

THE ROAD TO THE INQUISITION

By Mike Bauler

"We should be very cautious lest we take the first steps in this road that leads to the Inquisition."

Solemn events are unfolding around us, both in the world and in God's professed church. As we see the Bible prophecies being fulfilled in catastrophic world events and political movements, we also see the fulfillment of solemn warnings given to God's last day people by God's prophet.

The prophet Isaiah predicted that in the last days God's chosen people would rebel against Him, and turn their ears away from hearing the Law. They will say to the prophets, who are sent to them, "Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits: Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us." Isaiah 30:10, 11.

We must ask ourselves the serious question, Have we in Adventism turned aside from hearing the words of God's prophet? Have we turned from following God's Holy Law to follow the commands of another leader?

In this article we will trace the steps of the apostasy, in Adventism, in order to understand how we arrived at the place we now occupy in the Historic Adventist movement. We will also consider where this path is leading and what the sure results will be (according to inspiration) unless a complete change is made.

The Road to the Inquisition

Throughout history Satan and his associates have used a consistent series of methods to destroy those who do not agree with them or will not submit to their authority. Speaking of the steps in Signs of the Times, May 26, 1890, Ellen White wrote: "The papal authorities first ridiculed the reformers, and when this did not quench the spirit of investigation, they placed them behind prison walls, loaded them with chains, and when this did not silence them or make them recant, they finally brought them to the fagot and the sword." But, you might ask, How does this affect us today? God's prophet continued: "We should be very cautious lest we take the first steps in this road that leads to the Inquisition."

Although we may not have seen open, physical persecution, are there other ways that can lead down the road to the inquisition? Consider carefully another quotation where Ellen White outlines how an inquisition has been set up even among God's professed people. "An inquisition has been set up among those who should be free from all overbearing. God calls for the extinction of this satanic devising. The love of Christ in the heart forbids all oppression. . . . But for years, some, even among those who claim to believe present truth, have acted in an oppressive manner, cherishing in the heart that fearful, hateful thing which has led them to exclude their brethren from their fellowship and their councils, because they supposed them wanting in some respects, as though the Lord has made them judges of character." Review and Herald, January 7, 1902. [All emphasis supplied.]

Has Adventism begun down the road to the inquisition? We will begin our investigation with the General Conference Session in 1888.

The 1888 General Conference

The issues surrounding the 1888 General Conference have been widely discussed through Adventist circles, but the central issue, which Ellen White labored hardest to combat, has received little attention. That overruling problem was the kingly power that existed among the Adventist leadership at that time, which had led to a restriction of God's work. In the 1888 Materials, Ellen White wrote about this problem many times. The following is a brief sample:

"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 entrances 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. But when we see that message after message given by God has been received and accepted, yet no change has been made, we know that new power must be brought into the regular lines." 1888 Materials, 1727, 1728.

"The spirit of domination is extending to the presidents of our conferences. If a man is sanguine of his own powers and seeks to exercise dominion over his brethren, feeling that he is invested with authority to make his will the ruling power, the best and only safe course is to remove him, lest great harm be done and he lose his own soul and imperil the souls of others. . . . A man's position does not make him one jot or tittle greater in the sight of God; it is character alone that God values." Ibid., 1445.

"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." Ibid., 1746.

What were the results of this kingly power? The first was that the work of spreading the Three Angels' Messages was hindered, and because of this, Ellen White began to give her support to various independent workers and organizations. The foremost of these was Madison College established by E. A. Sutherland and Percy Magan, in 1908.

The Madison School

For years, Sutherland and Magan had worked in Adventist educational institutions. In 1897 they were both serving at Battle Creek College. Under the conviction that the church had not followed the divine plan for education, as set forth in the counsel of Ellen White, they began attempting to make reforms in that institution. They met stiff opposition, and finally they decided to move the college away from Battle Creek to Berrien Springs, where the new college was called Emmanuel Missionary College. Unfortunately, they still faced severe opposition as they tried to follow the divine plan, so, in 1904, they both resigned and made plans to open a

self-supporting school in the South. Under the direction of the Lord, Ellen White helped Sutherland and Magan find the property for the new school, Madison College. She also gave direction for the planning of the school and served as a charter member of the board (the only college board on which she ever served).

All was not easy for the new self-supporting school. Sutherland and Magan faced opposition (although often not open) from the leaders in the conference, and they received no financial support from the denomination. Despite all of this, Ellen White still counseled them to remain independent from the conference. She wrote: "When my advice was asked in reference to the Madison school, I said, Remain as you are. There is danger in binding every working agency under the dictation of the conference. The Lord did not design that this should be. The circumstances were such that the burden bearers in the Madison school could not bind up their work with the conference. I knew their situation, and when many of the leading men in our conferences ignored them, because they did not place their school under conference dictation, I was shown that they would not be helped by making themselves amenable to the conference. They had better remain as led by God, amenable to Him, to work out His plans. But this matter need not be blazed abroad." Manuscript Releases, vol. 8, 203-204.

God knew that if the school was under conference direction, the work of spreading the Three Angels' Messages would be slowed, just as it had been in the older schools that had been established. Sister White wrote: "I have been shown that in our educational work we are not to follow the methods that have been adopted in our older established schools. There is among us too much clinging to old customs, and because of this we are far behind where we should be in the development of the Third Angel's Message." Special Testimonies 11, 29.

So, we have seen that because of the problems with kingly power and the unwillingness of the Adventist leadership, in Ellen White's day, to receive her inspired counsel, the Lord had to raise up independent organizations to train workers and spread the Three Angels' Messages. And, very often, these independent workers were shunned, or their work was hindered because they wanted to follow the divine counsel. Kingly power wants to crush out individuality and freedom to act upon the dictates of your own conscience.

Has there been a reformation among the Seventh-day Adventist leadership? Or does the same problem of kingly power, which existed in the last century, still exist today? Have advances down the road to the inquisition been made? We do not have to look very far to discover the answers. Notice what happened to the people in the Hungarian Union Conference, during the 1960s and 70s, and you decide if you think the problem has been solved or if it has gotten worse.

The Hungarian Crisis

In 1957, the Hungarian Union of Seventh-day Adventists joined the Council of Free Churches, a Hungarian inter-church ecumenical federation. This was done voluntarily and without any governmental coercion. (The Council of Free Churches is the Hungarian branch of the World Council of Churches, which is pushing for a national Sunday Law along with other ecumenical goals.)

The knowledge that their own churches were involved in such an activity was very distressing to the faithful Adventist people in Hungary. Faithful Adventists could not keep silent when they saw such apostasy. Did they have a right to be concerned about the Hungarian Union

being a part of the World Council of Churches? Notice carefully these words from the pen of inspiration which the faithful Hungarians used to defend their course of action: "The wide diversity of belief in the Protestant churches is regarded by many as decisive proof that no effort to secure a forced uniformity can ever be made. But there has been for years, in churches of the Protestant faith, a strong and growing sentiment in favor of a union based upon common points of doctrine. To secure such a union, the discussion of subjects upon which all were not agreed-- however important they might be from a Bible standpoint-- must necessarily be waived. Charles Beecher, in a sermon in the year 1846, declared that the ministry of 'the evangelical Protestant denominations' is 'not only formed all the way up under a tremendous pressure of merely human fear, but they live, and move, and breathe in a state of things radically corrupt, and appealing every hour to every baser element of their nature to hush up the truth, and bow the knee to the power of apostasy. Was not this the way things went with Rome? Are we not living her life over again? And what do we see just ahead? Another general council! A world's convention! Evangelical alliance, and universal creed!' When this shall be gained, then, in the effort to secure complete uniformity, it will be only a step to the resort to force." *The Great Controversy*, 444, 445.

What are the results of an ecumenical movement? This inspired warning tells us that the sure results will be persecution for God's true people. For, it will be through ecumenism that Protestant America will form an image to the Roman hierarchy, and civil penalties for the faithful will inevitably result.

How did the Adventist leadership respond to this apostasy by the Hungarian Union? In a sermon, Neal Wilson, the President of the General Conference, at that time, replied to the faithful Seventh-day Adventists who were protesting this union with the Council of Free Churches. In regard to those who had joined the CFC he stated: "They did something which seemed good in their eyes. To try to cooperate, to receive those benefits and privileges which they are entitled to by this. If we were to talk over this question today, and if they would ask us whether to enter or not, we would advise them not to enter. Not because it is wrong, or because it would be a denial of what God said... Not because we violate our teaching by this, and not because the Union would be committing apostasy by joining the Council of Free Churches. We do not believe this. Never think of it in this way. But because our opinion is that it would be wiser to do so." *The Hungarian Union Apostasy*, Pilgrim's Tractbooks, 63. [All emphasis supplied.]

Was it apostasy for Adventism to join with the fallen daughters of Babylon in an ecumenical bond, in light of the clear testimony of God's inspired word? The answer is a resounding Yes! "It is a backsliding church that lessens the distance between itself and the Papacy." *Signs of the Times*, February 19, 1894.

The faithful Hungarian brethren pleaded with the Hungarian Union to withdraw from the Council of Free Churches, but they would not. As a result, whole churches that persistently protested this union were disbanded. Those who chose to stay a part of the Conference, in order to restore their membership, had to sign a declaration which stated that they were wrong and that they would remain loyal to the General Conference and accept all church policies. Twelve hundred faithful Hungarian Adventists would not sign the declaration, and all 1200 were disfellowshipped. Twenty-six ministers and Bible workers were discharged for protesting the ecumenical involvement, and five church buildings were shut down and the doors barred to keep the faithful Adventists from gathering there. At one church, in Budapest, guards were

stationed around the church to make sure none of those who had been disfellowshipped could use the building.

Open Apostasy in Russia

About the same time as the Hungarian Crisis, a similar situation occurred in Communist Russia. The issues that the faithful Adventists in Russia faced at this time were that the Conference was 1) promoting SDA children attending school on Sabbath, 2) working to stop evangelism in Russia and 3) allowing the pastors to read fictional books from the pulpit on Sabbath morning.

The faithful Seventh-day Adventists began to write letters to the General Conference about the issue of sending their children to school on the Sabbath. Their reply was that they could not find a Biblical reason for them not to be attending schools on the Sabbath. (See The Kulakov File, 49.)

Kulakov, a self-appointed leader, was a strong supporter of all of the apostasy which the faithful Adventists were standing up against. When these faithful ones went to the General Conference for help, with reports of what Kulakov was promoting, not only did they not receive any help, but Kulakov received the support of the GC.

Without opposition from the General Conference, Kulakov went to the civil authorities, and with their help, forced the faithful Adventists out of their long established churches. He and his followers then became the registered church in Russia. This then made the faithful Adventists an illegal organization, no longer recognized by the state as legitimate, and this forced them to go underground and hold their worship services in secret. (See The Kulkov File, 64,65.) One hundred ministers sought help form the GC, but did not find it. In their letter to the conference leadership they correctly predicted what would happen. "If you give the permission that Kulakov requests, you will open the door to the possibility of persecution by the authorities." (See Ibid, 56.)

By taking a neutral position and not siding with those who were standing for the truth, the conference was also accountable for the persecution which followed. "No one is without influence. Those who, in an effort to be neutral, manifest no positive hostility toward Christ and their brethren, may think that they are rendering a service to God, but such a thought is delusive. Upon the minds of those who are endeavoring to stand in a neutral position, satanic agencies are working." Manuscript Releases, vol. 16, 10, 11.

"If God abhors one sin above another, of which His people are guilty, it is doing nothing in case of an emergency. Indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God as a grievous crime and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God." Testimonies vol. 3, 280.

Do you see the progression down the road to the inquisition? Not only were the members disfellowshipped by the church without Biblical grounds, but the conference did nothing to stop Kulakov from using the civil authorities to disband faithful Adventist churches. This action is directly contrary to God's express word.

"It was apostasy that led the early church to seek the aid of the civil government, and this prepared the way for the development of the papacy the beast. Said Paul: 'There shall come a

falling away, ...and that man of sin be revealed.' 2 Thessalonians 2:3. So apostasy in the church will prepare the way for the image to the beast." The Great Controversy, 443-444.

It was apostasy for the early church to seek the aid of the civil government, and it is apostasy when Adventists seek the aid of the civil government today. So, we must ask ourselves, what is the underlying issue that leads men to seek the aid of civil governments to prosecute their brethren? The fundamental issue is the unregenerate heart which seeks to control others. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

When church leaders begin to go down the road of kingly power, and they wish to control the minds of their brethren, they become progressively more willing to use whatever methods they can find to accomplish their purpose. They may start with ridicule, evil-speaking and withholding support, then they may disfellowship the dissenting members, and if that is not successful they may turn to civil authority to meet their end.

All this happened twenty or more years ago in the Adventist Church. Has there been a change since then? Sadly, the answer is no. There has been no reformation among the leadership of the Adventist Church. There is still the same desire to control the work. And many more people, who have been unwilling to submit to the Conference and go along with the apostasy, have been disfellowshipped or have been forced to leave their churches. As this article is being published, the General Conference is using the strong arm of the court to stop the work of a faithful minister (who has been working tirelessly to spread the Three Angels' Messages), because he uses the name "Seventh-day Adventist."

A Faithful Adventist Sued

Raphael Perez was a Conference pastor who was preaching the Three Angels' Messages on radio stations in Florida. When he would not stop presenting the messages, as the Conference demanded, his ministerial license was revoked. Since that time, Raphael's ministry has expanded to more radio stations and he now puts full-page advertisements in large city newspapers around the United States, giving the final warning message with clarity and power. The suit he is now facing threatens to destroy his ministry and make it financially impossible for him to continue giving the Three Angels' Messages.

What exactly is the charge in the suit against Pastor Raphael Perez? In a letter from the lawyers hired by the General Conference to prosecute this case, the true purpose of the suit is clear. The letter states: "Clearly, your advertisement has caused confusion and is causing harm to the Seventh-day Adventist Church." The Conference is being harmed because the truth is being presented? Have they not read what Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:12? "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." We can expect to be ridiculed and despised by those who do not love the truth, when we present the straight truth to them. Inspiration tells us that the only reason we do not see more persecution is because the church has compromised with sin and conformed to the world. (The Great Controversy, 48.)

The Conference is embarrassed by the clear presentation of the message we have been commanded to give to the world! They have shown this over and over again in recent years. Just this past January, when the Pope visited St. Louis, a number of Historic Adventist groups were there to pass out literature which exposed the Beast and the Mark of the Beast. The conference made a public apology for these "fringe groups" as they called them.

The statement posted on the Adventist Today web page said, "The recent visit of Pope John Paul II and his message of hope, plea for high moral standards, end to racism, abortion, assisted suicide and the death penalty emphasized issues that need to be at the forefront of thought.

"Unfortunately, in conjunction with the Papal visit, offshoot groups claiming association with the Seventh-day Adventist Church have coordinated negative media campaigns which misrepresent the care, compassion and respect we have for people of all faiths. . . .

"As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we would like to apologize for any and all communications that have advocated discrimination, hatred and unwarranted persecution of members of the Roman Catholic Church. . . .

"Kermit Netteburg, communication director for the Adventist Church in North America [said] 'The public needs to be aware that fringe groups are using the Adventist Church's name, and not identify the official Church with these ads.'"

What a sad day we have come to when the professed people of God no longer call sin by its right name, or call people to come out of Babylon, but instead give medallions to the Pope and complement him for the "good" he has done.

Has Rome changed? Or does God still require that we expose her iniquity? "The Roman Church now presents a fair front to the world, covering with apologies her record of horrible cruelties. She has clothed herself in Christlike garments; but she is unchanged. Every principle of the papacy that existed in past ages exists today. The doctrines devised in the darkest ages are still held. Let none deceive themselves. The papacy that Protestants [professed Adventists] are now so ready to honor is the same that ruled the world in the days of the Reformation, when men of God stood up, at the peril of their lives, to expose her iniquity. She possesses the same pride and arrogant assumption that lorded it over kings and princes, and claimed the prerogatives of God. Her spirit is no less cruel and despotic now than when she crushed out human liberty and slew the saints of the Most High." *The Great Controversy*, 571.

It is not time to join hands with Rome. It is time to proclaim with a loud voice that "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Revelation 14:8. God's prophet said, "Time is short. The First, Second, and Third Angel's Messages are the messages to be given to the world. We hear not literally the voice of the three angels, but these angels in Revelation represent a people who will be upon the earth and give these messages. . . . With pen and voice we are to proclaim that very message to the world, not in a tame, indistinct whisper." *1888 Materials*, 926.

Dear friends, the time that remains for this world is very short! Right now we must take advantage of every opportunity to present the last warning message to a dying world, for soon it will be forever too late. Let us each surrender ourselves fully to the Lord so that He can change our hearts, so hardened by sin, and make us fit vessels to do His work. For without Him we can do nothing. We must ask ourselves the question, "Which side am I on? Have I taken the first steps that lead down the road to the Inquisition?" Remember, in the final conflict there will be only two groups, the faithful who will be persecuted and those who will be persecuting. May God help us to be among the faithful.