Talk-The Spirit of Independence

Takoma Park, Maryland, May 30, 1909

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Read to the General Conference Session by E. G. White, May 30, 1909, 9:15 a.m.24LtMs, Ms 38a, 1909, par. 1

Before leaving Australia, and since coming to this country, I have been instructed that there is a great work to be done in America. Those who were in the work at the beginning are passing away. Only a few of the pioneers of the cause now remain among us. Many of the heavy burdens formerly borne by men of long experience are now falling upon younger men.24LtMs, Ms 38a, 1909, par. 2

This transfer of responsibilities to laborers whose experience is more or less limited is attended with some dangers against which we need to guard. The world is filled with strife for the supremacy. The spirit of pulling away from fellow laborers, the spirit of disorganization is in the very air we breathe. By some, all efforts to establish order are regarded as dangerous—as a restriction of personal liberty, and hence to be feared as popery. These deceived souls regard it a virtue to boast of their freedom to think and act independently. They declare that they will not take any man’s say-so; that they are amenable to no man. I have been instructed that it is Satan’s special effort to lead men to feel that God is pleased to have them choose their own course, independent of the counsel of their brethren.24LtMs, Ms 38a, 1909, par. 3

Herein lies a grave danger to the prosperity of our work. We must move discreetly, sensibly, in harmony with the judgment of God-fearing counselors; for in this course alone lies our safety and strength. Otherwise God cannot work with us and by us and for us.24LtMs, Ms 38a, 1909, par. 4

Oh, how Satan would rejoice if he could succeed in his efforts to get in among this people and disorganize the work at a time when thorough organization is essential and will be the greatest power to keep out spurious uprisings and to refute claims not endorsed by the Word of God! We want to hold the lines evenly, that there shall be no breaking down of the system of organization and order that has been built up by wise, careful labor. License must not be given to disorderly elements that desire to control the work at this time.24LtMs, Ms 38a, 1909, par. 5

**Unity of Effort**

Some have advanced the thought that as we near the close of time, every child of God will act independently of any religious organization. But I have been instructed by the Lord that in this work there is no such thing as every man’s being independent. The stars of heaven are all under law, each influencing the other to do the will of God, yielding their common obedience to the law that controls their action. And, in order that the Lord’s work may advance healthfully and solidly, His people must draw together.24LtMs, Ms 38a, 1909, par. 6

The spasmodic, fitful movements of some who claim to be Christians are well represented by the work of strong but untrained horses. When one pulls forward, another pulls back, and at the voice of their master, one plunges ahead, and the other stands immovable. If men will not move in concert in the great and grand work for this time, there will be confusion. It is not a good sign when men refuse to unite with their brethren and prefer to act alone. Let laborers take into their confidence the brethren who are free to point out every departure from right principles. If men wear the yoke of Christ, they cannot pull apart; they will draw with Christ.24LtMs, Ms 38a, 1909, par. 7

Some workers pull with all the power that God has given them, but they have not yet learned that they should not pull alone. Instead of isolating themselves, let them draw in harmony with their fellow laborers. Unless they do this, their activity will work at the wrong time and in the wrong way. They will often work counter to that which God would have done, and thus their work is worse than wasted.24LtMs, Ms 38a, 1909, par. 8

**Unity in Diversity**

On the other hand, the leaders among God’s people are to guard against the danger of condemning the methods of individual workers who are led by the Lord to do a special work that but few are fitted to do. Let brethren in responsibility be slow to criticize movements that are not in perfect harmony with their methods of labor. Let them never suppose that every plan should reflect their own personality. Let them not fear to trust another’s methods; for by withholding their confidence from a brother laborer who, with humility and consecrated zeal, is doing a special work in God’s appointed way, they are retarding the advancement of the Lord’s cause.24LtMs, Ms 38a, 1909, par. 9

God can and will use those who have not had a thorough education in the schools of men. A doubt of His power to do this is manifest unbelief; it is limiting the omnipotent power of the One with whom nothing is impossible. Oh, for less of this uncalled-for, distrustful caution! It leaves so many forces of the church unused; it closes up the way so that the Holy Spirit cannot use men; it keeps in idleness those who are willing and anxious to labor in Christ’s lines; it discourages from entering the work many who would become efficient laborers together with God if they were given a fair chance.24LtMs, Ms 38a, 1909, par. 10

To the prophet, the wheel within a wheel, the appearance of living creatures connected with them, all seemed intricate and unexplainable. But the hand of infinite wisdom is seen among the wheels, and perfect order is the result of its work. Every wheel, directed by the hand of God, works in perfect harmony with every other wheel. I have been shown that human instrumentalities are liable to seek after too much power and try to control the work themselves. They leave the Lord God, the mighty Worker, too much out of their methods and plans and do not trust to Him everything in regard to the advancement of the work. No one should for a moment fancy that he is able to manage these things that belong to the great I AM. God in His providence is preparing a way so that the work may be done by human agents. Then let every man stand at his post of duty, to act his part for this time, and know that God is his instructor.24LtMs, Ms 38a, 1909, par. 11

The General Conference

I have often been instructed by the Lord that no man’s judgment should be surrendered to the judgment of any other one man. Never should the mind of one man or the minds of a few men be regarded as sufficient in wisdom and power to control the work and to say what plans shall be followed. But when in a General Conference the judgment of the brethren assembled from all parts of the field is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be stubbornly maintained, but surrendered. Never should a laborer regard as a virtue the persistent maintenance of his position of independence contrary to the decision of the general body.24LtMs, Ms 38a, 1909, par. 12

At times, when a small group of men entrusted with the general management of the work have, in the name of the General Conference, sought to carry out unwise plans and to restrict God’s work, I have said that I could no longer regard the voice of the General Conference, represented by these few men, as the voice of God. But this is not saying that the decisions of a General Conference composed of an assembly of duly appointed, representative men from all parts of the field should not be respected. God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority. The error that some are in danger of committing is in giving to the mind and judgment of one man, or of a small group of men, the full measure of authority and influence that God has vested in His church in the judgment and voice of the General Conference assembled to plan for the prosperity and advancement of His work.24LtMs, Ms 38a, 1909, par. 13

When this power, which God has placed in the church, is accredited wholly to one man, and he is invested with the authority to be judgment for other minds, then the true Bible order is changed. Satan’s efforts upon such a man’s mind would be most subtle and sometimes well-nigh overpowering; for the enemy would hope that through his mind he could affect many others. Let us give to the highest organized authority in the church that which we are prone to give to one man or to a small group of men.24LtMs, Ms 38a, 1909, par. 14