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15 August 2002 Editorial: GCO an Issue-Oriented Site Seeking to Uphold the Third Angel's Message

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From time to time we find we are misunderstood. On occasion Adventists discover this site and find it to be more than they bargained for. They may feel it is too hard on "the church," or even on an individual. From time to time we want to say something to help clarify that.

The purpose and mission of this site is *to uphold the third angel's message*. It is not and has not been to attack people or units of the church. It is to uphold Seventh-day Adventism.

Regrettably we are seeing more and more pluralism in the church. This is troubling. We mustn't forget that the church is to be the pillar and ground of the truth. It has a carefully defined set of beliefs and mission. Its teachings are unified and meant to be shared in common with one another, you know, as in one faith, one Lord, one baptism.

In my particular case, as an employee of the church, and an ordained minister no less, I am employed and endorsed to uphold the expressed beliefs of the organization that employs me. The world church has recognized and affirmed their conviction of a call by God. I (and all SDA ministers) have been charged to uphold the truth of the gospel -- particularly the gospel in the present-truth setting.

Thus when it becomes apparent that objectionable or illegitimate changes in ideas are being presented against the truth, ministers are charged to rise up and defend against them. If they come from outside the organization, we are called to meet them, and if they come from within it is the same. Truth is always truth and error is always error, no matter where it starts; when it is found inside the church a minister is like a white blood cell. He must faithfully give the warning, faithfully seek to protect the body.

Again, from time to time we discover cowardice or irresponsibility in administration. There are not only doctrines to uphold but agreed upon policy voted by constituencies. This must be kept in harmony with the varied units of the church that interlink. A Union is required to keep its Constitution and Bylaws in harmony with prescribed and mandated Constitution and Bylaws model documents that the church has voted and affirmed as policy. Church administration is charged with the responsibility of keeping all this together.

Some might think these policies and such are just more machinery, but actually, there are many points in place in such documents that -- were they only *obeyed in trust* -- would be helps in keeping the church together and preventing departure from the right. We don't want to see that, but there are occasions when it is proper to address such things. Open mutiny and/or betrayal of the faith must be met with open defense of and support of the faith. Does that make sense?

Some may label such as criticism of the church, but others see it as giving the trumpet a faithful blast. Consider our analogy again. If a sickness is taking hold somewhere in the body, and your immune system takes action to protect the body, to root out the intrusion of disease, will we say that the immune system is being critical of the body? Will we charge it with evil when it is doing its duty?

How thankful ministers are that their work embraces more than just their being continuous watchmen in that sense. Just as one's bodily energies do more than root out trouble, they often prevent it and simply operate to keep the body healthy, so too the work of a minister is mostly directed to the spiritual needs of the congregation he ministers to. It is positive and healthy, edifying, building-up. We are always glad when our energies can be directed more in that direction than the other.

This site represents only one window on things, one view-port among many. It is a specialty site, an issue-oriented site. It always has been and probably always will be. You who visit the site should keep in mind that that is what it is. Don't think this is for people at random. It is true that anyone can stumble across it on the net, but if you'll think about it, no book or hard-copy can really be guaranteed to be non-public. What we don't do and never plan to do, is buy mailing-lists or pay for advertisements or banner ads on non-Adventist sites (actually, we don't do any advertising at all, it is just word of mouth). This site is for Adventists. While the mainstream denominational press has given little room to those not embracing troublous new views, this site seeks to uphold the faith delivered to the saints. We want to see the third message go forward all the way, no matter how unpopular that becomes!

Remember, we don't force anyone to visit this site. It is inevitable that those who are opposed to certain of our views will claim that we are not presenting our perspective aright. And there is no guarantee that we won't sometimes in fact make a mistake and become guilty of that. At the same time it is true that those seeking with subtlety to introduce different ideas into the body that cannot be sustained by the inspired materials will inevitably be distressed about this part of our work. Oh well.

Let those who visit here, and particularly those who do and might feel we are being unduly hard on "the church" realize that we are the church just as much as you are the church just as much as the General Conference is the church. We are seeking to sustain what our presses have published for a century and a half and still publish as the truth. Last time I looked, we were, as a church, still publishing the Great Controversy, Christ's Object Lessons, Steps to Christ, and all the other books from inspiration's pen. More than those, we

are charged to uphold the teaching of Scripture. Fortunately, we find the two groups of materials (Bible and Spirit of Prophecy) to agree with each other and can freely uphold both, for both contain the message for this hour that this religious body is charged to give at this hour.

There are auto-immune diseases. There are times when the human body's immune system attacks itself. We could never attack our own church for teaching Sabbath observance; that would be destructive to the body. We could never attack our own church for teaching the investigative judgment; that would be destructive to the body. However, we will defend God's own church from those who project error into her midst on these or other points, whether from inside or outside. That's OK. That's the body functioning as it ought.

This website, far from being bad news is, we gather, an encouragement. Many who've been on the verge of abandoning the organized church structure have here been told, "Wait! Hold on tight. Stay with us. Stand for truth. Don't budge an inch." Indeed, a short search of the Ellen G. White CDROM will reveal that she says members of the SDA church are not to treat our membership in the church as an indifferent matter. It is high on my value system -- although I know it won't save me -- to be a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

I hope that never changes. For me, or for you. Let's uphold the third angel's message together. We are part of the people of God. Together. We too are the church. We too have a voice. We too have a charge. This is no hour for cowardice. GreatControversy.org will strive to strike the right note in a most difficult time when some are singing off-key. We covet your prayers that we may attain this. God grant us each one strength for fealty to Him.



Pastor **Larry Kirkpatrick** is an ordained minister of the gospel. Since 1994 he has served in the American Southwest as pastor to several churches. He received his BA in Religion from Southern Adventist University in 1994 and a Master of Divinity from Andrews University in 1999 with a specialization in Adventist Studies. While in Michigan he was employed by the General Conference at the White Estate's Berrien Springs branch office. Far surpassing in importance his scholastic preparation has been his immersion in the biblical and [Spirit of Prophecy materials](#). Presently he serves as Pastor of the [Mentone Church of Seventh-day Adventists](#), located near Loma Linda California. Larry is married to Pamela. The couple presently live in Highland California along with their two children, Etienne and Melinda.

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