

Appeal to Those in the Reform Movement or Those Considering Such Membership

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Some 15 years have passed since the Biblical Research Institute first published the book I authored, *The Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement*. When the manuscript was first written, I was relatively new in my experience within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. If you read the book today, it is natural to ask if anything has changed between the time it was first published until today. The answer is—not really.

My leaving the Reform Movement was based on doctrinal issues, not on personal grievances. First of all, I want to say that there are many wonderful people who are members of the Reform Movement, including many of my own relatives. These people sincerely believe what they have been taught. But sadly they have developed a mind set which tends toward being critical of others who may not see matters the same way they do. They believe that they are doing God's will when they look for faults, reasoning that they are fulfilling the commission of Ezekiel 9:4 to "sigh and cry for the abominations that are done in the midst thereof."

They seem to be convinced that in order to remain pure they must remain separate from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which they see as fallen and rejected by God. This concept of rejection is based on the mistakes made by some leading brethren at the beginning of World War I. They fail to consider the extreme mercy of God toward his imperfect people. Elijah thought that he was alone in upholding the true worship of God within his nation, but he did not begin a new organization or a new nation. In his hour of greatest discouragement, God reminded him that there were still 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed their knees to Baal.

Having now served as a pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for nearly 20 years, I would be the first to acknowledge that, as a people, we have many problems. There are many

who claim to be Seventh-day Adventists who are not living out the truth they know. We are not all that the Lord desires His Remnant Church to be. We are desperately in need of a revival and reformation! Individually we need to heed the counsel of the True Witness in Revelation 3:18-20.

Despite this realization, I am so very thankful to realize that, as it was in ancient Israel, within the Seventh-day Adventist Church many of God's faithful servants are standing in the forefront, holding up the standard of truth. I have witnessed a vast number of faithful witnesses to the power of the gospel who are being marvelously used by God in spreading the message of truth to the ends of the earth by every means possible, ranging from personal witnessing to radio, television, public evangelism, health outreach, etc.

While groups such as the Reform Movement spend a great deal of time and effort pointing out the faults of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the question is whether they are examining themselves and actually doing better. What are the fruits of their ministry? You see, in the days of Jesus, there was a group of people who, seeing the apostasy among God's people, made the decision to separate themselves from even their fellow countrymen in order to avoid ritual and spiritual pollution. They called themselves, "Pharisees," or "the separate ones." It is interesting to note that this is the very class that was the most antagonistic to the work of Jesus Himself. I am convinced that this should serve as a warning today to those who feel that they must separate themselves from the Adventist Church in order to remain pure.

According to Revelation 18, the final message will lighten the whole earth with the glory of the Lord. Sadly, when one looks at the impact of groups like the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement, it is obvious that they are making almost no impact on the communities where they live. Their major mission is to draw people from the Adventist Church rather than to evangelize the lost. The gospel commission calls us to go to every nation, tongue and people, proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am thankful to be a part of a movement that is making an impact for Jesus Christ to the

ends of the earth. I think of the wonderful reports of how the Lord is at work in Africa, India, Inter-America, South America, and other places on earth. I praise the Lord that truly the Holy Spirit is working through humble servants to reach the lost on planet earth with the message of salvation. My mind goes to the innovative approaches being used in an attempt to share the good news with people in one of the most difficult mission fields, North America.

On the other hand, groups like the Reform Movement are content to mostly address their message inward toward Seventh-day Adventists instead of to the millions of lost souls about to perish in their sins. Their appeal is that they have a “purer” message to prepare a people for the coming of Jesus. This work could be done even more effectively within the organized Adventist Church.

I want to appeal to all those in the Reform Movement and those who may be considering becoming members of that or of similar movements: Instead of preaching the message of separation, which is what Satan would like to accomplish, heed the appeal from Jesus himself. When he prayed to his Father about his disciples, he implored: “that they may be one, even as we are one.” (John 17:22.) Or, as the messenger of the Lord appeals, let God’s people “draw together.” It is Satan’s desire to break up the work. The Lord calls for unity.

“When the storm of persecution really breaks upon us, the true sheep will hear the true Shepherd’s voice. Self-denying efforts will be put forth to save the lost, and many who have strayed from the fold will come back to follow the great Shepherd. The people of God will draw together, and present to the enemy a united front. . . . The love of Christ, the love of our brethren, will testify to the world that we have been with Jesus and learned of him. Then will the message of the third angel swell to a loud cry, and the whole earth will be lightened with the glory of the Lord.”—6T 401.

Let us all join together in proclaiming the Three Angels’ Messages to the ends of the earth so that Jesus can soon return, and we can go home.