

# From the G.C. President

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**O 3ABN BOARD REJECTS AGREEMENT:** I am deeply disappointed to report that the Board of Directors of Three Angels Broadcasting Network voted not to sign an agreement with the General Conference for a mutually supportive global distribution of satellite programming.

The April 7 edition of *"From the G.C. President"* reported that the General Conference has been in dialogue with Three Angels Broadcasting Network attempting to document a working relationship. The draft agreement (recommended for approval by almost all of the 3ABN Board members on March 20), neither presumed or proposed change in 3ABNs governance or programming and it specifically excluded General Conference "control." But it did provide the members in each country a voice if they felt the programming distributed by 3ABN in their territory was detrimental to the work of the church. Even that "voice" was not unilateral. It proposed a five-step issues-resolution process which culminated with a three-person binding arbitration panel (one from 3ABN and one from the division involved plus a third party agreed upon by those two).

In addition to utilizing satellite technology to fulfill the task our Lord assigned to His church and to do so without duplicating expenses, another reason to reach an agreement with 3ABN was that several divisions voted that an agreement was vital to building a long-term relationship with 3ABN.

One division appealed "to the General Conference to facilitate future initiatives that will help each congregation fulfill their soul-winning and soul-retaining responsibility. Given the willingness and interest of Three Angels Broadcasting Network to support and expand a television ministry within the territory of the \_\_\_ Division, ... we request the General Conference to take such steps as may be necessary leading to formalizing and documenting the relationship between the General Conference (and) Three Angels Broadcasting Network ... in order to ensure that through the normal denominational representative process, the voice, interests, and ultimately the authority, of the members of our respective ... constituencies are protected, for of course, absent an approved record of such understandings we must reluctantly decline to accept, or otherwise participate in ..., the generous offers which have been or may be extended."

In addition to disappointment, I admit to some confusion. The tone of the 3ABN Board action was gracious and affirmed its support for "the work of the church" and "continued loyalty to the cause of the church" yet the stated reason for the rejection was that "3ABN, its staff, its board, and many of its viewers and supporters perceive a serious potential threat to the continuing effectiveness and operation of the ministry of 3ABN by entering into any type of contractual agreement with the church."

While denying the constituent authority of members in each country the right to be heard in an activity which directly affects their ability to fulfill the mission for which they are responsible, 3ABN affirms the "authority of its president," yet expresses its concern about the exercise of "kingly power" in the church.

While I am a confirmed optimist and pray the 3ABN Board

may reconsider their decision, there are so many major evangelistic events already scheduled and we are committed to moving rapidly toward the objective of global coverage, that the General Conference has no option but to proceed to establish a global satellite delivery system and pray that 3ABN will subsequently agree to join the church in this initiative.

## Off the Back Burner

**Segment #62:** I frequently wondered, during my years in public evangelism, why, with one Bible there are so many churches? Is the Bible that confusing and hard to understand? Have you ever seen Seventh-day Adventists use the Spirit of Prophecy to support opposing position? Of course. We have all seen the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy abused by those who read or use either with a wrong attitude or faulty reasoning. Throughout history this abuse has misrepresented God and led to terrible conflicts—because people become like the God they worship!

In Adventist history, the abuse of Ellen White mirrors this long abuse of the Bible, and, generally for the same reasons. For the next few segments I will highlight some of the more common misuses of Ellen White's writings (also applicable to the Bible). The causes for most abuses can be organized as follows: (1) a wrong attitude, (2) a confused understanding of revelation/inspiration, (3) an inability to separate the sacred from the common, (4) a mistaken understanding of how prophets use sources, and (5) a disregard for context. Let's consider these individually.

**Wrong Attitude.** Ellen White believed that "the Bible was given for practical purposes" (1SM:20) and that "no one need be lost for want of knowledge, unless he is willfully blind" (Ibid:18).

However, recognizing the challenge of communication she noted that "it is difficult for one mind to give to one of a different temperament, education and habits of thought by language exactly the same idea as that which is clear and distinct in his own mind. Yet to honest men, right-minded men, he [an author] can ... convey his meaning for all practical purposes." But if the reader "is not honest and will not want to see and understand the truth, he will turn his words and language ... to suit his own purposes" (Ibid:19).

Ellen White lamented that some treated her writings, "In the very same way that they treat the writings in my published articles and in my books, so do skeptics and infidels treat the Bible. They read it according to their desire to pervert, to misapply, to willfully wrest the utterances from their true meaning" (Ibid). In our next segment we will look further at how the reader's attitude determines how truth is perceived.