

SEPTEMBER 2017

THE OLD MAN STOOD COMFORTABLY with one foot resting on the massive log bridging the raging current draining Blain Basin. I didn't know him. Standing at an elevation of 11,000 feet (3352.8 m.) with 50 pounds (22.6 kg.) on my back, I was happy for the rest.

"Powerful current!" I shouted above the roar. "Yep!" His blue eyes wrinkled as he smiled.

"Ever been to Hoover Dam?" he asked, motioning with his old cork-handled walking pole.

"Yes, I have" I replied, letting my mind drift hundreds of miles to the west.

"Now that's power," he said. I recalled feeling the huge dam vibrate as millions of gallons of water shook the earth and turned the mammoth turbines that changed night to day.

"Before reaching Hoover Dam this little creek finds East Fork, Dallas Creek, Uncompahgre River, Gunnison River, the Colorado River, Lake Powell, then Lake Meade. And this is just one out of thousands of other creeks and rivers that come together to change the world," he said.

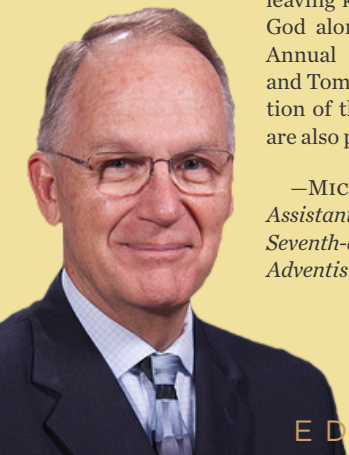
The realization of his statement startled me. Indeed, this little creek did change the world.

Though you may be just one person, together we become an unstoppable force that God uses to change the world.

In this committee, are developed plans of organization and operation and plans of eternal life for the world's millions who are desperate for hope. Be assured that all these things take place through the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of God's unfathomable love. It is when we come together that God directs His church. Not through one person but through the richness and power of a global voice.

In this issue of the *Executive Committee Newsletter*, G. T. Ng shares the importance of leaving kingly power with God alone. Church news, Annual Council agenda and Tom Lemon's description of the unity question are also presented.

—MICHAEL RYAN
*Assistant to the President,
Seventh-day
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EDITORIAL



THE PERILS OF KINGLY POWER

By G. T. NG, PH.D., *Executive Secretary, Seventh-day Adventist Church
Chair, Ellen G. White Estate Board of Trustees*

A man was a new student of the Bible. One day he was looking into the Bible for some guidance. Not knowing where to look, he simply opened the Bible randomly and pointed his finger at a passage. Wherever his finger landed, he would take the text as advice. The first text he pointed at was Judas "went and hanged himself." Not knowing what to make out of that, he tried again. This time it was "Go and do likewise." Completely baffled, he tried a third time, and his finger landed on "What you do, do quickly."

Examples abound of individuals using the Scriptures out of context. Sometimes we too are guilty of such false attribution by removing a passage from its original background in such a way as to distort its intended meaning, and using it as an authority to support some position. Such misuse and abuse of statements are commonly seen in politics, advertising, social

media, and, unfortunately, in the usage of the Spirit of Prophecy.

A case in point is the phrase "kingly power." The phrase has been used indiscriminately without regard to the original situations and circumstances under which it was written. The phrase "kingly power" is mentioned 103 times in the Spirit of Prophecy. Its use falls into three basic categories: counsels on general matters, counsels to specific individuals, and counsels to the General Conference.

GENERAL COUNSELS

In these references, the term "kingly power" is used in a broad sense to describe Jesus' kingly power that He laid aside at His incarnation and in His self-sacrificing life. Several of the general references are related to James and John and their experience of coveting the highest positions of honor and desiring *kingly power*

in Christ's kingdom.¹ Here is an example of Ellen White's use of the term "kingly power" in relationship to Jesus:

"When Christ laid down his life on Calvary, He put aside His *kingly power* and demonstrated to the world a life of self-denial and sacrifice."²

A careful analysis of this statement and other similar statements reveals that the term kingly power is used to describe the rightful authority of Christ as the divine, eternal Son of God that He willingly surrendered in loving self-sacrifice to redeem the human race. One day He will return with "kingly authority" as "King of kings" to deliver His people (Revelation 19:11-16).

SPECIFIC COUNSELS

Aside from these general statements, Ellen White also penned personal messages regarding kingly power to specific individuals, most notably, Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and Elder A.G. Daniells.

Ellen White highly respected Kellogg as a medical missionary pioneer, but she cautioned him against assuming too much responsibility and control in the medical missionary work in Battle Creek.³ She warned him against using *kingly power* over "God's heritage." Time and again, Ellen White talked about the importance of humility in God's service. "God has given you special endowments," she told Kellogg, "but because of this you are not to feel that you can exert a *kingly power*."⁴

In this sense, kingly power is the abuse of one's rightful authority. This aspect of kingly power was also manifested during the General Conference presidency of A.G. Daniells.

On June 5, 1901, Ellen White counseled him about God's displeasure over the greed and selfishness in "demanding high wages" at the publishing houses.⁵ In this message, she repeated the phrase *kingly power* twice

in reference to the managers of the publishing houses who used "unsanctified wisdom" and "corrupted principles" in managing the work.

She wrote, "For two or three years the *kingly power* that ruled closed the door against the light God had sent to the world in *Great Controversy* and *Patriarchs and Prophets*."⁶ If the managers had allowed God to purify the publishing work from "selfishness, covetousness, and unfair dealing," many more books would have been purchased, and many souls would have read the two books and found their way to the kingdom.⁷

Three weeks later, on June 28, 1901, Daniells received another message from Ellen White lamenting about leaders who had "taken to themselves a *kingly power*,"⁸ controlling church finances and using them in a "most disproportionate manner." Throughout her prophetic ministry Ellen White wrote to various individuals about the abuse of authority using the term kingly power.

GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSIONS

She also used the term to refer to General Conference leadership. Most of these tes-

timonies spanned the course of three years (1901-1903) and, generally, were also messages of reproof and counsel to specific individuals at specific times under specific circumstances. To take them out of their historical context is certainly to misapply the counsel of Ellen White.

Two days before the General Conference Session in 1901, a group of church leaders met with Ellen White in the Battle Creek College library to listen to her

counsel.⁹ She went straight to the point by saying that the work of God should not be dependent on one person or a small group of people. She continued:

"Over and over again men have said, 'The voice of the Conference is the voice of God;

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The phrase kingly power was used by Ellen White to refer to the abuse of authority rather than the rightful exercise of administrative authority.

therefore everything must be referred to the Conference. . . .' 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*."¹⁰

She went on to urge the 1901 delegates to implement the distribution of responsibilities. Without such reorganization, the voice of the General Conference could not be regarded as the voice of God.

"That these men should stand in a sacred place, to be as the voice of God to the people, as we once believed the General Conference to be, —that is past. What we want now is a reorganization. We want to begin at the foundation, and to build upon a different principle."¹¹

Then for the second time in the same address, she talked about the danger of exercising *kingly power* by a few individuals controlling all aspects of the work: "Now I want to say, God has not put any *kingly power* in our ranks to control this or that branch of the work."¹²

Ellen White went on to elaborate on the urgency of reorganizing the church, switching from an exclusive approach of a handful of people controlling the church to a more inclusive system with broadbased representation.

During the initial period of the church's development, Battle Creek became the national and international headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The work was centralized with a small group of church

(Continued on page 3 ...)

1. Ellen G. White, *The Acts of Apostles*, Mountain View, Calif., Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 541.

2. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, August 18, 1904, par. 5. Here and in subsequent references when "kingly power" is italicized, the emphasis is supplied.

3. Ellen G. White, Ms. 156b, 1901, par. 15.

4. Ellen G. White, Letter 199, 1901, par. 17.

5. Ellen G. White, Letter 59, 1901 (June 5, 1901) par. 14.

6. Ibid., par. 8.

7. Ibid., par. 9.

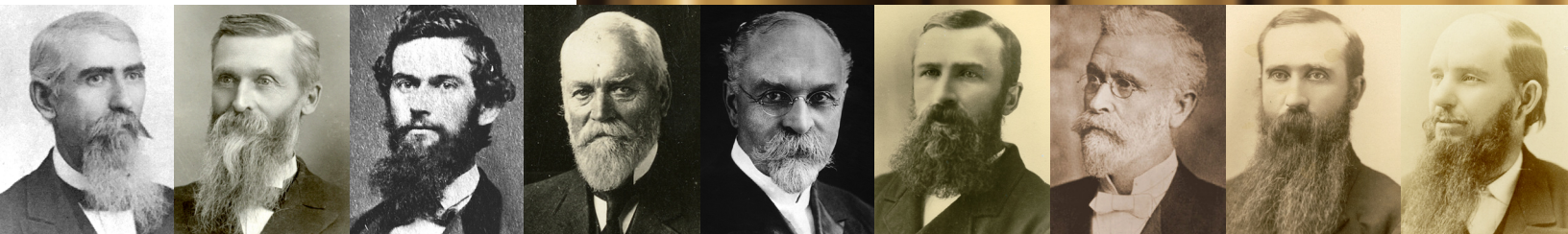
8. Ellen G. White, Letter 60, 1901 (June 28, 1901) par. 2.

9. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Elmshaven Years*, vol. 5, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), p. 76.

10. Ellen G. White, Ms. 43, 1901, par. 4.

11. *General Conference Bulletin*, April 3, 1901, par. 25.

12. Ibid., April 3, 1901, par. 34.



N.W. Allee J.H. Morrison R.F. Cottrell A.J. Breed A.G. Daniells O.A. Olsen G.A. Irwin R.M. Kilgore S.H. Lane

leaders in control. Since its inception in 1863, the church had grown exponentially, not only in terms of membership, number of conferences and missions, but also educational, publishing, and healthcare institutions. Yet, the original administrative structure remained unchanged. The two basic organizational levels (local conference and the General Conference) continued from 1863 to 1901.

The General Conference Executive Committee is the decision-making body of the church when the General Conference was not in session. This committee had just three members in 1863, five in 1883, seven in 1887, nine in 1889, eleven in 1893, and thirteen in 1899.¹³ With such a small administrative body caring for the various logistical and financial matters around the world, it became obvious that the mission expansion of the world church had outgrown the original structure. The General Conference could not adequately supervise the day-to-day operations of the conferences in North America as well as entities overseas. Under such an untenable situation, Ellen White gave the following counsel:

“Never should the mind of one man or the minds of a few men be regarded as sufficient in wisdom and power to control the work and say what plans shall be followed. The burden of the work in this broad field should not rest upon two or three men.”¹⁴

This reorganization that Ellen White appealed for came at the 1901 General Conference Session. It went down in history as



The Review & Herald publishing house burned the very year Ellen White wrote about these men exercising kingly power.

having made major decisions to embark on an “entirely different course of action” as Ellen White had admonished. The new union conference structure was put in place, the General Conference Committee was enlarged and expanded to include representatives from the world field, departments were established, and independent organizations were brought under the control of the General Conference.

Ellen White’s concern about General Conference leaders exercising *kingly power* and her comment that she could no longer consider the decisions of the General Conference as the voice of God were in this way addressed and rectified.¹⁵

Apart from general statements referring to Christ’s rightful authority, the phrase *kingly power* was used by Ellen White at specific times, for specific needs, for a specific group of people. It referred to the abuse of authority rather than the rightful exercise of

administrative authority. Ellen White is very clear regarding the authority of God’s church: “God has invested His church with special authority and power which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising, for he who does this despises the voice of God.”¹⁶

ELLEN WHITE EXPRESSES CONFIDENCE

After 1901, Ellen White increasingly expressed her confidence in the future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her clear testimonies reveal her unwavering confidence in the ultimate

triumph of God’s church.

The 1909 General Conference Session held in Washington D.C. was the first session with delegates from each of the world’s major continents. It was also the last Session Ellen White attended. She took this opportunity to reiterate the authority of the General Conference in session:

“At times, when a small group of men entrusted with the general management of the work have, in the name of the General Conference, sought to carry out unwise plans and to restrict God’s work, I have said that I could no longer regard the voice of the General Conference, represented by these few men, as the voice of God. But this is not saying that the decisions of a General Conference composed of an assembly of duly appointed, representative men from all parts of the field should not be respected. **God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when as-**

(Continued on page 4 ...)

13. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Elmshaven Years*, vol. 5, p. 71, regarding the 1899 GC Committee: “Even so, the group was widely scattered and did not often meet for a full meeting. Six of the thirteen men were the district leaders spread out across North America. Two men represented overseas work and resided overseas. This left four members of the General Conference Executive Committee resident in Battle Creek. These, with the secretary and the treasurer of the General Conference, who were not members of the Committee, formed a sort of unofficial officer group that carried the day-to-day responsibilities of the operation of the church.”

14. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 13, p. 192.

15. The Lord revealed to Ellen White after the 1901 Session that reformation effected in the Session had not gone far enough. She expressed her agony in the famous chapter “What Might Have Been” found in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp.104-106.

16. Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 164.

CREATION EXHIBIT TO OPEN DURING ANNUAL COUNCIL



Knightia fish fossils from the Green River Formation in Wyoming, USA, are among the many fossils on display at the GRI exhibit.

The Church's Geoscience Research Institute (GRI) is creating a series of scientifically accurate and faith building displays. The exhibit will be opened during this year's Autumn Council and be on display at the world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland through March, 2017.

The exhibit is free and GC Executive Committee members and others who are interested are invited to visit the exhibit.

"The displays will feature physical evidence pointing to design in nature and catastrophe in the rock record," says Dr. Jim Gibson, GRI Director. "The Scriptures provide a cogent explanation for this evidence. These displays are a testimony to both the Church's allegiance to the biblical creation and to the scientific study of origins."

The exhibit will show examples of biological beauty and many other evidences of design, such as irreducible complexity. Several displays will feature some of the abundant evidence of the worldwide flood recorded in the Bible.

"The question of time is one in which the most widely accepted scientific explanations espousing millions of years disagree with the clear record given in Scrip-

ture of thousands of years since creation," says Tim Standish, senior scientist at GRI. "Adventists don't ignore this tension and this will be reflected in the displays. However, the record of Scripture is robust," he says.

The exhibit will be open in time for Creation Sabbath, designated for October 28, 2017. All Adventist churches are encouraged to participate in this special day.

"Creation Sabbath is an opportunity to celebrate this Bible-inspired approach to the study of nature, according to Dr. Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. "The creation story and global flood explain so much, and yet we still have questions that need to be answered. Nevertheless, God's word is sure!" Wilson affirms.

For more information and resources for Creation Sabbath, visit <http://www.creationsabbath.net/>

*sembled in a General Conference, shall have authority."*¹⁷

She frankly states, in the same address, that "when, in a General Conference, the judgment of the brethren assembled from all parts of the field, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be stubbornly maintained, but surrendered."¹⁸

CONCLUSION

The notion that Ellen White's statements regarding kingly power have universal application is incorrect and should be debunked. We should use Spirit of Prophecy statements responsibly and always in context. Aside from a general use of the phrase "kingly power" and her specific counsels to individuals, Ellen White also applied it to the General Conference leadership *as it existed up until 1901* when she identified the great need of reorganization for mission. Her counsels were followed and measures were put in place to pave the way for mission expansion.

What is "kingly power" and when does the legitimate exercise of church authority become what Ellen White calls "kingly power"? Speaking of church authority she queries, "What would be the use of a church if each one is permitted to choose his own course of action? Everything would be in the greatest confusion; there would be no harmony, no union."¹⁹

The 1913 General Conference Session delegates were privileged to listen to Ellen White's final message to the Church in session. Her reassuring words were read to the session by the General Conference president, A. G. Daniells.

"I am encouraged and blessed as I realize that the God of Israel is still guiding His people and that He will continue to be with them," she wrote, "even to the end."²⁰

17. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 260-261 (emphasis supplied).

18. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

19. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, p. 296.

20. *Selected Messages*, Book Two, p. 406.

TO: ALL GC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

We hope that you have been enjoying receiving the *GC Executive Committee Newsletter* by email each month since it began in January 2017. If, for any reason, you have not been receiving it, please send your current email address to ECN@gc.adventist.org and we will be sure to add you to the list. In addition, you may access the current (and previous) issues at <https://executivecommittee.adventist.org/newsletter/>

We welcome your feedback on the newsletter and look forward to hearing from you.



DID YOU KNOW?

SPECIAL EDITION—ANNUAL COUNCIL 2017

WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE 2017 ANNUAL COUNCIL

The agenda for this year's Annual Council is filled with several noteworthy items. Although perhaps the most well-known (and discussed) item is "Unity in Mission: Procedures for Reconciliation and Adherence," the G.C. Executive Committee will be engaged in a wide variety of business items focused on the mission of God's Church.

According to Myron Iseminger, GC Undersecretary, much time will be devoted to Nurture and Retention, featuring several presentations and other segments focused on how the Church can nurture and retain its members. The Nurture and Retention Committee is chaired by Geoffrey Mbwana, a GC General Vice President, and Gerson Santos, a GC Associate Secretary, who serves as the committee's secretary.

Another item of interest is the report given by the Geoscience Research Institute (GRI), which is a General Conference institution located in Loma Linda, California. Its mission is "to discover and share an understanding of nature and its relationship with the Biblical revelation of the Creator God."¹

As part of its contribution to the Annual Council this year, the GRI staff have prepared a special exhibit that will open in the GC Visitor's Center during Annual Council, and will be on display through March 2018 (see story about exhibit on p. 4).

During the meetings, several reports will be given, including the G.C. Secretary's Report, presented by G.T. Ng, well-known for his quick wit and engaging presentations. Juan Prestol-Puesán, GC Treasurer, will give the Treasurer's Report, showing through charts and graphs how God has blessed His Church financially, how the funds have been used to promote the Church's mission, and any challenges that may be anticipated going forward. The GC Secretariat will also be presenting a number of proposed changes to the General Conference Working Policy.

Each of the 13 world divisions will present reports on Mission to the Cities featuring how the initiative is being implemented in large urban areas within their territories.

Other reports to be given include: Urban Mission; G.C. Auditing Service; Sabbath School and Personal Ministries; Archives, Statistics, and Research; Public Campus Ministries; Special Needs Ministries; Women's Ministries; and Children's Ministries.

Other items include presentations by the Ellen G. White Estate, Council on Evangelism and Witness, the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists Project*, Planned Giving and Trust Services, *Adventist Review/Adventist World*, and Total Member Involvement.

A commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation is planned during the Annual Council, as well as a presentation on current ecumenical trends.

This and more awaits you at this year's Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee. We look forward to seeing you, and invite you to pray for God's guidance as we meet together.

1. "Our Mission," www.grisda.org

Members of the GC Executive Committee are traveling from these 94 countries and territories to attend Annual Council 2017:

Angola	Kenya
Argentina	Korea
Australia	Latvia
Austria	Lebanon
Bangladesh	Liberia
Bahamas	Madagascar
Belarus	Malawi
Belize	Martinique
Bolivia	Mexico
Botswana	Moldova
Brazil	Mozambique
Bulgaria	Myanmar
Burundi	The Netherlands
Cameroon	Nepal
Canada	New Zealand
Chile	Nigeria
China	Norway
Colombia	Pakistan
Congo	Panama
Costa Rica	Papua New Guinea
Cote d'Ivoire	Paraguay
Croatia	Peru
Cuba	Philippines
Curacao	Puerto Rico
Czech Republic	Poland
Denmark	Portugal
Dominica	Romania
Dominican Republic	Russia
Ecuador	Rwanda
El Salvador	Senegal
Ethiopia	Serbia
Fiji	Singapore
Finland	South Africa
France	South Sudan
Georgia	Spain
Germany	Sweden
Ghana	Switzerland
Guatemala	Tanzania
Haiti	Trinidad and Tobago
Honduras	Uganda
Hungary	United Kingdom
India	United States
Indonesia	Ukraine
Italy	Uruguay
Jamaica	Venezuela
Japan	Zambia
Kazakhstan	Zimbabwe

* We have attempted to make this list as complete as possible and apologize if your country or territory was overlooked.

DAYCARE OWNER LEADS 45 TO BAPTISM IN JAPAN

Mayumi Nagano, 58, is one of the most influential Seventh-day Adventist women in Japan.

She nearly died twice before she started school.

Mayumi grew up with an alcoholic father and a mother who suffered mental illness. Neither kept an eye on the little girl, and she twice knocked a kettle filled with boiling water off the stove. Both times, hot water drenched her body, leaving her with permanent scars.

"God saved my life twice," Mayumi said in an interview.

When she was 9, her mother disappeared, never to be seen again.

Mayumi's first glimmer of hope came in the sixth grade. An American moved next door and taught her to speak English and read the Bible. She couldn't believe her ears when she read the Golden Rule in Matthew 7:12, where Jesus said, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them" (NKJV).

"When I heard that verse, I know that I had found a way forward," Mayumi said. "I couldn't change my past, and my scarred skin would remain. But I realized that I could give to other children the love that I wanted from my parents."

It was then that the idea began to form in her mind that she would take care of children.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN

But several difficult decades passed first. She married at the age of 21 and divorced 10 years later. She became an alcoholic and a heavy smoker. She tried to commit suicide. When she remarried at 38, she began to build a new life. She was horrified at what she saw when she began working at a daycare center.

"So, I started my own daycare business with a customer-first policy," Mayumi said. "I would take children without any conditions, even those with a fever."

The daycare, located in Mayumi's home, was open 24 hours a day, year-round. Five hundred families flooded her with applications for the 10 available spots. It was 50 times the number she could handle. She never rejected a sick child. If a child had a fever, she sent a babysitter to the child's home so the other children wouldn't be infected.

While Mayumi was taking care of other people's children, she was having trouble



with her own. She had two daughters, and the younger child refused to go to her fourth-grade classes. The daughter complained that the public school teachers called her "stupid" and punished her by hitting her on the shoulder or arm. The music teacher once struck her on the head with a tambourine.

Mayumi looked for other local school options and found an Adventist school nearby.

"The Adventist school was like paradise in comparison to the public school," Mayumi said. "The teachers were very nice."

A NEW LIFE

Her daughter quickly adapted to the new school and, several years later, was baptized. Soon Mayumi, her husband, and their other daughter were baptized as well.

After baptism, Mayumi began to change. Once overweight, she became trim and fit. She was smiling and happy all the time. Friends, parents, and even former daycare children asked her what had happened, and Mayumi boldly told them about her newfound love for Jesus. Because of her influence, about 30 of her former daycare

children, now teens and young adults, are studying in Adventist schools today.

"I advised my former babies to go to Adventist schools long after they had left the daycare, and many agreed!" she said.

About 45 of her former daycare children and their parents have been baptized over the past four years. This dedicated daycare owner has led more people to Christ than any other Adventist in Japan, local church leaders said.

The Adventist Church has just 15,150 members in this country of 125 million people.

Today Mayumi and her staff run a large Tokyo daycare center with 50 children, mainly from non-Christian families. She is determined to reach more people for Christ, and is finalizing plans to open a lifestyle center for children with mental challenges such as ADHD and Asperger's Syndrome.

— ANDREW MCCHESENEY
Editor, *Adventist Mission*

www.adventistmission.org