wrong purposes. Math, Science, and English teachers are not what is being talked about above as these teachers are not qualified for tithe. Below is a testimony showing the importance of teaching new converts about tithing:

*It is part of your work to teach those whom you bring into the truth to bring the tithe into the storehouse as an acknowledgment of their dependence on God. They should be fully enlightened as to their duty to return to the Lord His own. The command to pay tithe is so plain that there is no semblance of excuse for disregarding it. **If you neglect to give the new converts instruction on this point, you leave undone a most important part of your work.**--Letter 51, 1902. {Ev 250.2}*

Also:

*The contributions required of the Hebrews for religious and charitable purposes amounted to **fully one fourth of their income**. So heavy a tax upon the resources of the people might be expected to reduce them to poverty; but, on the contrary, the faithful observance of these regulations was one of the conditions of their prosperity. On condition of their obedience God made them this promise: "I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field. . . . And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts." Malachi 3:11. {PP 527.1}*

Also:

*The Lord requires us to give liberally for the support of his cause. Should we compare our offerings with those which were constantly required of the Jews, **we would find that we fall far below them in beneficence**. Their contributions amounted to **fully one-fourth of their entire income**. At the lowest estimate, the amount expended upon the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple at Jerusalem **exceeded the cost of all the church edifices in the United States**. {RH, January 4, 1881 par. 5}*

*Many regard these demands upon the Jews as far above the possible standard of duty required of us. **But are there grounds for this conclusion?** Are our advantages inferior to those of the Jews? or has God been less beneficent with us than with them? We hear ministers in the various churches extolling the blessings of the gospel, and representing the glory of this age as exceeding in every respect that of the Jewish age. They call the Mosaic dispensation one of darkness, and exalt the present as an age of far greater light and privilege. If this is so, will not God hold us accountable for these increased blessings? Just in proportion to the gifts bestowed, will be his claims upon us. Are the calls of beneficence less*

*numerous now than they were in the Jewish age? **It should be the reverse.** {RH, January 4, 1881 par. 6}*

New persons that come into God's fold should be educated on proper organization and the importance of tithes, second tithe and offerings so that they may understand how they are helping in God's plan of salvation. In an earlier quote Mrs. White said using the tithe for the wrong purpose will always be a temptation and one of the big reasons for this is there is usually less offering and second tithe given than tithe. People often only give tithe and some not even that, so offerings that are needed to carry out the work are lacking leaving a temptation to use tithe money. In the quotes above Mrs. White mentioned that $\frac{1}{4}$ of their income was dedicated to God, which in my studies is broken down to 10% first tithe for the ministry, 10% second tithe for many uses but primarily helping the poor in the church, the ministry and even benefiting the giver, and 5% offering for other expenses. The first tithe goes to the Conference to hire workers. The second tithe and offering stays in the local church minus a tithe of them, so the local church would send 10% of the second tithe, and 10% of the offering to the Conference. The use of the "second tithe" is very broad and should be studied by the local church on how to best use it in their area.

Now many people are going to be opposed to sending the first tithe to the conference due to prejudice but we are not Congregationalists. There are a few quotes in SOP often misused to make people believe they can individually control their tithe. Mrs. White had special authority to distribute tithe and she allowed people to send it to her for distribution but she herself said the better way was to send it to the Conference. Just because Mrs. White had special authority to do this doesn't mean we do. There are also quotes where she tells us we have an individual responsibility as stewards of God and this is true, you are free to use offering as God leads you and even some of the second tithe can be used at your discretion but the first tithe is not for us to determine its use on an individual level. There maybe be people doing a work who are in harmony with the body but for whatever reason have not yet been supported by the "regular lines" and individuals are free to support those in the "irregular lines" with offerings. We should inquire with our Conference rep on how the tithe is being used to keep them accountable.

*"You ask if I will accept tithe from you and use it in the cause of God where most needed. In reply, I will say that I shall not refuse to do this, but at the same time **I will tell you that there is a better way.** {12MR 271.2}*

It is better to put confidence in the ministers of the conference where you live, and in the officers of the church where you worship. Draw nigh to your brethren. Love them with a true heart fervently, and encourage them to bear their responsibilities faithfully in the fear of God. "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" [1 Timothy 4:12]. Read Philippians 2:1-16. {12MR 271.3}

Also:

"The tithe is sacred, reserved by God for Himself. It is to be brought into His treasury to be used to sustain the gospel laborers in their work. For a long time the Lord has been robbed because there are those who do not realize that the tithe is God's reserved portion. {CS 93.2}

*Some have been dissatisfied, and have said, "I will not longer pay my tithe; for I have no confidence in the way things are managed at the heart of the work." **But will you rob God because you think the management of the work is not right?** Make your complaint, plainly and openly, in the right spirit, to the proper ones. **Send in your petitions for things to be adjusted and set in order; but do not withdraw from the work of God, and prove unfaithful, because others are not doing right.**"--9T 249. {CS 93.3}*

Also:

*God has given special direction as to the use of the tithe. He does not design that His work shall be crippled for want of means. That there may be no haphazard work and no error, He has made our duty on these points very plain. The portion that God has reserved for Himself is not to be diverted to any other purpose than that which He has specified. **Let none feel at liberty to retain their tithe, to use according to their own judgment. They are not to use it for themselves in an emergency, nor to apply it as they see fit, even in what they may regard as the Lord's work.** {CS 101.1}*

*The minister should, by precept and example, teach the people to regard the tithe as sacred. **He should not feel that he can retain and apply it according to his own judgment, because he is a minister. It is not his. He is not at liberty to devote to himself whatever he thinks is his due.** He should not give his influence to any plans for diverting from their legitimate use the tithes and offerings dedicated to God. **They are to***

be placed in His treasury and held sacred for His service as He has appointed. {CS 101.2}

Now I'm sure many people will be stunned and perplexed how they could possibly give 25% of their income but I do not say we should set this up as a demand on the people but rather a goal. This lofty goal gives us something to shoot for and will cause us to see how we can sacrifice and cut expenses to get as close to the goal as possible. Today our economy is very different from the Jewish economy and even the economy of our pioneers. Today most Americans have 20-30% taken from them by various government taxes which most of these taxes have little benefit if any to a SDA Christian. Neither the Jewish nor our pioneers had this much money stolen from them however our economy is different in ways that we may be paid better than they were so it may offset some of the tax theft. There are other cost of living factors such as housing which government laws have been made which make it difficult for many. Nevertheless I still see 25% as goal to strive for and if you can do better than this great but no one should boast whether they make it to 10% or 50%, the principle is sacrifice to further the cause of God. On top of this our time can be an offering for God so although some may be poor and unable to give a significant monetary value to the cause they may be able to give their time to God's cause which is just as important. This shows us that every member is valuable not just because of money but valuable in their service to God. However this should not be abused as we see in this quote:

*“God desires all His stewards to be exact in following divine arrangements. **They are not to offset the Lord's plans by performing some deed of charity, or giving some gift or some offering, when or how they, the human agents, shall see fit.** It is a very poor policy for men to seek to improve on God's plan, and invent a makeshift, averaging up their good impulses on this and that occasion, and offsetting them against God's requirements. God calls upon all to give their influence to His own arrangement. He has made His plan known; and all who would cooperate with Him must carry out this plan, instead of daring to attempt an improvement on it.”* {CS 101.3}

As you can see from the above we should not think we can do something for God so that we may retain His tithe or even other offerings. Below are some quotes on the second tithe:

*“To promote the assembling of the people for religious service, as well as to provide for the poor, a **second tithe** of all the increase was required.*

Concerning the first tithe, the Lord had declared, "I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel." Numbers 18:21. But in regard to the second He commanded, "Thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which He shall choose to place His name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always." Deuteronomy 14:23, 29; 16:11-14. This tithe, or its equivalent in money, they were for two years to bring to the place where the sanctuary was established. After presenting a thank offering to God, and a specified portion to the priest, the offerers were to use the remainder for a religious feast, in which the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow should participate. Thus provision was made for the thank offerings and feasts at the yearly festivals, and the people were drawn to the society of the priests and Levites, that they might receive instruction and encouragement in the service of God. {PP 530.1}

Every third year, however, this **second tithe** was to be used at home, in entertaining the Levite and the poor, as Moses said, "That they may eat within thy gates, and be filled." Deuteronomy 26:12. This tithe would provide a fund for the uses of charity and hospitality. {PP 530.2}

Also:

"Our fellow laborers in Australasia responded cheerfully and heartily. **The second tithe was set apart to increase the building fund.** Many gifts of money, labor, and material, representing untold self-denial, were made." {Needs, July 4, 1903 par. 21}

Also:

The Lord desires the churches in every place to take hold more diligently of the church school work, giving liberally to sustain the teachers. The question has been asked, "Could not the **second tithe be used for the support of the church school work?**" It could be used for no better purpose.--Ms 67, 1901, p. 5. ("The Church School," July 29, 1901.) {7MR 138.2}

The above quote is balanced by these quotes:

*I do not see the wisdom of the school depending on the **second tithe** to meet so much of its expenses. I fear that if the brethren rely so much upon this, difficulties will arise. You should labor patiently to develop those*

industries by which students may partly work their way through school. Let each family try to pay the expenses of the students that it sends to school.--Letter 167, 1904, p. 1. (To Brethren Santee and Owen, April 27, 1904.)

*In regard to the school work, I have been instructed that the plan of charging students nothing for tuition, depending on the **second tithe** to support the school, will always leave the school in the condition of financial embarrassment. When I first heard of this movement I thought I would let it be worked out, but I tell you now that the light given me is that other plans will have to be made than the plan of supporting schools from the **second tithe**. Students should be charged a reasonable price for their tuition. There will be an abundance of places to use **the second tithe** in doing earnest missionary work in new places.--Letter 103, 1905, p. 5. (To E. S. Ballenger, April 7, 1905.) {7MR 139.1}*

The above show the broad possibilities on how the second tithe can be used. I especially believe in our context it could greatly be used to benefit country living or things associated with it such as getting a plot of land owned by the local church where much food can be grown to help the poor in the local church as well as many other possibilities. People in the church can offer their time in working on the project. It could come in handy when the no buy or sell decree comes in.

WORKERS

Qualifications:

How does a person become qualified for tithe paid ministry work? Men and women in local churches are to go out and work for the Lord as this is the duty of every Christian, but some will be especially called of God to consecrate themselves to his ministry full-time. As they go out and prove themselves by the fruit of their labors, word should be sent from the local church to the Conference concerning those who are doing a good work for the Lord and the Conference should investigate to see if the person or persons are truly qualified for tithe paid full time work. It is up to the Conference to examine the evidence and character of each candidate and to determine whether or not to hire a person under the tithe payroll. The exact details on what qualifies a person may have to be learned by Conference leadership but a thorough interview with the person, those who have been impacted by the person's ministry and those whom know his character best should be sought for. The better the qualifying process, the more success per tithe dollar should be seen. I believe we should highly encourage qualifying ministers based on the quality of church members they produce rather than the quantity but quantity shouldn't be entirely excluded. One church member reached by a minister who faithfully pays tithe and offering and is trained to do missionary work bringing in more souls is of far more quality than 10 lay people who remain stagnant in their growth.

"In order for a man to be a successful minister, something more than book knowledge is essential. The laborer for souls needs consecration, integrity, intelligence, industry, energy, and tact. Possessing these qualifications, no man can be inferior; instead, he will have a commanding influence for good. {GW 111.1}

Also:

*Men who are chosen of God to labor in this cause, will **give proof of their high calling**, and will regard it as their highest duty to **grow and improve until they shall become able workmen**. Then, as they **manifest an earnestness to improve upon the talent which God has intrusted to them, they should be helped judiciously**. But the encouragement given them should not savor of flattery, for Satan himself will do enough of that kind of work. Men who think that they have a duty to preach, **should not be sustained in throwing themselves and their families at once upon the brethren for support**. They are not entitled to this **until they can show good fruits of their labor**. There is danger*

now of injuring young preachers, and those who have but little experience, by flattery, and by relieving them of burdens in life. **When not preaching, they should be doing what they can for their own support. This is the best way to test the nature of their call to preach.** If they desire to preach only that they may be supported as ministers, and the church pursue a judicious course, they will soon lose their burden, and leave preaching for a more profitable business. Paul, a most eloquent preacher, miraculously converted by God to do a special work, was not above labor. He says, "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it." "Neither did we eat any man's bread for naught; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you." [1 Corinthians 4:11, 12; 2 Thessalonians 3:8.] {GW92 145.2}

Also:

The Lord has shown that gospel order has been too much feared and neglected. Formality should be shunned; but, in so doing, order should not be neglected. There is order in heaven. There was order in the church when Christ was upon the earth, and after His departure order was strictly observed among His apostles. And now in these last days, while God is bringing His children into the unity of the faith, **there is more real need of order than ever before;** for, as God unites His children, Satan and his evil angels are very busy to prevent this unity and to destroy it. **Therefore men are hurried into the field who lack wisdom and judgment, perhaps not ruling well their own house, and not having order or government over the few that God has given them charge of at home; yet they feel capable of having charge of the flock.** They make many wrong moves, and those unacquainted with our faith judge all the messengers to be like these self-sent men. Thus the cause of God is reproached, and the truth shunned by many unbelievers who would otherwise be candid and anxiously inquire, Are these things so? {EW 97.1}

Lastly:

*Said the inspired apostle: "Lay hands suddenly on no man." **In some of our churches the work of organizing and of ordaining elders has been premature; the Bible rule has been disregarded, and consequently grievous trouble has been brought upon the church.** There should not be so great haste in **electing leaders as to ordain men who are in no way fitted for the responsible work**--men who need to be converted, elevated, ennobled, and refined before they can serve the cause of God in any capacity. {5T 617.2}*

The following scripture is a good qualification for field ministers, Elders and Deacons:

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop (see Acts 1:20 to see the Apostles were Bishops/overseers, and Acts 20:18-28 shows that local elders are also Bishops/overseers), he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Likewise, must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. (1 Tim 3:1-3)

Another good qualifying scripture for local Elders and ministers is:

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given

to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. (1 Tim 1:5-11)

Obviously, Conference board members should also be held to these same qualifications. Conference board members need to understand these things so they can make good decisions in hiring people for tithe paid positions and for planning the work. In the following we see some Elders are tithe paid if they are primarily laborers in word and doctrine.

“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.” (1 Tim 5:17-19)

I am going to delve a little deeper to break down the tithe paid work into two separate categories: the gospel minister and the local Bible worker. The Bible worker is a trained lay worker who is doing a work to bring more souls into the local church within an immediate territory and providing studies for new converts to grow and learn. The minister's job is a calling where a person takes on a larger field of work of not only reaching new souls but also raising up new churches and training new members for missionary work. Creating a cycle of continual discipleship. Once the minister has organized the newly raised up church with officers and Elders capable of leading the church, he is to move on to raise up another church. He is not to remain at any one church or a few churches and hover over it. Yes, he will check in with the church and may even stop in occasionally to preach but the ministers job is not primarily preaching on Sabbath, in fact that is a very small portion of his duties. In raising up a church the local congregation gives recommendation to who is fit as officers and the minister has authority on whether or not to ordain those recommended as an officer such as Elder or Deacon.

Although women are not to hold the office of Elder in the local church, they can however be hired as workers in the field in raising up new churches just as the men. The difference being in carrying out authoritative actions and duties such as ordaining, baptism and communion. The principle of

submission on the part of women to male leaders still is to be carried out. That being said should there be no qualified male leadership within the church to head it up, then a qualified woman of Godly character has authority to carry out these ordinances. This is based on the principle of headship and submission throughout scripture. Thus women are called to work just as men are however this should never do away with the law of male headship.

*“All who desire an opportunity for true ministry, and who will give themselves unreservedly to God, will find in the canvassing work opportunities to speak upon many things pertaining to the future, immortal life. The experience thus gained will be of the greatest value to those who are fitting themselves for the ministry. **It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God.**” {CEv 16.1}*

The reason women’s ordination folk in the GCSDA abuse this quote is because the system has “hovering pastors” which in reality is a glorified Elder position which women cannot hold as the Elder position is a regular position of authority in the local congregation making it impossible for the principle of headship and submission to work. The primary purpose of a minister is to go out and reach new souls not camp out and rule over a congregation. Obviously not even an Elder should rule in the sense of absolute authority but he does have a position of authority that is manifest every Sabbath day.

Occasionally a minister or Bible worker will begin to decline carrying out their work effectively for various reasons but whatever the reason may be if they fail to do their work they should be examined, and if found lacking, potentially removed from the tithe payroll. This would be done by the Conference investigating the minister’s work. We see the principle of having to let ministers go here:

*The ministry is becoming enfeebled because men are assuming the responsibility of preaching without gaining the needed preparation for this work. Many have made a mistake in receiving credentials. They will have to take up work to which they are better adapted than the preaching of the word. They are being paid from the tithe, but their efforts are feeble, **and they should not continue to be paid from this fund.** In many ways the ministry is losing its sacred character. {GW 94.4}*

As you can see above there is a basis for removing a worker from the tithe payroll. All who are hired into positions paid from the tithe should expect that evaluations will be conducted periodically in order to ensure their work is

fruitful and remain qualified under the tithe payroll. You can also see that there is a preparatory work for a person in order to be qualified for a tithe paid position. Church organization is so important because in the event that a popular minister has to be cut loose from the tithe system, there is a high likelihood of many following him which could have an effect on the finances of the organization. This may have a potential effect on the Conference officers to do the right thing based on this fear of losing funds. Educate the people on church organization and this issue will have less of an impact. If people want to leave to follow a minister it only shows their independence. We should never fear doing the right thing because of fear of losing money. The people we want in this organizational work are the ones who are convicted this is the right way and see the dangers that congregationalism has on church organization. Now I have mentioned the word “hovering” a lot so let’s take a look at what inspiration says about this so we can fully understand it.

*“As I traveled through the South on my way to the conference, I saw city after city that was unworked. What is the matter? The **ministers are hovering over churches which know the truth while thousands are perishing out of Christ.** {Ev 381.2}*

*If the proper instruction were given, if the proper methods were followed, every church member would do his work as a member of the body. He would do Christian missionary work. **But the churches are dying, and they want a minister to preach to them.** {Ev 381.3}*

*They should be taught to bring a faithful tithe to God, that He may strengthen and bless them. They should be brought into working order, that the breath of God may come to them. **They should be taught that unless they can stand alone, without a minister, they need to be converted anew, and baptized anew. They need to be born again.**-- Manuscript 150, 1901.*

Another:

***“Instead of keeping the ministers at work for the churches that already know the truth,** let the members of the churches say to these laborers: “Go work for souls that are perishing in darkness. We ourselves will carry forward the services of the church. We will keep up the meetings, and, by abiding in Christ, will maintain spiritual life. We will work for souls that are about us, and we will send our prayers and our gifts to sustain the laborers in more needy and destitute fields.”-- Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 30. (1900) {Ev 382.1}*

Another:

*Our ministers should plan wisely, as faithful stewards. **They should feel that it is not their duty to hover over the churches already raised up**, but that they should be doing aggressive evangelistic work, preaching the Word and doing house-to-house work in places that have not yet heard the truth. . . . They will find that nothing is so encouraging as doing evangelistic work in new fields. --Letter 169, 1904. {Ev 382.3}*

***If the ministers would get out of the way, if they would go forth into new fields**, the members would be obliged to bear responsibilities, and their capabilities would increase by use.--Letter 56, 1901.*

Last one:

*The churches that have not life in themselves, that have lost their spiritual discernment, call for ministers to come to their help, to bring them the breath of life. **But the ministers have other work to do. They must carry the message of truth to those who know it not.** Those ministers who **hover about the churches**, who have not a clear cut message, which, like a sharp, two-edged sword, cuts both ways, **will do the churches harm.** They will not work for the salvation of souls that are in great peril because they know not the truth, and **they will die spiritually themselves, and trouble and discourage those who try to help them.** 6MR 65. {PaM 121.3}*

As we can see, the issue of pastors hovering over churches was a great issue back in the day. We do not want to repeat these errors. **I have read a report that in the days of our pioneers it would take 3-4 ministers to raise up one church per year on average. This doesn't sound like much and I do believe it should be better at closer to a 1:1 ratio but the same report said that in the GCSDA today it takes 160 Pastors to raise up 1 church per year. That is how devastating hovering pastors are so this issue should not be tolerated by our Conferences or local churches. It should be seen as a great sin and disciplined.** Most of the Father and Son ministers today are doing the same thing because of congregational organization. It is critical to bring a church into working order and move on. Nobody prospers when ministers begin to hover and preach to the choir. If the congregational ministers in the Father and Son community followed this counsel today they would lose their following from the various camp meetings and the source of funds to them would dry up. They do not have an organizational structure capable of following this counsel; they must continue

to preach to the choir to obtain tithes and offerings. In fact, the purpose of camp meetings was to evangelize those who have not heard the truth, but today in both the GCSDA and the Father and Son community the camp meeting has become a social week where the ministers come speak to the choir. The camp meeting today is the main avenue by which our ministers hover. Please note I do not say we should never have gatherings where the audience is primarily SDA's but the extreme majority of camp meetings should be evangelistic efforts for those who have not heard the message.

HANDLING DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES

In the RCG (representative form of church governance), members are joined to a body of believers where it is agreed upon that no one pushes supposed new light on major issues until the issue has been thoroughly addressed through proper procedure which I will touch on later. This is important because it is this key principle that prevents error from coming in as well as disunity. When we stop taking it upon ourselves to push our independent views and truly be a body everything operates much more smoothly. Things do not work this way in the congregational model and is a major reason why there are always continual splits. Even minor issues need to be handled carefully and respect should be shown to each other on these minor issues of difference. I will talk more about dealing with minor issues later as well. This system helps prevent pride of opinion from taking over as people generally lean to think all their own thoughts and ideas are extremely important but in this system the burden of “new light” is not put on individuals or even a few men. Thus to rise up with your supposed “new light” and push it every chance you get independent of the body shows that you are controlled by a rebellious nature and not converted. This is going to be tough for many of us as we have become so independent in nature. Anyone joining any movement or organization should thoroughly examine everything about the organization before deciding this is the direction God would have them go. Obviously in the event of apostasy such as in the GCSDA, which means a falling away from the truth, the people should never hold their peace. There is a difference between apostasy and dealing with supposed new light. Notice the following testimonies:

*“I saw that your views **concerning swine's flesh** would prove no injury **if you have them to yourselves**; but in your judgment and opinion **you have made this question a test**, and your actions have plainly shown your faith in this matter. **If God requires His people to abstain from swine's flesh, He will convict them on the matter.** He is just as willing to show His honest children their duty, as to show their duty to individuals upon whom He has not laid the burden of His work. If it is the duty of the church to abstain from swine's flesh, **God will discover it to more than two or three. He will teach His church their duty.** {1T 206.3}*

God is leading out a people, not a few separate individuals here and there, one believing this thing, another that. Angels of God are doing the work committed to their trust. The third angel is leading out and purifying a people, **and they should move with him unitedly. Some run ahead of the angels that are leading this people; but they have**

to retrace every step, and meekly follow no faster than the angels lead. I saw that the angels of God would lead His people no faster than they could receive and act upon the important truths that are communicated to them. But some restless spirits do not more than half do up their work. As the angel leads them, they get in haste for something new, and rush on without divine guidance, and thus bring confusion and discord into the ranks. They do not speak or act in harmony with the body. I saw that you both must speedily be brought where you are willing to be led, instead of desiring to lead, or Satan will step in and lead you in his way, to follow his counsel. Some look at your set notions, and consider them an evidence of humility. They are deceived. You both are making work for repentance. {1T 207.1}

The above testimony is a very important one because the person being rebuked was actually right on the doctrine but wrong in taking action to push their view. This was obviously before Mrs. White's vision on health and the church coming to light on these health subjects. A testimony like this has no place with us today in the congregational models we have as we all feel the burden to carry forward the light we believe we have. There simply is no real accountability or body to which we belong. We are aimlessly going about as independent atoms. In the following statement I'm about to use please don't think I'm using this to protect the GCSDA because I'm not.

*“Again I say, The Lord hath not spoken by any messenger who calls the church that keeps the commandments of God, Babylon. True, there are tares with the wheat; but Christ said He would send His angels to first gather the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into the garner. I know that the Lord loves His church. **It is not to be disorganized or broken up into independent atoms. There is not the least consistency in this; there is not the least evidence that such a thing will be.** Those who shall heed this false message and **try to leaven others will be deceived and prepared to receive advanced delusions, and they will come to nought.** {2SM 68.3}*

Although we are living in a time when the church has become disorganized and broken up into independent atoms, I believe this is only temporary and God is now bringing the light forward for His people to reorganize under correct principles. The above text doesn't say disorganization would never happen but that it is not to be this way in any permanent way. Some are waiting for a prophet or the sealing to come to bring order and organization but this light will not come to those waiting when the light is

already here (the prophet has spoken already). Nobody is going to fully receive the seal of God in this disorganized mess we currently have in order to bring in new light and finally organize. It's time for us to take heed to the light already given. Reorganizing doesn't make us a "new church", a "new organization", or an 8th church as some, especially Trinitarians, would say even if we have to use a new name. Sure, if we organize on false teachings and principles, we will be a "new organization" but to reorganize of itself doesn't make us a new church or new organization. The new organization and religion is the GCSDA.

*"Those who belong to Christ's army must work with concerted action. They cannot be faithful soldiers unless they obey orders. United action is essential. **An army in which every part acts without reference to the other parts has no real strength.** In order to add new territory to Christ's kingdom His soldiers **must act in concert.** God's **plans and purposes must be carried out in solid, straightforward lines.** He calls for a **united army which moves steadily forward, not for a company composed of independent atoms.** The strength of His army is to be used for one great purpose. Its efforts are to be concentrated upon one great point--the magnifying of the laws of His kingdom before the world, before angels, and before men. " {20MR 28.2}*

So many people in our community think this army is just going to magically form and develop similar to how evolutionists think chaos turned into order creating our universe. This army is never going to be seen while we are congregational. It is going to take effort on our part to see a united work. I know that line is very much opposed to those who have an independent congregational mindset.

*"An army in battle would become confused and weakened **unless all worked in concert.** If the soldiers should act out their own impulsive ideas, **without reference to each other's positions and work, they would be a collection of independent atoms; they could not do the work of an organized body.** So the soldiers of Christ **must act in harmony.** They alone must not be cherished. If they do this, the Lord's people in the place of being in perfect harmony, of one mind, one purpose, and consecrated to one grand object, will find efforts fruitless, their time and capabilities wasted. **Union is strength. A few converted souls acting in harmony, acting for one grand purpose, under one head, will achieve victories at every encounter.**" {SpM 121.1}*

The more I study this issue the more I'm convinced that we have been working under Babylonian principles trying to maintain a kingdom that is to be destroyed rather than finish a work to be part of an eternal kingdom. The warning against congregationalism is very plain in the testimonies, will we obey it? The following letter is one full of principle so I have copied the entirety of it as it is very important for us to understand.

(Written to Brother Chapman from Petoskey, Michigan, June 11, 1891.)

*I have received yours dated June 3. In this letter you speak in these words: "Elder Robinson does not wish me to leave, but urges that I enter the canvassing field until such time as the conference can afford to employ me in some other capacity, but **states positively that I cannot be sent out to present the truth to others until some points held by me are changed or modified in order that the views regarded by us as a people should be properly set forth.** He quotes as a sample, 'My idea in reference to the Holy Ghost's not being the Spirit of God, which is Christ, but the angel Gabriel, and my belief that the 144,000 will be Jews who will acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. On all fundamental points I am in perfect harmony with our people; but when I try to show what seems to me to be new light on the truth, those in authority, none of whom have seemingly ever made a personal investigation of the matter, refuse to look into the Bible, but brand me as a fellow with queer ideas of the Bible.'" {14MR 175.1}*

*My brother, you have asked me candidly for advice. **Please read with attention John 17:17-27.** I quote verses 20 to 23: [verses 20-23, quoted]. {14MR 175.2}*

*It is your **privilege** and your **duty to seek for this oneness**, this unity, and thus **answer the prayer of Christ.** This prayer is full of instruction and consolation. As our intercessor in heaven, Christ is ever working for the unity of His people. In order to be in harmony with heaven, we **must seek to be one in faith and in practice.** {14MR 175.3}*

*Our Lord especially prayed that His disciples might be united in the closest bonds of Christian fellowship and love; as one body, under one supreme Head. This will exist only in proportion to the degree of their illumination and sanctification. **The more fully they receive the enlightenment of the living Spirit, the more nearly will they harmonize in their understanding of what is truth. The more closely they are united in judgment, the more confidence they have in one another.** They are*

blessed with peace and harmony, **believing and speaking the same things**, "with one heart and one mouth glorifying God." Their love, their Christian unity, is an evidence to the world that God has sent Jesus to save sinners, and with convicting power it testifies that the Word of God is the safe rule of life. {14MR 176.1}

The differences that now exist among Christians did not exist in the days of Christ or His apostles. When the gospel was preached after the resurrection and ascension of Christ, union prevailed; the believers were all of one heart and one mind. For a **short time** there was a difference of understanding in regard to circumcision, as to whether admission to the church should be granted to the uncircumcised Gentiles; but **this matter was soon settled**, and through the divine illumination and sanctification of the Spirit the believers were perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. **This was and always will be the fruit that is borne under the influence of the Holy Spirit.** {14MR 176.2} [thought: I'll explain more on this later but this is referring to Acts 15 and a proper council of brethren to deal with issues which is very important in true church organization.]

Brethren should not feel that it is a virtue to stand apart because they do not see **all minor points in exactly the same light**. **If on fundamental truths they are at an agreement, they should not differ and dispute about matters of little real importance.** To dwell on perplexing questions that, after all, **are of no vital importance**, has a direct tendency to **call the mind away from truths which are vital to the saving of the soul**. Brethren should be very modest in urging these side issues which often they do not themselves understand, points that they do not know to be truth and that it is not essential to their salvation to know. When there is difference of opinion on such points, the less prominence you give to them the better it will be for your own spirituality and for the peace and unity that Christ prayed might exist among brethren. {14MR 177.1} [thought: I will talk more about minor issues later but the above is excellent counsel. Yes we want perfect harmony even on minor things but putting these in their rightful place will prevent disunity.]

Unbelievers are critical, and they want to frame some excuse for not receiving the truth as it is in Jesus. Where these differences exist among us, those who stand outside will say, "It will be time enough for us to believe as you do when you can agree among yourselves as to what

constitutes truth." **The ungodly take advantage of the divisions and controversies among Christians.** {14MR 177.2}

There are among us more who are merely nominal Christians than many suppose. These are not connected with Christ, are not one with Him, and therefore do not feel that it is incumbent on them to answer the prayer of Christ that His followers may be one. But some who are real believers catch the spirit of contention. **Some are ever seeking to be original, to bring out something new and startling, and they do not realize as they should the importance of preserving the unity of the faith in the bonds of love.** -178- {14MR 177.3}

Christians are to be made complete in the one body--in Christ; and through Christ they are one with the Father. What is the result? They give evidence that they have not followed cunningly devised fables but the sure word of prophecy. By their words and actions, all men will take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus and learned of Him. They are a holy, happy people, the objects of Christ's divine love. {14MR 178.1}

"I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me" [verse 23]. "And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them" [verse 26]. With what earnest effort should we seek for unity, for oneness. The church is to be perfected through sufferings after the example of Christ. Being conformed to His image, we shall be one with Him. {14MR 178.2}

We are to pray for divine enlightenment, but at the same **time we should be careful how we receive everything termed new light.** We must beware lest, under cover of searching for new truth, **Satan shall divert our minds from Christ and the special truths for this time.** I have been shown that it is the **device of the enemy to lead minds to dwell upon some obscure or unimportant point, something that is not fully revealed or is not essential to our salvation.** This is made the absorbing theme, the "present truth," when all their investigations and suppositions only serve to make matters more obscure than before, and to confuse the minds of some who ought to be seeking for oneness through sanctification of the truth. -179- {14MR 178.3}

Your ideas of the two subjects you mention do not harmonize with the light which God has given me. The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery not

clearly revealed, and you will never be able to explain it to others because the Lord has not revealed it to you. You may gather together scriptures and put your construction upon them, but the application is not correct. The expositions by which you sustain your position are not sound. You may lead some to accept your explanations, but you do them no good, nor are they, through accepting your views, enabled to do others good. {14MR 179.1}

It is not essential for you to know and be able to define just what the Holy Spirit is. Christ tells us that the Holy Spirit is the Comforter, and the Comforter is the Holy Ghost, "the Spirit of truth, which the Father shall send in My name." "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" [John 14:16, 17]. This refers to the omnipresence of the Spirit of Christ, called the Comforter. Again Jesus says, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth" [John 16:12, 13]. {14MR 179.2} {thought: the above does not justify anyone to believe whatever they want on the Spirit, it condemns those views that takes the nature of the Spirit too far. To many read this as if its saying it doesn't matter what I believe on this topic.}

There are many mysteries which I do not seek to understand or to explain; they are too high for me, and too high for you. On some of these points, silence is golden. Piety, devotion, sanctification of soul, body, and spirit--this is essential for us all. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" [John 17:3]. "This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life" [John 6:40]. {14MR 179.3}

I hope that you will seek to be in harmony with the body. *I have been shown that you would not exert a saving influence in teaching the truth, because your mind is restless, and unless you drank deeper of the Fountain of life, you would make the mistake that many others have made, **of thinking that you have new light, when it is only a new phase of error.** {14MR 180.1}*

You need to come into harmony with your brethren. You may take certain views of Scripture and, searching the Bible in the light of your ideas, **may gather together a large number of texts and claim that they mean this and that, and call for anyone to prove to you that your views are incorrect. But what influence could anyone have upon your mind, when he takes the same scriptures and interprets and applies them differently? Both of you claim to found your views on the Bible.** {14MR 180.2}

*It is your duty to come as near to the people as you can, and not to get as far away from them as possible, and by your interpretation make a difference that should not exist. Here is your danger, of diverting minds from the real issues for this time. And you are not the only one who seems to be moved with ambition in this direction. **It would not be right or prudent to send you out as a worker to promulgate your peculiar ideas and thus cause division; we have plenty of this now.** We want men of solid experience, who will anchor minds and not send them adrift without chart or compass.* {14MR 180.3}

Now, my brother, it is truth that we want and must have, but do not introduce error as new truth. I would be glad to write further on this point, but must drop the subject now. God wants us to be a unit.--Letter 7, 1891.

The key question that will come to almost all of our minds is how we could possibly follow this counsel today in light of the massive division that exists? Let's say we have 10 ministries that all believe they have some point of truth that is a dividing point, which one is right? After all, "all claim to have found their views on the Bible." Obviously none of us should set aside our conscious convictions for the sake of unity, as that is ecumenism. We can't just blindly follow anyone or any organization. I believe the answer to this question is a systematic approach based on this principle:

"And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." (Acts 5:38-39)

"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." (Psalm 127:1)

Only a truly God organized work is going to succeed on all levels while the work established on error and false organization is going to come to naught. I

believe congregationalism is condemned of God to crumble so all the Father and Son ministries that wish to stay in this form of organization should be considered irrelevant. Who knows maybe some of them will attempt to truly organize and this is the key we should be looking for. I believe this will narrow our options down drastically for I do not believe we are going to see many attempt to organize. Many have doctrines that don't fit in the RCG but are a perfect fit to congregationalism.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE ORGANIZED BODY

I found an article by Loughborough that I believe is very good in giving us an outline in becoming a member of the organized body. Here is the article:

“After speaking a few minutes concerning the principles of Seventh-day Adventists, the elder said he would take three persons who were desirous of entering into church fellowship, and question them closely concerning the principles to be recognized in entering into church fellowship, and he desired all the others who wished to enter into the organization to note closely every point, for as they should present their names they would be asked if they endorsed these principles, without, on this occasion, asking each one the separate questions. Three persons were then selected to be questioned, who were to constitute the nucleus, or beginning of the church organization. {1907 JNL, COOD 174.2}

The elder then said, "Instead of forming a creed in which is expressed every item of our faith, those entering into church fellowship attach their names to a church covenant which reads as follows: 'We, the undersigned, hereby associate ourselves together as a church, taking the name Seventh-day Adventists, covenanting to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ.' In a covenant of this character we endorse the entire Bible as a rule of faith, and leave room for the Spirit of God to enlighten us in regard to the truths of his Word, not being bound down by any creed." {1907 JNL, COOD 174.3}

The following questions were asked the three candidates for membership, who answered each question heartily in the affirmative:- {1907 JNL, COOD 174.4}

1. Do you accept the Bible as the rule of your faith and practise? {1907 JNL, COOD 175.1}

2. Will you study to learn the truths of the Word, and practise those truths in your lives? {1907 JNL, COOD 175.2}

3. Do you understand the doctrines taught by the Seventh-day Adventists, and do you believe them? {1907 JNL, COOD 175.3}

4. Have you confessed your sins to God as far as they have been made known to you, and have you on your part, as far as in you lies, tried to make matters right with your fellow men? {1907 JNL, COOD 175.4}

5. Do you claim by faith in Christ that God for Christ's sake has forgiven our past sins, and that he is yours, and you are his? {1907 JNL, COOD 175.5}

6. Do you recognize the fact that as truly as God claims the seventh part of time as his, so he claims one tenth of all our income as his for the support of his work in advancing the glorious gospel of Christ, and will you faithfully render to his his own - the tithe? {1907 JNL, COOD 175.6}

7. Will you submit to the decisions of the body of the church in matters of church discipline? In other words, will you seek the peace, harmony, and unity of the church, rather than press an individual opinion to cause confusion in the church, which is in harmony with Volume V of the "Testimonies," page 107? {1907 JNL, COOD 175.7}

8. Will you besides this contribute of your substance as God may prosper you, for the upbuilding of the various branches of his cause? {1907 JNL, COOD 175.8}

9. Will you seek to build up the interests of the church by attendance upon its meetings, ordinances, and adding your influence to extend its work, while the church, on their part, exercise their watch-care over you? {1907 JNL, COOD 175.9}

10. Do you understand the principles of Christian temperance as taught by the Seventh-day Adventists, and will you carry out those principles, abstaining from the use of liquors, tobacco in all its forms, coffee, tea, and swine's flesh? In short, will you truly study the subject of Bible temperance, and practise it in your life? {1907 JNL, COOD 175.10}

11. In the matter of dress will you follow the Bible rule of plainness of dress (1Tim.2:9; 10; 1Peter 3:3, 4), abstaining from plumes, feathers, banging the hair, and the wearing of gold as ornaments, and "costly array," as taught in Volume VI, page 97? {1907 JNL, COOD 176.1}

12. Do you believe the Bible doctrine of "Spiritual Gifts," and do you understand the nature of the gift of prophesy which has been manifested through Sister E. G. White, and which has been connected with the message from its very commencement? And as far as you understand the instructions from that source, are in harmony with them? {1907 JNL, COOD 176.2}

13. You of course recognize all ten of the commandments as spoken from the Lord from Mount Sinai as still binding, and by God's grace will you keep those commandments, the fourth with the rest, rendering to the Lord as his sacred time the seventh day, by the world called Saturday? {1907 JNL, COOD 176.3}

14. By submission to Christ and his grace, will you seek to grow in grace as well as in the knowledge of his truth? {1907 JNL, COOD 176.4}

15. Have you been immersed (baptized) in the likeness of Christ's death, and so now walk in the new life, having been raised to the likeness of his resurrection? {1907 JNL, COOD 176.5}

16. Are you three in Christian fellowship with each other, and do you each by uplifted hand accept the other to constitute the nucleus of this church? {1907 JNL, COOD 176.6}

At this point each of the three persons were voted upon by the others, and were then declared a church, ready to receive other members. The others one by one were asked to endorse the questions which had been propounded, and were voted in by the first three and others who were accepted. {1907 JNL, COOD 176.7}

I do not present the above as an exact form we should follow but I believe it is a great outline for us to pattern ourselves in establishing churches.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

How does church discipline work and who has power? This particular section is one where we do not have exact details to follow in every particular but we always have principles. When we get a people together who want organization we will have to discuss this topic as there may be more light on the topic. First I will deal with some Conference issues. The local churches having selected an official representative from amongst them to the conference, should they not be happy with their representative and the work being carried out, they, based on good reason can vote to elect a new representative to the Conference to replace the originally elected member they chose. If the Conference committee has a legitimate issue with a board member of their Conference, they can remove the member from the board and petition the church or churches responsible to elect a new Conference member. If a member of the Conference is doing something worthy of disfellowship, which is explained below, the local congregation that he is from should be notified of the issues and it is that churches responsibility to begin proper procedures in dealing with the issues at hand. Some may feel the Conference should discipline the individual but I'm afraid that this could lead to an authoritative power issue and it is best to deal with it at the church level. God requires committee voting on these issues to be unanimous so if that is not obtained the committee has a work to do to discover why there is division among them. We may have some things to learn in this area but based on what I am seeing from our pioneers God requires the body to be united in its decisions and if it is not united then there is a serious problem and something has to be done whatever that may be.

Local churches are required to deal with member discipline when there is open willful violation of God's Law and the person will not repent. Local churches cannot disfellowship someone using a creed neither can a creed gain someone membership into the body, however "major" doctrinal issues can lead to disfellowship after thorough examination of the scriptures has been done with a member. All of the members questions and points should be thoroughly addressed and time given to him to ponder them before taking any action. If the member still chooses to go independently of the body by pushing his views contrary to the body (If the member chooses to not push his views no action should be taken), it is the churches duty to vote for disfellowship but all must be thoroughly informed of the issues at stake and given a chance to study and or speak with the member. The member should be allowed to address the church with his final thoughts giving him ample time to speak his mind. All

should be united in the vote and those who are not united in the vote become subjects of labor for disciplinary action. This is a hard saying, but this is how it works in a true body of believers, not because of conformity but because they are united to truth and mission in a body. They understand that God's people are united and do not run ahead of each other pushing their own major views or unimportant views or continue in willful sin.

If the Conference is notified of church discipline that should be carried out and steps are not being taken to deal with the member or members, appeals should be made by a Pastor to the local church elders to be faithful in leading out proper church discipline. If the local church elders still fail to lead out in proper disciplinary procedures, the local church members should vote to disfellowship its elders that are refusing to lead out proper procedure. New elders would then be recommended by the church and ordained by a minister. If only a portion of the church will vote to disfellowship the elders they must also discipline those who are sympathizing with the elders. If none of the church members will vote to disfellowship the elders then the entire church has gone rogue and is no longer part of the organized body as it has decided to be independent. It will no longer receive support from the Conference and is free to go its own direction keeping its local assets so long as those assets are owned by that congregation. The issue of local church building ownership is not one I am well studied on so I'm very open to issues concerning this.

The persecution that is carried on among church members is a most terrible thing. It is true that some have committed errors and made mistakes, but it is equally true that these errors and mistakes are not nearly as grievous in the sight of God as is the harsh and unforgiving spirit of those who are criticizers and censors. Many of those who are free to pass judgment on others are committing errors which, although not made manifest, are tainted with deadly evil that is corrupting their spiritual life. {TM 185.3}

Many appear to be steadfast in the truth, firm, decided on every point of our faith; yet there is a great lack in them,--the tenderness and love which marked the character of the great Pattern. If a brother errs from the truth, if he falls into temptation, they make no effort to restore him in meekness, considering themselves lest they also be tempted. They seem to regard it as their special work to climb upon the

judgment seat and condemn and disfellowship. They do not obey God's word, which says, "Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." The spirit of this passage is altogether too rare in our churches. It is the lack of it that shuts out the Spirit of God from the heart, from the home, from the church. Shall we not henceforth practice the Bible plan of **restoring erring ones in the spirit of meekness**? Shall we not have the spirit of Jesus, and work as he worked? {RH, December 16, 1884 par. 9}

I have seen the great sacrifice which Jesus made to redeem man. He did not consider His own life too dear to sacrifice. Said Jesus: "Love one another, as I have loved you." **Do you feel, when a brother errs, that you could give your life to save him? If you feel thus, you can approach him and affect his heart; you are just the one to visit that brother. But it is a lamentable fact that many who profess to be brethren, are not willing to sacrifice any of their opinions or their judgment to save a brother. There is but little love for one another. A selfish spirit is manifested.** {1T 166.2}

The Lord forbids us to proceed in any violent way against those whom we think erring, and we are not to deal out excommunications and denunciations to those who are faulty. {TM 47.1}

Notwithstanding Christ's warning, men have sought to uproot the tares. To punish those who were supposed to be evildoers, the church has had recourse to the civil power. Those who differed from the established doctrines have been imprisoned, put to torture and to death, at the instigation of men who claimed to be acting under the sanction of Christ. **But it is the spirit of Satan, not the Spirit of Christ, that inspires such acts. This is Satan's own method of bringing the world under his dominion.** God has been misrepresented through the church by this way of dealing with those supposed to be heretics. {COL 74.1}

"God's people are rising," said the angel, "never to fall again." "Be careful," said the angel, "lest the branches be cut off and others are raised up in their stead." I saw [that] some would bear fruit, and work to the glory of God. I saw we must keep close to Jesus, and fast and pray, if we could not get the victory over the powers of darkness. **I then saw that Brother Gorsline had wounded and torn the hearts of God's people. I saw he had been stubborn and rebellious, and unless he changed his course entirely, the church should disfellowship him,** for he has been a dead weight to the church. {18MR 11.3}

"I was pointed back to ----. Your feelings were wrong there. You should have stood side by side with Elder D and made straight work, taken hold of and reproved individual wrongs. The burden you cast upon Elder D you deserved yourself, for your lack of moral courage to lay your hand upon wrong. You influenced others. The good work which God designed should be accomplished for certain ones was not accomplished, and they have been puffed up by Satan. If you had stood in the counsel of God at that time, an influence would have been cast which would have told upon the cause of God. The Spirit of the Lord was grieved. And this lack of union discourages those upon whom God lays the burden of reproof. {1T 214.4}

"I was shown that you had been wrong in sympathizing with E. The course you have taken in regard to him has injured your influence, and has greatly injured the cause of God. **It is impossible for E to be fellowshipped by the church of God. He has placed himself where he cannot be helped by the church, where he can have no communion with nor voice in the church. He has placed himself there in the face of light and truth. He has stubbornly chosen his own course, and refused to listen to reproof. He has followed the inclinations of his corrupt heart, has violated the holy law of God, and has disgraced the cause of present truth. If he repents ever so heartily, the church must let his case alone. If he goes to heaven, it must be alone, without the fellowship of the church.** A standing rebuke from God and the church must ever rest upon him, that the standard of morality be not lowered to the very dust. The Lord is displeased with your course in these things. {1T 215.1}

Those who break the seventh commandment should be suspended from the church, and not have its fellowship nor the privileges of the house of God. Said the angel, "This is not a sin of ignorance. It is a knowing sin and will receive the awful visitation of God, whether he who commits it be old or young." {TSB 248.4}

It is impossible for E to be fellowshipped by the church of God. He has placed himself where he cannot be helped by the church, where he can have no communion with, nor voice in, the church. He has placed himself there in the face of light and truth. He has stubbornly chosen his own course, and refused to listen to reproof. He has followed the inclinations of his corrupt heart, has violated the holy law of God, and has disgraced the cause of present truth. {TSB 249.4}

The church may be called upon to dismiss from their fellowship those who will not be corrected. It is a painful duty that has to be done. Sad indeed is such a step, and it should not be taken until every other means of correcting and saving the one in error has failed. {Ev 368.2}

Fashion is deteriorating the intellect and eating out the spirituality of our people. Obedience to fashion is pervading our Seventh-day Adventist churches and is doing more than any other power to separate our people from God. **I have been shown that our church rules are very deficient. All exhibitions of pride in dress, which is forbidden in the word of God, should be sufficient reason for church discipline.** If there is a continuance, in face of warnings and appeals and entreaties, to still follow the perverse will, it may be regarded as proof that the heart is in no way assimilated to Christ. Self, and only self, is the object of adoration, and one such professed Christian will lead many away from God. {4T 647.2}

There is a terrible sin upon us as a people, that we have permitted our church members to dress in a manner inconsistent with their faith. **We must arise at once and close the door against the allurements of fashion. Unless we do this, our churches will become demoralized.** {4T 648.1}

As those thus united in Christian fellowship offer prayer to God and pledge themselves to **deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God**, great blessing comes to them. If they have wronged others they continue the work of repentance, confession, and restitution, fully set to do good to one another. This is the fulfilling of the law of Christ. {CCh 257.1}

"But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." Matthew 18:16. Take with you those who are spiritually minded, and talk with the one in error in regard to the wrong. He may yield to the united appeals of his brethren. As he sees their agreement in the matter, his mind may be enlightened. {CCh 257.2}

"And if he shall neglect to hear them," what then shall be done? Shall a few persons in a board meeting take upon themselves the responsibility of disfellowshipping the erring one? "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church." Verse 17. **Let the church take action in regard to its members.** {CCh 257.3}

"But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Verse 17. If he will not heed the voice of the church, if he refuses all the efforts made to reclaim him, upon the church rests the responsibility of separating him from fellowship. His name should then be stricken from the books. 463 {CCh 257.4}

Your husband is mistaking his work. When he shall humble his heart as a little child, and when he shall feel his own importance less and his need of help from God more, then he may be where he can be used to God's glory. But, as he is, he does not realize the wants of the cause. There is so much great I, and so little Jesus exhibited in the life and character of many, that God will accept nothing from their hands. But few realize the solemnity of the time in which we live--the day of God's preparation. Should you both be converted and devote your ability to studying how to build up the church instead of weakening it and helping the enemy in his work of leading its members to the world you would be gaining a valuable experience every day as you pass along. **Brother ---- has been a great hindrance to the church. He should not be a member of the church unless his daily life is in harmony with his profession.** God does not

acknowledge him as His child. He stands today under the black banner of the powers of darkness. Satan has him completely under his control. {5T 118.3}

*The world's Redeemer has invested great power with His church. He states the rules to be applied in cases of trial with its members. After He has given explicit directions as to the course to be pursued, He says: **"Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever [in church discipline] ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."** Thus even the heavenly authority ratifies the discipline of the church in regard to its members when the Bible rule has been followed. {3T 428.1}*

If the local church is found to disfellowship a person or persons who are standing on the platform of truth recognized by the body at large, but many of the leaders and people in that particular church have apostatized, the Conference can in that situation vote to override the decision. With that said, those loyal to the body in that church can then disfellowship those involved in the wrongful act and return the church to those who are loyal to the body. The by-laws in the local churches should outline that those who remain faithful to the body of truth are the rightful stewards of the building and assets. Things hopefully should never get to this breaking point. If people in the church are pushing views contrary to the agreed upon beliefs then it should be dealt with accordingly and swiftly before it gets to a point where the conference must step in. There are a couple incidents in the New Testament where the church was overtaken by apostates, and eventually all of the church was subdued and eventually the Catholic church was formed. This also has happened in the GCSDA and is precisely how the Trinity doctrine crept into the church. If the church had disciplined those who attempted to push the Trinity the issue would not have taken over the body.

This system of discipline serves to protect those who wish to remain faithful to the organized body without fear of losing their place of fellowship, if that place is a visible church building. The local church assets should always remain at the local church level and with those who are united to the organized body (unless these assets are privately owned such as a house being used as a church). An exception to this rule is when a group is no longer united to the organized body, in which case the church has gone rogue after continued

counseling. The voting process is done openly for all to see so if there are any who are sympathizing with the defendant they may be questioned or become subjects of labor and for the defendant to see for himself that the body has spoken. Why a system that requires an entire unified vote concerning disciplinary actions? The vote is obviously not based on a majority vote but rather the purpose of the vote is to see if all are united as a body and willing to put “achan” out of the camp as carrying out disciplinary action is not easy for human nature. When discipline is not carried out and sin is allowed in the camp the whole congregation comes under God’s curse until it is dealt with. It is important for new converts to understand how this works. If the system of beliefs and body is corrupt, then God is doing a disfellowshipped person a favor by getting them away from that apostate body, a good example being the GCSDA. Disfellowship is truly removing a person from fellowship, not simply removing them as a member like the GCSDA does, however if the person refuses to leave so be it, let God deal with the person. Nobody should ever physically remove the person from the church nor should they ever call the cops. If this were to ever happen the entire church may have to be considered rogue if none tried to stop the action from taking place and none will repent of what they have done.

If a local church begins to see a Pastor “hover” over them instead of going forth to do his duty and they have had no success encouraging him forward they should notify the Conference. It is the Conference’s responsibility to investigate the situation and if need be action taken by the Conference officials to remove the pastor from the tithe payroll. If the local church has a Bible worker that is not focused on reaching new souls but rather spends the majority of his efforts in studying with local church members who already know the truth and efforts have failed to change this by discussing the matter with him, then the Conference should be notified. And they will investigate whether or not that worker should remain on the tithe payroll.

If the local church board has hired a Bible worker paying them from local offering or the second tithe, it would be the local church’s boards responsibility to investigate and if need be vote to cease funding the Bible worker. If the conference officials having been found not carrying out their duties of maintaining the enforcement of investigations of persons or are no longer representing the local churches in accordance with the organized body, the local churches can and should seek to elect new reps and they should begin disciplinary procedures for the former Conference representatives if necessary. In the RCG, no one is beyond being disfellowshipped or disciplined (discipline

is the process of following Matthew 18). If an organizational structure is setup in a way that makes disciplining Conference reps and Pastors impossible that system should be seen as a hierarchy rather than a servant to the church. Tweaks to what I have written may be necessary. Here are testimonies on discipline with the first from Loughborough:

*Q. - Is it right to vote out a member at any ordinary business meeting, by a majority present, **ought the vote to be unanimous?** {1907 JNL, COOD 169.1}*

*A. - In a meeting properly notified when action is to taken on a case, according to the usage of the church, **the vote to exclude should be unanimous**, unless the opposition come from those who are themselves subjects of labor, or under the censure of the church. {1907 JNL, COOD 169.2}*

The term “subjects of labor” refers to those who the church is currently putting through disciplinary procedures. Outside of those we see the vote should be unanimous.

*There are those members who are busybodies, speaking evil, sowing the seeds of doubt and infidelity, who pay no heed to the light God has given them in His Word. If we have but one church member who by his spirit, words, and influence seeks to counterwork the influence of the minister of Christ, labor with that one faithfully; and **if after taking the steps required by Christ, he will not hear, will not change his course of action, then separate him from the church**, and let him know the reason why the church cannot hold him in her fellowship.*

***And if there are those who sympathize with him, who will not discern the right from the wrong, who, after patient instruction has been given them, choose to keep on the wrong side, let them also be suspended.** God's name must not be dishonored by murmurers, faultfinders, and those who are continually sowing seeds of disaffection. {15MR 163.3}*

In the above we can see the importance of unity when it comes to disciplinary action and those who sympathize with the disfellowshipped also must be labored for.

*The names of those who **sin and refuse to repent should not be retained on the church books**, lest the **saints be held accountable***

for their evil deeds. *Those who pursue a course of transgression should be visited and labored with, and if they then refuse to repent, they should be **separated from church fellowship, in accordance with the rules laid down in the Word of God.** . . . {5BC 1096.5}*

*Those who refuse to hear the admonitions and warnings given by God's faithful messengers are not to be retained in the church. **They are to be disfellowshipped; for they will be as Achan in the camp of Israel--deceived and deceiving.** {5BC 1096.6}*

*Who, after reading the record of Achan's sin and punishment, can think it according to the will of God that those who do wickedly, refusing to repent, are to be retained in the church? **To retain them would be an insult to the God of heaven** (Letter 215, 1902). {5BC 1096.7}*

In the above we see why it is important to remove those who are in open violation of God's law.

*When there are cases in the church which need to be dealt with decidedly, let the rule of the Bible be carried out. **If the influence of erring members has an influence that corrupts others, they should be disfellowshipped;** and heaven will ratify the action. It is the work of the enemy to sow tares among the wheat; and there will be men found in the church whose influence, as far as we can discern from outward appearance, is no blessing to the church. But even in cases of this character we are to **move cautiously;** for Christ and heavenly agencies are at work to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. {RH, January 3, 1893 par. 9}*

As you can see those who are not united with the body but using their influence to corrupt others should be disfellowshipped.

*Those who walk in obedience to the commandments of God are the Lord's representatives in our world. Church members are to be lightbearers. They are to help one another. If there are those in the church who are walking contrary to the word of God, who give no evidence that they are seeking to live the life of Christ, faithful shepherds are to labor for them. If they refuse to come out from the world and be separate, if they continue to walk contrary to Bible rules, **they should be suspended from church fellowship,** that they may not be stumbling blocks to sinners. **If after being earnestly labored with, they refuse to repent and humble themselves before God, let them be separated from the church.--***

Letter 102, 1901, p. 6. (Written July 21, 1901, from St. Helena, California, to the church at Healdsburg.) {15MR 167.1}

The terms suspended, separated, and disfellowshipped are all the same thing. Some may think suspended is something else but it is not which we see here:

*“Those who break the seventh commandment should be **suspended from the church and not have its fellowship or the privileges of the house of God.** Said the angel, “This is not a sin of ignorance. It is a knowing sin and will receive the awful visitation of God, whether he who commits it be old or young.” {1EGWLM 409.3}*

In the next testimony we see a case for disfellowship:

*“The brethren prayed over me and I was healed and taken off in vision. I had a deep plunge in the glory, and the state of things in Washington was revealed to me which I declared plainly to them. The vision had a powerful effect. All acknowledged their faith in the visions except Brother Butler and S. Smith. We all felt it duty to act, **and by a unanimous vote of the brethren, S. Smith was disfellowshipped by the church** until he should forever lay down his erroneous views. His wife then broke down and said she knew that her husband was not right.” {3MR 242.3}*

As you can see from the above there was a unanimous vote. In this testimony we see a brother get disfellowshipped because he used his influence against the testimonies but there were also other issues this man had which were recorded in the previous paragraph not listed by me. As you can see Butler was not disfellowshipped but no reason is given why, it is assumed his behavior was different to Smith. I do not believe a person should be disfellowshipped for not believing the testimonies unless they use their influence to cause others to doubt them. Below is a testimony that is very important:

*I saw that **great caution should be used and the church will have to bear some with individuals who do not always understand the movings of the Spirit of God, and always have some errors.** And, **if these individuals were disfellowshipped,** they would be brought more closely in connection with an **unholy influence and the possibility of saving them be lost.** But, if they were still **retained in the fellowship of the church, they will be where the church can have some influence over them,** and may, by moving judiciously and carefully, win them to all the truth, which will discover to them their errors, and cause them to yield them up and be fully united to the church. {9MR 196.3}*

*I saw that the messengers and the church must have **compassion with some, making a difference.** Now the messengers of God must seek wisdom and know how to treat each individual case. **Not all must be treated alike.** By close examination it will be seen that individual cases differ. **Some are to be borne with longer than others, but if one is living in disobedience to the commandments of God, the church must act and must separate them from them.** And for other sins it will often be necessary to disfellowship souls if they continue in their sins; yet great care should be used and great patience and forbearance exercised. {9MR 196.4}*

The above testimony shows us how great caution must be exercised in dealing with those on the side of error. We should also not be so staunchly conservative that we are ready to discipline for just anything, all cases must be examined thoroughly based on their circumstances. Another word of caution:

*“No church officer should advise, no committee should recommend, nor should any church vote, that the name of a wrong-doer shall be removed from the church books, **until the instruction given by Christ has been faithfully followed. When this has been done, the church has cleared herself before God.** The evil must then be made to appear as it is, and must be removed, that it may not become more and more widespread. The health and purity of the church must be preserved, that she may stand before God unsullied, clad in the robes of Christ's righteousness.” {GW 501.1}*

In this last quote below we will examine a case where the church did not handle a disfellowshipping correctly. Mrs. White doesn't give counsel as to what could be done to fix the situation but it is a warning to us:

*“We had an interview with Brother and Sister Hansen. We had a very pleasant interview. **Monday evening three were disfellowshipped from the church. There was not the wisest course taken.** These offending ones were cut off **while a spirit of harshness and severity was manifested, rather than a spirit of sorrow and pity and love for them.** This awakened in them a spirit of combativeness and retaliation, and the offended ones, in the place of having a spirit of repentance and sorrow, became defiant and accusers. They manifested a satanic spirit; and when action was taken to disconnect them from the church, a few voted in harmony with the proposition, while others did not vote at all; and*

some who had felt and expressed their grief at the course pursued by these men had naught to say.” {Ms66-1886.28}

As we can see the church didn't handle the above situation very well. In a scenario such as this, a Pastor or elder should be sent to investigate the matter and speak with all sides to examine and ascertain the correct knowledge of how to rectify the situation. This would be an example of where a united vote might not be possible if those dissenting from the vote are not happy with how things were carried out. In such a case these people are in the right and should not be put up for disfellowship. They are not sympathizing with sin but rather protesting the sins of those who manifested a wrong spirit in dealing with the three individuals. This is obviously different than sympathizing with sin which is grounds for disfellowship.

HANDLING DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES - REVISITED

The Core major fundamental pillars on which we stand and were established by our SDA church pioneers and confirmed in SOP are unmovable and are not to be voted on in the sense of removing them. I say this concerning the fact that there will be various fellowship groups that will choose to organize together but may have differing views on certain aspects of doctrine that are minor but the Core beliefs should be unanimous. A minor issue is a teaching where the interpretation or understanding of a particular matter doesn't violate a core fundamental belief nor adds a major doctrine to the pillars. Minor issues may not necessarily be minor to some and may be of higher importance to others which will have to be worked out as we organize. Of course, not all will agree on what is a minor issue and their actions may make a minor issue major for which possible disciplinary action may have to take place. Seeing that the church at large is to be missionary focused, we should not be warring with each other over minor issues. However we do have a duty to come together and study to know what truth is and what error is whether it is major or minor. We do not want to sweep issues under the rug but we must be patient and merciful in dealing with these minor issues.

Entrance of New Light:

How is supposed "new light" on issues to be handled? If a person believes God has revealed to them new light that should be preached by all in giving the three angels messages, they should put forth in writing a study/outline of what was revealed and how it ties into the rest of scripture in keeping with the message to be preached. In today's technological world, we could have a website setup where all ministers, bible workers, and elders have access to review documents submitted for study. Responses can be made to the document via a separate document for the leaders to review either objection or confirmation of the initial study. If the original document holds credence after review, it will be shared further to all leadership and all in the church to thoroughly examine the issue over a period of time. If the brethren are unable to come into unanimous position on the issue we may have to petition God for more direct revelation such as was used through Ellen White or we may have to temporarily set the issue aside for all to think. God requires His body to be unanimous and if it is not something is wrong and we need to diligently search to find out what is happening that is preventing us from reaching unity.

After the debates and issues of 1888 God did eventually step in and show the church what was true and what was error concerning the various issues at that time. God stepped in to warn us about the Alpha of deadly heresies in the early 1900's as well but in each case he did not do it immediately. Even when the church early on was struggling for truth God first attempted to allow the brethren to see if they could see eye to eye before using Mrs. White. Thus I suspect God requires this of us today but in the event that we can go no further we should expect if we are truly His people that He will step in and guide us via the prophetic gift. Now with that said since it appears there is no prophet among us currently I suspect there will be great doubt if this were to happen and rightly so as its probable even Satan will try to use visions and dreams to lead us into error. The point is, any confirmation or direction we get from a modern day prophet is unlikely to persuade many of us away from the position we take before it gets to that point. I simply don't see many among us relying on modern prophets for direction on issues of truth and error however a modern prophet could be a confirmation to those who God is already leading into truth while those who are going astray may never have such a confirmation or may even be lead away by a false prophet. The choices we make as individuals and what we believe will determine who we unite with and if it is of God nothing will stop it and if it is not there will be plenty of warning signs to those who may be honestly deceived so that they may get off the wrong track and get on the right one if they understand organization. I see things this way because in the vast majority of issues I have studied I have found that there is more than enough weight of evidence to convince us of truth in this day and age. We have access to information far beyond what those in the past had and in most cases we have no excuse for continuing in error and at this time God will simply sift us out if we are not moving away from error and into light.

Below is part of an article written by Eugene Prewitt a SDA who was writing on the problems of congregationalism. In this section he goes over evidence showing how the NT church was not congregational but representative.

“Jethro’s organizational plan in Exodus 18 with captains of tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands (Ex 18:21), mimics our own reasonably well, if we consider ten to be ten fairly large families.

Jethro’s ‘Tens’ would be equivalent to our churches; the three administrators of the two fifties that make a hundred in Jethro’s time would be roughly similar to the administrators of a small conferences a

century ago; and a thousand large families would roughly similar to our smallest unions then and even now.

Aside from this Old Testament model of a multi-tiered organizational level we find abundant evidence that the New Testament church also had a multi-level form of organization.

The clearest evidence is found in Acts 15. There, after Gentile churches had suffered under confusing and contradictory teachers, the world church made a pronouncement in Jerusalem that would have authority around the world.

The nature of the proceedings show that the decision of the council was the result of deliberative process. Paul had a chance to present his views. Messianic Pharisees had a chance to present their case as well. (Acts 15:4-5). In the actual meeting we find no pope-like pronouncement. Rather, “when there had been much disputing” (Acts 15:6) Peter rose up and shared undeniable practical evidence in favor of Paul’s position. (v. 9-12) After a period of quiet James rose and presented scripture evidence in favor of the same position (v. 13-18). With that he made what we could call “a motion.”

That his “sentence” (v. 19) was not autocratic can be seen from the fact that it had to please the brethren and from the fact that the council’s decision was published as coming from them as a group. They reported hearing of the details of the problem as a group.

22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: 23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: 24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:

The decision was made and finally presented as that of the leading brethren working in concert, “with one accord”. A representative delegation was sent to communicate the decision to the churches:

It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; 29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

Another evidence for multi-tiered organizational authority can be seen in the third epistle of John. Somewhere a rogue local church elder with domineering tendencies had gained control of his own congregation. Such was his hold on that body that he was able to prevent the proper administration of church order there. Representatives from “the brethren” (presumably with messages, perhaps like those sent in Acts 15) were “refused.” And more than that, faithful persons who tried to respect such brethren were disfellowshipped from the church.

Someone might ask, “This sounds like congregationalism to me, so where is the evidence of authority above the local level?” Listen to what John (3John 9-10) says about the waywardness of Diotrephes.

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

This plan of John, to “come” and “remember his deeds”, shows an authority at a distance with ability to hold local leaders accountable. That is the antithesis of congregationalism.

Paul’s method of setting up church order also demonstrates authority above the local level. Elders were ordained “in every city,” but by who? By Titus, someone who was not a member of those churches but who had been appointed to “set in order” the things that “lacked” in their organization.

Titus 1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had

appointed thee: And when Paul lists the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12, he assigns ordinal numbers to three of the gifts:

1Co 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

Apostles and prophets, of course, are inspired. Their authority is God's. It is interesting that teachers, after these two, are set "thirdly" in the church. These, we learn from another list of gifts, are the pastors. They are pastoral teachers and they have authority in the church. They are part of a body and bodies are, of course, organized above the organ level.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; Ephesians 4:11

Paul perceived authority in Jerusalem above the local level. He spoke of "James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars," and who affirmed the work that he and Barnabas were doing. Gal 2:9. And when seven deacons were appointed in Jerusalem, these were not local figures only. Philip was recognized much later, while doing international evangelism, to be "one of the seven." Ac 21:8.

From these and other passages it is clear that the early church had an authoritative organization that extended beyond the local level." (Eugene Prewitt)

CONCLUSION

Seeing that my study on this topic is only a few months old, I am sure some things are bound to change (already has in this 1.1 version which is the second edition) as I continue to study and learn. I hope that with this study I was able to outline some important aspects to organization and how we should go about establishing order and unity. There will be multiple steps that need to take place before we get to a truly organized church and will take some time. As step one of this process, I encourage all to decide whether they will remain congregational or move towards a unified form of organization and to begin organizing at the local level first. Please note that just because I put this together, doesn't mean I have any special authority on how this will turn out. I have no authority in this representative form of church organization. After organizing on a local level begin to reach out in your state to see if you can press together on a larger scale. Once you have success at this level you can begin searching even more broadly. This is not a dogmatic approach because do to internet and some people having no fellowship its possible some may for organized groups via the web or other ways of communication. I personally have chosen to work from the bottom up as I originally described. Christ is in charge so eventually He will be able to unite various organized groups into a larger structure whatever that may be.

I would really love to hear other ideas from scriptures and SOP as this subject is tremendous and I know I have not uncovered every aspect of truth on it. Please share your thoughts with me as well as this topic with others. There may be points in this document that will need correction and it may be necessary to add or take away other things in this document.

God Bless!

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