



*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

*"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
the hour and the end!"*
Eze. 7:6 (Moffat)

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

PART TWO

Even as there can be corporate repentance, so there is corporate guilt. Unless there is guilt, there would be no need to call for repentance. When therefore, judgment is executed because repentance has not followed the act of transgression which brought the guilt, how does God relate to the corporate identity involved? Does He separate the individuals who are not directly involved from the leaders who have led the people into sin? In other words - to put it plainly - will the laity and the rank and file of the ministry be spared the judgments of God upon the hierarchy who have led in the apostasy from the truth of God? In seeking an answer to this question, we shall consider the God of the Old Testament, the God of the New Testament, and the God revealed in the Writings.

The God of the Old Testament

In the days of ancient Israel, on their way to the land of promise from Mount Sinai, rebellion broke out. Korah, Dathan and Abiram challenged the leadership of Moses. In turn, Moses called for the leaders, and those associated with them, to appear before the sanctuary that God might reveal His will. Dathan and Abiram refused to come. The Lord then ordered all of the congregation of Israel to separate from the tents of these men. Because Dathan and Abiram would not appear at the tabernacle, Moses went to their tents, followed by the elders of Israel. Observe what followed.

Moses spoke to the congregation saying:

Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs lest ye be consumed in all their sins. So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram

came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children. (Numbers 16:26-27) [The little children had not joined in the manifesto which their grandfathers had sent to Moses. See Numbers 16:12-14]

Here were two families - corporate identities - standing together. Two men had sinned - the heads of the households. Here were ties of loyalty, kinship - and there was the command which had been uttered but a little while before from Mt. Sinai - "Honor thy father and thy mother." Would corporate identification take precedence over individual responsibility, or would the latter prevail? How would the decision of the sons of these men - Dathan and Abiram - affect their "little children"? Would God separate them from the judgment upon their fathers who had sinned? The record continues:

And Moses said... If the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up,... They and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them. (Numbers 16:28-33)

While the families of Dathan and Abiram fell together under the judgment from God, because they refused to separate themselves from their corporate identity, the record also notes that the sons of Korah did not die. (Numbers 26:10-11) They did not appear with their father and the two hundred and fifty princes who had assembled at the door of the sanctuary to challenge the leadership of Moses and Aaron. The sons of Korah chose to exercise their individual responsibility, and refused to be identified in the corporate entity which initiated the rebellion, and thus they escaped the judgment of God.

The God of the New Testament

On the Day of Pentecost - at the time of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as promised by Jesus - there were assembled in Jerusalem for the feast, Jews, "devout men, out of every nation under heaven." (Acts 2:5) These were not wicked men - but "devout" - who had come to Jerusalem from the diaspora to celebrate the feast in harmony with the instruction God had given. A few perhaps had come for the Passover, and remained the fifty days till Pentecost, but most were not even present when Jesus was crucified. Quickly coming together due to the excitement and witness engendered by the coming of the Holy Spirit, they listened intently as Peter explained the meaning of what had and was taking place. They heard him say:

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know;... ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. (Acts 2:22-23)

Those who had not been present at the feast of the Passover were not moved. They had no part in the crucifixion of Jesus - they were not anywhere near. Those who might have come for both feasts knew that the Romans had done the act. It was their hands that were "wicked" not theirs. So they continued to listen, very sure they had no accountable guilt. Then Peter returns to the theme again, and brings it home. Note:

Let all the house of Israel [the corpus of Israel] know assuredly that God hath made this same Jesus whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:36)

Strong conviction took hold of them. Whether present or not, whether a part of the mob which shouted - "Crucify Him!" - or not, and definitely not a Roman soldier, still they were being charged by God as guilty of the blood of Jesus Christ, and accountable as participants in the crucifixion because of their corporate identity. Pricked in their hearts, they cried out to Peter and to the rest of the disciples - "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37) Their response to Peter's counsel would determine whether they would be included in the judgment of God upon the nation of Israel.

The God of the Writings

There are those among the professed people of God who would have us believe that the God with whom we have to do today is not the same God as yesterday. They vainly hope that the

God who declared - "My Spirit shall not always strive with men" (Gen 6:2) - no longer holds to this dictum, but will grant unlimited time to an insubordinate people for them to repent of their apostasy. The laity are told that God is too merciful to visit His people in judgment. Look, they are advised, at all the great and wonderful institutions which God has permitted to be built as monuments to His glory. Will He forsake such a people, and such an organization, they are asked?

The reasoning goes - God is different today. Times have changed. He may have called into account the Jewish people who "cherished the idea that they were the favorites of heaven, and they were always to be exalted as the church of God." (COL, p. 294) But this will not be true of the corporate body today. It is going through. To such the God of judgment has died. But the God of the Writings is the same God who spoke in Old Testament times, and Who through the Holy Spirit gave the same message on the Day of Pentecost. Read this prophecy carefully:

The Lord commissions His messengers, the men with the slaughtering weapons in their hands: "Go ye after him through the city, and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity; slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom in the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house."

Here we see that the church - the Lord's sanctuary - was the first to feel the stroke of the wrath of God. The ancient men, those to whom God had given great light, and who had stood as guardians of the spiritual interests of the people, had betrayed **their trust**. ... Times have changed. These words strengthen their unbelief, and they say, The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil. He is too merciful to visit His people in judgment. Thus peace and safety is the cry from men who will never again lift up their voices like a trumpet to show God's people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins. These dumb dogs, that would not bark, are the ones who feel the just vengeance of an offended God. (5T:211)

As we read this, we say, "Amen, Lord, let it be." Those who betrayed their **sacred trust** should suffer the just vengeance of an offended God. **BUT**, this is not all of the prophecy. There is one more sentence. It reads - and as you read - tremble for yourselves, and weep for the others:

Men, maidens, and little children, all perish together.

Why? Because they are identified corporately in the guilt of their leaders, and have refused to

exercise their individual responsibility. The God who held the sons, the son's wives, and their little children guilty with Dathan and Abiram; the God who held the "devout men" of Israel equally guilty with the "wicked hands" who crucified the Lord of glory, is the same God who will visit in judgment, not only the leadership who have "betrayed their trust," but also the laity - the men, women with their families - who by their corporate identity have supported that leadership by acquiescing to the apostasy, and who have upheld their hands by theirs and the Lord's means. Is it not time for an awakened laity, pricked by the Holy Spirit as were the devout men of Israel on the day of Pentecost, to cry out - "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

"What Shall We Do?"

When convicted of the reality that God does hold individuals accountable for the actions of leaders and officers in a corporate identity, "devout men" of the House of Israel realizing that they had shared in the crucifixion of the Son of God, cried out from an anguished heart - "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" In response to this heart cry, Peter outlined certain steps to be taken by which they could escape the judgment of God. He said - "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)

Peter closed his counsel with the admonition - "Save yourselves from this untoward [crooked] generation." (Acts 2:40) This Spirit-indited directive, if studied in the setting of the time when given, can profit a professed people of God who face the fast approaching hour when "the church - the Lord's sanctuary" will be "the first to feel the stroke of the wrath of God" because the leadership, "those to whom God had given great light, and who stood as guardians of the spiritual interests of the people, had betrayed their trust." (5T:211)

Peter told the "devout men" of Israel to "Repent!" This word - metanoēō - means basically to change one's mind. This change of mind for the men of the house of Israel involved a change of understanding in regard to Jesus Christ. They had knowledge of the fact that "Jesus of Nazareth" had been a man "approved of God." (Acts 2:22) Why then had they not accepted Him prior to the Day of Pentecost? While approved of God, Jesus had not been approved by the leadership of the Church to which they belonged. In fact, it was the leader-

ship of the Church who had turned Him over to the Romans for crucifixion. While these "devout men" had not taken part in the deliberations, nor voted the death of Jesus, they had in reality consented to the crime committed by continuing in the forms and ceremonies of that Church, and by quietly acquiescing to the direction the leadership was taking them. Why?

"The Jewish people cherished the idea that they were the favorites of heaven, and that they were always to be exalted as the church of God. They were the children of Abraham, they declared, and so firm did the foundation of their prosperity seem to them that they defied earth and heaven to dispossess them of their rights." (COL 294) And "the foundation" upon which they built their hope was none other than "the word of God" to Jeremiah. (See Jer. 31:35-37) How could this word fail? Here was a promise of "eternal favor" - the House of Israel was going through! All they had to do was to stay with "the House." But they overlooked the "conditions" upon which the promise was made. "To a people in whose hearts His law is written, the favor of God is assured. They are one with Him." (DA 106) But here was a people whose leaders had made of none effect the commandments of God by their tradition - teaching for doctrine, the theology of men, instead of the truth of God. (See Matt. 15:6-9) And those devout Jews assembled together on the Day of Pentecost were following those leaders, right or wrong.¹ Peter told these men of Israel to "repent" - change your mind, come to your senses, cease to be deluded by a false sense of security.

The admonition of Peter carried the same theme as was sounded by John the Baptist as he prepared the way for the ministry of Christ. John told his hearers - "Bring forth therefore fruits answerable to an amendment of life and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our fathers." (Matt. 3:8 margin) In other words, get this theory out of your mind that you are and always will be the favorites of heaven for God is able of "stones" to raise up "children unto Abraham." (Luke 3:8) Peter preached with even greater conviction than John, because he had heard Jesus Himself declare - "Your house [no longer God's house] is left unto you desolate." (Matt. 23:38) The temple veil had been rent, and the apartment of the Unseen Presence could be gazed upon by human eyes with no fear of retribution because that Presence was no longer there. (Matt. 27:51) It dare not be overlooked that similar language is used in

the present time concerning the Church: "The glory of the Lord **had departed** from Israel; although many still continued the forms of religion, His power and presence were lacking." (5T 210) And - "'My Father's house is made a house of merchandise, a place whence the divine presence and glory **have departed!**'" (8T 250)

Besides changing their way of thinking - repentance - the "devout Jews" were to make an outward confession which would publicly declare their change of thought. Each one who changed his mind was to be "baptized...in the name of Jesus Christ." Among those assembled to hear Peter were "proselytes." (Acts 2:10) These had been baptized as a symbol of their acceptance into Judaism so as to be numbered among "the House of Israel." (8BC, article, "Baptism") Now they were told to be baptized again, and the other "devout Jews" who would also change their thinking, would by this act change their identity from the corpus of Israel to the corpus Christi. Only thus could they find remission for the sin of the ages - the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, which was in reality the crucifixion of truth - doing the desire of their father the devil, who abode not in the truth. (See John 8:44)

Peter concluded his advice and counsel by telling those convicted to "save themselves from this crooked generation." (Acts 2:40) In so advising, Peter was bringing together a concept from the Pentateuch, and a charge that both Jesus and John the Baptist had used in confrontation with the Jewish hierarchy. Moses had written that God was "the Rock" upon which Israel was founded - "a God of truth." But Israel had "corrupted themselves" and had become "a perverse and crooked generation." (Deut. 32:4-5) Both Jesus and John had zeroed in on the why of Israel's predicament. John the Baptist seeing many of the Pharisees and Sadducees among his listeners spoke directly to them - using a symbol of crookedness - saying: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matt. 3:7) Jesus was even more emphatic. Addressing the scribes of the Law and the Pharisees, He declared - "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matt. 23:33) Thus Peter, knowing through the Holy Spirit, the damnation upon the hierarchy, warned those who did not wish to be included in the corporate guilt, and thus the corporate judgment to save themselves from that crooked generation.

Those who responded to the counsel of Peter

were baptized - signifying the passing from the corpus of Israel to the corpus Christi - and "continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship." (Acts 2:41-42) Through Christ the Truth, and by the coming of the Spirit of Truth, the original faith was restored to men. No more need men follow traditions and perverted concepts of the scribes and Pharisees. The truth as given by the Rock of Israel became the basis of the Corpus Christi.

In the final hour of human history, when the power of the enemy to deceive the world would appear to be supreme - "it seemed the whole world was on board; that there could be one left" - the messenger to the Remnant was advised to "look in an opposite direction" and she saw "a little company traveling a narrow pathway. All seemed to be firmly united, **bound together by the truth**, in bundles, or companies. Said the angel, 'The third angel is binding, or sealing them in bundles for the heavenly garner.'" (EW, 88-89) Thus the basis of the final revelation of the corpus Christi is the same as it was at its inauguration - Truth, pure and unadulterated. (TM 65) This group - brought about by the Third Angel (EW 118) - "come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." (Heb. 12:22) These realize that the Jerusalem "which now is... is in bondage with her children," therefore, they transfer their allegiance and loyalty to the "Jerusalem which is above" which "is free, which is the mother of us all." (Gal. 4:25-26) In this we find the answer to the question - "What shall we do?"

¹Concerning this very concept held by the Jews that they were always to be exalted as the church of God, the warning is given - "These things 'are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.'" (DA 106)

²Rebaptism of "devout" Seventh-day Adventists, when truth is understood and experienced, is also called for. See Evangelism, p. 375. This does not mean a baptism back into so-called "historic" Adventism under a false manifestation of the Spirit of God.

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LET'S TALK IT OVER

In a recent issue of the Eastern Oklahoma Catholic (August 23, 1992), official organ of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Tulsa, was an article captioned - "Don't Attack Mary or the Church." The author, a Roman Catholic convert, had helped organize a Marian Peace Conference. In the article (a letter she wrote responding to some one who had sent her anti-Catholic literature because of the conference), after quoting several texts from the Bible, she comments:

I am sure you do not believe that God stopped working after the Scriptures [were] written. I believe this is the reason we are having so many modern day prophets, with people receiving messages from angels, The Blessed Mother, Jesus and the Father, Himself. ...

But, isn't it in Scripture, that it says, judge a tree by its fruits? Since the Blessed Mother has been appearing in Medjugorje, Yugoslavia, there have been many, many conversions back to Jesus Christ, including people previously identified as Moslems, Protestants and Catholics.

All over the world now we are hearing about someone getting messages from a heavenly messenger. While I do believe we must proceed with discernment, caution and, most importantly, prayer, I believe God is diligently working through these messengers to bring all mankind (not just Catholics) back into His Light. (p. 5)

This last paragraph was emphasized in the letter-article. While we can recognize the working of the "spirits of devils" bringing about the final unification of earth under his control, there is an ominous ring in the evidence cited that God is working. Are we not being told about the results of evangelistic endeavors behind what was once "the iron curtain" in the pages of the Adventist Review. Is this not being cited that God is working marvelously for the Church? But will the Spirit of truth attest to the betrayal of truth? No matter how we want to paint the picture, the 27 Statements of Fundamental Beliefs voted at Dallas, Texas, in 1980, altered, changed, and negated fundamental principles of truth expressed in previous Statements of Belief. How can we then carry the Everlasting Gospel to those in Eastern Europe with a negation of that Gospel? See WWN-5(92), art. - "The Everlasting Gospel".

It is Christ, and Christ alone, who is the way of salvation; not Mary, nor the Church. Unless we

recognize that "the righteousness of Christ ... is pure, unadulterated truth" (TM, 65), our religious teaching is empty theory. All the pretentious celebration hoop-a-la within the regular Church or the "primitive godliness" facade of certain "independent ministries" echoes only human criteria of God's supposed leading. The Adventist Community is in crisis. The reasoning used by Catholicism is also being used in Adventism, and tragically the same "spirit" is manifest, spiritism in angelic robes. "Different delusions [are] prepared to affect different minds." (EW 261)

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PARAPHRASED COMMENT

The devil has been able to lead dedicated members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to gradually compromise the pure truth of the Bible. Working through human agents, he at first brought a slight change in doctrine, and the people not wanting to cause trouble, failed to protest. They accepted the change merely to keep peace. In a short time the change didn't seem so bad, and the devil was ready with another change. Now after forty years, those who awaken find themselves not a little out of line with truth, but way out of line.

Now the devil has another deception ready for those who awaken - "historic Adventism"! When he leads the devotees of these men down this road, they will be in the same state that the Church was when the compromises first began forty years ago. What is needed is progressive basic Adventism. And the men crying "historic Adventism" are incapable of meeting the real need of God's concerned people.

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