

# An Appeal From the General Conference

Takoma Park, Washington D.C., August 4, 1939

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*The following Appeal was approved by our church leaders at an Autumn [now Annual] Council meeting, printed in official church records, and then published in tract format and distributed widely among our denominational workers and members nearly sixty years ago.*

*It is a message for you and me today. Please, my fellow believer, please read it and take heed! It may mean the beginning of a return to a better, more consecrated way of life. Then cement that change by a daily, prayerful study of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy alone and with your loved ones.*

We appeal to our workers, first of all, to exalt the standard of righteousness, of truth, and of purity, of Christian deportment in their lives. They can lead others to Christ only as they know Christ as a living, transforming power in their own daily experience. "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord," is the divine injunction. Of His church Christ declares: "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

The Apostle Paul exhorts the church leader: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."—1 Timothy 4:12.

Our church leaders should indeed be examples of Christ to the church in every relationship of life.

## EXAMPLES OF THE CHURCH

Let us specify some concrete ways in which this should be done:

1. They should be examples in simple living, economy, consecration, and sacrifice. Their homes should be models in the community in which they live. They should have "children in subjection with all gravity." In their lives and homes there should be exemplified the principles of this gospel message.

2. Our workers should be examples in social relationships. They should not give license by their presence, or in any other manner, to attendance at the theater or movie, to commercialized baseball or other professional sports, to the worldly part of pleasure even though held in the homes of personal friends.

3. The preacher of the gospel has no part to act as a politician. His mission is to all men. He should be free from class prejudices, racial rivalries, national animosities. In the words of the Scripture, "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves."

4. Our workers should teach and exemplify in their lives and homes the principles of healthful living which has come to us by divine revelation. This is an age of gluttony and excess in eating and drinking. Disease abounds on every hand, and is increasing in form and variety. We may expect divine preservation only as we cooperate with God in obedience to the laws of health which He has ordained.

5. The church worker should be an example in Sabbath observance. He should not employ its sacred hours in picnic excursions or sight-seeing trips. He should limit Sabbath travel in his conference work to the needs and exigencies of necessary requirements.

6. Our workers and their companions should be examples to the flock in the matter of dress. Dignity, modesty, and simplicity should be the guiding principles in the choice of attire.

## EXAMPLES TO THE CHURCH

7. Christ's true representatives will make careful selection of that which comes over the radio and television. He will find neither time nor pleasure in listening to the popular radio comedians, nor in quoting the sayings of the characters depicted in the comic section of the newspaper.

8. The relations governing the association of men and women should be characterized by Christian reserve and dignity. Particularly should a Christian worker be so discreet in his words and deportment that no just reflection can be cast upon him or the cause he represents. In both his life and teachings the worker should exert positive upbuilding influence of purity and righteousness. He should manifest a cheerfulness which never finds expression in levity and cheapness, a seriousness which stops short of morbidness and pessimism, a cordiality which never admits of familiarity, and purity of speech which never descends to vulgarity. In the pulpit, in the home, and social gatherings, he must ever bear in mind that he is Christ's representative, the ambassador of heaven to a dying world.

### AN AGE OF WORLDLINESS

We are living in a age of overwhelming worldliness, and in closer physical contact with it than ever before. The automobile, the radio, and television have changed the whole atmosphere in which we live, and have made it more difficult than at any former time to maintain our separate and distinctive character. The automobile takes us to, and the radio and television brings to us, much of everything that is going on in the world. These modern inventions have created temptations of an entirely new kind in our everyday living, and have brought us into contact with influences which are the opposite of that which is wholesome and uplifting. If we are not careful, the radio and television will turn our homes into theaters and minstrel shows of a cheap and sordid kind. We appeal for a far more discriminating use of these modern developments, urging that we be conscientiously guided in their use by the long established principles of the gospel. Let us not do, nor hear, nor see, nor read, nor say, under any circumstances, anything prohibited by the divine rule given us by the apostle:

"Whatever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things." —*Philippians 4:8*.

We appeal to our ministers, our workers, our people everywhere, to keep their feet in the "old paths," and not to remove the "ancient land-

marks" of this message.

In cases where members of the church hold Bridge or similar card parties in their homes, or frequent such gatherings in other places, or have dances in their homes or attend them elsewhere, or frequent shows in theaters or movie houses, we recommend that faithful labor be put forth to reclaim such individuals from the errors of their ways; but if this proves unsuccessful, that they be dismissed from church membership.

### AN APPEAL TO THE CHURCH

Moved by a sense of solemn responsibility as leaders of God's remnant people, we, the representatives of conferences, mission fields, and institutions, believe it to be our duty to bring to the attention of the members of our church throughout the world, this statement and appeal. We view, with feelings of deepest uneasiness, the appearance among us of growing worldliness and a laxity in the observance of denominational standards. This laxity, permitted to spread and widely prevail, will obstruct and defeat the fulfillment of our divinely given commission.

This Advent movement, which is bearing the final message of the gospel to all the world, is of God. Its doctrines, its organization, its standards of life and conduct, have all come from God. He brought this movement into being at His own appointed time. It has been led by divine guidance from the beginning, and is doing His appointed work in the world.

As with God's people through the ages, so His people today are to be separate from the world. Of Israel it is said, "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." While His people must remain in the world in order to carry God's message to the world, they are not to be of the world. We are bidden by the apostle, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate . . . and touch not the unclean thing." We are admonished to "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."

Knowing that this matter of separation from the world and the abandonment of worldly practices and pleasures is fundamental in the belief of Seventh-day Adventists, we are naturally alarmed when we observe and hear of the inroads that worldliness is making in the church. This is particularly obvious in centers where large numbers of our people are gathered together. We be-

lieve we are called upon to lift our voices in solemn warning, not merely that these tendencies may be checked, but that a decided program of much-needed reformation may be entered upon, to overcome altogether these worldly drifts and tendencies in the church. We are impelled to cry out, "O Israel, prepare to meet thy God."

It would hardly seem necessary to remind our people that the use of beer, wine, and other alcoholic beverages, as well as tobacco in any form, is a test of church fellowship among Seventh-day Adventists. Those who have been led of Satan to indulge in the use of these defilements of flesh and spirit, and persist in their use after faithful warning, should be disfellowshipped from the church. The good name of the church of Christ should not be brought into ill repute by permitting any user of liquor or tobacco to remain in its membership.

#### **STANDARDS OF CHRISTIAN LIVING**

The committee, appointed at the beginning of the Council to give study to worldly trends in the church and to bring in a series of recommendations on denominational standards, presented a report.

#### **AN APPEAL TO CONFERENCE, INSTITUTIONAL, AND LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS**

To the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church throughout the world, the delegates assembled in the autumn Council, at Louisville, Kentucky, address this appeal:

This is the crisis hour of the world. It is an hour of peril and danger to the church of Christ. Satan has come down in great wrath, knowing that his time is short, and seeking by every means in his power to lead men away from God. Seductive influences are at work in every phase of human life and experience. The stable, conservative standards which have governed men's thinking in the past are being set aside. These influences have affected, in large measure, the nominal Christian church. More and more she is joining affinity with the world, and the line of demarcation is being fast obliterated.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church must meet the impact of these untoward and unholy influences. Heaven has committed to this church a definite message of reform. This message is to

go, not alone to the godless world who never knew Christ, but to the great professed Christian church as well. The remnant church is commissioned, by High Heaven, to erect, in the midst of the prevailing iniquity of this degenerate age, a standard of truth and righteousness, of purity and Christian conduct.

In this work of reform the first and greatest responsibility rests upon the leadership of this movement. This leadership includes the ministry, our conference and institutional leaders, our church elders and their associate officers, and also the wives of these various classes of workers.

We have confidence in the leadership of the remnant church. In large measure and for the most part, the leadership is composed of earnest, godly men and women who sense the high and solemn responsibilities of their positions. Some, we regret to say, fail to sense the sacred character of their work and the responsibility which attaches to true leadership.

#### **SAFEGUARDING THE CHURCH**

Exemplifying these principles in his own life, the gospel worker, whether in conference or institutional employ, or as an officer in the local church, will use his influence, in both public and private, to banish from the church membership the unholy practices which are seeking entrance. By personal work when needed, and by appeal from the pulpit, he will seek to hold back the flood tide of worldliness, which is seeking to engulf the church. If necessary he will lead the church in taking disciplinary measures as have been clearly emphasized by the pen of divine revelation. God has set our church leaders as watchmen upon the walls of Zion. When they see danger threatening the church they are to sound the alarm. When they see individual members of the church imperiled, they are to make earnest efforts for their salvation. Lovingly, tactfully, earnestly, fearlessly, they are to warn the wicked to break from their sins and to find deliverance in Christ as their Saviour.

Says the Master to each one of His watchmen, "Son of Man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore, hear the word of My mouth, and give them warning from Me. When I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn

the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity but thou has delivered thy soul." Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins."

Where faithful, loving labor is put forth to reclaim the erring, disciplinary measures, by the church, will not be so often indicated. The conditions of many in the remnant church today demand a revival and a reformation. A new depth of consecration and baptism of divine power is needed to finish the work. Our leaders should be the foremost in seeking for this divine infilling. Faithfully and uncompromisingly should they uphold the right and deny the wrong. In this hour of crisis they should prove true and loyal to the message for this time. God will recognize their heroic endeavor and their unswerving integrity.

May the blessing of God rest upon our leaders. Theirs is a great responsibility; theirs also is a great privilege. No service is so sweet and satisfying as labor for those for whom Christ gave His precious blood. Such labor should constitute a passion, not a profession or a merely formal service. Its prompting impulse will be love for souls, and not love of salary.

The resources of Heaven are promised to Christ's ambassadors. The Holy Spirit is given as a guide and counselor. Surely we are without excuse if we fail in prosecuting faithfully, courageously, and hopefully our high and holy calling. Soon we shall reap if we faint not. Then we shall thrill with the unutterable joy of seeing saved, in the everlasting kingdom, those for whom we have labored. With Christ the Lord we shall see the travail of our souls and shall be satisfied. May God make us true and loyal till that glad day.

### UPHOLDING THE STANDARDS IN OUR SCHOOLS

Recognizing that our schools are a most vital part of our organized work, and have done and are doing a great and good work in helping our young people to a clearer vision of their God-given opportunities and responsibilities, and are veritable havens of refuge for the youth, where every effort is being made to stem the tide of corrup-

tion and sin that is threatening to engulf the world,

We hereby wish to express our thankfulness to God for these schools and for the help they have been in upholding high and right standards for the young people of this denomination. Realizing, however, that we must ever be on the watch lest the enemy overtake us unaware, We recommend, That institutional boards and faculties study anew the principles governing the conduct of our institutions as revealed in the Bible and in the Spirit of Prophecy.

We further recommend, That joint meetings of the board and faculty members be held at stated times for such general study, and also for the study of the particular problems and their application to definite situations in their situation.

We recommend, That all student organizations in our institutions be properly sponsored by some member of the faculty appointed by the administration and responsible for it.

We further recommend, That regular meetings of sponsors be held for the study of proper functions, duties, and responsibilities of sponsors, to the end that all activities of the institution may conform to proper standards approved by God and the church.

We recommend, That in every institution where student or student-faculty associations exist, the board of trustees take these associations under review and advisement and lay down principles that shall govern such associations and pass upon their constitutions and bylaws.

We further recommend, That the trustees shall hold the president of the faculty or such committee as may be designated to a strict accounting for the conduct of the aforesaid associations and all their activities.

We recommend, That organizations for athletic contests be not permitted in our institutions.

### A PLAIN PEOPLE

Our church members have, from the beginning, been a plain people. Our standards call for discarding of jewelry, especially those articles mentioned in the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy, such as rings, earrings, bracelets, and necklaces; the avoidance of extravagance and immodesty in dress; a discriminating selection

Continued on the next tract

More HISTORIC GEMS - from  
**PILGRIMS REST**

HCR 77, BOX 38A - BEERSHEBA SPRINGS, TN 37305 USA

# An Appeal From the General Conference

## Takoma Park, Washington D.C., August 4, 1939

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

of proper foods and drinks for the maintenance of health; and an entire conformity to the will of God in all Christian conduct and deportment. We appeal for a greater loyalty to these important and divinely given standards.

We are cognizant of influences which have brought into our services of worship elements that lower our standards and injure our work. We ask our churches to give greater attention to good order, proper decorum, and reverence, while they set themselves against all excessive formalism and ritualism, including choir processions and recessions in the conduct of our Sabbath services. There is an apparent endeavor, in some instances, to bring the spirit of entertainment into the church and evangelistic meetings. This should be guarded against, and the Bible given its rightful place as the center of all our services and programs. Dramatization and acting should have no place among us, pageants and playlets should be avoided, and save in the case of some dignified representation to make real what our missionaries are facing in mission lands, makeup and costuming should not be countenanced. Let us hold to the plain and simple, and discard the elaborate, the exaggerated, the gaudy and showy.

These principles of simplicity should also govern graduating exercises in our schools, as well as weddings in our churches. Let us not seek after the spectacular and theatrical, but keep to the simplicity, the meekness, the plainness, which have characterized this movement from the beginning.

We believe it will be helpful in all our religious services to use only religious music. Place should not be given to secular songs, to music that is cheap and degrading. Music that is not religious, especially of the operatic sort, should not be introduced into our services even as preludes, offertories, postludes, or instrumental solo and ensemble numbers. There is a wealth of uplifting religious music which we would urge our

churches to use, to the exclusion of the worldly. We also appeal to our people to make more use of the deeply spiritual and impressive hymns of the church which have grown out of a rich experience in the things of God, and less use of the lighter songs. We commend the practice of selecting hymns which combine the majestic music with sublime truth.

### MORAL AND SANCTIFIED STANDARDS

We are compelled to recognize that the prevailing and increasing laxity in social standards all about us has had some effect among us. Things are lightly smiled at in the world about us today which a few years ago would have justly received public condemnation. Among us, however, there should be no laxity in social and moral relationships that give rise to suspicion and evil surmising, and all appearance of evil are not to be considered as of trifling consequences among those who profess to be followers of God and representatives of Jesus Christ.

Divorce is no light and trifling matter. A person who has passed through divorce proceedings has had a regrettable and unfortunate experience which will always leave a scar. If there should be any adequate reason for question about the Biblical cause for such divorce or about guilt regarding the individual, such person should not be looked to for leadership in our churches.

We deplore the sad abandonment of the family altar in any Adventist home. Nothing is so conducive to wholesome family life and consistent religious experience, as the old-fashioned and entirely Scriptural practice of daily family worship. We urgently appeal for its revival in every Seventh-day Adventist home where it has been permitted to lapse, and its faithful maintenances among all our members.

### SABBATH OBSERVANCE

Whereas the Sabbath is not only a sign of God's

love to man, but also a sign of man's loyalty to God, and that in true Sabbath observance is evidenced our fidelity to our Creator, our fellowship with our Redeemer, therefore be it resolved:

1. That we earnestly heed the admonition of the Word of God to "remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," not doing our own work, nor finding our own pleasure on God's holy day.

2. That we dedicate the Sabbath to the worship of God and the uplift of our fellowmen:

a. Faithfully attending the Sabbath school, the worship hour, and other divine services.

b. Gathering our children into the family pew, thus encouraging reverence for the house of God, the place of prayer.

c. Spending the other hours of the Sabbath in visiting the sick and the afflicted, teaching the Word of God, distributing our truth-filled literature, or otherwise ministering to sin-sick humanity.

d. Teaching our children the wonders of God's universe and His creative power by often "walking with them in the fields and groves," studying with them the lesson book of nature, and telling them of God's wondrous love, thus leading them to consider the Sabbath a blessing rather than a burden.

3. That we pledge ourselves to renewed consecration in the observance of God's holy day by:

a. Sacredly guarding the beginning and the ending of the Sabbath, especially having preparations fully made before the setting of the sun as the Sabbath approaches.

b. Welcoming the blessed day by worship around the family altar, and again at the setting of the sun at the close of the Sabbath, rededicating ourselves and our children to the Lord.

c. Putting aside all secular papers, and refraining from the use of the radio except for proper religious programs.

d. Refraining from unnecessary automobile journeys and pleasure trips.

e. Not engaging in idle conversation, nor in 'thinking our own thoughts, nor in speaking our own words.'

4. That great carefulness be exercised in the manner of raising money and disposing of literature during our Sabbath services, so that we ever keep the spiritual purpose of the Sabbath before our churches.

5. That we consecrate ourselves and our children to God, seeking to enter into His glorious rest, of which the Sabbath is a type, thus giving to the world a testimony to the truth of the Sabbath in the lives of those who hollow it.

We deplore any tendency to laxity in the obser-

vance of the Sabbath on the part of any of our people. The purchase of gasoline to operate cars, purchase of newspapers, purchase of food supplies, the holding of business conversations, the reading of newspapers or of anything worldly, pleasure riding, social visiting, and idle and worldly conversation should all be excluded from this day. These sacred hours belong to God. They are to be used for Him. Our own pleasures, our own words, our own business, our own thoughts should find no place in our observance of God's day. (Isaiah 58:13). Radios and television should be turned off during all sacred time, unless it be for use in listening to a religious service or program. Greet the Sabbath with prayer and song. Close it with prayer and praise. Keep worldly reading, worldly music, worldly activities, worldly conversation out of this day. Make a distinction between the holy and profane, the precious and the vile, the clean and the unclean, the sacred and the common. In such observance God's sacred Sabbath blessing of acceptance, of rest, and of peace may be confidently expected.

We are glad to believe that the vast majority of our people are true to the great standards of this cause, and do not permit the violations which have been mentioned to manifest themselves in their lives and in their homes. We appreciate their loyalty. We admonish them to hold fast to their faithfulness. It is for the sake of correcting this laxity on the part of some and elevating the spiritual life of all, that we send out this statement and appeal. Abuses that go uncorrected and the lowering of standards that go unrebuked are oftentimes looked upon as endorsement of laxity. The time has come when the leadership of this cause should speak with a firm voice. This we have endeavored to do. At the same time we speak in love. We appeal to all those who have permitted these failures to appear in their experience, to turn their backs now upon the world, to abandon its practices and pleasures, and wholeheartedly live up to the standards of the faith which God has committed to this people.

—*An Appeal from the General Conference*, from "Denomination Standards"—A reprint of Actions from the Minutes of the Autumn Council of the General Conference Committee held at Louisville, Kentucky, October 1935.

Authorized to be reprinted by the Autumn Council held at Battle Creek, Michigan, October 1938.

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists  
Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.  
August 4, 1939

***This concludes the above appeal.***

**We have the preceding appeal in mimeographed format, from a very old copy. However, from an entirely different source, we secured page one (only) of a second appeal from the General Conference, on its own letterhead. —Both appeals to uphold our historic standards carry the same date: August 4, 1939.**

**It is very likely that we have here a single appeal. The preceding portion is probably the main part, and the paragraphs, reprinted below and again on the next page, probably constituted the first page of the introduction.**

**Here is this introductory portion:**

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists  
Takoma Park, Washington D.C.  
August 4, 1939

To our Ministers, Conference and Institutional Workers and Believers Generally.

Greetings:

The officers of the General Conference take this opportunity of addressing you upon a matter of great importance. We are living in a time of great spiritual and moral crisis. Of these times Jesus prophesied thus:

“And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given into marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the Flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.” (Luke 17:26-30).

Jesus illustrated His point by drawing a parallel between the days of Noah and Lot and the

last days just previous to His coming. The moral conditions of those evil times were deplorable in the extreme. Just as Jesus predicted, we have come again into just such times. The world today is like another Sodom. The sins and loathsome practices of the antediluvians again prevail in the world. On every hand salacious exhibitions, insinuating and impure theatrical plays and motion pictures, low-class radio programs, so-called beauty contests vulgarly portraying the nudity of young women, mixed bathing in indecent costumes, and a flood of vile literature, all contribute to the breaking down of moral restraints and standards. These evils threaten even the life and spiritual well-being of the church. We know that the great body of our workers and believers are godly men and women of moral integrity. But some who have stood as shepherds of the flock have fallen before the temptations of these perilous times. We desire to sound a solemn warning against the intrusion of these evils into the church. We call upon the ministry and all our workers and members to turn away from every practice and association that tends toward laxity and indulgence. We exhort every worker and church member to keep himself free from moral contamination and from all tendencies in that direction, and shun a careless, world-loving easy manner of life that invites temptations and leads to wrong doings.

We call upon all our workers and members in this cause, both men and women, to conform to the highest standards of rectitude and moral conduct, and to avoid all unbecoming and improper relationships. Let it be known, everywhere, that this denomination will not tolerate or . . .

**On the next page is a photographic reprint of this August 4, 1939 appeal from the General Conference.**

“Unless we live Christ’s life of obedience, our profession is worthless.”—*Review*, August 2, 1906.

“There is a call for a higher standard to be met, a holier, more determined, self-sacrificing effort to be put forth in the Lord’s work.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 306.

“Our only safety is to stand as God’s peculiar people. We must not yield one inch to the customs and fashions of this degenerate age, but stand in moral independence, making no com-

promise with its corrupt and idolatrous practices.

“It will require courage and independence to rise above the religious standard of the Christian world. they do not follow the Saviour’s example of self-denial; they make no sacrifice; they are constantly seeking to evade the cross which Christ declares to be the token of discipleship.”—*5 Testimonies*, 78.

“God’s Word is our standard.”—*5 Testimonies*, 133.

**PILGRIMS REST**

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