

THE CARLSON LETTER

Part One of Three

Richard and Bonnie Carlson, and their grown daughter, Kimberley, were workers at Prophecy Countdown in Mount Dora, Florida. Richard was also on the Board of Directors of that organization.

The following letter was penned amid much sorrow, and is the expression of people who have pled for changes which have not occurred.

We are especially shocked that John would demand that Carlson's daughter switch from simple Christian music to a more worldly, bouncy style.

On behalf of the three of them, the following letter was written by Richard and Bonnie Carlson. Italics are theirs.

October 7, 1994

To the Staff and Supporters of
Prophecy Countdown
and to the
Independent Ministries

When I was the research/correspondence secretary at Prophecy Countdown, it was my privilege to read and answer the letters addressed to John Osborne or the ministry. When letters were answered, they were given to John Osborne's secretary who then sent them out.

The problem was that answered letters would sit on John Osborne's desk for weeks without being returned to me. Eventually, I found out why when I was called into Kathleen Greenfield's office to be interrogated (they call it "being interviewed") by her and Bill Hughes. They did not approve of a letter I had written to a woman who had written to the ministry asking for counsel on whether or not she should leave the conference church because of the apostasy and give her support to an independent ministry.

The lady was very troubled and I empathized with her problem and gave much careful thought as to how I should answer her, since I didn't want Prophecy Countdown to appear to take advantage of her vulnerable situation by persuading her to support Prophecy Countdown over the conference church and other independent ministries.

I gave her Spirit of Prophecy statements on both sides of the issue in order to allow her to make up her own mind on this controversial subject. Christ does not force the conscience of anyone, and I did not feel that it was the place of Prophecy Countdown to do so either.

In addition, to state to this woman that she should go where truth is being preached and to insinuate that truth is being preached at Prophecy Countdown, as Bill Hughes told me in Kathleen's office that I should have done, is a dangerous supposition. The Davidians, for instance, believe they follow the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy even more closely than Seventh-day Adventists. I offered to change, delete, or do the letter over to suit them, but they indicated to me that they noticed a tone in my letters of *disloyalty to the ministry* and so I was fired. Kathleen told my husband, Richard, and I, while we were still in her office, that they had already hired a correspondence secretary to take my place which turned out to be a falsehood, because to this date they do not have a correspondence secretary.

This made it very difficult for Richard, my husband, who was on their board and was also the Shortwave Radio Program Director as well as Television Production Manager. He tried to reason with them. He told them that it would be impossible for us to make ends meet on only one salary and reminded them of the statement in *Testimonies to Ministers, 300*: "Workers may make mistakes, but you should give them a chance to correct their errors, give them an opportunity to learn caution, by leaving the work in their hands." But they were not willing to listen or to follow Matthew 18. (We will send you a copy of this letter if you request it.)

As a result of my husband's standing with me in upholding Bible and Spirit of Prophecy principles, he was asked to resign two weeks after my firing. He told them he could not resign because he believed the Lord had brought us here to work at Prophecy Countdown. So, they fired Richard as well.

These are two more examples of a long history of discriminatory actions related to employees which indicates that this organization

is not run by Biblical principles and religious ethics, but by total control of its employees . . . otherwise known as popery. At Prophecy Countdown, if you are not 100% in favor of the ministry and everything that goes on there . . . you are a traitor and become “the enemy” which must be gotten rid of. **This should help explain why 40 plus employees have either left or been fired over the last three years with 22 in 1994 alone.** Things are not right at Prophecy Countdown. After my first week of working there where I started as Dianne Osborne’s and Kathleen Greenfield’s secretary, I had mentioned to Pat Shafer that I felt like I was working for the Mafia.

We realized that television viewers are not aware of these things because they only see the GLOSSY IMAGE on the screen. It has reached a point that we, as well as many others, are very concerned about the lack of integrity at Prophecy Countdown. We know that many of the employees are aware of these things and are loyally clinging to a ministry whose leader is not Christ, but a man. They mistakenly believe, as we all have, that, if we can stand as did Daniel, we may have an influence for good. However, it always results in the employees leaving rather than changes being made.

We are very concerned for the trusting supporters of this ministry who are innocent to the deceptive practices played out among the inner circle of power at Prophecy Countdown (meaning John, Dianne, Kathleen, and Patti). Even though Pat Shafer is on the board, she once referred to them as the “Roman Wedge” because of the board within the board situation. But our major concern about this ministry is the honor of God.

Shortly after the [spring 1994] shake-up when a large number of the employees left or were fired, my husband was asked to serve on the board. **This is when he began to see, first-hand, the operations of PC and was shocked to see the sham, deceit, and deception that was continually being perpetrated on the naive staff and supporters of the ministry.**

He was also instructed that he should not share any of this information with his wife, family, friends, fellow staff members, or anyone inside or outside of the ministry. So he kept quiet. In fact, he has felt sick for some time about the state of affairs at PC and would have departed

long before, except for the fact that he felt, as others had before him, that he could be a positive influence.

After having worked at this ministry, we are much saddened to report that there is not much difference between the conference church that John Osborne condemns and John Osborne’s own ministry. These are the reasons:

1. Prophecy Countdown is a hierarchy organization.
2. The leader uses mind control.
3. There is use of Celebration-style gospel music.
4. There is much use of theatrics.
5. The leader uses praise and flattery.
6. There is no financial accountability provided the supporters of the ministry.

The question that we must ask ourselves is, Could there possibly be counterfeits among the independent ministries? We know that Satan always has his counterfeits. John Osborne seems, on the surface, to be preaching truth, but are the fruits there?

In our disappointment with the increasing apostasy sweeping through the conference churches and their failure to uphold the pillars of our faith and lowering the standards, most of us have fallen prey to various independent ministries who claim to be preaching truth. This is not to say there are no true and faithful independent ministries doing a good work, but we must take into consideration that Satan always has his counterfeits and is working feverishly to deceive the elect. *Is it possible that an independent ministry could be part of the prophesied false reformation?*

Apostasy has been foretold in the Spirit of Prophecy, but it has also been foretold that, at this time of apostasy, “Every conceivable power of evil will be set in operation, and minds will be confused by many voices crying, . . . ‘This is the truth, I have a message from God. He has sent me with great light.’ ” In this time of apostasy, who is leading the many “isolated voices” coming from all directions . . . God’s Holy Spirit or an evil spirit? John Osborne always says, “Look at the message, not the man.” Because we have all sinned, we can all say “Amen” to that.

But notice what Ellen White has to say. “Men may speak fluently upon doctrines, and may express strong faith in theories, but do they

possess Christian-like meekness and love? If they reveal a harsh, critical spirit, they are denying Christ. If they are not kind, tender-hearted, long-suffering, they are not like Jesus; they are deceiving their own souls. A spirit contrary to the love, humility, meekness, and gentleness of Christ, denies Him, whatever may be the profession." (*Review and Herald*, February, 9, 1892).

On January 1, 1994, John Osborne, announced over nationwide television and short-wave radio during a fund-raising telethon, (speaking of the General Conference):

"One of us is the true and faithful and genuine Seventh-day Adventists and one of us is a counterfeit. One of us is Babylon masquerading as Seventh-day Adventists and one of us are true Seventh-day Adventists. **If our God is a true God we are going to raise the five million. We're not going to raise five million,—we're going to raise five and one half million by May 16 . . . we're going to take control of that station in September.**"

Neither of the two predictions came to pass on the dates specified.

The money was not raised by May 16 nor did Prophecy Countdown take control of the station in September. In fact, the money has not been raised to this date. Most of it was borrowed. Borrowing is not the same as raising the money from supporters.

John claims that borrowing the money is God's plan B when in actuality this is John's plan B. Our prophet wrote: "To handle sacred things as we would common matters is an offense to God; for that which God has set apart to do his service in giving light to this world is holy. *Those who have any connection with the work of God are not to walk in the vanity of their own wisdom, but in the wisdom of God, or they will be in danger of placing sacred and common things on the same level, and thus separate themselves from God.*" (*Review and Herald* September 8, 1896).

In order to determine who is preaching truth in a world where we know that truth and error will run so closely together that it will be easy to be deceived, the Biblical test for who is preaching truth is found in Matthew 7:20, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." We have also been forewarned in Matthew 7:15-16, "Be-

ware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits." "Meekness and humility are the fruits of the Spirit." (*Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 4, 301).

Someone has said, "If one's 'hobby horse' leaves one destitute of the most elementary of Christian virtues . . . common courtesy . . . what genuine value is there in one's promotion of that 'hobby horse'?" Such a voice is only as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." Anyone who claims to be preaching "truth" but is devoid of love and compassion is, indeed, preaching a "false gospel."

During the January 1 telethon, John Osborne made the "challenge" to the General Conference; and then the following Sabbath, on January 8, 1994, he announced that he had an impression from the Lord that either the General Conference structure would fall or his ministry would fall in 1994. We trembled for him.

"You may be sure that *pure and undefiled religion is not a sensational religion*. God has not laid upon anyone the burden of encouraging an appetite for encouraging *speculative doctrines and theories*. My brethren, keep these things out of your teaching." (*Australasian Union Conference Record*, March 15, 1904).

"The enemy will watch closely and will take advantage of circumstances to degrade the truth by the introduction of *undignified demonstrations*. None of these demonstrations are to be encouraged. *The precious truths given us are to be spoken in all solemnity and with sacred awe.*" (*Manuscript 19*, 1910).

Please read this plea from an S.D.A. brother:

"Dear brothers and sisters in the church, May I plead with you to consider how serious is the willful intent to mislead on the part of the unscrupulous writers and speakers who sanctimoniously criticize others of falsity and apostasy. *The very things they accuse others of doing are clearly things they themselves have problems with.* Let us be more discerning about who we follow or what we follow or what we proclaim to be special 'light' for this time. Too frequently, these merchants of dissension *use a veneer of supposed late-breaking prophetic fulfillments to appeal to Adventists to give support to their causes.* Repeatedly, fanciful reports of prophe-

cies fulfilled *have proved to be hoaxes.*”

Can we honestly believe that a constant tirade proclaiming the apostasy in the churches will bring a people to the place of “soul affliction and sorrow for sin”? Instead, it has produced a pharisaical Laodiceanism unmatched by the church itself in its Laodicean state.

Many of those who are “sighing and crying” over the apostasy are developing a smug complacency, thanking God that they are not like their former brethren who are now firmly entrenched in the entertaining ecumenical-style churches. **These concerned souls are for the most part unmindful that the same psychological techniques that are being decried, are the same techniques being used on them by the very “voices” who are decrying their use.**

These are serious issues and times in which we live, which make it imperative that we be “as wise as serpents and harmless as doves,” so that we will not be among the deceived.

It will possibly be thought that this is being critical, revengeful, negative, or as Prophecy Countdown leaders have often said of those who have either left or been fired, that they were doing the work of Satan in being an “accuser of the brethren.” On the contrary, it is with much sadness that these facts are brought to light. We, as well as many of you, wanted nothing more than to work in a ministry that was truly the Lord’s ministry, and felt that as long as “truth” was being preached that this was the right place to be—but how wrong one can be.

Below are listed some of the items that are very disturbing aspects of Prophecy Countdown:

MIND CONTROL

John Osborne preaches against NLP and hypnotism. However, by studying his videotapes, it can be demonstrated that John uses the very concepts he denounces. He seeks to sway the minds and emotions of his viewers by habitually and unnecessarily repeating his words and statements by a pompous stance, bodily contortions, dramatic theatrical facial expressions, and by raising the pitch of his voice to irritating levels which tend to agitate and unsettle the nervous systems of the listeners. He also beguiles his listeners by assuming an air of the proverbial persecution complex which draw upon the pity and sympathies of his audience by the use of well-

timed tears and emotional outbursts.

Another basic tool of NLP is called “anchoring.” This is done by touching or placing a hand on the shoulder of another individual which is used to “anchor” or “embed” a suggestion, statement, or idea. The usual effect on the individual this is done to is that they will override their own personal convictions, judgment, and belief system in favor of the one who has just touched them. This can result in desensitizing our moral integrity where we can even call wrong right and right wrong. These techniques are methods commonly used in NLP and hypnosis.

You will recall that John has accused Vance Ferrell of inaccurate reporting and, at the same time, demonstrates his tendency to pick up a rumor and repeat it without bothering to verify its accuracy. **But John is a master at mind manipulation. He operates on sensationalism and capitalizes on whatever he feels will capture his audience and appeal to the emotions of the hearers, to win them over to himself. It may be an expression heard only moments before, but if it pleases him, he will latch onto this and repeat and hammer this into the minds of his listeners.**

This psychological control is as dangerous as NeuroLinguistic Programing!

“Men think they are representing the justice of God, but they do not represent His tenderness and the great love wherewith He has loved us. *Their human invention, originating with the specious devices, of Satan, appears fair enough to the blinded eyes of men, because it is inherent in their nature. A lie, believed and practiced, becomes truth to them. Thus the purpose of satanic agencies is accomplished, that men should reach these conclusions through the working of their own inventive minds.*

“But how do men fall into such error? By starting with false premises, and then bringing everything to bear to prove the error true. In some cases the *first principles have a measure of truth interwoven with the error, but it does not lead to any just action, and this is why men are misled. In order to reign and become a power, they employ Satan’s methods to justify their own*

Continued on the next tract

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Part Two of Three

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

principles. They exalt themselves as men of superior judgment, and they have stood as representatives of God. These are false gods." (*Testimonies to Ministers*, 364).

"God will not vindicate any device whereby man shall in the slightest degree rule or oppress his fellow man." (*Testimonies to Ministers*, 366).

"Whatever in our practice is not as open as day, belongs to the methods of the prince of evil. His methods are practiced even among Seventh-day Adventists, who claim to have advanced truth." (*Testimonies to Ministers*, 366).

THEATRICALS

Another troubling aspect is the theatricals. Everything—everything—is done for show. There should be no theatricals in our worship services. "Not one jot or tittle of anything theatrical is to be brought into our work." (*Evangelism*, 137). The habit of parading and prancing across the stage while presenting a sermon is most distracting to the hearers during the presentation of the vital truths of God's Word.

A godly Christian has no room to be proud, to boast, to be heady and high-minded, to be flamboyant, frivolous, flippant, or to display a challenging defiant spirit with which to antagonize those who do not agree with him. In addition to our words, our pose, our carriage, our stance and our mannerisms all speak of God or they speak of self. This common practice of setting aside the pulpit and pacing the platform while speaking or singing *sets the stage for acting* and is charismatic and mesmerizing in nature. It draws men to the speaker and not to God.

Entertainment and "performing" have no place in a true church of God whether it be in an exhilarating "pleasing address" which feeds our carnal nature and emotions or in unholy seductive music, patterned after the world's degraded taste in music, for they all serve to lead away from the truth and from God. This also causes the holy angels to depart and the evil angels to come flooding in to take full control of the meeting.

Regardless of the type of music we enjoy now we are commanded, by God, to come up to a higher level of holiness and praise the Lord. He

will transform our tastes and give us the power and the ability to enjoy the sacred and the holy, untainted with the things of this world.

Are you aware of the fact that most of John's videos are nothing more than theatricals? In putting a script together to make a video, John will insert prompts before his statements to tell himself when to, for example, "laugh; ask; smile; shake head; be firm; whisper; pause; praise; get Bible; lay Bible down; be mad, slow, puzzled, up, strong; take a deep breath; be calm; chuckle; be sad, with a long pause, sarcastic; mock; etc. It is a known fact that he uses a dresser-type mirror and a full-length mirror to look at his profile and as he practices the script for his videos; he will walk around with the script in his hand, rehearsing over and over his attitudes and expressions in front of the mirrors.

"Ministers in the desk have no license to behave like theatrical performers, assuming attitudes and expressions calculated for effect. They do not occupy the sacred desk as actors, but as teachers of solemn truths. There are also fanatical ministers who, in attempting to preach Christ, *storm, halloo, jump up and down and pound the desk before them, as if this bodily exercise profited anything. Such antics lend no force to the truths uttered, but, on the contrary, disgust men and women of calm judgment and elevated views. It is the duty of men who give themselves to the ministry to leave all coarseness and boisterous conduct outside the desk at least.*

"Awkward and uncouth gestures are not to be tolerated in the common walks of life; how much less, then, are they to be ensured in the most sacred work of the gospel ministry. The minister should cultivate grace, courtesy, and refinement of manner. He should carry himself with a quiet dignity becoming his elevated calling. Solemnity, a certain godly authority, mingled with meakness, should characterize the demeanor of him who is a teacher of God's truth.

"The cause of God is in no need of unconverted jolly ministers. This man's spirit is not at all in harmony with the solemn work in which

are engaged . . . What is the object of the ministry? Is it to mix the comical with the religious? The theater is the place for such exhibitions. If Christ is formed within, if the truth with its sanctifying power is brought into the inner sanctuary of the soul, you will not have jolly men, neither will you have sour, cross, crabbed men to teach the precious lessons of Christ to perishing souls." (Letter 15, 1890).

"Some who stand in the pulpit make the heavenly messengers in the audience ashamed of them. The precious gospel, which it has cost so much to bring to the world, is abused. There is common, cheap talk; grotesque attitudes and workings of the features. There is, with some, rapid talking, with others a thick, indistinct utterance. Everyone who ministers before the people should feel it a solemn duty to take himself in hand. He should first give himself to the Lord in complete self-renunciation, determined that he will have none of self, but all of Jesus." (Testimonies to Ministers, 339, 1896).

"Decorum is necessary in the desk. A minister of the gospel should not be regardless of his attitude. If he is the representative of Christ, his deportment, his attitude, his gestures, should be of such a character as will not strike the beholder with disgust. Ministers should possess refinement. They should disregard all uncouth manners, attitudes, and gestures, and should encourage in themselves humble dignity of bearing. They should be clothed in a manner befitting the dignity of their position. Their speech should be, in every respect, solemn and well chosen." (Testimonies, Vol. 1, 648-649, 1868).

PRAISE AND FLATTER

This leader, John Osborne, praises and flatters men whom he chooses to favor and promote in return. John receives much praise and adulation from his fans. It is in this manner that he gains a following. It is the work of Satan to use flattery and trickery and bribery. **In the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, we are instructed to not use one word of flattery and praise for man because all praise should go to God.** Jesus, when He was called "Good Master," refused to be called good and answered that only His Father in heaven could be called "good." (See Matthew 19:17). "Praise no man; flatter no man; and permit no man to praise or flatter you.

Satan will do enough of this work." (Evangelism, 630). This is the kind of humility that God's true followers must have!

MUSIC

The music at Prophecy Countdown is very similiar to some Celebration-style churches. Permit me to give you an example:

When Ralph Henderson left Prophecy Countdown, John Osborne was left without a soloist so he brought our daughter, Kimberly, from Berrien Springs, Michigan, to be the soloist for his crusade. She also had her degree in Business Management and became their desktop publisher when Bob Wells left. She began by singing the traditional classical sacred music, but John told her it was too conservative and that she was to sing only contemporary gospel music, the kind that appeals to the emotions.

One afternoon, he was on his way to Kimberly's office and called me into her office with them. He told me, with words to the effect, that he understood that our taste in music was different than his but that since this was his ministry and he was the leader, our family was not going to change him. He was going to change us! This was said as he pointed his finger in my face! John gave Kimberley the ultimatum that if she would not agree to this . . . they could not work together! He gave her instructions to go to the music stores, listen to contemporary gospel singers, and to copy, learn, and sing their style of music.

Kimberly agreed to give it a try and to do what he asked, but I was in a state of shock. However, I was not allowed to disagree with him as it was true that it is his organization (even though I had originally thought it was the Lord's!). John told Kimberley that Prophecy Countdown would pay for all her music and also pay to have the soundtracks re-orchestrated for the purpose of removing the heavy drum beat. This cost the ministry a couple hundred dollars to have the soundtracks separated out so that the drum could be removed or toned down somewhat. Even though worldly gospel-rock music is "cleaned up" so to speak, it still does not make it "sacred" music.

This brought to mind the statement in the Spirit of Prophecy, "The things you have de-

scribed as taking place in Indiana the Lord has shown me would take place just before the close of probation. Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be *shouting, with drums, music, and dancing.*" (2 Selected Messages, 36).

Keep in mind that Kimberley previously had been praised by John Osborne for doing a "great job," but from this time forward the Carlson family began receiving the cold treatment. It was becoming apparent that since we did not concur with him on the subject of music, our jobs were on the line.

It was only a matter of time before Kimberley resigned due to their cruel and unprofessional treatment of her, and we were fired.

Another indication that this ministry is not operating under the banner of truth is indicated in the type of music that is used. In his video series, *"The Greatest Crisis in Adventism,"* John Osborne has pointed out the errors in the Celebration-type churches and services, but a major part of this system of error is centered around a style of music.

Celebration-style (Pentecostal) music is easily identified by several factors. It is often performed in the same style as rock music and resembles nightclub and dance hall tunes except for having religious words:

1. It has a *predominate beat.*
2. It has a melancholic, *repetitious chanting.*
3. It glorifies and *draws attention to the performer* rather than to God.
4. It produces a euphoric *emotional* state of mind in the hearers.
5. It is performed with *dramatics* and *worldly body language.*

Music that appeals to the emotions is not spirituality based; but rather it appeals to the lower nature, weakens the intellectual thinking part of the brain, and projects the hearers into a hypnotic mind-set, making the individual susceptible to the power of suggestion.

In essence, it works to deaden the conscience, making it virtually impossible for the individual to differentiate between truth and error and the proper discernment of moral issues. There should be a distinct difference between the sacred and the profane. True Christians will not compromise high standards by catering to the unholy tastes of the uncon-

verted in the hope that, in this way, we can reach souls for the kingdom and keep them in the church. We must lift one another up to Jesus by holding our standards high and the Lord will surely bless!

"Avoid emotionalism. Sill others go to the opposite extreme, making religious emotions prominent, and on special occasions manifesting intense zeal. Their religion seems to be more of the nature of a stimulus rather than an abiding faith in Christ." (*Evangelism*, 502).

It appears that Mr. Osborne uses music solely for the effect and for display because he is currently making music videos of himself singing out in nature. He was motivated, by a close friend, to do this with the idea that it would appeal to his fans and increase his donations.

"Your singing is for display, not to praise God with the spirit and understanding. The state of the heart reveals the quality of the religion of the professor of godliness." (*Letter 1a*, 1890).

"True ministers know the value of the inward working of the Holy Spirit upon human hearts. They are content with simplicity in religious services. Instead of making much of popular singing, they give their principal attention to the study of the Word, and render praise to God from the heart. Above the outward adorning, they regard the inward adorning, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. *In their mouths is found no guile.*" (*Manuscript 21*, 1891).

"Form and ceremony do not constitute the kingdom of God. Ceremonies become multitudinous and extravagant as the vital principles of the kingdom of God are lost. But it is not form and ceremony that Christ requires. He hungers to receive from His vineyard fruit in holiness and unselfishness, deeds of goodness, mercy, and truth.

"Gorgeous apparel, fine singing, and instrumental music in the church do not call forth the songs of the angel choir. In the sight of God these things are like the branches of the unfruitful fig tree which bore nothing but pretentious leaves. Christ looks for fruit, for principles of goodness and sympathy and love. These are the principles of heaven, and when they are revealed in the lives of human beings, we may know that Christ is formed within, the hope of glory." (*Manuscript 123*, 1889).

“Singing is seldom to be done by a few.” (*Counsels on Health*, 481-492).

“Music, when not abused, is a great blessing, but when put to wrong use, it is a terrible curse.” (*1 Testimonies*, 497).

“When professing Christians reach the high standard which it is their privilege to reach, the simplicity of Christ will be maintained in all their worship. *Forms and ceremonies and musical accomplishments are not the strength of the church. Yet these things have taken the place that God should have, even as they did in the worship of the Jews.*” (*Manuscript 157*, 1889).

PRIDE

A humble servant of God will speak words of truth in humility using no other part of self other than his voice to uphold Christ and to avoid distracting the hearers from receiving the Lord’s blessing. He does not seek attention for himself and would prefer that self be not seen at all if it were to lead even one soul away from Christ so that the beauty of Christ may shine through and uplift the thirsty soul to be fed straight from the throne of God.

“The value of our work does not consist in making a loud noise in the world, in being zealous, eager, and active *in our own strength* . . . The value of our work comes through trust in God, which brings holier qualities of mind, so that in patience we may possess our souls. We should continually pray to God to increase our strength, to make us strong in His strength, to kindle in our hearts the flame of divine love. *The cause of God is best advanced by those who are meek and lowly in heart.*” (*Evangelism*, 631).

Meek: (1) Showing patience and humility, gentle. (2) Easily imposed upon, submissive.

Lowly: (1) Having, or suited for, a low rank or position.

“The Lord wants them to forget themselves to save souls. Our life is worse than a failure if we go through life without leaving waymarks of love and compassion. God WILL NOT work with a harsh, stubborn, loveless man . . . God will use humble men, men who will cherish a sense of their weakness, who will not think that the work of God depends on them. Such men will remember what the service of God demands from them—the propriety of speech and action that God calls for. They will reveal that

Christ dwells in the heart, imparting purity to the whole being.” (*Letter 197*, 1902).

“My brother, I have an intense desire that you shall be a man after God’s own heart. You must make a change in your life. You have most precious truth to present, but you must put on the gospel shoes—your feet must be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. *Your manner of addressing people is not always pleasing to God.* You need to feel His converting power upon your soul every day. You are full of physical strength and energy, and you need much of the grace of Christ, that it may be said of you as it was of Him, “Thy gentleness hath made me great.” When the Holy Spirit takes possession of your mind and controls your strong feelings, you will be more Christlike.” (*Letter 164*, 1902).

It is imperative that we have spiritual eyesalve to be able to discern truth from error and to test all things by the Word of God. Satan is mixing his sophistries in with seemingly sound doctrine and this deception is almost overwhelming to God’s people in these end times.

We have been and still are shocked to see apostasy come into the S.D.A. conference churches who fed us watered-down truth, and so we turned to independent ministries whom we believed to be the true and faithful, preaching the straight truth because we needed a safe life-line to cling to after leaving the conference churches.

The startling revelation is that there is a shaking taking place even among these groups. God is trying to teach us that we cannot with safety “lean on the arm of flesh,” but we must with our whole being cling to God or we will certainly be deceived and shaken out by every voice claiming to be the true church and preaching the name of the Lord. We must test everything by the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy and prove all things with a “thus saith the Lord.”

THE NAME, “HISTORIC ADVENTISTS”

Seventh-day Adventists have a wonderful name because they are the remnant church who keep the commandments of God and have the

Continued on the next tract

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faith of Jesus. We have not been told by the messenger of God to call ourselves by any other name including *Historic Seventh-day Adventists, Reformed Adventists, Separatists, etc., because we have always been and still are 'Seventh-day Adventists,' and will continue to be so.* "We are Seventh-day Adventist. Are we ashamed of our name? We answer, 'No, no! It is the name the Lord has given us. It points out the truth that is to be the test of the churches.'" (2 *Selected Messages* 384; see also 1 *Testimonies*, 223-224).

We are to build on the solid platform hammered out after the passing of time in 1844. Are we to stop building? NO!

"Upon this foundation we have been building for the past fifty years . . . We are God's commandment-keeping people. For the past fifty years every phase of heresy has been brought to bear upon us, to becloud our minds regarding the teaching of the Word,—especially concerning the ministration of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, and the message of heaven for these last days, as given by the angels of the fourteenth chapter of Revelation. Messages of every order and kind have been urged upon Seventh-day Adventists, to take the place of the truth which, point by point has been sought out by prayerful study, and testified to by the miracle-working power of the Lord. But the waymarks which have made us what we are, are to be preserved, and they will be preserved, as God has signified through His Word and the testimony of His Spirit. He calls upon us to hold firmly, with the grip of faith, to the fundamental principles that are based upon unquestionable authority." (*Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 2, 58-59*).

Nowhere does it say that we are to change our name for any reason. We are now 150 years from 1844 but we still hear the cry, "We have all the truth, stay with "historic Adventism." In so doing we have put a period to our spiritual growth, and blinded our eyes to "the advancing truth" and "increasing light" God would have shine upon our paths. This is pure Laodiceanism. Tragically, all that many "concerned Adventists" have done is to transfer themselves and their support from one Laodicean condition to another

equally as dangerous.

We are told that truth is progressive and those adopting such an Adventism will be walking in the light that "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." "Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His Word . . . But as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men rest satisfied with the light already received from God's Word, and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They become conservative, and seek to avoid discussion." (5 *Testimonies*, 706-707).

It appears that instead of being a watchman on the tower, we have been sleeping at our post of duty and thieves have come in and stolen this most valuable precious possession . . . our name.

We, as a people, are fragmenting into polarized groups as we choose any one or more of the 1,000 winds of doctrine that suit our ears instead of unifying and pressing together as instructed by our Lord. The Spirit of Prophecy states:

"We are all woven together in the great web of humanity, and we cannot, without loss, withdraw our sympathies from one another." (*Gospel Workers*, 331).

Perhaps there is a lesson in this for all of us! Perhaps we are expecting the various independent ministries to do the work that we should be doing.

"Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, hasten from place to place, proclaiming the warning from Heaven. *By thousands of voices all over the earth, the message will be given.*" (*Great Controversy*, 612). "As the time comes for the Loud Cry to be given, the Lord will work through humble instrumentalities." (4 *Spirit of Prophecy*, 424). "God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands. The workers will be surprised by the simple means that He will use." (*Testimonies to Ministers*, 300; see *Notebook Leaflets, Elmshaven*, 113).

We should ask ourselves, does God need thousands of dollars invested in huge, expen-

sive projects to finish the work or does He need thousands of dedicated godly people going door to door with the good news of salvation?

"You have chosen to work in a way that wears yourself out and absorbs a large amount of means. This expensive outlay of means has been presented before you in its true bearing, and you have been told that such a way of working is not in harmony with the will of God. Your expensive and peculiar methods of labor may appear at first to make a strong impression on the people, but they soon reach the conclusion that the display is made to call attention to yourself and your wife and children. The large expenditure of means is not in harmony with the solemn truths presented. Self has been placed on exhibition." (Letter 205, 1904).

The time is here when we must not depend upon anyone else to do our work for us. Each individual Christian is a ministry and a testimony to the saving power of Christ, and God's people all over the world are the simple means He will use to finish the work. It is not going to be done by any great and wonderful project or expenditure of money invested in large projects and purchases, but by humble, faithful servants scattering the leaves of Autumn to all parts of the world. What a wonderful privilege each one of us has to take part in this type of ministry.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Prophecy Countdown is a non-profit organization which functions solely from the financial donations of its supporters in the form of tithes and offerings. As such they not only are held accountable to God for the use of these tithes and offerings, but also have an obligation to the supporters to give accountability in the use of these monies by proffering and making readily available a financial statement. Requests have repeatedly been made to Prophecy Countdown for their financial statement, but the ministry has not complied with those requests. This leaves the supporters completely in the dark as to how their contributions have been appropriated. Sound familiar? Most of the supporters have given money to this organization without any concept as to how their money was being used.

On Sabbath morning, February 19, 1994,

during his sermon, "The Sacredness of Vows," John Osborne, with a wild look in his eyes, while addressing the topic of contributors who wanted their money back, looked toward the camera and angrily said, "Sorry, You AIN'T getting it back!!!"

He then proceeded to take Spirit of Prophecy quotations out of context to show why he is correct in not returning these freewill offerings.

It is a tragedy that when Prophecy Countdown goes down, as it most assuredly will if there is no corporate repentance, that it will take with it a multitude of the life-savings of many of God's people. What a tragedy!

The television ministry of John Osborne and Prophecy Countdown is not much different than any other TV ministries because the more sensational the approach, the more money is raised. "They must carefully guard against anything that borders on sensationalism. In this age of extravagance and outward show, when men think it necessary to make a display in order to gain success, God's chosen messengers are to show the fallacy of spending means needlessly for effect. As they labor with simplicity, humility, and graceful dignity, avoiding everything of a theatrical nature, their work will make a lasting impression for good. . . Outward show and extravagant outlay of means will not accomplish the work to be done." (Gospel Workers, 346).

The conference church and leaders have served, for Osborne, as the whipping post to stir up our people emotionally and draw increased financial support. A brother has stated it thus, "The continual recitation of apostasy by which to keep a steady flow of tithes and offerings into the coffers to support an 'ego' trip is not 'mourning' over the sins of others; it is merely using the cry of apostasy to cover their 'own spiritual declension.'" In this age of confusing, dissident voices, it is far safer to commit our resources to God's service when it is directed by councils of trusted men and women, rather than to give support to individual operators who shun accountability to authorized boards and committees.

Please accept this in the spirit in which it is written . . . not to condemn, but to press together in the spirit of agape love as true brothers and sisters in the Lord, to build up the body of Christ, and to encourage one another not to lean on the

arm of flesh. We know that God loves John Osborne and has emptied all heaven to save him, as well as you and I, for the kingdom. We feel that it is our responsibility to add our testimony to that of the other former employees who just recently left, that Prophecy Countdown is a self-serving private organization which is under the direction of an unstable leader and, as such, does not qualify as a ministry. A ministry ministers to the needs of others.

The attitudes of this ministry and its leader, that they are above reproach as they manipulate people's minds and virtual reality for their purposes, is what leads to the demise of religious organizations. These dangerous attitudes did not all perish in the Waco fire.

There are many former Prophecy Countdown employees who have similar experiences to relate, but, for our family, this has been a particularly difficult trial. We have always wanted to work full time for the Lord and were willing to move anywhere we felt the Lord was calling us. When Prophecy Countdown hired us to work for them, we felt that this must be where God wanted us, and so we moved to Florida. Then, as a result of standing for principle, we were unjustly fired by people we thought were Christian brothers and sisters, our fellow believers. We are now both unemployed and finding it a humbling experience that we have had to accept charity in order to survive, but at the same time we are learning to rejoice in the Lord. For we know that we are being strengthened for the times that are just ahead.

We feel we have a responsibility to God and His people, who have trustingly supported Prophecy Countdown with their tithes and offerings, to bring to light what is going on behind the scenes. Please carefully weigh this matter in the light of God's Word.

It is the conviction of many that all financial support should be withdrawn from the ministry. This may be John Osborne's greatest blessing and salvation . . . to lose it all (a challenge he, himself, made to the Lord, that in 1994 either the conference would go down or his ministry would fall).

Please pray earnestly that we may each have learned from this experience to keep our eyes fixed only upon Jesus, the true Shepherd of the flock. We also pray that we may have the wisdom

of true spiritual discernment and humble our hearts before God in standing firm on the truths of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. May God continue to guide and strengthen you through this final conflict and grant you the strength to endure unto the end. Stay faithful . . . Jesus is coming soon!

Your brother and sister in Christ,

Richard and Bonnie Carlson
P.O. Box 1243
Mount Dora, Florida, 32757

[The following postscript was added by the Carlsons:]

MORE ON THEATRICALS

"Some ministers make the mistake of supposing that success depends on drawing a large congregation by *outward display*, and then delivering the message of truth in a *theatrical style*. But this is using common fire instead of the sacred fire of God's kindling. The Lord is not glorified by this manner of working. Not by *startling notices* and *expensive display* is His work to be carried to completion, but by following Christlike methods . . . Men will recognize the gospel when it is brought to them in a way that is in harmony with God's purposes." (*Gospel Workers*, 383, 1915).

"Ministers should not make a practice of *relating anecdotes in the desk*; it detracts from the force and solemnity of the truth presented. *The relation of the anecdotes or incidents which create a laugh or a light thought in the minds of the hearers is severely censurable*. The truth should be clothed in chaste and dignified language; and the illustrations should be of a like character . . . *There is too much gesticulation and relation of humorous anecdotes in the pulpit and too little said of the love and compassion of Jesus Christ.*" (*Review and Herald*, August 8, 1878).

"All the sangfroid, which is so common, *the theatrical gestures, all lightness and trifling, all jesting and joking*, must be seen by the one who wears Christ's yoke to be 'not convenient'—*an offense to God and a denial of Christ. It unfits the mind for solid thought and solid labor. It makes men inefficient, superficial, and spiritually diseased. The conversation will be pure,*

entirely free from all slang phrases." (Manuscript 8a, 1888).

"There are persons that are ready to catch at something strange, which they can bring as a surprise upon the people, to awaken their fears and begin a strange work that will spoil the good work that has been begun right." (Letter 17, 1902).

"Never bring the truth down to a low level in order to obtain converts, But seek to bring the sinful and corrupted up to the high standard of the law of God." (Manuscript 7, 1900).

"I have a message for those in charge of our work. Do not encourage the men who are to engage in this work to think that they must proclaim the solemn, sacred message in a theatrical style. *Not one jot or tittle of anything theatrical is to be brought into our work.* God's cause is to have a sacred, heavenly mold. Let everything connected with the giving of the message for this time bear the divine impress. Let nothing of a theatrical nature be permitted, for this would spoil the sacredness of the work.

"I am instructed that we shall meet with all kinds of experiences and that men will try to bring *strange performances* into the work of God. We have met such things in many places. In my very first labors, the message was given that all *theatrical performances*, in connection with the preaching of present truth, were to be discouraged and forbidden. Men who thought they had a wonderful work to do sought to adopt a *strange deportment and manifested oddities in bodily exercise*. The light given me was, 'Give this not sanction.' *These performances which savored of the theatrical, were to have no place in the proclamation of the solemn messages entrusted to us.*

"Our success will depend on carrying forward the work in the simplicity in which Christ carried it forward, *without any theatrical display.*" (Letter 53, 1904).

"*We cannot be shepherds of the flock unless we are divested of our own peculiar habits, manners, and customs, and come into Christ's likeness.* When we eat His flesh and drink His blood, then the element of eternal life will be found in the ministry. There will not be a fund of *stale oft-repeated ideas*. There will be a new perception of truth." (Testimonies to Ministers, 339).

"However zealously the truth may be advo-

cated, if the everyday life does not testify to its sanctifying power, the words spoken will avail nothing. An inconsistent course hardens the heart and narrows the mind of the worker, and places stumbling blocks in the way of those for whom he labors . . . His language should be correct; *no slang phrases, no cheap utterances, should fall from his lips . . . There is to be no levity, no trifling, no fanciful interpretation;* the minister must speak in sincerity and deep earnestness, as a voice from God expounding the Sacred Scriptures." (Gospel Workers, 144-145, 147).

"Men who assume the responsibility of giving the people the word from the mouth of God, make themselves accountable for the influence they exert on their hearers. If they are true men of God, they will know that *the object of preaching is not to entertain.* It is not merely to convey information, nor to convince the intellect." (Gospel Workers, 152).

"The work in the large cities is to be done after Christ's order, not after the order of a *theatrical performance. It is not a theatrical performance that glorifies God, but the presentation of the truth in the love of Christ.*

"Do not divest the truth of its dignity and impressiveness by preliminaries that are more after the order of the world than after the order of heaven. *Let you hearers understand that you hold meetings, not to charm their senses with music and other things, but to preach the truth in all its solemnity, that it may come to them as a warning, arousing them from their death-like sleep of self-indulgence.* It is the naked truth that like a sharp two-edged sword cuts both ways. It is this that will arouse those who are dead in trespasses and sins." (Gospel Workers, 356).

[That concludes the Carlson Letter. If you wish to correspond with them, their address and telephone number is as follows:]

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