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## GOD'S ANOINTED IN EXILE

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One of the most vexing questions and perhaps the one which causes the greatest degree of polarity and separation among the Independent Ministries is the question of what our relationship should be to the organized SDA church. Most of us are already familiar with the various arguments presented by both sides and it may not be necessary for me to here go back over most of the points. Let it suffice to say that while one group is convinced that on the basis of the writings of Sister White they ought to maintain membership in, and a working relationship with the organization, as well as continue to support it with their tithes and offerings, the other group is equally convinced that neither the Bible nor the writings of Sister White encourage us to remain joined to a system which is in open apostasy, on all fronts. In fact, they would see strong reasons, and even direct instructions to separate completely from such a system, and to stop supporting it in any way whatsoever.

If there were an easy way to resolve both points of view, then no doubt the issue would have been settled long ago. To each person, his own perspective seems absolutely plain, and he is amazed that those on the other side could be so blind and hard-hearted that they should fail to see what seems so plain to him. Well, what is the truth? "They that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth," and the attitude of the true learner in the school of Christ is that having found the truth he is ever seeking for a higher understanding of truth; a more perfect revelation of the way of God so that He may represent Him more perfectly.

In praying over this question recently, I was moved to look at the story of David and Saul and to compare the attitude of David with the attitude of the reformers in the SDA church today.

First of all, let us notice that Saul had been chosen of God. He had been anointed by the prophet of God, Samuel. One in whom was the Spirit of Prophecy. When Saul came to the throne it was with the solemn declaration proclaimed in the presence of the people, "See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen!" (1 Sam.10:24) However, in spite of the fact that God had chosen Saul and had

anointed him through a prophet, the day came when God had to reject Saul as king, and the same spirit of prophecy which had announced his choice as king, decreed of Saul, "The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day..." (1 Sam.15:28)

Now notice something: God had rejected Saul that very day. From that moment He no longer had God's blessing, but even so God did not immediately remove him from the seat of power. For 23 more years Saul continued to lead Israel, becoming more and more diseased in mind and spirit as the devil gained complete control of his being. Yet, though Saul sat on the throne of Israel, it was not the duty of those who were loyal to Jehovah to either support him, or follow him. "Turn again with me," said Saul to Samuel, "that I may worship the Lord." But Samuel's reply was, "I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord..." "And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul." (1 Sam. 15:25,26,35)

There were those then, who continued to follow Saul, no matter what. Was he not the Lord's anointed? In their narrow minds they could not see that "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king ." (1 Sam. 15:23) What was the consequence of this blind loyalty to Saul? The consequence of this failure to discern the mind of God? Well, simply that Israel followed after Saul in cruelly and unreasoningly persecuting the true anointed of the Lord. People who had never known David, who had no reason for hating him, knew only that Saul was hunting him and that was reason enough for them to betray him to Saul at every opportunity (1 Sam.23:19). Some, like Jonathan, who knew that God had chosen David to be king, yet stayed with Saul from filial loyalty. Love for Saul made him stay, even when he had become convinced that Saul was mad; even when he knew without a doubt that God no longer was with Saul. Jonathan was a good man, but blindly loyal, and he perished with Saul and a great multitude of Israelite men on Mount Gilboa, defeated by the enemies of Jehovah, the Philistines, because they followed a leader from whom the Spirit of God had departed.

There is a time when failure to support a cause, or a man, or a system constitutes rebellion against God. There is another time

when supporting that same cause, or man or system means disloyalty to God. The child of God will know what God requires of him, moment by moment, as people, systems, organizations and times change, but God remains the same forever.

And what may we say of David's attitude? Outlawed, disgraced, robbed of wife and home, hounded from place to place by a powerful lunatic who was obviously possessed of an evil spirit, what was his philosophy concerning Saul?

"The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed ." (1 Sam.26:11) There was nothing which Saul could do which could make him seek to harm, or to destroy Saul. His feeling was that God Himself would deal with Saul in His own appointed time (verse 10). This did not mean that David was willing to support Saul in any way. It did not mean that Saul did not deserve to be destroyed, but David's reverence for God was so great that he would not lay his hand upon what had been once touched by the hand of God.

David's attitude should be ours today, as sincere believers in the third angel's message who have been persecuted, disfellowshipped and disgraced by the "Saul" of today. Distressed by the rebellion of Saul, we "mourn" for Saul as did Samuel. Hounded and persecuted, short of supplies, dwelling even in the "wilderness", yet we refrain from seeking to destroy Saul, even when he is in our power, "lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph." Our duty, as David's was, is to fight the battles of the Lord. Though David was short of supplies, though his army was made up of discontented rabble, yet David never lost a battle while he was in exile. His rag-tag band of men defeated the enemy in every battle, and all Israel knew even if they did not admit it openly, that the one chosen of God was David.

We ask ourselves the question: For what purpose was the SDA movement raised up by God? Was it not to preach the three angels' messages to all the world? Yes, and the need of the world, for the message is very great. There is need for urgency in the presentation of the message. Yet, it is the feeling of those who see the apostasy of the church, that these messages are no longer being preached by the organized body. Therefore they see it as their duty to spend their energies and resources in seeking to

persuade the church to turn around. Yet, I feel that this is to miss the mark. Let me illustrate how this kind of reasoning really appears to me.

Suppose that a great epidemic breaks out in a certain area: Two men are sent with a box of medicine which is the only hope of survival for the people in that area. Without this medicine, it is certain that all will perish. As they are driving along at breakneck speed in an effort to get help to that area before it is too late, one of the men suddenly decides to stop to watch a football match. All the efforts of the other man to persuade him to return to his mission are in vain. He becomes engrossed in the game and refuses to move until it is over.

Meanwhile, back in the village, people are dying like flies. What is the other man to do? It seems to me that his duty is clear. He must leave the other man to his game. He must grab the box of medicine and run with it. The apostasy of his friend has not lessened the urgency of his mission one iota. I will go even further: Should the man who stops to watch the football match be supported with any of the resources entrusted to these men? For example, should he be left with the car while the other man runs on foot? The point I am making should be very clear. While the illustration may fall short in some areas, yet in the main, it serves to show the situation as it really is today.

In 1844 God raised up a people to give a message to the world which was of vital importance. A message which was His last merciful appeal to mankind. Is there still an urgent need for it today? Does God love the perishing ones as much today as He did in 1844? Is there as much need for urgency now, as there was back then? Surely you see what I mean! We are a hundred and fifty years down the stream of time, and the work is nowhere nearer being finished now than it was a hundred years ago. In fact, it is probably further behind than then, inasmuch as the movement has lost its momentum, while the population of the world has multiplied several times over since then.

"This is no time for the messengers of God to stop to prop up those who know the truth, and who have every advantage. Let them go on to lift the standard and give the warning, 'Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him..'" (Testimonies to Ministers - p.233