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Standing On Solid Ground - The Bible

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BY ROBERT FOLKENBERG *

STANDING ON SOLID GROUND— THE BIBLE

We claim that we are a people of the Book. It is our foundation, our core, our essence. Everything we do is tested by “What saith the Lord?” for we believe that the Bible is the divine Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

But in contemporary Protestant theology, the authority of the Bible is being undermined and ignored. Denied is the existence of a solid, objective revelation of God upon which our faith and life must be founded.

Seventh-day Adventists have not been unaffected by this trend. Often we hear members say that Christian truths are relative rather than absolute—and therefore, neither

universal nor normative.

Others say that they fully accept the Bible, but then appeal to and wholly accept what other sources say the Bible says. They appeal to reason, tradition, science, cultural relativity, and history, and accept the conclusions of these other authorities over what the Bible plainly says.

We cannot condemn wholesale these other fields, for they have served us well in understanding many aspects of God’s Word. But their pernicious claims to supersede

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or to be the final interpreters of the Bible must be staunchly rejected. . . .

Our unequivocal, historic emphasis upon the divine inspiration and trustworthiness of Scripture has strengthened our church. It has helped us resist the error of treating some parts of Scripture as God's Word, while ignoring or rejecting other parts. If we accept it as God's Word, we must accept it all, whether or not we like what it says. To us the Scriptures should be the ultimate revelation of God's will for our lives.

To submit to Scripture, then, is part of our Christian calling. Without it we would essentially degenerate into a debating society for the discussion of ideas—not a church with a clear, specific message. As church members we must accept the authority of the Bible and recognize that its teachings are not optional, but normative, and must be obeyed.

Questions then arise: What demands shall the church make upon its members? What is it to do if a member refuses to comply with its demands, or if a member's conduct or beliefs contradict those the church considers of divine origin? Should the member be allowed to go his or her way and to lead others

also? Or should the church, both local and universal, confront such members? . . .

Church discipline is simply the right of self-preservation. No argument about individual liberty, academic freedom, or popular objection to 'heresy trials' should negate the need for any group to preserve its fundamental doctrinal commitments.

The church worldwide should have the right to a body of doctrine that is a test of fellowship as well as the right to censure or exclude those who affirm some other creed. The clarity of the faith demands this. Any other attitude would have a debilitating effect on the mission and spiritual vitality of the church.

And those who disparage biblical doctrine must face a practical question: Does honesty permit one to continue in a church while explicitly rejecting specific doctrinal truths?

Without our uncompromised acceptance of scriptural authority and our fundamental beliefs, only a shadow of Adventism will remain for our coming generations. □

—*Condensed from the Adventist Review, August 1995.*

