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Bible Explorations Newsletter

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Inside This Issue	
1	Passover/ULB 2022
1-5	The Goel by Kimber Hoffman
6-9	The Bloody City (continued)
9	Words from Ellen White

PASSOVER AND UNLEAVENED BREAD 2022

As you find on our calendar, we will have our "Passover/Unleavened Bread" week April 16 through 23, 2022. This will be on zoom. We have great speakers getting lined up again, so be sure to mark your calendars.

THE GOEL

Kinsman / Redeemer / Avenger

By Kimber Hoffman

Among the Statutes that God gave His people in ancient times was a special provision that was designed to establish both social and economic stability. This was the special role in the family unit or clan known as the Goel, or "kinsman-redeemer." This was not unique to the Jews--other cultures of that time and area practiced it and still do to some extent--but God gave special guidelines for its regulation that not only promoted social stability but also symbolized His eternal purposes.

From Strong's Hebrew Dictionary--

H1350 גָּאֵל gâ'al *gaw-al'* A primitive root, to *redeem* (according to the Oriental law of kinship), that is, to *be the next of kin* (and as such to *buy back* a relative's property, *marry his widow*, etc.): - X in any wise, X at all, avenger, deliver, (do, perform the part of near, next) kinsfolk (-man), purchase, ransom, redeem (-er), revenger.

Here are a few verses that use that word to speak of God as the Goel.

*Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you***H1350** *with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:* Exodus 6:6

*For I know that my redeemer***H1350** *liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:* Job 19:25

And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God **their redeemerH1350**. Psalm 78:35

The Goel was the one who brought things back to the way they ought to be, the nearest relative that could always be counted on for help when a wrong needed to be made right. The responsibilities of the Goel covered basically four areas--to redeem property that had been sold because of financial difficulty, to redeem a person who was in bondage because of financial difficulty, to marry a widow and raise

children for a brother, and to avenge murder. The overall concept seems to be that of restoring what has been wrong, renewing the cycle of right. Let us have a look at what it meant to be the Goel in each of these situations and how that symbolizes what our Heavenly Goel does in our behalf.

The Goel as Property Redeemer--

When the Israelites inherited the Promised Land, each family received a piece of property to call their own. They did not actually own it because God claimed ownership of the land, but as tenants, they had the right to use it perpetually to "make a living"--to raise animals and food for themselves and sell the increase for profit. The property was not to be transferred to others outside the family. This plan promoted economic stability for the family unit and for the nation as a whole.

The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. Leviticus 25:23

This is the reason why Naboth refused to let Ahab get his vineyard. That would have been against the Divine Statutes.

And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. 1 Kings 21:3

When Jezebel's hit-men had done their work of eliminating him and his heirs (2 Kings 9:26), the land was "up for grabs" and Ahab grabbed it.

If the person or family to whom the property was granted got into a situation where they felt forced to sell because of financial difficulties, the payment they received was only for the value of the harvested produce for each year up until the Year of Jubilee, not for the market value of the land since they did not actually own the land. The original "owner" would then have cash to help him out of his difficulty and the buyer would receive the profit from whatever the land produced. The nearest relative, the Goel, was probably given first chance to purchase the family property to help alleviate the difficulty and keep the property within the clan. If he did not, for whatever reason, then someone else could purchase it. If the original "owner" could later afford to repurchase his property, he had the right to do so by repaying the

value of the annual harvested produce until the Year of Jubilee. For example, if he had sold it 20 years before the Year of Jubilee, he was paid for 20 harvests. If 10 years later he could repurchase it, he paid the holder for the remaining 10 harvests.

And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress one another: According to the number of years after the jubile thou shalt buy of thy neighbour, and according unto the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee: According to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it: for according to the number of the years of the fruits doth he sell unto thee. Leviticus 25:14-16

A Goel could step in at any time and "redeem" the property by paying the value of the remaining harvests at his own expense and then giving the property back to the owner, or holding it in trust and managing it for them if necessary. If it was not redeemed, it would return automatically to the original owner "free and clear" in the Year of Jubilee. This was God's way of stabilizing the economy of Israel so there would not be extremes of poverty or wealth. It is very different from what happened to the Egyptians when they were suffering under severe famine conditions in Joseph's time. (Genesis 47:13-26) They exchanged their money, their animals, their land, and finally themselves for food to keep from starving. They lived as slaves of the government after that and could not anticipate a Year of Jubilee when they would be free again

In the story of Jeremiah we see an incident where Jeremiah's cousin wanted to sell his property.

And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it. (Jeremiah was Hanameel's Goel) *So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD. And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and*

weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. Jeremiah 32:6-9

The book of Ruth gives us an excellent picture of all that would transpire in a situation like this. When Naomi returned to Israel after living in Moab and losing her husband and sons, she had no resources except Elimelech's land. Apparently it had not been sold prior to this and Naomi felt that she and Ruth would not be able to work the land properly to make a livelihood from it. In order to support herself and Ruth, she felt forced to sell it. The first right of purchase went to the nearest relative, the kinsman whom Boaz talked with at the gate.

Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it. Ruth 4:1-6

This kinsman was the Goel for Naomi and Ruth. He was willing to redeem their property but did not want the other responsibility of a Goel--supporting the two women and raising up a family through Ruth in Elimelech's name. In relinquishing his right to the property to Boaz, he was also shirking his legal responsibility to Ruth and Naomi.

The Goel as Personal Redeemer--

God is very conscious of the needs of the poor. In His Statutes, He specifically provided for their relief.

And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant: But as an hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubile: And then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return. For they are my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen. Leviticus 25:39-42

And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him: Either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be able, he may redeem himself. And he shall reckon with him that bought him from the year that he was sold to him unto the year of jubile: and the price of his sale shall be according unto the number of years, according to the time of an hired servant shall it be with him. If there be yet many years behind, according unto them he shall give again the price of his redemption out of the money that he was bought for. And if there remain but few years unto the year of jubile, then he shall count with him, and according unto his years shall he give him again the price of his redemption. And as a yearly hired servant shall he be with him: and the other shall not rule with rigour over him in thy sight. And if he be not redeemed in these years, then he shall go out in the year of jubile, both he, and his children with him. For unto me the children of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. Leviticus 25:47-55

If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart

shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land. And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. Deuteronomy 15:7-14

There were times when a family got into serious financial difficulties and the father was forced to sell himself or members of his family as slaves in order to survive. A Jew could not "own" one of his fellow Jews as a slave (God held claim to them Leviticus 25:42, 55) but was to treat him as a temporary employee, under contract for a limit of six years. Apparently, the poor person would be paid "up-front" wages for the amount of time he was to serve, thus giving him cash to alleviate his poverty. The wealthy person was to be kind and generous, even giving him help and provisions beyond his wages when he was released at the end of his six-year contract. (Deuteronomy 15:13, 14) At times a Jew might sell himself to a wealthy foreigner living nearby. The role and responsibility of the Goel included redeeming those within his family or clan who were in this situation. He would repay the "employer" out of his own resources for the time remaining until the seventh year, the Year of Release, thus releasing the poor brother before his time of indenture was up so that he could return to his family and former line of work, allowing him to keep the wages he had received "up front," and begin again to earn his livelihood.

Nehemiah rebuked the wealthy rulers in his time who were disregarding God's Statutes and taking advantage of their poorer brothers.

And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. Some also there were that said, We have

mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards. And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer. Nehemiah 5:1-8

The story in 2 Kings 4:1-7 of the woman coming to Elisha for help describes this type of situation. Apparently the creditor was rather hard-hearted, possibly a foreigner, not following what God said in Deuteronomy 15:7-14, and she had no Goel to redeem her and her sons from their financial difficulty, so God provided help in another way.

The Goel as Family Redeemer--

The brother (or nearest relative) of a deceased husband had the responsibility to raise up children from a widow in her husband's name. This was not merely an option but a serious responsibility as we can see from the instructions God gave. This law preserved all family lines and property rights.

If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him:

and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed. Deuteronomy 25:5-10

And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar. And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him. And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. And the thing which he did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also. Genesis 38:6-10

When Boaz took Ruth as his wife, the child that was born was given to Naomi as though it was her own son, the heir to the property. Boaz, the Goel, preserved Elimelech's family line.

And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David. Ruth 4:14-17

The Goel as Avenger--

If a family member was killed and the crime was proved to be murder rather than manslaughter, it was the responsibility of the Goel to avenge the murder by killing the murderer.

And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. Genesis 9:5, 6

And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. Or if he smite him with an hand weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. The revenger of blood himself (the Goel) shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him, he shall slay him. But if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by laying of wait, that he die; Or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die: he that smote him shall surely be put to death; for he is a murderer: the revenger of blood (the Goel) shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him. . . . Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die. Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death. And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest. So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. Numbers 35:16-21, 30-33

One instance we read about where this Statute was carried out, though somewhat modified because of the circumstances, is in 1 Kings 2 where King David gave Solomon the responsibility of avenging the blood of Abner and Amasa by killing Joab, the one who had murdered them. A Goel, a near relative of either of those men, would have been very reluctant to perform his duty against the commander of the army, and David apparently did not feel he could personally kill his own general, so he had Solomon do it.

At last treachery overthrew the throne that malice and ambition had established. Abner, becoming incensed against the weak and incompetent Ishbosheth, deserted to David, with the offer to bring over to him all the tribes of Israel. His proposals were accepted by the king, and he was dismissed with honor to accomplish his purpose. But the favorable reception of so valiant and famed a warrior excited the jealousy of Joab, the commander-in-chief of

David's army. There was a blood feud between Abner and Joab, the former having slain Asahel, Joab's brother, during the war between Israel and Judah. Now Joab, seeing an opportunity to avenge his brother's death and rid himself of a prospective rival, basely took occasion to waylay and murder Abner.

David, upon hearing of this treacherous assault, exclaimed, "I and my kingdom are guiltless before the Lord forever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner. Let it rest on the head of Joab; and on all his father's house." In view of the unsettled state of the kingdom, and the power and position of the murderers--for Joab's brother Abishai had been united with him--David could not visit the crime with just retribution, yet he publicly manifested his abhorrence of the bloody deed. . . . PP 699, 700 (**...to be continued**)

THE BLOODY CITY BY TED SCHULTZ (Continued)

The official ADCOM statement

On the adventist.org website we find a statement that “was voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM), for release at the time of the General Conference Session in Toronto, Canada, June 29 - July 9, 2000.” www.adventist.org/official-statements/gambling. Adventist.org is the official website of the Seventh-day Adventist World Church. The official statement on gambling states in part, “Seventh-day Adventists have consistently opposed gambling as it is incompatible with Christian principles. It is not an appropriate form of entertainment or a legitimate means of raising funds....The Seventh-day Adventist Church rejects gambling as defined above and will not solicit nor accept funding that is clearly derived from gambling.” *Ibid.* While this may be an “official” statement that was released at the General Conference Session in Toronto, many church entities have not operated in harmony with that statement. The church has openly violated its own official statement. It is impossible to believe that those at La Sierra University were not aware of Dr. Allred’s long history as abortionist and gambling race track operator by which he made his millions. Dr. Allred is no doubt one of LSU’s most celebrated graduates. When enough money presents itself, however, it becomes virtually impossible to resist and selective amnesia sets in and erases all memory as to how the money came into the hand of the giver.

So it was when gambling and blood money came to the Montana Conference. “Individuals are stepping forward in faith to give because they have been impacted either directly or indirectly by MEA. Ed Allred of Los Alamitos, California, had no attachment to Mount Ellis Academy....When Allred heard MEA was in need, he felt impressed to give \$100,000 toward campus capital improvements.” *Gleaner*, November/December, 2020, p. 23. Although MEA was informed as to who Allred was and how he came by his wealth, the money was received as a “blessing” anyway. So what happened to all the Biblical instruction in this matter? What happened to the “official” statement from the General Conference Administrative Committee which states that the church is not to “accept funding that is clearly derived from gambling”? And what of the clearcut statements in the *Church Manual* on gambling and open violation of the law of God? But then, what is a mere \$100,000 when Adventists as well as the world in general have been reading news headlines such as, “Loma Linda University Health Expands With \$10 Million Tribal Casino Gift.” *Spectrum*, December 10, 2014. This vast some of money came from the San Manuel Band of Mission Indian’s casino largess. Another headline reads, “San Manual gifts Loma Linda University Health record \$25 million for children’s hospital tower.” *The Sun*, March 11, 2019. This serves as yet another example that when God’s law is set aside it won’t be long and man will disregard his own laws. But what does gambling have to do with the abortion issue? The spirit that is driving the abortion industry is the same spirit that drives the gambling industry. Both industries are a direct violation of the law of God. Both industries leave lives shattered and families broken. To this the prophet Micah speaks. “They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity.” Micah 3:10. May each one of us repent of this great evil that is among us as a people. And may each one of us defend the honor of God by raising our voices against this abomination. God is put to an open shame by what is being done among His professed people and for this He will judge. “Jerusalem is a representation of what the church will be if it refuses to walk in the light that God has given.” *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8, p. 67. The spirit that led Allred into the abortion business is the same spirit that led him into the gambling business. It is the same spirit that leads certain entities within the church to receive blood money to build up Zion today. It is the same spirit that leads people to stand silent when God calls for a loud

and decisive voice to be heard. God calls upon his people to, “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” Isaiah 58:1. “God does not work in partnership with Satan.” *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 1, p. 307. Nor will any who are followers of Christ work in partnership with Satan.

The law of God vs. worldly policy

“Now and ever we are to stand as a distinct and peculiar people, free from all worldly policy, unembarrassed by confederating with those who have not wisdom to discern God’s claims so plainly set forth in His law. All our medical institutions are established as Seventh-day Adventist institutions, to represent the various features of the gospel medical missionary work, and thus to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. We are to show that we are seeking to work in harmony with Heaven.” *Counsels on Health*, p. 237. All of the church’s abortion statements notwithstanding, the policies that have actually governed the medical institution’s day to day abortion services are of a worldly stamp. Far from standing as a distinct and peculiar people in our medical missionary work we are more like the world than the world itself.

“Principle, right, honesty, should ever be cherished. Honesty will not tarry where policy is harbored. They will never agree; one is of Baal, the other of God.” *Maranatha*, p. 228.

Modern Israel needs to choose whom they will serve. Will they serve the worldly policies of Baal or will they serve the true God of heaven by keeping His commandments and leaving the results with God?

“So, men who should be standing as faithful guardians of God’s law have argued, till policy has taken the place of faithfulness, and sin is allowed to go unreproved. When will the voice of faithful rebuke be heard once more in the church?” *Prophets and Kings*, p. 141.

“The church does not serve as conscience for individuals.”

“The church does not serve as conscience for individuals.” This statement which was part of the 1992 Annual Council’s voted guidelines on abortion may sound correct at the first hearing of it. But how has this statement, which is true in one sense, been used? It has been used in a way to side-step the issue

of establishing a standard on abortion. The church has standards by which it governs itself. It has set standards against murder, worshiping idols, breaking the Sabbath, habitual falsehood, fraud, use of tobacco and alcoholic beverages, gambling, stealing, profanity, habitual falsehood, various sexual perversions, etc. Does the church allow for freedom of conscience in these areas of conduct? In one sense it does, in another sense it doesn’t. The person may choose of his own free will to walk contrary to one of those standards. That person is free to do so. However, if a person violated one of these standards, the church, depending on the severity of the violation, may deem it necessary “to remove an individual from church membership to protect its name and its Christian standards.” *Church Manual*, 2005 edition, p. 195. Abortion, in its exclusion from the list, has been treated by the church as if it has no relationship whatsoever to morality or the standards of the church. Thus, there is no moral standard to which anyone is to be held accountable in regard to abortion. This anomaly is inexplicable in the extreme.

Corporate church apostasy

During the First World War most of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany apostatized. Only a relatively small minority of church members stayed true to the beliefs of Adventism. It was stated by church leadership to the German government the official church position was that it was up to the conscience of the individual whether they would bear arms or serve on the seventh day Sabbath. Thus, those who claimed that it was the position of the church of which they were members that they could not take up arms against their fellow man or break the Sabbath by serving in the war on that day were left by their church leaders to face the wrath of the German war lords. The non-position of the church in Germany at that critical hour left many to a terrible fate. The leadership’s position was in effect, “the church does not serve as conscience for individuals.” Does this sound familiar? Yet those who stood faithful at the peril of their lives had good reason for their position. They saw that the church had been in the same awful position during the civil war. Ellen White had been given a vision as to how God’s faithful were to proceed.

“I was shown”

“I was shown that God’s people, who are His peculiar treasure, cannot engage in this perplexing war, for it is opposed to every principle of their faith. In the

army they cannot obey the truth and at the same time obey the requirements of their officers. There would be continual violation of conscience. Worldly men are governed by worldly principles. They can appreciate no other. Worldly policy and public opinion comprise the principle of action that governs them and leads them to practice the form of right doing. But God's people cannot be governed by these motives. The words and commands of God, written in the soul, are spirit and life, and there is power in them to bring into subjection and enforce obedience. The ten precepts of Jehovah are the foundation of all righteous and good laws. Those who love God's commandments will conform to every good law of the land. But if the requirements of the rulers are such as conflict with the laws of God, the only question to be settled is: Shall we obey God, or man?" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, pp. 361, 362.

The church leadership of Germany chose to obey man. Notice this communique to the Army Commander dated March 5, 1915. "To the General Commander of the 7th Army Corps in Dresden: "Relative to No. 856, III of February 22, 1915, which forbade Adventist meetings to be held in Dresden, allow the undersigned to give the following explanation. "For several years the undersigned have clearly set forth before Military Officials, both orally and in writing, that Military Service on Saturday (Sabbath) in times of peace always remained a question of the individual conscience.

"But at the outbreak of the war the leaders of the Adventist Organization in Germany, of their own accord, advised all their military service members in all the land, under the pressing circumstances and need of the Fatherland, to do their duties required of them as citizens, according to the Scripture. And earnestly to do on Saturday (Sabbath) as other warriors do on Sunday. As proof, allow this enclosed copy of the document to serve the highly esteemed Prussian Minister of War, written on the 6th day of August, 1914. This position, taken years ago, is supported by the attached signatures:

"For the European Division,
Headquarters, Hamburg,
[Signed] L. R. Conradi, President
"For the East Germany Union,
Headquarters, Berlin,
[Signed] H. F. Schuberth, President
"For the Saxon Association,
Headquarters, Chemnitz,

[Signed] Paul Drinhaus, President"
Reformation, Seventh-Day Adventists At The Crossroads, p. 15.

While leaders gave lip service to "individual conscience" they capitulated to the earthly powers and urged the church members to follow them in their apostasy. The leaders believed that "individual conscience" was to be suspended because the law of God itself was to be set aside in a crisis. Those who remained faithful to their consciences wisely understood that God did not abrogate His law during times of war. The apostate leadership disfellowshipped the faithful for following the freedom of conscience that those same leaders spoke of. Not only did the faithful suffer severe persecution by the state, but they suffered persecution from their own former brethren as well.

Toward the end of the war an article appeared in an April 12, 1918 issue of a Dresden newspaper that demonstrates the bitter hatred of church leadership against the faithful. "At the beginning of the war our denomination divided into two parts. Ninety-eight percent of our membership took the position on Bible grounds that it was their conscientious duty to defend the Fatherland with weapons, and that also on the Sabbath. This united position of the leaders was at once forwarded to the War Department. Two percent, however, did not submit themselves to this united resolution and therefore had to be disfellowshipped because of their unchristian conduct. These unprofitable elements set themselves up as preachers and, with small results, made propaganda for their foolish ideas. They call themselves falsely preachers and Adventists. They are not; they are deceivers. When such elements shall receive their merited punishment, we regard it, in fact, a favor done toward us. Our leaders have up to this day invested our surplus church money in war loans, in the fullest assurance that Germany, with God's help, would come through the struggle, victoriously. Everywhere our members are sharing the self-evident duty, in giving into the hands of the Fatherland the so-much-needed means. The Adventist men are practically all in the field or army service, faithfully performing their duty, and expect a just treatment as thanks from the Fatherland also." *Ibid.* p. 19.

Even after such unjust treatment, those who were still alive and remained faithful sought to reunite with those who had capitulated. Just after the war had

ended, they sought an opportunity to meet with General Conference leadership to address the circumstances which had led to the faithful being disfellowshipped. This hearing was finally granted and occurred in July of 1920. One question that was asked by those who were disfellowshipped was, "How does the General Conference stand with reference to the position taken by the leaders in Germany in 1914 toward the fourth and sixth commandments?" *Ibid.* p. 19. To this question A. G. Daniells, President of the General Conference said, in part, "But we must grant to every citizen the right to take his position toward the government according to his own conscience....What now has been our position toward our brethren in their varied attitudes? We have said that we will not be conscience of other people." *Ibid.* p. 20.

It seems that it would have been more fitting to direct that response to those who did the disfellowshipping rather than to those who were disfellowshipped. If indeed as leadership claimed that "we will not be conscience of other people," why then disfellowship those who followed the convictions of their consciences? This little bit of history demonstrates how the words "the church does not serve as conscience for individuals" (*Ministry Magazine*, December 1992) may be entirely correct in one sense, but in another sense may have a whole world of darkness lurking within them. Our own history as Seventh-day Adventists abundantly illustrates the spirit that lurks behind the misuse of the words "freedom of conscience." Those who sought to exercise their freedom of conscience were spared no insult. Every disparaging remark was hurled against them. They were referred to as "a menace to the peace of the church," a "movement of apostasy," "fanatics," "a counterfeit reformation," "not Adventists," "extremists," "a group of rebellious elements," "deceivers," "unprofitable elements," "unchristian," "foolish." All of this, not from the world, but from the church. To this day those who, at the peril of their lives, stood steadfast for the truth and the law of God are referred to as "an offshoot movement," "extremist," and "dissident." *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, p. 1183. (1966).**To be continued.**

EARLY WRITINGS

Ellen G. White

I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of "refreshing" and the "latter rain" to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! They had neglected the needful preparation; therefore they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of a holy God. Those who refuse to be hewed by the prophets and fail to purify their souls in obeying the whole truth, and who are willing to believe that their condition is far better than it really is, will come up to the time of the falling of the plagues, and then see that they needed to be hewed and squared for the building. But there will be no time then to do it and no Mediator to plead their cause before the Father. Before this time the awfully solemn declaration has gone forth, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." I saw that none could share the "refreshing" unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action. We should, therefore, be drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord and be earnestly seeking that preparation necessary to enable us to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. Let all remember that God is holy and that none but holy beings can ever dwell in His presence.



BE READY!!

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