

THE SENIOR BISHOP

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In my dream, Becky and I are walking up the front steps of a very large Seventh-day Adventist Church. At the top, greeters open the doors to meet us. One shakes our hand and says, "Welcome." Another says, "Happy Sabbath" and hands us a bulletin. Inside the foyer, three deacons quickly approach us. The one in the middle states, "We know who you are. You are welcome to join us, but go in, sit down, and don't make any comments."

Entering the sanctuary, we notice it is enormous. It has several large, round pillars that support a balcony. As we walk toward the front left side, we are approached by several elders who stop us half way up. One states, "We know who you are. Sit down and be quiet. We will be watching you."

Becky and I proceed on and sit down a few rows from the front. I now notice three pastors peer out at us from behind a curtain on the far right side of the platform. They walk over to us and we stand up, extending our hands to greet them. They look at our hands and then up at us, and the middle pastor says, "I am the senior bishop of this church. I, along with my two assistants, know who you are. We have alerted our staff to keep an eye on you. You are welcome to join us for our grand presentation, but you are to sit down and keep quiet. We want no advice, nor do we want to hear any of your stories." I notice the congregation of well over 2,000 are intently watching the discussion unfold, but cannot hear what is being said. However, because the three pastors smile the whole time, it gives the illusion that they are offering us a warm welcome.

The three turn and walk back to the room on the far right behind the curtain. We now hear the magnificent pipe organ begin to play. As we all kneel, a processional of those who will sit on the platform walk out from the right side. Everyone is focused on the 3 deacons followed with 4 elders, then 3 pastors followed with 4 elders, and ending with 3 deacons. All are dressed in very ornate robes that are decorated with fine gold and silver and reach to the floor. The deacons and elders wear black robes. Two of the three pastors are dressed in blue robes with very decorative sashes, belts and ropes that hang from their shoulders, neck, and waist. The middle pastor, who called himself the senior bishop, stands in an all white robe. It is arrayed with jewels and sashes and decorative tasseled ropes. On his head sits a miter with part that comes down his back and part that comes down the front to his chest. He speaks with slow hand gestures and holds one hand with two fingers always pointing upwards. He talks of the one and only great true god that saved this earth and how he is the ruler of this earth. He explains that we are to have no other gods but him and that he is the god of this earth and we must worship and honor him in all that we do.

Suddenly during his opening talk, a computer-controlled pipe organ begins to play the closing processional march for those on the platform. Everyone realizes it is a computer malfunction. The organ is in a locked room on the back left side of the sanctuary. The six platform deacons rush to the microphone, as the senior bishop backs away, and they begin barking orders to the lesser working deacons to quickly correct the problem.

Many deacons now rush to find the right key to the thick, ornate door. I notice many of the members now stand to take in the whole scene. They notice the platform "pontiffs" look very displeased. It makes one think that if those searching for the keys were actual employees they would be fired for being incompetent. The pontiffs are thinking, "This is terrible. This service is to be a perfect presentation of such pomp and circumstance. This is a great catastrophe." The people on the platform now look down at me, and the senior bishop stares at me as if to say, "This is your fault; you have caused this."

Finally a lowly deacon finds the right key, unlocks the door, goes in and stops the music. As soon as it stops, a screen comes down behind those on the platform and a movie begins to play, showing all assembled the private daily lives and concealed sins of those that sit on the platform. Again the deacons try to stop the video and silence the audio, but they cannot. Those on the platform try to look innocent and to remain calm. The scenes and the language in the movie portray the basest of all carnal lusts.

As I watch those on the platform all arrayed in priestly robes, I am reminded that this is one of our prominent Seventh-day Adventist churches. One at a time those who demanded that I sit down and keep quiet now stare at me. The one in the middle who called himself the senior bishop stares at me as if all is my fault. I sit with my hands folded across my chest. Then I lean over to Becky and tell her that even though this is one of God's churches, it is not His service. I explain that the day will soon be here when the Great Hand picks up this church as if it is a salt shaker and shakes out all those who are not His salt. Soon His church will be restored to where the services are holy, reverent, and that honor and glorify God's name. At this time it is all about glorifying man's name and nothing more than an entertainment arena. Soon God will shake His church and remove the filth of those that serve self and not God.

I now stand up and tell Becky we are leaving and that it is better to worship our Savior at home than be defiled with the evil ones of these halls. I tell her that there are others who seek the purity of a reverent church service. There are those who seek a church that is mindful of worshipping and placing honors on God, not on man. There are others who desire with all their heart a church that truly worships our Father, a church that is not a building, but a church that is a unified people.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Number 32:23 . . . behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.

Matthew 5:13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Early Writings, pp. 124-125

I was shown the necessity of those who believe that we are having the last message of mercy, being separate from those who are daily imbibing new errors. I saw that neither young nor old should attend their meetings; for it is wrong to thus encourage them while they teach error that is a deadly poison to the soul and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. The influence of such gatherings is not good. If God has delivered us from such darkness and error, we should stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has set us free and rejoice in the truth. God is displeased with us when we go to listen to error, without being obliged to go; for unless He sends us to those meetings where error is forced home to the people by the power of the will, He will not keep us. The angels cease their watchful care over us, and we are left to the buffetings of the enemy, to be darkened and weakened by him and the power of his evil angels; and the light around us becomes contaminated with the darkness.

I saw that we have no time to throw away in listening to fables. Our minds should not be thus diverted, but should be occupied with the present truth, and seeking wisdom that we may obtain a more thorough knowledge of our position, that with meekness we may be able to give a reason of our hope from the Scriptures. While false doctrines and dangerous errors are pressed upon the mind, it cannot be dwelling upon the truth which is to fit and prepare the house of Israel to stand in the day of the Lord.

Following is an option, if necessary:

The Review and Herald, October 14, 1884

On the Sabbath the few friends here assembled in Edson's parlor for a Sabbath-school. There are four families--twelve persons in all--who usually meet for worship. Edson conducts the Sabbath-school when he is at home. After Sabbath-school they either have a Bible-reading or a prayer and social meeting. This is as it should be. The family altar should be established in every home; and if in any locality there are no more than two or three of like precious faith, they should meet together. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."