

Schwisow Condemns the Reformers

Genuine Christians reverence God and, by faith in the enabling grace of Christ, obey His commandments. Indeed, they love God so much that they defend the principles given in His Word.

The men who wrote the Old and New Testament Scriptures were such men. So was Ellen White.

But a man has been placed in charge of the union paper of the North Pacific Union, which views both Christians and Bible prophets with condescension bordering on contempt.

The man is Edwin Schwisow, and the publication is the *North Pacific Union Gleaner*.

In the October 16, 1995, issue of the *Gleaner* he wrote an astonishing editorial, which vividly announces to anyone caring to read, that he is violently opposed to historic believers, their concerns, their standards, and their Scriptures.

Sounds like a strong summary? Read the editorial yourself. It is on the last two pages.

Here is a brief commentary on it, which is keyed to paragraph numbers alongside the reprinted editorial (see pages 3-4):

(Para. 1) Schwisow is especially worried about "Adventist reformers." He needs to be. When the last faithful believer leaves the structure, it will be an empty shell.

(2) Schwisow declares that those who are concerned with maintaining church standards are miserable discontents who spend their lives in abject misery.

(2-3) Schwisow gives his belief that the prophet Elijah was a grouch who occupied himself with complaining about the lack of standards in the church. As a result of living in such a black cloud of despair, his own life and the lives of others had been made miserable. If he had not tried to remove idolatry from Israel, he would not have asked for death.

Schwisow arrives at such a position by falsely interpreting Scripture. Read what he has to say; it's terrible.

The man should not be retained as editor-in-chief of that North Pacific Union journal.

Those church leaders in the NPUC, who want to keep him, must agree with his sentiments or they would not do so.

This continual placating of wrongdoing and wrongdoers by our leaders is wearing out the patience of the saints.

If it continues, ere long the organization will be a desolate haunt of evil spirits. Anyone who wrote something like this in a church publication 20 years ago would have been reprimanded, transferred, or discharged.

Yet today they are honored and kept in office. The Holy Spirit is being quenched by such vulgar attacks on the noblest of the Bible heroes.

(3) Schwisow charges that Elijah did what he did, simply because he was self-centered and an inveterate critic.

Apparently, Schwisow believes Elijah would have been happier and more successful in life, if he had made friends with Ahab, flattered Jezebel, and told the people not to worry about the declining standards. After all, Ahab was occupied with putting up idols, stealing property, killing landowners, and destroying the religion of the people. Surely, according to Schwisow, what could be there in all of this worth complaining about?

(4) Schwisow likens wretched Elijah to contemporary historic Adventists. Thanks, we appreciate that comparison; but Elijah was not wretched, and neither are we.

It is the liberals in the church who are trying to eliminate our standards and remove obedience from our doctrines—to excuse their own

transgressions of the law of God. It is the liberals who are trying to change the *Church Manual*—so they can cover up the adulteries of their most prominent advocates of the new theology.

Historic Adventists, in contrast, are happy people. They rejoice in the peace they have with God. Their consciences do not bother them when they go to sleep at night. They have the faith and practice of Elijah, and they will share in his inheritance.

(5) According to Schwisow, by condemning sin—Elijah was questioning God's plan. The truth is that, by condemning wrongdoing, Elijah was helping God's plan be fulfilled.

The impression is given in the article that God sent the still, small voice to reassure complaining Elijah, and get him back on the track of timeserving.

Even though Schwisow may, at times, call the prophets "great" and "Spirit-filled," yet such phrases contrast grotesquely with his determined efforts to castigate them as fools.

(6) Schwisow next turns his guns on John the Baptist. Not able to erase him from the Holy Scriptures, he tries to destroy his reputation in the thinking of our people.

(5-7) Schwisow instructs the reader that John got into trouble because he refused to be a policy man. Instead of just preaching acceptance in Christ, he denounced sin in high places. This is something he should not have done!

According to Schwisow, instead of preaching peace in our time and salvation for those who dally with sin, John made a great mistake: He openly declared that sin was dangerous and sinners would be lost.

(6) Even Jeremiah wandered away from a peace-and-safety message, and began calling on the people to repent of their sins ("current events," Schwisow calls them).

That was Jeremiah's undoing. If he had ignored "current events," he would have had a far more peaceful life.

(7) As for John, Schwisow believes he occupied too high an office, and should not have been bothered with such things as sin.

—Maybe that is what is wrong with our leaders; they think they are too important to concern themselves with maintaining standards in the church.

Schwisow reveals a clear misunderstanding of the work of God's people. He says that the one who proclaimed Christ's coming was wrong in attempting to denounce sin!

But how can anyone be brought to Christ, if no Biblical standards are presented to them? John was trying to save Herod, and it could only be done if Herod was shown his sin so that he might choose to put it away.

(8) Schwisow returns to Elijah again. The very idea that the man should have reproved transgression so rancors the soul of Schwisow, that he cannot be content until he thoroughly destroys all confidence in that godly man.

Schwisow says that Elijah was foolish to go live in the wilderness after reproving Ahab. Apparently, he

should have flattered the sinner, and ate at his table! Why irritate leaders, and get yourself in trouble?

(9-10) The problem with some today is "they have turned aside from the grand themes of salvation to explore lesser side valleys." They have left the "greater gospel calling" to fiddle with useless "portions and fragments."

Schwisow gives the impression that themes of salvation have nothing to do with the putting away of sin.

(11) Frequently, Schwisow comes back to what he sees as a basic problem: rebuking the sins of leaders—Ahab, King Herod, or church leaders. Schwisow says that reproving the "moral foibles of this or that church leader" is a no no.

Utter folly is his opinion of an Elijah who will reprove idolaters, or a John the Baptist who will reprove adulterers. Schwisow thinks those two men would have been wiser to be friends with the wicked, and give them the right hand of fellowship.

(12-16) Near the bottom of the page, Schwisow says that God pities His erring children on earth who descend to the low level of standing for the right and reproving wrongdoing. His point is that, by doing this, they have separated from God and are living in dark caverns of

misery and gloom. They need to come back out to the sunlight of placated sin. Because they hate sin, he maintains, they have become "disenchanted" with God. An astounding thought! Godly living separates us from God! Friendship with the works of darkness brings us closer to Him?

(15) Schwisow's brand of "full-gospel reform" is the comfortable forgetting about sin.

(16-17) Schwisow concludes with the thought that all such reformers need divine help so they can turn from their faultfinding ways, and accept "God's plan" of appeasement. Then they will leave the desert of despair, and accept a "full gospel of escape" from obedience to God's commandments.

The world has seen the tragic results of pliant Aarons, who take charge of the flock when the men of God are gone. Yet the editor-in-chief of the North Pacific Union *Gleaner* tells us that the real reformers are harmful to the people.

If Schwisow had his way, he would banish the calls of Noah and the warnings of Nathan. He would eliminate the preaching of Enoch and the urgent voice of Jeremiah. He would unite with the Pharisees against Christ, and join those who wanted to get rid of Ellen White.

THE WORK OF ELIJAH

"Through the long centuries that have passed since Elijah's time, the record of his lifework has brought inspiration and courage to those who have been called to stand for the right in the midst of apostasy. And for us, 'upon whom the ends of the world are come,' it has special significance.

"History is being repeated. The world today has its Ahabs and Jezebels. The present age is one of idolatry, as verily as was that in which Elijah lived . . .

"Many even of those who claim to be Christians have allied them-

selves with influences that are unalterably opposed to God and His truth. Thus they are led to turn away from the divine and to exalt the human.

"The prevailing spirit of our time is one of infidelity and apostasy—a spirit of avowed illumination because of a knowledge of truth, but in reality of the blindest presumption. Human theories are exalted and placed where God and His law should be."—*Prophets and Kings*, 177-178.

THE WORK OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

"He [John] saw his people deceived, self-satisfied, and asleep in

their sins. He longed to rouse them to a holier life. The message that God had given him to bear was designed to startled them from their lethargy, and cause them to tremble because of their great wickedness . . .

"God does not send messengers to flatter the sinner. He delivers no message of peace to lull the unsatisfied into fatal security. He lays heavy burdens upon the conscience of the wrongdoer, and pierces the soul with arrows of conviction . . .

"Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"—*Desire of Ages*, 103-104.