

## A LETTER TO THE CONSTITUENTS OF THE TEXAS CONFERENCE

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God has warned His people: "If God abhors one sin above another, of which His people are guilty, it is doing nothing in case of an emergency. indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God as a grievous crime and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God." (3T 280) It is an irrefutable fact that we are experiencing a religious crisis today, and any attempt at neutrality or an attitude of indifference is disastrous for the people of God, both individually and corporately.

It is imperative that the constituents of the Texas Conference be made aware of a "religious crisis" of "kingly power" and control that has developed in this conference. Please prayerfully consider the following documented facts in preparation for the upcoming constituency meeting in May. If it can happen to us. it can happen to ANY of you. We have been clearly instructed that "We have far more to fear from within than from without." (Selected Messages, Vol. I, p. i22).

On January 30, 2019. the Texas Conference administration confiscated the finances of the Fort Worth NW Church through a very deceitful, underhanded, and perhaps even illegal action. In January our church elected new officers for the current year. However, the officers of our Conference, working through one of the previous treasurers whose name had not yet been removed from our bank account, had that person write the Conference a check for over \$72,000. This left us only \$65.79 in our bank account. There was not enough left to pay the phone, electric, or any of the other bills of the local church. We were told that if we had any bills that needed to be paid, we could submit them to the Conference for payment, and they would write the checks. However, this was not even possible. for they also confiscated the key to our post office box.

It should also be noted that *none* of these funds were Conference funds or tithe. for these monies have been faithfully remitted to the conference on a monthly basis for over 30 years. All of this money is local church operating funds. They did this without notifying *any* of the officers of our church. The membership only found out about this confiscation of our funds through a notification of the bank that a substantial check had been written to, and cashed by, the Texas Conference.

Although this took place in January, to date the church has still received no official letter of communication from the conference of this dishonest, dastardly deed. How can anyone even remotely think that such dishonest attempts to control a local congregation through confiscation of their funds can be done by spiritually minded, godly men? Quite the contrary, this "is *after Satan's own order*; and those who carry out these designs are his agents to execute his hellish purpose." (*Review and Herald*, January 10, 1893). These "men *become the enemies of God and his church*." (*Review and Herald*, January 10, 1893). The instruction is clear that these men "*must be deprived of their positions for this is not God's plan*." (*Review and Herald*, September 7 1897). Are these the caliber of individuals that should head up the work in Texas, or anywhere else?

Because of things said by the Conference president at a meeting with some of the Northwest members, as well as statements contained in some of the written correspondence, suggesting the Northwest Church separate from the Texas Conference; the church voted at a church business meeting on December 16,2018 that a letter be written to the Conference affirming our faithfulness as Seventh-day Adventists and declaring our position on doctrine and support of the denomination. This letter stated:

"Dear Administration and Executive Committee of the Texas Conference...

I was asked by the church family to respond to this communication and draft a letter that could be signed by the membership to corporately declare four important issues.

1. We are committed Seventh-day Adventists believing all of the Bible teachings of the church and the prophetic gift and guidance of Ellen G. White.
2. We are supportive of every echelon of this denomination from the local churches to the General

Conference.

3. We have no desire to separate from the Texas Conference, nor do we ever want this to happen: although in your meeting with our church you seemed to be encouraging such a move. In the words of the Apostle Paul. "God forbid."
4. We are not opposed to accepting a new pastor from the conference. We even have names of a few pastors we would like to recommend for consideration.

Although this letter was signed, front and back, by the church members on Sabbath morning, the attacks and opposition toward the church continued. Despite an abundance of inspired instruction, and in opposition to ethical principles of right and wrong, the conference executive officers sent a letter to the church in January asking once again if they were "going independent and separate from the conference." It is interesting that the letter was sent to Elder Joe Gresham, our pastor for the past 25 years; who had previously stepped aside from his leadership position a month prior, as required by the conference, rather than to the Head Elder or Board Chairman. It is indeed sad that such a letter from the conference administration began with the words: "We send you greetings in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We trust that the new year has entered with many blessings for you and your families." To our church these words bordered on blasphemous.

The next assault came on February 11<sup>th</sup>. Because the conference had confiscated our bank account. The church, in business meeting, voted to close our savings account in the union revolving fund in order to continue to operate and pay bills. This church authorization was taken to the union office. The union treasurer wrote a check (#65575) to the Northwest Church for our funds, totaling \$93,096.84. However, when the church took the check to deposit it in the bank, the bank manager informed (the church treasurer that the union had placed a stop payment on it. When the union treasurer was contacted to inquire why they had done such a thing, it was discovered that once the Texas Conference administration became aware a check had been written, they informed the union office to stop payment on the check. This is money that belongs solely to the members of the church. As such the three conference officials (or perhaps only one) have seized control of a local church's finances without any notification authority, or authorization by anyone in the local church. Do you think it could never happen to you and your church family? It is something we would have never believed possible if it were not happening to us. Keep in mind that this is money that belongs solely to the Fort Worth Northwest Church. and not the Conference or the Union.

Not only has the Texas Conference Administration confiscated over \$165,000 of the Fort Worth Northwest Church's finances, but on February 21<sup>st</sup> two of the Northwest church officers (the Clerk and Head Deacon), went to the church to do some work at about 10 a.m. to find Carlos Craig, Richard White, and Roger Mekelburg at the church with a locksmith, changing the locks and confiscating the church property. They did this without notifying a single church officer. Had the two members not gone by the church and discovered this atrocity, the church family would have come to church Sabbath morning to find themselves locked out, for again not one of the officers of the church had been notified. To date the members are still locked out of the church and above each door a sign reads: "posted - no trespassing - keep out."

It is imperative that the constituents of the Texas Conference fully understand that what has happened to the Northwest Church can happen to any other church in this conference if the administration decides to do so. It must also be understood that this is not an isolated case. Other pastors and churches are suffering similar treatment both in North America and around the world; and many are forced to submit to things previously unheard of in the Christian world (outside of Catholicism). and particularly within the Remnant Church.

A further illustration of this abusive, ungodly, kingly power can be seen in the confiscation of the money the Weatherford church has in the union revolving fund. On February 25<sup>th</sup> that church voted to withdraw their funds from their savings account at the union office and place them in their checking account. The documentation for this withdrawal was brought to John Page, the Union Treasurer, by one of the elders.

However, Mr. Page refused to give the elder a check for the church funds because the conference had instructed him not to do so. At the insistence of the elder Mr. Page wrote a letter stating that we are unable to release the funds in your Revolving Fund Account #....., until we receive clearance from the Texas Conference." Is it not puzzling why the Union must receive permission from the Conference before they can release funds that belong to the Church? Remember, it can happen to you! These controlling, dictatorial, individuals of worldly policies must be removed from office and replaced by godly, spiritual leaders at our constituency meeting in May.

All of God's people, leaders and laity alike, must fully understand that: "*All persecution, all force employed to compel conscience, is after Satan's own order; and those who carry out these designs are his agents to execute his hellish purpose. In following Satan's cruel proposals, in becoming his agents men become the enemies of God and his church, and will be judged in that great day by that man whom God hath ordained; for he hath committed all judgment into the hands of his Son.*" (*Review and Herald*, January 10, 1893). God's clear command is: "*All who thought that their position gave them power to command their fellow beings, and control conscience, must be deprived of their position; for this is not God's plan.*" (*Review and Herald*, September 7, 1897).

It was felt that the preceding information is of such supreme importance for the churches to be aware of that this letter was prepared dealing with this issue. However, for those who might desire some background to these issues, the following is presented for your information.

Our pastor, a minister of 45 years service to God's church. received a phone call from the conference president and secretary (Carlos Craig and Richard White) in mid-December stating that he had been terminated. It is both interesting and puzzling how one can be terminated, or fired, when the person is not even employed by that organization. He had been retired for five years. but had agreed to continue to pastor our church at no cost to the conference; which he has done over these years. The pastor was also told that he would receive an official letter from the conference, however, that letter has never arrived. Two days later the pastor received an email stating that he was terminated and that an official letter was attached. Yet, there was no letter attached. In the email two reasons were given for termination. One was because of a failure to force each member of the church to submit to a background check. The mandate set down by the leadership of the conference was that *every member had to submit to a background check* and if they refused they needed to write a letter to the conference stating their refusal and agree to do nothing more than sit in the pew. They could hold no offices nor take any part in the church services.

The email read: "This email and the attached letter confirm that your employment with the Texas Conference was terminated." Again. remember this pastor had been retired for five years and was receiving no pay or benefits from the conference. Therefore, how can one be terminated when he was not even an employee? The email continued: "Your termination is based on non-compliance with NAD/Texas policies:

- non-compliance with verified volunteers training and background check initiatives and requirements.
- Long-term use of a Bible Worker through an outside ministry; payments to that ministry for the Bible Worker's pay.'

The fallacy of this assertion is easily refuted by a message sent to the conference president nine days before this email was sent. This message read in part concerning the background checks: "I have presented this to both churches in boards. business meetings, and even on the Sabbath. It is my understanding that many have already submitted to that background check. Concerning the exact number of those who have and those who have not I do not have that information but the conference should be able to provide that for me if there are still others who have failed to do as the conference has demanded. If so please notify me of this." In addition to the above; text messages and emails had been sent to every member of the church giving them the website to go to in order to complete the background checks.

In that same correspondence to the conference president the issue of the Bible worker was also addressed.

"I have spoken with Doug (the Bible worker) and he has decided to sever his affiliation with the \_\_\_\_\_ missionary organization and has agreed to be a Bible Worker and to be paid through the conference. I have been told that this process has already begun. As far as I know all of the issues of concern have been addressed as directed. If I have overlooked something please let me know." As can be seen the fraudulent assertion of non-compliance concerning background checks and a Bible Worker are without any merit. In addition to these facts the Bible Worker had previously been paid through the conference office.

In a rather pharisaical, patronizing, statement the pastor was informed: "*You may attend an SDA church of your choice, but you must refrain from acting in a professional, leadership, pastoral or any lay-lead capacity.*" How considerate of them to give a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for nearly a half century and pastor for over 40 years permission to go to church. Who would have ever imagined any Seventh-day Adventist needing the permission of any individual or conference administration to attend church; or what they can and cannot do within that local congregation? Is this not an enormous exhibition of the "kingly power" that God so frequently warned us or?

The prophet of the Lord declared: "Over and over again men have said, 'The voice of the Conference is the voice of God; therefore everything must be referred to the Conference. The Conference must permit or restrict in the various lines of work.' As the matter has been presented to me, there is a narrow compass, and within this narrow compass, all the openings to which are locked, are those who would *like to exercise kingly power*. But the work carried on all over the field demands an entirely different course of action. There is need of the laying of a foundation different from the foundation which has been laid in the past. We have heard much about everything moving in the regular lines. *When we see that the 'regular lines' are purified and refined, that they bear the mold of the God of heaven then it will be time to endorse these lines*" (*General Conference Bulletin* April 10, 1903). Until then they cannot be accepted. If the committee and council meetings of our leaders are not under the direct supervision of the Spirit of God, their conclusions will be secular and worldly. Worthy of no more consideration than are any man's stipulations.

It is both dangerous and detrimental to the body of Christ when men who feel they should dictate and control every aspect of the work are passively permitted to exercise such power over the body of believers. This policy of power and control so prevalent within the church today not only hinders the preaching of the gospel and the function of local congregations, but also serves to corrupt those in leadership. This satanic strategy is designed to take away from God's people their freedom of religion through hierarchal domination.

On December 13<sup>th</sup> Elder Gresham had sent a letter to all church members stating that he had stepped aside from the leadership of the church and encouraging the membership to pray for, support and encourage the head elder who now bore that responsibility. This was reiterated at the conclusion of a church business meeting on February 10<sup>th</sup>, at which time we contacted the Conference. At that time we were informed that Elder Gresham had failed to comply with the Conference's demand to step down as the pastor of the church. This was not correct. The letter he had written to the church family on December 13<sup>th</sup> was read and entered into the minutes, which stated:

"Inasmuch as the conference has declared that I am no longer to pastor these churches the leadership has now passed into the hands of the Head Elders, Landon Anderson, and Jim Christen until the churches and conference decide what is to happen next. I ask that you support and hold up the hands of Landon and Jim in this awesome responsibility, as they seek to lead under the dictates and directions of the Holy Spirit. The conference has also demanded that I no longer preach in these churches and I will no longer do so unless asked to by the church or elders."

It was further requested that the administration stop contacting Elder Gresham concerning church matters since he was no longer the official leader of the congregation and that they needed to contact the leaders of the church. We were told the conference would not contact the church any more since they had already done this.

This was not true and they were informed that not one elder, or any other officer, had been contacted. At that point the Conference then spoke briefly with the head elder and chairman and was told that future contact should be through him.

Even though Elder Gresham has stepped down from leadership, the conference administration has endeavored to even prohibit him from having any function within the church he has pastored for so many years. This is an abysmal attempt to usurp the authority of the local congregations. It is absolutely amazing how any entity, outside of the local congregation can think that they have the authority to dictate matters of membership, leadership, the holding of offices; or what activities or interactions the individual members of that congregation can be involved in without the outside entities' approval or authorization. While it is true that a Conference has authority over the pastors they employ, they do not have that authority over the individuals within the churches; that authority rests solely with the local churches. This papal premise of a hierarchical power over the people of God is in opposition to the will of God and all inspiration. It is satanic in origin and those involved in such diabolic endeavors represent the very spirit and character of Satan.

*"The man-ruling power that has been coming into our ranks has no sanction in the word. Satan has stolen in to lead men to depend on men and to make flesh their arm. I am instructed to say, Break every yoke that human invention has framed, and heed the voice of Christ, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls: for "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.*

*"The man who because he is president of a conference dares to take the responsibility of telling his fellow workers what their duty is; is working out a wrong experience. The influence will be to destroy the God-given personality of men, and place them under human jurisdiction. Such management is laying a foundation for unbelief. The men who instruct their fellow men to look to men for guidance, are really teaching them that when they go to the Lord for counsel and the direction of His Spirit regarding their duty; they must not follow that counsel without first going to certain men to know if this is what they must do. Thus a species of slavery is developed that will bring only weakness and inefficiency to the church of God.*

*"Those who bring in this unhappy chapter into the experiences of our work, and willingly accept the idea that the *rulership of other men's conscience* has been given to them, need to understand that they have made a grave mistake. *Their office was never intended to give to them the responsibility which they have been led to think it bestowed.* The danger signal is now lifted against this *evil*. Never, never let men consent to stand in a position which *God alone should occupy*" (Letter 344, 1907, p. 3 (Oct. 1. 1907, to A. G. Daniells, G. A. Irwin and W. W. Prescott).*

The heart-wrenching words of Martin Niemoller concerning the Nazis echo their warning through the corridors of time to us today.

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out - Because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out - Because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out - Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me - and there was no one left to speak for me.

We are indeed reaping what we have sown. You have a voice for change, before it happens to you or others. May 19, 2019 at the constituency meeting in Bryan Texas is your voice. Let it be heard. Do not remain silent at such a critical time. "Indifference and neutrality" can prove fatal

**“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Revelation 2:7).**

"God desires all to realize that they must be careful how they strive to control those who are doing his work. No one is to seek to bind the hands of God's instrumentalities. God has given to every man his work, and if His children will consecrate themselves to Him, no one has a right to specify who is to work, or who is not to work. Let God work through whomsoever he will." (Review and Herald. March 29, 1898).

"Divine wisdom must have abundant room in which to work. It is to advance without asking permission or support from those who have taken to themselves a kingly power. In the past one set of men have tried to keep in their own hands the control of all the means coming from the churches... They have taken upon themselves the grave responsibility of retarding the work where the work should have been advanced. It has been left to a few supposed kingly minds to say what fields should be worked and what fields should be left unworked." (General Conference Bulletin. April 11.1903).

"The Lord requires another spirit in the leading men in the office. In all their councils they need the spirit of meekness, not of pomposity. They need not a strong, hard, exacting spirit but need to act as Christian gentlemen. Your light is to shine forth, not in sparks of your own kindling, but in the light of the Sun of Righteousness." (EGW 1888 Materials. p. 390).

"The spiritual blindness which rests upon humanity seems to be deepening. There are men handling sacred things who are unconverted, who are unconverted. *All such should be replaced* by men who not only have a knowledge of the truth, but who practice the truth, and have respect enough for the Bible to obey a 'Thus saith the Lord.' Many of the men who have long been connected with the Office and with other important lines of work are really ignorant of the influence of the decisions they make. If they had a sense of the importance of these decisions, and comprehended what they mean with reference to the work, they would be far more modest in advancing ideas, and voicing by their vote the propositions others make.

"Piety is needed. Less self-confidence and far more humility must be seen. The work of God has come to be looked upon as a common thing. It would have been *much better to have changed the men on boards and committees than to have retained the very same men for years until they supposed that their propositions were to be adopted without a question, and generally no voice has been lifted in an opposite direction.* There are men who sit in counsel who have not the discernment that they should have. Their comprehension is narrow and egotistical. A change is needed." (EGW 1888 Material, p. 1609,1610).

"There is no place for tradition, for man's theories and conclusions. or for church legislation. No laws ordained by ecclesiastical authority are included in the commission." (Desire of Ages, p. 826).

"In the work of God no kingly authority is to be exercised by any human being, or by two or three." (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 4. p. 292).

"'Thou God seest me,' should be ever in mind: courtesy and Christian politeness should be exercised by every one who bears responsibilities in the office. They should have a sense of the encroachment upon others rights which is so common in the world's practice, but which *is an offense to God.*" (Paulson (Collection p. 370).

"Now I want to say, *God has not put any kingly power in our ranks to control this or that branch of the work. The work has been greatly restricted by the efforts to control it in every line... If the work not been so restricted by an impediment here, and an impediment there, and on the other side an impediment, it would have gone forward in its majesty*" (General Conference Bulletin, April 3, 1901).

"When we become true followers of the meek and lowly Saviour; we shall do the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven. The will of man's unrenewed, *unsanctified nature can no longer exercise a ruling, kingly power over the human agent. No longer can the leaven of unrighteousness - professing Christians who in their lives lie against the truth - leaven the whole church and prevent the divine will from being carried out on earth as it is in heaven.*" (Manuscript Release, Vo1.18, P. 106).