

Our Firm **FOUNDATION**

The 7th-Day Sabbath

Immutable Law of God

Non-Immortality of the Soul

Christ Our Righteousness

Three Angels' Message

The Sanctuary

Vol. 13, No. 3

June 1998

Why I Am a Seventh-day Adventist

The Conditions of Salvation

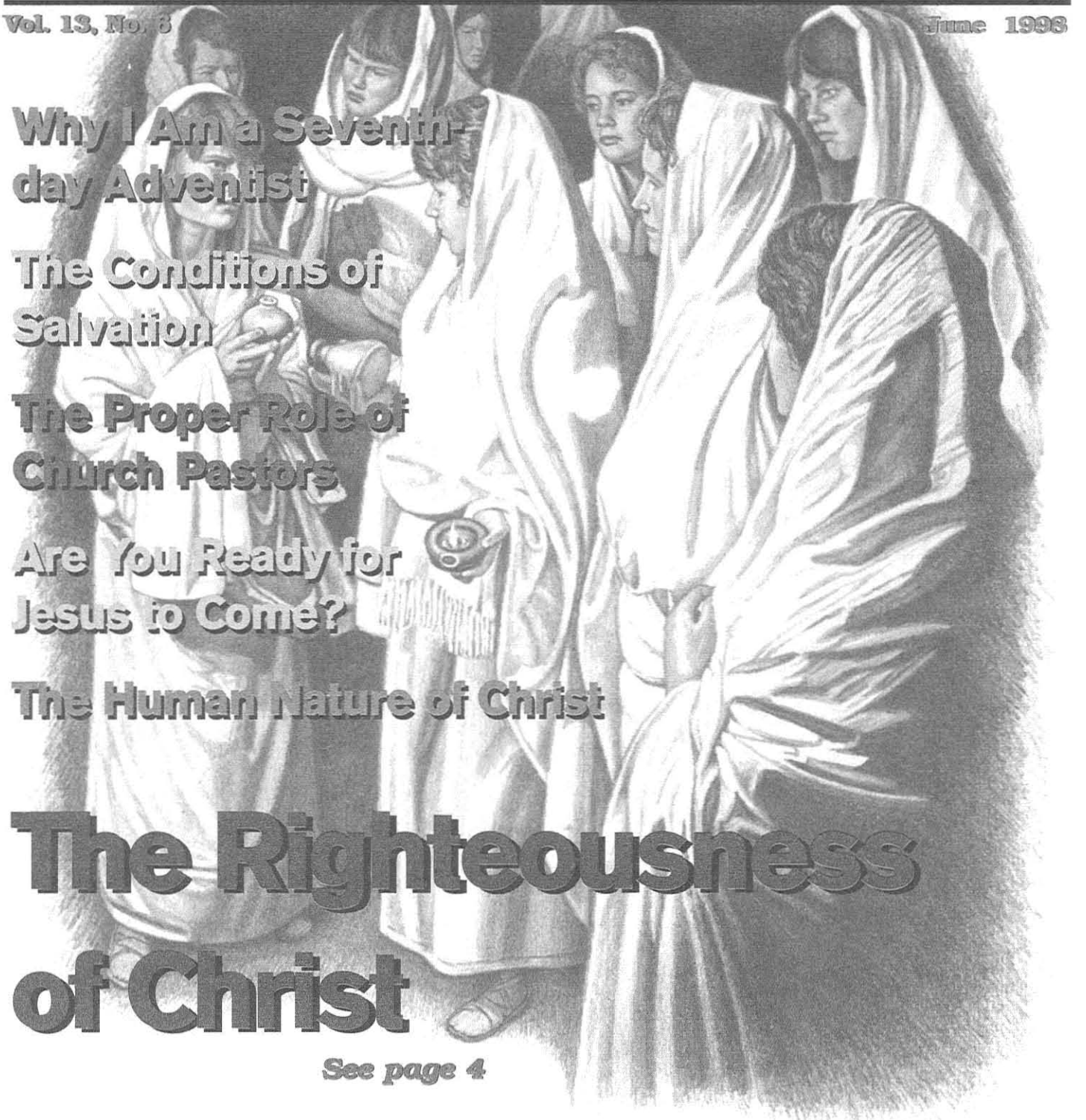
The Proper Role of Church Pastors

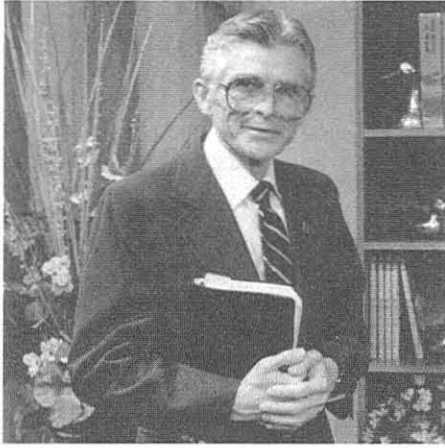
Are You Ready for Jesus to Come?

The Human Nature of Christ

The Righteousness of Christ

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Editorial

SELFISHNESS is the very foundation of all sin. We must know and understand that the human soul is not naturally innocent before God. Therefore, no one can be pronounced justified unless a supernatural transformation has taken place in the lifestyle that produces the good works of Christ.

We are exhorted, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." *Philippians 2:5-8*.

So, it is the mind of Christ that God offers us. The lifestyle change is brought about by a love for Christ—and then an overwhelming desire to be like Him in every life situation.

"The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit." *The Desire of Ages*, 172.

It is impossible for this change to come about unless we are first ready to deny self. Something must be imparted to us so that God can recognize our willingness to be made willing to conform to the conditions of salvation without a compromise. Only then, may the once guilty be declared righteous. There will be no mistake in God's judgment. The carnal nature, which is "sold under sin" (*Romans 7:14*) will only receive the wages of sin, which is death.

The mind of Christ is selfless. When Christ dwells in the heart there is a death to self and sin, and a new heart altogether.

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." *1 Corinthians 2:16*.

Sin has corrupted everyone born into this sinful world, for all have sinned. Through heredity some have received a greater curse than others. However, there is a great cure available for all! When we receive the mind of Christ, the faith of Christ, and the love of Christ, which brings repentance, confession, justification, and sanctification, then we are truly the sons and daughters of God. See *Acts 5:31*, *Galatians 2:20*, *Revelation 14:12*, and *Ephesians 3:17-20*.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." *1 John 3:1-3*. Praise God for this promise!

The remedy for our sinful nature is the mind of Jesus. The greatest desire of our life must be to be like Jesus—just as the old hymn we sang as children says: "Be like Jesus, this my song . . . be like Jesus all day long." Unfortunately, we do not sing that song much anymore, and when we do, do we really understand what it means to be like Jesus all day long by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, working the love of Jesus in our daily lives moment by moment?

"After the believing soul has received the ordinance of baptism, he is to bear in mind that he is dedicated to God, to Christ, and to the Holy Spirit. . . .

"All who study the life of Christ and practice His teaching will become like Christ. Their influence will be like His. They will reveal soundness of char-

acter. They are established in the faith, and will not be overcome by the devil because of vanity and pride. They seek to walk the humble path of obedience, doing the will of God. Their character exerts an influence that tells for the advancement of the cause of God and the healthful purity of His work." *Evangelism*, 315.

Because of Jesus' great and marvelous sacrifice on Calvary, and His offer of His presence in our daily lives, when we surrender our lives to Him, God's Spirit returns to dwell in the place from whence it was banished by our giving in to the temptations and deceptions of Satan. Then the character of Jesus is reinstated in the life, and God can treat us as if we had never sinned. The perfection of Jesus is then credited to us. Again God reveals to us this marvelous transaction in these inspired words:

"Self is in need of being crucified. When self is submerged in Christ, true love springs forth spontaneously. It is not an emotion or an impulse, but a decision of a sanctified will. It consists not in feeling, but in the transformation of the whole heart, soul, and character, which is dead to self and alive unto God. Our Lord and Saviour asks us to give ourselves to Him. Surrendering self to God is all He requires, giving ourselves to Him to be employed as He sees fit. Until we come to this point of surrender, we shall not work happily, usefully, or successfully anywhere." *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, 1100-1101.

Obedience to known truth without a compromise—by having the mind of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit—this is the key to eternal life. May each of us strive to obtain the knowledge and experience we need, that we might be ready to meet Jesus up in the air some day soon. See *1 Thessalonians 4:16-17*. □

Ron Spear—EDITOR

It is the mission of Hope International and the editors of *Our Firm Foundation* to clearly present Christ and His truth. The days that yet remain of this world are few, and what we do we must do quickly. We must boldly proclaim the historic truths of Adventism that place us on so firm a foundation in the midst of this troubled world.—EDITORS

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Invitation to Writers

We are accepting article-length (1500–4000 words) manuscripts for possible publication in *Our Firm Foundation*. We cannot give consideration to longer submissions. Whenever possible, we ask that manuscripts be submitted either on 3 1/2 or 5 1/4-inch floppy disk in IBM format or neatly typed and double-spaced. Address all correspondence to Editors, *Our Firm Foundation*, P.O. Box 940, Eatonville, WA 98328.

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able, the ten virgins had lamps, but only five of them had the saving oil with which to keep their lamps burning. This represents the condition of the Church. The wise and the foolish have their Bibles, and are provided with all the means of grace; but many do not appreciate the fact that they must have the heavenly unction. They do not heed the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30.

Jesus desires to efface the image of the earthly from the minds of His followers, and to impress upon them the image of the heavenly, that they may become one with Himself, reflecting His character, and showing forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. If you have been permitted to stand in the presence of the Sun of Righteousness, it is not that you may absorb and conceal the bright beams of Christ's righteousness, but that you may become a light to others. The enemy has men in our ranks through whom he works, that the light which God has permitted to shine upon the heart and illuminate the chambers of the mind may be darkened. There are persons who have received the precious light of the righteousness of Christ, but they do not act upon it; they are foolish virgins. They prefer the sophistry of the enemy rather than the plain "Thus saith the Lord." When the blessing of God rested upon them in order that they might become channels of light, they did not go forward from light to a greater light; they permitted doubt and unbelief to come in, so that the truth which they had seen, became an uncertainty to them.

Satan uses those who claim to believe the truth, but whose light has become darkness, as his mediums to utter his falsehoods and transmit his darkness. They are foolish virgins indeed, choosing darkness rather than light, and dishonoring God. The character we cultivate, the attitude we assume today, is fixing our future destiny. We are all making a choice, either to be with the blessed, inside the city of light, or to be with the wicked, outside the city. The principles which govern our actions on earth are known in heaven, and our deeds are faithfully chronicled in the books of

The Righteousness of Christ

[The following letter was written in answer to a letter from a brother minister. As the subject dwelt upon is of general interest, it may be a help to others besides the one specially addressed.]

DEAR Brother: It was with pleasure that I read your letter of inquiry to me, for the thought that the work of the Spirit of God wrought upon your heart at the Kansas meeting has so far not been effaced, is of great satisfaction. You have had a glimpse of the righteousness of Christ which you have not lost, as I am sure some others did when they came in contact with those who did not appreciate this blessed truth.

I am glad that Jesus does indeed make His presence manifest when it is eagerly sought for and gratefully acknowledged.

When the third angel's message is preached as it should be, power attends its proclamation, and it becomes an abiding influence. It must be attended with divine power, or it will accomplish nothing. I am often referred to the parable of the ten virgins, five of whom were wise, and five foolish. This parable has been and will be fulfilled to the very letter, for it has a special application to this time, and, like the third angel's message, has been fulfilled and will continue to be present truth till the close of time. In the par-

Ellen G. White

record. It is there known whether our characters are after the order of Christ or the order of the archdeceiver who caused rebellion in heaven. Are we wise virgins, or must we be classed among the foolish? This is the question which we are deciding today by our character and attitude. That which passes with many for the religion of Christ, is made up of ideas and theories, a mixture of truth and error. Some are trying to become good enough to be saved. They continually complain of their sins. The Lord says of them, "And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand." Malachi 2:13. "Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?" Verse 17.

Penances, mortifications of the flesh, constant confession of sin, without sincere repentance; fasts, festivals, and outward observances, unaccompanied by true devotion—all these are of no value whatever. The sacrifice of Christ is sufficient; He made a whole, efficacious offering to God; and human effort without the merit of Christ, is worthless. We not only dishonor God by taking this course, but we destroy our present and future usefulness. A failure to appreciate the value of the offering of Christ, has a debasing influence; it blights our expectations, and makes us fall short of our privileges; it leads us to receive unsound and perilous theories concerning the salvation that has been purchased for us at infinite cost. The plan of salvation is not understood to be that through which divine power is brought to man in order that his human effort may be wholly successful.

To be pardoned in the way that Christ pardons, is not only to be forgiven, but to be renewed in the spirit of our mind. The Lord says, "A new heart also will I give you." Ezekiel 36:26. The image of Christ is to be stamped upon the very mind, heart, and soul. The apostle says, "But we have the mind of Christ." 1 Corinthians 2:16. Without the transforming process which can come alone through divine power, the original propensities to sin are left in the heart in all their strength, to forge new chains, to impose a slavery that can never be broken by human power. But men can never

enter heaven with their old tastes, inclinations, idols, ideas, and theories. Heaven would be no place of joy to them; for everything would be in collision with their tastes, appetites, and inclinations, and painfully opposed to their natural and cultivated traits of character.

In the parable of the virgins, five are represented as wise and five as foolish.

of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my

Half-hearted Christians obscure the glory of God, misinterpret piety, and cause men to receive false ideas as to what constitutes vital godliness.

The name "foolish virgins" represents the character of those who have not the genuine heart-work wrought by the Spirit of God. The coming of Christ does not change the foolish virgins into wise ones. When Christ comes, the balances of Heaven will weigh the character, and decide whether it is pure, sanctified, and holy, or whether it is unclean, and unfit for the kingdom of heaven. Those who have despised the divine grace that is at their command, that would have qualified them to be the inhabitants of heaven, will be the foolish virgins. They had all the light, all the knowledge, but they failed to obtain the oil of grace; they did not receive the truth in its sanctifying power.

Happiness is the result of holiness, and conformity to the will of God. Those who would be saints in heaven, must first be saints upon the earth; for when we leave this earth, we shall take our character with us, and this will be simply taking with us some of the elements of Heaven imparted to us through the righteousness of Christ.

The state of the Church represented by the foolish virgins, is also spoken of as the Laodicean state. The True Witness declares, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; I counsel thee to buy

voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in the throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Revelation 3:15-21.

Half-hearted Christians obscure the glory of God, misinterpret piety, and cause men to receive false ideas as to what constitutes vital godliness. Others think that they, also, can be Christians and yet consult their own tastes and make provision for the flesh, if these false-hearted professors can do so. On many a professed Christian's banner the motto is written, "You can serve God and please self—you can serve God and mammon." They profess to be wise virgins, but not having the oil of grace in their vessels with their lamps, they shed forth no light to the glory of God and for the salvation of men. They seek to do what the world's Redeemer said was impossible to do; He has declared, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Matthew 6:24. Those who profess to be Christians, but do not follow in the footsteps of Christ, make of none effect His words, and obscure the plan of salvation. By their spirit and deportment they virtually say, "Jesus, in your day you did not understand as well as we do in our day, that man can serve God and mammon." These professors of religion claim to keep the law of God, but they do not keep it. O, what would the standard of true manhood have become had it been left in the hands of man! God has lifted His own standard—the commandments

of God and the faith of Jesus—and the experience that follows complete surrender to God, is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Everything that man touches with unholy hands and unsanctified intellect, even the gospel of truth, becomes, by the contact, contami-

son against the Lord who has bought you.

It is the privilege of every earnest seeker for truth and righteousness, to rely upon the sure promises of God. The Lord Jesus makes manifest the fact that the treasures of divine grace are placed

It is the privilege of every earnest seeker for truth and righteousness, to rely upon the sure promises of God.

nated. Man puts confidence in man, and makes flesh his arm, but all the work of man is of the earth, earthy.

Christ says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6); and it is the privilege of every soul to make Christ his personal Saviour. You need not wait to grow good; you need not think that any effort of yours will make your prayers acceptable, and bring you salvation. Let each man and woman pray to God, not to man. Let each one come to Christ in humility, speak to Him with your own lips. The request, "Will you pray for me?" has become simply a form of speech; you should pray to God for yourself, believing that He listens to every word you utter. Lay bare your heart for His inspection, confess your sins, asking Him to forgive you, pleading the merits of the atonement, and then by faith contemplate the great scheme of redemption, and the Comforter will bring all things to your remembrance.

The more you study the character of Christ, the more attractive will He appear to you. He will become as One near you, in close companionship with you; your affections will go out after Him. If the mind is molded by the objects with which it has most to do, then to think of Jesus, to talk of Him, will enable you to become like Him in Spirit and character. You will reflect His image in that which is great and pure and spiritual. You will have the mind of Christ, and He will send you forth to the world as His spiritual representative. He will be your only glory. You cannot affiliate with the world without becoming a partaker of its spirit, without becoming guilty of trea-

entirely at our disposal, in order that we may become channels of light. We cannot receive the riches of the grace of Christ without desiring to impart them to others. When we have the love of Christ in our hearts, we shall feel that it is our duty and privilege to communicate it. The sun shining in the heavens, pours its bright beams into all the highways and byways of life. It has sufficient light for thousands of worlds like ours. And so it is with the Sun of Righteousness; His bright beams of healing and gladness are amply sufficient to save our little world, and are efficacious in establishing security in every world that has been created. Christ declares that Our Heavenly Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children. See Luke 11:13. The day of Pentecost furnished a wonderful occasion. In the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, what a testimony was given to the abundance of the grace of Christ! Why is it that those who claim to believe advanced truth, live so far beneath their privileges? Why do they mingle self with all they do? If they will cast out self, Jesus will pour into the thirsty soul a constant supply from the river of life. How can our ministers become the representatives of Christ, when they feel self-sufficient—when by spirit and attitude they say, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing"? We must not be in a self-satisfied condition, or we shall be described as those who are poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked.

Since the time of the Minneapolis meeting, I have seen the state of the

Laodicean church as never before. I have heard the rebuke of God spoken to those who feel so well satisfied, who know not their spiritual destitution. Jesus speaks to these as He did to the woman of Samaria: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." John 4:10.

Like the Jews, many have closed their eyes lest they should see; but there is as great peril now, in closing the eyes to light, and in walking apart from Christ, feeling need of nothing, as there was when He was upon earth. I have been shown many things which I have presented before our people in solemnity and earnestness, but those whose hearts have been hardened through criticism, jealousy, and evil surmisings, knew not that they were poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. Those who resist the messages of God through His humble servant, think they are at variance with Sister White, because her ideas are not in harmony with theirs; but this variance is not with Sister White, but with the Lord, who had given her her work to do.

Those who realize their need of repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, will have contrition of soul, will repent for their resistance of the Spirit of the Lord. They will confess their sin in refusing the light that Heaven has so graciously sent them, and they will forsake the sin that grieved and insulted the Spirit of the Lord. They will humble self, and accept the power and grace of Christ, acknowledging the messages of warning, reproof, and encouragement. Then their faith in the work of God will be made manifest, and they will rely upon the atoning sacrifice. They will make a personal appropriation of Christ's abundant grace and righteousness, and He will become to them a present Saviour; for they will realize their need of Him, and with complete trust will rest in Him. They will drink of the water of life from the divine, inexhaustible fountain. In a new and blessed experience, they will cast themselves upon Christ, and become partakers of the divine nature. The human and the divine will cooperate every day, and the heart will well up in thanksgiving and praise to Christ. Heavenly Inspiration will have a part in the Christian experience, and we shall grow to the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.

It is growth in knowledge of the character of Christ that sanctifies the soul. To discern and appreciate the wonderful work of the atonement, transforms him who contemplates the plan of salvation. By beholding Christ, he becomes changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. The beholding of Jesus becomes an ennobling, refining process to the actual Christian. He sees the Pattern, and grows into its likeness, and then how easily are dissensions, emulations, and strife adjusted. The perfection of Christ's character is the Christian's inspiration. When we see Him as He is, desire awakes to be like Him, and this elevates the whole man; for "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." 1 John 3:3.

I feel sad when I think how for long years there has been a gradual lowering of the standard. I have been shown that very few realize the constant presence of the Divine Watcher who declares, "I know thy works." Through the indulgence of sin, many have forfeited the favor of God, misrepresented Jesus, forgotten His presence, forgotten that they are living in His sight, and so have added evil to evil. All such are foolish virgins. They have no abiding consolation. The power of Christ is to be the comfort, the hope, the crown of rejoicing, of everyone that follows Jesus in his conflict, in his struggles in life. He who truly follows the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, can shout as he advances, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4.

What kind of faith is it that overcomes the world?—It is that faith which makes Christ your own personal Saviour—that faith which, recognizing your helplessness, your utter inability to save yourself, takes hold of the Helper who is mighty to save, as your only hope. It is faith that will not be discouraged, that hears the voice of Christ saying, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world, and My divine strength is yours." See John 16:33. It is the faith that hears Him say, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:20.

The reason why the churches are weak and sickly and ready to die, is that the enemy has brought influences of a discouraging nature to bear upon trembling souls. He has sought to shut Jesus from their view as the Comforter, as One who reproves, who warns, who admonishes them, saying, "This is the way, walk ye

in it." See Isaiah 30:21. Christ has all power in heaven and in earth, and He can strengthen the wavering, and set right the erring. He can inspire with confidence, with hope in God; and confidence in God always results in creating confidence in one another.

thirsty soul. He is our refuge in the storm. He is our righteousness, our sanctification, our redemption. When Christ is our personal Saviour, we shall show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Christ should never be out of the mind. The angels said concerning Him, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

Every soul must have a realization that Christ is His personal Saviour; then love and zeal and steadfastness will be manifest in the Christian life. However clear and convincing the truth is, it will fail to sanctify the soul, fail to strengthen and fortify it in its conflicts, unless it is brought in constant contact with life. Satan has achieved his greatest success through interposing himself between the soul and the Saviour.

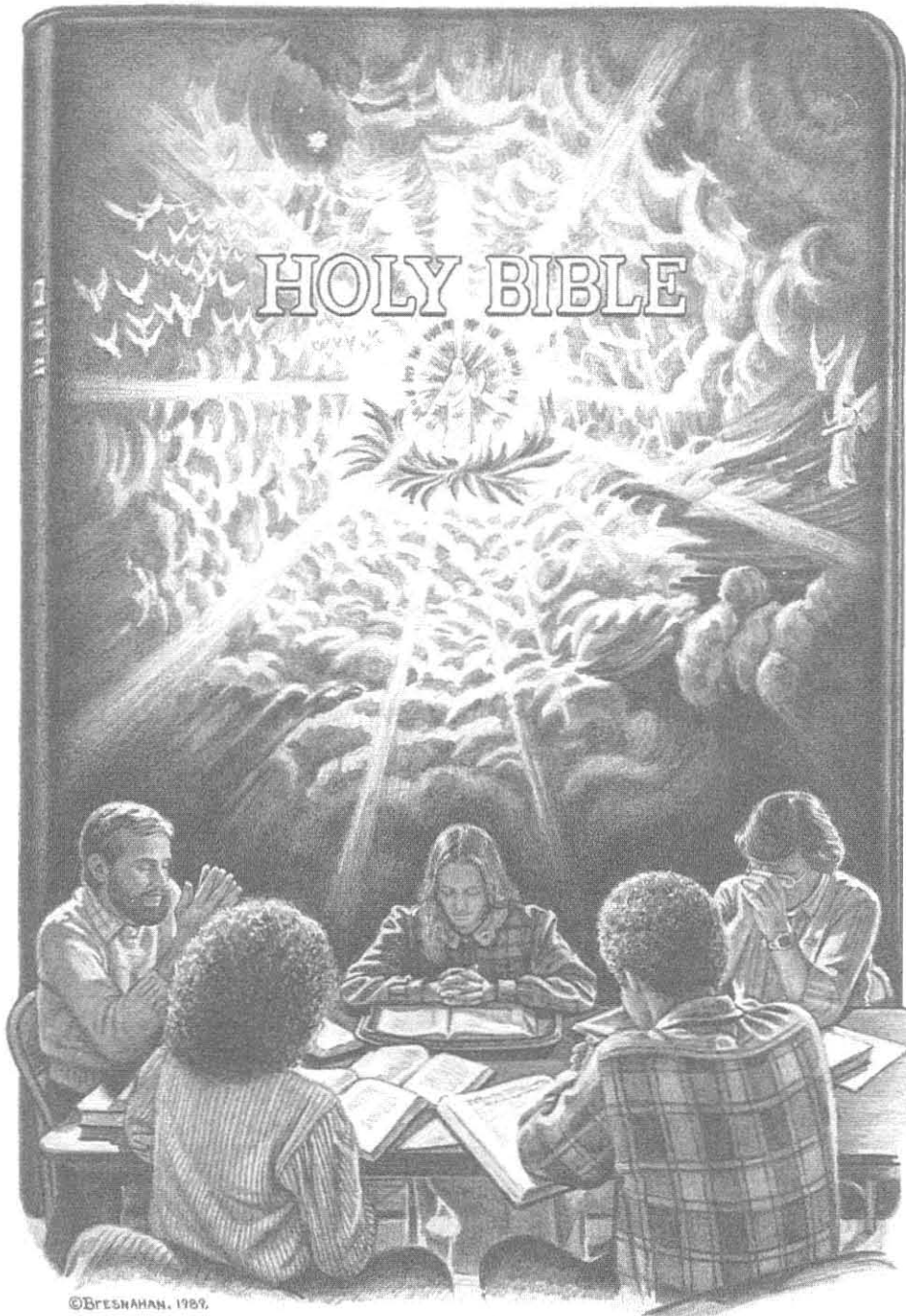
Christ should never be out of the mind. The angels said concerning Him, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21. Jesus, precious Saviour! Assurance, helpfulness, security, and peace are all in Him. He is the dispeller of all our doubts, the earnest of all our hopes. How precious is the thought that we may indeed become partakers of the divine nature, whereby we may overcome as Christ overcame! Jesus is the fullness of our expectation. He is the melody of our songs, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. He is living water to the

This great spiritual destitution is not caused by any failure on the part of Christ doing all that is possible for the Church. Our Heavenly Father bestowed all Heaven in One Gift—that of His dear Son. The work of the Holy Spirit is not to daub with untempered mortar, but it is to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgment to come. Jesus says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John 12:32. The revelation of the Son of God upon the cross, dying for the sins of men, draws the hearts of men by the power of infinite love, and convinces the sinner of sin. Christ died because the law was transgressed, that guilty man might be saved from the penalty of his enormous guilt. But history has proved that it is easier to destroy the world than to reform it; for men crucified the Lord of glory, who came to unite earth with Heaven, and man with God. □

Review and Herald, August 19, 26, 1890.

We must gain the victory over self, crucify the affections and lusts; and then begins the union of the soul with Christ. . . . After this union is formed, it can be preserved only by continual, earnest, painstaking effort.

The Faith I Live By, 135



Why I Am a Seventh-Day Adventist, Part 1

A NUMBER of years ago in a small Kentucky hill town, the Ministerial Association members decided on an unusual project. Each denomination represented in the group was to have one of its pastors tell, simply and briefly, what his church believed. This would be followed by a question-and-answer period, but no spirit of debate was to be allowed to enter in.

It was my great privilege as a member of this organization, to represent the Seventh-day Adventists. A longing to share my faith with other ministers was just the reason I had decided to join the group. It would have been easy to read them a statement of the fundamental doctrines found on the inside pages of our baptismal certificates. Instead, I was impressed to present my very personal reasons for the hope that is in me.

Paul P. Felt

Forty-four years have gone by now since that memorable day in my experience. However, the convictions I shared with those fine, earnest men are even more firmly the convictions I hold today. They have stood every test of time and trial.

One of the ministers in that group had told me he feared I had committed the sin against the Holy Spirit. Why?—Because I had dared to question, and then to reject, what the supposedly great scholars thought they had discovered about the Bible. What they teach, I had been taught, as had also my father, who was a foreign missionary. With this background, when I first became acquainted with Seventh-day Adventists, I knew of no authority in matters of religious belief more sure than my own private judgment. To me the Bible was the greatest collection of religious literature in the world—most of it true, much of it legendary, and some of it positively false!

Reason One

My first reason, then, for being a Seventh-day Adventist is that it is through this people that the Lord led me to have faith in His Word. And it was Bible prophecy, more than any other factor, which brought me out of the quicksand of the so-called “Higher Criticism” into faith in the firm “Thus saith the Lord!” of prophets and apostles. After years of study in other schools, I found at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary (in 1945) the most thorough scholarship, and the most truly scientific passion for truth, that I have seen in any educational institution.

A Seventh-day Adventist, by very definition, is a whole-hearted believer in the accuracy and authority of the Holy Scriptures. Is it possible that anyone would pay the price of faithfulness to God’s own wording of the fourth Commandment, if he did not believe that God had literally spoken that Commandment on Mount Sinai, and written it with His own finger? Can we imagine a man daring to swim against the swelling tide of worldliness and tradition, keeping holy the day that Jesus kept holy, if he did not believe in the literal accuracy of the Bible story of Creation? Would a people with doubts about the Bible dare to pro-

The late Paul P. Felt, a retired Seventh-day Adventist minister, wrote this testimony not long before a recent automobile accident that proved fatal.

claim to all the world that Christ is coming soon in power and great glory, and that in this event lies our only hope for world peace?

“Christ is coming! let creation
Bid her groans and travail cease;
Let the glorious proclamation
Hope restore and faith increase;
Christ is coming! Christ is coming!
Come, Thou blessed Prince of peace
“With that ‘blessed hope’ before us,
Let no harp remain unstrung;
Let the mighty Advent chorus
Onward roll from tongue to tongue;
Christ is coming! Christ is coming!
Come, Lord Jesus, quickly come!”

Reason Two

My second reason for being a Seventh-day Adventist is that I came to believe that their entire message is what the Bible teaches. The gospel of this worldwide movement is an integrated whole, accepted in all its essentials by all its informed and faithful members in all lands. I only wish I could tell you today that as a people we are perfectly fulfilling Christ’s prayer, “that they may be one, even as we are one.” John 17:22. As individuals we have fallen so far short of the perfect consecration to which God calls His people, that we certainly have nothing to boast of but Jesus our

Saviour. The movement of which we are a part lags far behind in accomplishing the work to which we believe God has called it.

This message we understand to be the “Everlasting Gospel” in its setting of “Present Truth.” See 2 Peter 1:12. Our “theme song” is the thrilling message of heavenly angels, preaching through hu-

man instruments to all who live in this closing hour of time. John tells us, “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” Revelation 14:6. This first angel is followed by a second and a third—like three rockets blazing through the night in swift succession! Having heard the messages of these angels, John says, “And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud

one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.” Verse 14. These messages together, then, must constitute “this gospel of the kingdom,” which our Saviour told His disciples “shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations” to prepare the way for His Second Coming. Matthew

A Seventh-day Adventist, by very definition, is a whole-hearted believer in the accuracy and authority of the Holy Scriptures.

man instruments to all who live in this closing hour of time. John tells us, “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” Revelation 14:6. This first angel is followed by a second and a third—like three rockets blazing through the night in swift succession! Having heard the messages of these angels, John says, “And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud

24:14. If so, it is just as important for those of us living today to understand these messages, and let them do their appointed work in our lives, as it was for the people of Noah’s day to believe his warning of the coming flood, and to join him in the ark before the rain began to fall. Noah must have seemed very arrogant and positive to some of his hearers, just as we sound to some today. What mattered, however, was that Noah preached the truth, and that life and death hinged on the acceptance of that truth.

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The first angel's message is the most general of the three, yet we understand it as having a very definite, twofold application to our own times. "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Revelation 14:7. What is so remarkable about the first part of this message is that it preaches a judgment already upon us: "the hour of his judgment IS COME."

give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come!"

This angel's message goes on to call men back to the worship of the Creator. "And worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." This has been the great cry of all the holy prophets since the world began. Never, however, was it more needed than it is today! We cannot truly worship the Creator without accepting

moral law. We keep it because "the sabbath was made for man" (Mark 2:27; Genesis 2:3) before man sinned. We keep it because it will be kept by all the saints in the earth-made-new, when sin and sinners have been banished forever. See Isaiah 66:22-23. Insofar as we keep it holy at all, we do so, not in our own strength, but by the power of the Holy Spirit and a regenerated heart. "That the righteousness of the law might," as Paul so fitly says, "be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:4. Since the fourth commandment commemorates God's rest at the close of His work of Creation, we do not see how any first-day rest could ever fulfill the purpose for which the commandment was given. See Exodus 20:11. This is the day, above all others, on which we are to "worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters!"

The first angel has spoken, and now the second angel proclaims with a mighty voice a message of equal importance for those who live in these last days. "Babylon is fallen, is fallen," he cries, "that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Revelation 14:8. This is the Babylon whose character and whose final destiny are so vividly described in Revelation 17 and 18. This is the mighty city from which a great "voice from heaven" is calling His people to come out. "Come out of her, my people," He cries, "that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Revelation 18:4. For many scriptural reasons, all Seventh-day Adventists believe that "Babylon" represents the fallen church. This is that "falling away" prophesied by Paul, in which "that man of sin" would "be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4.

The pioneers of the Protestant Reformation all well knew how to identify this sinister power, but Babylon is more than one church organization, even though the Catholic church is the most powerful one of all. Babylon includes in her seductive embrace all who will do her bidding. "Know ye not," asks Paul, "that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?" Romans 6:16. Is it any wonder then that Jesus, in warning His disciples of the perils that they would face in the last days, said, "Remember Lot's

We know of only one ordinance of man, directly contrary to our understanding of the moral law of God, which professing Christians today are trying to enforce through the civil law—that is the observance of Sunday.

(All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

The Seventh-day Adventist movement began with this conviction of a judgment work already begun in heaven. This belief is based on the words of Daniel 8:14, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." Space does not permit me to explain right here and now how these Bible students came to believe that this cleansing began in 1844. Suffice it to say that the sanctuary to be cleansed could only be that heavenly temple after which the tabernacle of Moses was patterned. See Revelation 11:19; Hebrews 8:5; 9:23-24.

We know of only one dark blot in all the courts of heaven that could need such a cleansing. This is the sad record, inscribed on the books of heaven, which tells of the sins of men. We understand this heavenly cleansing through its foreshadowing in the annual Day of Atonement in the Old Testament sanctuary service. See Leviticus 23:26-30; 16:29-30. We believe that this work of judgment, continuing from 1844 to the close of probation, is God's great "inventory" of His people. By this means, the angels who accompany Christ at His Second Coming can know that all who are called from their graves at that time are fit subjects for God's heavenly kingdom. And while the books of heaven are being cleansed from all record of the sins of the saints who have gone on before, a great reformatory message is cleansing the lives of God's people who are living on the earth during this judgment hour. "Fear God," then, "and

His own story of His work. To believe the pseudo-scientific theory of evolution, we must believe that mankind started at the bottom of the ladder, both intellectually and spiritually. To believe the divine record of Creation, as found in the opening words of the Bible story, we must believe that man started at the top, perfect in every way, and fell to his present low estate only through deliberate disobedience to the revealed will of his Creator. There could not possibly be any believers in "evolution" among the ranks of sincere Seventh-day Adventists.

Yet this call to worship the Creator means even more! It means that we will remember His creatorship through remembering to keep holy the day He set aside by His own example as an everlasting memorial of that great event. "Wherefore," He declares, "the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed." Exodus 31:16-17. We take these significant words as applying to the true spiritual Israel of all ages, for surely there is nothing Jewish about either the Creation, or the sanctified life (see verse 13) to which our Creator calls us in this world of sin!

We keep this Sabbath of the Lord—not from any vain dream of saving ourselves by our works—but because God Himself made it an integral part of His

wife"? Luke 17:32. The call to flee from fallen Babylon is an inseparable part of "this gospel of the kingdom." Matthew 24:14.

And now a third mighty angel commands our attention with his warning voice: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:9-12.

The mark of the beast will be placed upon all but the very elect of God. This will happen in the last great crisis of human history before the coming of Christ. If it is true that the signs of Christ's soon coming are being fulfilled, or have already been fulfilled all around us, then surely the time has come for Christians to study and to understand this striking prophecy. Adventists understand this "beast" power to represent civil authority under the domination of corrupt Christianity. It is Satan's supreme effort to destroy true Christianity, and he uses those who name the name of Christ as his chief agents—just as he did nineteen hundred years ago through God's people of that time—the Jews.

From the closing words of the third angel's message, it is plain that the mark of the beast must be some law of man directly contrary to one of the commandments of God. It is made clear in Revelation 13:16-17 that the mark of the beast will be enforced by civil authority, since "no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." Only those who have "the patience of the saints" will dare to resist, under penalty of death. This civil law will be inspired by professed Christians—the harlot woman of Revelation 17—who rides on the back of the beast. We know of only one ordinance of man, directly contrary to our understanding of the moral law of God, which professing Christians today are trying to enforce through the civil law—that is the observance of Sunday. Adventists believe that the day is coming when, in some real or fancied emergency, the traditional Christian rest day will be enforced so ruthlessly—

perhaps through a compulsory six-day work week—that the Sabbathkeepers will be quite unable to find a place in the economic system. In that day the issue of discipleship will be made crystal clear—as in the days of the ancient Caesars. By this test all mankind will be sifted, and only those who will "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (Revelation 14:4) will be found ready in the day of Christ's glorious coming. "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12.

These ringing words that close the third angel's message make that proclamation far more than a mere negative warning. They herald forth the principle on which all Christian victory depends—righteousness by faith in the Lord Jesus

Christ. While we Adventists do not always grasp this fact as we ought, it is the very heart of our gospel to the world. Nothing but the blood of Jesus can prepare us to stand in the trials that are before us. Only when we realize our utter helplessness apart from Christ, will He fill us by His mighty Spirit with the power to keep His commandments faithfully under extreme temptation. There is no gift of the Holy Ghost more essential than the gift by which we are made overcomers. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Revelation 2:7. □

To be continued.

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of Hope International
presents these upcoming meetings:

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The Conditions of Salvation

DISOBEDIENCE to the Holy Divine Law of God brought sin into the world—with its suffering, misery and death. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” 1 John 3:4. “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 6:23. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23.

These texts make it clear that disobedience to the law is sin, and that the wages of all who sin is death. We are told that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. What are the conditions for salvation? That is the question that every sinner must understand before he is safe to save. Obedience to all known truth—without any compromise—is one of God’s conditions for salvation. By the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, we must experience these conditions—not by what we do—but by what we are willing to allow God to do in us moment by moment.

During the 6,000 years of the great controversy, there have always been a few of God’s faithful people who have

been willing to meet God’s requirements for salvation—not through what *they* could do, but through what they knew God would do in them, if they were willing to obey His commandments.

“The great plan of redemption, as revealed in the closing work for these last days, should receive close examination. The scenes connected with the sanctuary above should make such an impression upon the minds and hearts of all that they may be able to impress others. All need to become more intelligent in regard to the work of the atonement, which is going on in the sanctuary above. When this grand truth is seen and understood, those who hold it will work in harmony with Christ to prepare a people to stand in the great day of God, and their efforts will be successful. By study, contemplation, and prayer God’s people will be elevated above common, earthly thoughts and feelings, and will be brought into harmony with Christ and His great work of cleansing the sanctuary above from the sins of the people. Their faith will go with Him into the sanctuary, and the worshipers on earth will be carefully reviewing their lives and comparing their

characters with the great standard of righteousness. They will see their own defects; they will also see that they must have the aid of the Spirit of God if they would become qualified for the great and solemn work for this time which is laid upon God’s ambassadors.” *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 575.

The sanctuary service was to be the plan of salvation in miniature. The daily ministration of the priests in the holy place, and then the annual Day of Atonement in the Most Holy Place, was to show the church the hideousness of sin. Every time the sinner cut the throat of the innocent lamb, it was intended to remind him that his sins were responsible for the future crucifixion of his Messiah. Tragically, the Jews became so accustomed to the sacrificial system that they lost sight of the hideousness of sin, and they came to believe that the lamb itself was appeasing God for their sins. The priest misused the system by turning it into a business by providing lambs for the sinners to buy for their sacrifices. They failed to teach the people that there was power in Heaven by which to overcome all hereditary and cultivated weak-

Ron Spear

nesses to sin. Consequently, they turned the tabernacle of God into a slaughterhouse. This was not God's plan, for the conditions of salvation have always been the same—overcoming all sin by the power of the Holy Spirit.

If the death of Christ could have justified the whole world, then He could have died outside the gates of Eden and saved the misery and death of billions of people. However, the omnipotent, all-seeing God knew it would take about 6,000 years to disprove Satan's accusations—that God was an arbitrary, unloving tyrant who had made a law that man could not keep. Then the final generation would reveal the ultimate display of what God can do—and will do—when man is willing to be made willing to obey without compromise. God could then bring an end to the great controversy. His faithful, loyal, and obedient people in every generation would then have vindicated God and shown that He is a God of love, mercy, and justice. God would have a planet of peace—with joyful inhabitants who would live forever—without sin ever arising again. See Nahum 1:9.

From the very beginning of the sin problem, the devil has attempted to counterfeit God's plan to redeem guilty sinners. Unfortunately, he has been most successful. The majority of the people rebelled in the wilderness, and very few entered the Promised Land. We are told many times in the inspired Testimonies that the same rebellion would be evident in the last-day remnant church. Only a very few leaders, pastors, and laity would repent of that rebellion and be saved. What a tragedy! See *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 10, 50, 75–83, 94, 160, 217, 456; *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 608–609.

God gave us more than 50 volumes of inspired Testimonies to keep us from making the same mistakes as did the ancient church. But very few have read them and complied with the divine counsel. Jesus said, "Many are called, but few are chosen." Matthew 22:14. Ellen White wrote, "To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test." *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 136.

God's test has always been obedience to known truth—which is God's appointed way—perfection of Christian character. "It is God's pleasure and will that the blessings bestowed on man shall be given in perfect completeness. He has made provision that every difficulty may

be overcome, every want supplied through the Holy Spirit. Thus He designs that man shall perfect a Christian character. God would have us contemplate His love, His promises, given so freely to those who have no merit in themselves. He would have us depend fully, gratefully, rejoicingly, in the righteousness provided for us in Christ. To all who

sponsored by apostates—which says you are saved **in** sin and not **from** sin (see Matthew 1:21)—has provided the majority of the church with a false assurance of salvation. Our tragic condition is revealed in this inspired Testimony:

"But very few of those who have received the light are doing the work entrusted to their hands. There are a few men of

When we are doing our work remember there is One that is watching the spirit in which we are doing it. Shall we not bring the Saviour into our everyday lives, into our secular work and domestic duties?"

come to God in His appointed way, He freely listens." *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, 932.

We must remember, God is daily measuring us to see if we are trustworthy to receive eternal life:

"Here is the work going on, measuring the temple and its worshipers to see who will stand in the last day. Those who stand fast shall have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. When we are doing our work remember there is One that is watching the spirit in which we are doing it. Shall we not bring the Saviour into our everyday lives, into our secular work and domestic duties? Then in the name of God we want to leave behind everything that is not necessary, all gossiping or unprofitable visiting, and present ourselves as servants of the living God." *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, 972.

The doctrine that you cannot overcome sin by the power of the Holy Spirit is Satan's greatest lie, and those who accept this false doctrine of salvation—which is now coming from many of our pulpits, and is supported by some of our church leaders—are doomed to disappointment, and they will lose eternal life.

Tragically, out of the approximately ten million Seventh-day Adventist members on the earth today, only a few will endure the test of obedience to present truth.

Their ambitions for the material riches of this sin-cursed world have not prepared them for the final test. The New Theology—so blatantly promoted from our pulpits, printed on our presses, and

unswerving fidelity who do not study ease, convenience, or life itself, who push their way wherever they can find an opening to press the light of truth and vindicate the holy law of God. But the sins that control the world have come into the churches, and into the hearts of those who claim to be God's peculiar people. Many who have received the light exert an influence to quiet the fears of worldlings and formal professors. There are lovers of the world even among those who profess to be waiting for the Lord. There is ambition for riches and honor. Christ describes this class when He declares that the day of God is to come as a snare upon all that dwell upon the earth. This world is their home. They make it their business to secure earthly treasures. They erect costly dwellings and furnish them with every good thing; they find pleasure in dress and the indulgence of appetite. The things of the world are their idols. These interpose between the soul and Christ, and the solemn and awful realities that are crowding upon us are but dimly seen and faintly realized. The same disobedience and failure which were seen in the Jewish church have characterized in a greater degree the people who have had this great light from Heaven in the last messages of warning. Shall we, like them, squander our opportunities and privileges until God shall permit oppression and persecution to come upon us? Will the work which might be performed in peace and comparative prosperity be left undone until it must be performed in days of darkness, under the pressure of trial and persecution?

"There is a terrible amount of guilt for which the church is responsible. Why are not those who have the light putting

forth earnest efforts to give that light to others? They see that the end is near. They see multitudes daily transgressing God's law; and they know that these souls cannot be saved in transgression. Yet they have more interest in their trades, their farms, their houses, their merchandise, their dress, their tables, than in the souls of men and women whom they must meet face to face in the judgment. The people who claim to obey the truth

Let us review some additional statements from Inspiration on this vital subject:

"It is plainly stated that the condition of gaining eternal life is obedience to the commandments of God." *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 26, 1897.

"Obedience to the commandments of God is the only true sign of sanctification. Disobedience is the sign of disloyalty and apostasy." *Ibid.*

Those who accept Christ as their Saviour, becoming partakers of His divine nature, are enabled to follow His example, living in obedience to every precept of the law."

are asleep. They could not be at ease as they are if they were awake. The love of the truth is dying out of their hearts. Their example is not such as to convince the world that they have truth in advance of every other people upon the earth. At the very time when they should be strong in God, having a daily, living experience, they are feeble, hesitating, relying upon the preachers for support, when they should be ministering to others with mind and soul and voice and pen and time and money. *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 456-457.

"There is only one path to Paradise restored—the path of obedience." *The Upward Look*, 318.

"Obedience is the first price of eternal life." *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, 1477.

"Warnings and reproofs are not given to the erring among Seventh-day Adventists because their lives are more blameworthy than are the lives of professed Christians of the nominal churches, nor because their example or their acts are worse than those of the Adventists who will not yield obedience to the claims

of God's law, but because they have great light, and have by their profession taken their position as God's special, chosen people, having the law of God written in their hearts. They signify their loyalty to the God of heaven by yielding obedience to the laws of His government. They are God's representatives upon the earth. Any sin in them separates them from God and, in a special manner, dishonors His name by giving the enemies of His holy law occasion to reproach His cause and His people, whom He has called 'a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people,' (1 Peter 2:9) that they should show forth the praises of Him that hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. . . .

"The Lord reprove and corrects the people who profess to keep His law. He points out their sins and lays open their iniquity because He wishes to separate all sin and wickedness from them, that they may perfect holiness in His fear. . . . God rebukes, reprove, and corrects them, that they may be refined, sanctified, elevated, and finally exalted to His own throne." *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 661-662.

"One act of disobedience, unless repented of, leads to another. He who justifies himself in sin is led on step by step in deception, till at length he sins with impunity." *The Upward Look*, 318.

"The requirement of God to obey and live was given to Adam. The only way to life is found through obedience to the commandments." *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 28, 1893.

"Christ came to the world to counteract Satan's falsehood that God had made a law which men could not keep. Taking humanity upon Himself, He came to this earth, and by a life of obedience showed that God has not made a law that man cannot keep. He showed that it is possible for man perfectly to obey the law. Those who accept Christ as their Saviour, becoming partakers of His divine nature, are enabled to follow His example, living in obedience to every precept of the law. Through the merits of Christ, man is to show by his obedience that he could be trusted in heaven, that he would not rebel." *The Faith I Live By*, 114.

May God help us to be a part of His faithful, obedient followers who will stand faithful to the end, and vindicate His law and His character. □

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The Proper Role of Church Pastors

IN the early years of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, God's people made no plans for there to be church pastors as we know them today. As the infant church developed, the ministers traveled between the little companies of believers, bringing inspiration and understanding to the precious souls. However, their major work was that of spreading the gospel to those who knew not the truth, entering into new towns, villages and cities and into the countryside to find precious souls who had hearts open to the testimony of God's Word.

However, as the churches began to multiply and the congregations began to increase, a desire naturally arose to have full-time gospel workers associated with these churches. The pattern in the fallen churches of Protestantism was clearly established. Each major church congregation had its own pastor and, if it was large enough, several pastors. Each small church had a pastor shared with one or more other churches—but each had a pastor.

As would be expected, some of those in the new Seventh-day Adventist Church looked to pattern the work of their ministry after the churches from which they

had recently come. Sister White insisted that the role of the minister—as in apostolic times—was to move into new territories in order to enter into front-line evangelism—where the message was non-existent or particularly weak.

“When the ministers understand the great blessing to be derived from laboring for those who know not the truth, they will leave the churches, after impressing upon them the importance of devising plans and methods whereby they can do within their borders the same kind of work that the ministers of the gospel are doing in the regions beyond.” *Medical Ministry*, 318.

“The influence of truth is too much restricted. Let men who know the truth be urged to communicate truth to those who are in darkness. Many are satisfied with a view of truth, but they have not yet stepped into their place to communicate that which they have received. God has let men feel the power of truth, but they are not all doing their appointed work in seeking to save that which was lost. Everyone is to have the armor on, prepared to win others to obedience to the law of God. I see so much given to those who already have; these wonderful meetings for those who wish to get more strength are depriving the world of the very work that should be done. Our ministers should now be working for the saving of the lost. The weeks spent in gatherings to fit men for work might better, far better, be spent in going to the highways and hedges with the proclamation, ‘Come; for all things are now ready.’ Luke 14:17.” *Testimonies to Ministers*, 231.

“Let everyone who loves God consider that now while it is day is the time to work, not among the sheep already in the fold, but to go out in search of the lost and perishing ones. These need to have special help to bring them back to the fold. Now is the time for the careless to arouse from their slumber. Now is the time to entreat that souls shall not only hear the Word of God, but without delay secure oil in their vessels with their lamps.” *Ibid.*, 233-234.

To faithfully do this work was not always going to be easy, but it was the work that God had called ministers to do.

“Every true follower of Christ has a work to do. God has given to every man his work. A few are now pointing to the roll of fast-fulfilling prophecy

Colin D. Standish

and proclaiming, Get ready, show your obedience to God by keeping His commandments. This is no time for the messengers of God to stop to prop up those who know the truth, and who have every advantage. Let them go on to lift the standard and give the warning, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.' Matthew 25:6. Many who hear the message—by far the greatest number—will not credit the solemn warning. Many will be found

The Lord sees the appointment of church pastors as being enfeebling rather than enabling for the church members:

"To those who obey the light they have, illumination will come from on high; for the heavenly messengers are waiting to cooperate with men in warning a deceived, sinful world. When the people of God engage in this work with real travail of soul there will be manifest a decided change in cities and villages.

The major function of the pastor was that of proclaiming the Word of God to those not of our faith.

disloyal to the commandments of God, which are a test of character. The Lord's servants will be called enthusiasts [fanatics]. Ministers will warn the people not to listen to them. Noah received the same treatment while the Spirit of God was urging him to give the message, whether men would hear or whether they would forbear." Ibid., 232-233.

Yet those who go out in the power of the Lord will be greatly blessed as angels link their efforts with that of the human agent:

"Angels are waiting to bless the consecrated workers. The parable of the lost sheep should be a lesson to every soul who has been rescued from the snare of Satan. We are not to hover over the ninety and nine, but to go forth to save the lost, hunting them up in the wilderness of the large cities and towns. In this work the laborers will be led to feel their weakness, and they will flee to the stronghold. The divine presence will be with them to give strength and courage and faith and hope. The true-hearted workers will be laborers together with God." Ibid., 232.

Clearly, in the experience of Sister White there were those pastors who much preferred to minister to the church members than to labor in new fields. Therefore the servant of the Lord encouraged the members of the church to take the initiative in helping the pastors to do the work that God had entrusted to them.

This hovering about churches to keep them propped up makes them more dependent on human effort. They learn to lean on the experience of their fellow men and do not make God their dependence and their efficiency. It is time that cities and villages everywhere were hearing the solemn note of warning, 'Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him.' Revelation 1:7." Ibid., 231-232.

On the positive side, Sister White saw that when the ministers were doing the work for which they were ordained—seeking souls in the world at large—the laity would become greatly empowered by the work and the responsibilities they would then carry:

"If the ministers would get out of the way, if they would go forth into new fields, the members would be obliged to bear responsibilities, and their capabilities would increase by use." *Evangelism*, 382.

Wisely, the early Seventh-day Adventist Church chose to develop district pastors. These were not district pastors in the same sense as we understand them today—pastors in charge of two or more churches—but rather, pastors who were each appointed to an area in which to conduct evangelistic meetings or to do other forms of soul-winning endeavors. It became common for the Conference to divide their territories into districts and to appoint a pastor to proclaim the Word in each district.

My brother, Russell, and I had the privilege of growing up to the age of fourteen and one-half while this system was still employed in the work of God in Australia. This system clearly changed earlier in the United States than in Australia. We were also privileged to have for our father the "young" elder of the Hamilton Church in the city of Newcastle, Australia. As lads, this permitted us to gain an understanding of the function of the pastor and of the officers of the church in such an organizational pattern.

A pastor would be appointed to a district. If it were in a city, it would be a city district. Our city of Newcastle at that time had a population of about one-quarter million people, and so it was considered one district. In the more rural areas the pastor would be appointed to a district which might contain three or four sizable towns. The major function of the pastor was that of proclaiming the Word of God to those not of our faith. The pastor would locate within the district. If assigned to a rural district, he would conduct a crusade lasting five to six months in one town, usually holding meetings two nights a week and spending the rest of the time in visitation, presentation of Bible studies and other soul-winning activities. He would then likely hold a crusade in a different town in his rural district each succeeding year until he was transferred to another district.

An evangelist appointed to a city district might also hold a crusade of five or six months each year, but in varying suburbs instead of towns. After three or four years the pastor was usually transferred to another district. It was usual for the pastor and his family to become members of one of the churches within the district. The first part of the year was given over to organizing the church or churches within the area to provide support for the crusade and the various functions necessary. The church members always received great encouragement through their involvement in the crusade, by their presence at each meeting, by their financial support, and by doing the various tasks so often associated with crusades—folding leaflets, distributing them house to house, and so forth. Some were chosen to help with such tasks as ushering, presenting music, and singing in the choir—which were so much a feature of those evangelistic efforts.

Because of this correct implementation of the pastoral role, we had the privilege of attending crusades every year

during our youth. Our parents were the kind of parents who took their boys with them to attend, not only the first meeting or two, but also nearly all of the other meetings in the crusade. What a great privilege it was for us to hear every year the great truths of the Seventh-day Adventist faith couched within the prophetic utterances of Scripture! We have no question that this marvelous privilege has been a wonderful bastion of truth in our own understanding of God's Word and in the destiny of the whole Seventh-day Adventist movement.

It is important to recognize that the Conferences did not always have sufficient funds for all the pastors in the various districts to run crusades, but that did not alter the basic function of the minister. Each minister was required to put soul winning first, and, if the conference did not have the budget to run a public evangelistic campaign, the minister would be responsible for personal evangelistic work. He often did door-to-door work—sometimes using the literature ministry as an approach to find souls interested in the third angel's message. Whether by public evangelism or by personal evangelism the pastor's primary role was like that of the apostles of the New Testament—bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who at that time knew it not.

Let us examine what took place in the local churches in that era. We can speak from the experience that we had as youth in the Hamilton Church in Newcastle. The pastor appointed to our district would preach once a month in our church. That is not to say that he would not preach in other churches during that month, and normally he did. However, it was most extraordinary for the pastor to attend a business or a board meeting, and certainly he took no part in a nominating committee. This was true even if he and his family became members of our church. The pastor kept himself busy in soul-winning endeavors and in Bible studies, and therefore did not spend time in any activity that the laity of the church could wholly and more effectively handle themselves. This practice was in harmony with Sister White's counsel.

However, currently not a few ministers are neglecting the very work that they have been appointed to do. Why are those who are set apart for the work of the ministry placed on committees and boards? Why are they called upon to

attend so many business meetings—many times at great distances from their field of labor? Why are not the business matters placed in the hands of businessmen? The ministers have not been set apart to do this work. The finances of the cause are to be properly managed by men of ability, but ministers are set apart for another line of work.

Today the ministers are doing the work of the elders and of the deacons. The elders were assigned to be the spiritual guardians of local churches. They were to be men who were apt to teach, who were to know the precious truth of God and who would be able to stabilize the congregation and otherwise be a blessing to the members. However, today the elders are occupying little more than ceremonial posi-

wisdom because they were to seek to solve the disputes that were in the church. What a difference from the way we choose deacons today!

Paul admonished Titus: "and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." Titus 1:5.

These elders had oversight of the local churches and were the spiritual leaders in those communities. Note Peter's exhortation concerning elders:

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but

The pastor kept himself busy in soul-winning endeavors and in Bible studies, and therefore did not spend time in any activity that the laity of the church could wholly and more effectively handle themselves.

tions of honor while the deacons are little more than offering gatherers—roles that do not require sacred ordination.

Let us look at the Biblical role of a deacon. When a dispute arose in the church in Jerusalem it was only natural that the disadvantaged people sought help from the apostles. Yet the apostles knew that they were not ordained for that role. Note their wise counsel:

"Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." Acts 6:2-4.

It will be noted that deacons were to be godly men who were empowered by the Holy Spirit. They were also to be men of wisdom. This was necessary because they were responsible for caring for the poor, discriminating between those who were truly needy and those who were simply lazy. They also had to have

being ensamples to the flock." 1 Peter 5:1-3.

Also note Paul's counsel (keeping in mind that "bishop" was just another name for elder): "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

How sad it is today that the pastors have become basically the baby-sitters of the church! Yet God has called them to be great soul winners, to move into new areas where the truth is not known or where there is little representation of

the truth, to there establish a church, and to strengthen it until it can survive well without the pastor when he moves to a new field of labor after appointing godly leaders in charge of the church.

Notice the statements of the servant of the Lord concerning the prohibition of ministers doing many things they are now expected to do:

"Ministers are not to be called hither and thither to attend board meetings for the purpose of deciding common business questions. Many of our ministers have done this work in the past, but it is not the work in which the Lord wishes them to engage. Too many financial burdens have been placed on them. When they try to carry these burdens, they neglect to fulfill the gospel commission. God looks upon this as a dishonor to His name. . . .

"The world is to be warned. Ministers should work earnestly and devotedly, opening new fields and engaging in personal labor for souls, instead of hovering over the churches that already have

ing activities of the church. Often when my father came home after business or board meetings my mother naturally asked, "Was anything important decided tonight?" It became very obvious to me from the dialogues of my parents that there was a great deal of unity and tranquillity within the church. There seemed to be few times when any major issues arose to cause division among those who were on the board. Our church had a harmony which many churches would covet today.

The lay leadership of the church held the responsibility for almost every aspect of what took place. Commonly, the elders, deacons and deaconesses, in a very informal way, met after the divine service in order to dialogue concerning any members who had missed the church service. Often someone would ask the question, "Did anyone see Brother or Sister X here today?" If none had seen that person, the church leaders would decide who would go to visit the family that afternoon. We well

little or no responsibility in these areas, for their primary focus was that of ministering to those not of our faith.

There is no question that the laity can do a better job in ministering to the local church needs than can the pastor. The laity knew at that time that they had to be strong and knowledgeable and apt to teach, for often the elders and, sometimes the deacons, would preach in the divine service hour.

When the time approached for the quarterly communion service, the elders, deacons and deaconesses frequently met together and formed themselves into teams of three. Each team of an elder, deacon and deaconess would visit shut-ins and administer the communion to them. Thus the total function of the local church was where God wanted it to be—in the hands of the laity. Not until the end of the 1940s was the first church pastor, per se, appointed to our church.

When several years ago I spoke with Pastor O. K. Anderson, who at the time was eighty-six years of age, concerning the change that took place, his answer was simple, "The ministers felt it was too hard to be constantly evangelizing. They felt it would be easier to pastor local churches." Others have sensed that a desire for our churches to operate according to the failed pattern of the fallen churches of the world contributed to the tragic change in local church government. Seldom, however, does any one factor bring about a major change.

In any case, a change did occur. After the appointment of our first church pastor at the Hamilton Church, we, as youth, noticed that our father returned home from board and business meetings somewhat confused. He did not know how to handle one who in reality immediately became a "king" in the church. The pastor assumed a role that indicated that he was above the rest of the members of the board. Our father did not always agree with the recommendations or the stands taken by the pastor, but he wanted to show respect and loyalty, thus he was not sure how he could disagree respectfully with the pastor. It was indeed a difficult time for our father—and no doubt for other lay leaders in the church as well. Now the pastor had the leadership of the church. No longer were those who exercised leadership in the church equal brethren.

Today we have seen greater changes because of this alteration of government

If any member appeared lax or backslidden in his or her Christian experience, the elders would share the responsibility of seeking to restore such a member.

great light and many advantages." *Testimonies*, vol. 7, 255.

Furthermore, in God's plan for lay ministry there are no head elders, head deacons or head deaconesses. This was certainly true in the church in which I grew up. Elders, deacons and deaconesses were chosen, but there was no discrimination of rank. Each elder took his turn in leadership. They were following the admonition of Jesus: "All ye are brethren." Matthew 23:8.

Thus no one had kingly rule in the church, and the teams worked together with a high level of harmony. When I was nine-years-old my family moved to live with my grandfather after the death of my grandmother. As the house had only two bedrooms, I slept in what had formerly been the dining room—immediately adjacent to the kitchen. Here I could easily overhear the conversations between my father and mother concern-

remember a number of times bicycling with our parents to bring spiritual strength to shut-ins and to encourage them during their illnesses.

Hospital visits were organized in much the same way. Indeed, it was normal to appoint a deacon, deaconess or elder to be at the hospital every evening that the sick one was in the hospital. Thus the laity was given and accepted the responsibility of spiritually blessing the members of the church. If any member appeared lax or backslidden in his or her Christian experience, the elders would share the responsibility of seeking to restore such a member.

In this way the lay leadership was responsible for the physical and spiritual needs of the members of the church. They handled the usual domestic problems that arose and also the challenges that families had because of poverty or other adversity. The district pastors had

at the local church level. It has led to our pastors fulfilling most of the roles of the elders and deacons while filling only a few of the roles for which they were ordained. It is common now for laity to say, "Pastor, Mrs. Smith is sick in the hospital. Please, will you visit her?" or "Mr. Jones has been missing from our congregation for some time now. Would you mind visiting him?" This alteration has encouraged ineffectiveness and laziness in the laity and has imperiled their spiritual destiny. Pastors frequently say things like, "My phone begins to ring at six in the morning and does not seem to stop until twelve at night." The pastors have become the "baby-sitters" of the church, and all the burdens seem to be placed upon them. No single man can handle such a responsibility, and in most cases the pastor has little opportunity to get to the real work for which he was ordained. Today we develop a few professional evangelists and ask them to do the impossible—to fulfill the roll in evangelistic work that should be done by each pastor.

The work is in great peril as a result of this change in the role of the pastor. No longer are we strongly seeking to move into areas of the world and of the individual countries where there is little or no Seventh-day Adventist witness. When the pastors are tied to the churches they cannot move into the regions beyond, and therefore we are paralyzing the onward advance of God's work.

Because the pastor has a status above everyone else in the church, there is always the danger of deferring to him—whether or not he is faithful to the Seventh-day Adventist message and to the principles of righteousness. More and more the pastor becomes a controversial individual within the church. Some are ready to follow him implicitly—irrespective of what he believes or where he leads—while others become burdened when he is unfaithful to his high and holy calling and to God's message. This has caused laity to fragment and become contentious one with another over the issues. Those who adopt the policy of supporting the pastor irrespective of his faithfulness or unfaithfulness are considered to be loyal and faithful members, while those who cannot support the actions of the pastor leading God's church astray are considered to be the "troublers of Israel." These two segments of the church then become hostile one to the other.

Often the influence of the pastor has been destroyed as he has taken over the business meetings, the board meetings and the nominating committee meetings. Too frequently these pastors are accused of manipulating the nominating committee so that those who support him are chosen for the most influential roles within the church. Of-

tures of Satan. God's method is decentralization, but the present form of church government has aided and abetted the designs of Satan.

The result has been that the laity have become inert and passive, and therefore impotent, and that is precarious for their eternal destiny. The deacons do little more than take up the

Finally, by ministers filling roles for which they were not ordained or called, they sometimes go through a whole year without bringing one soul to the Lord.

ten the decision-making pastors have exercised so great an influence that the laity have been disaffected. An issue as simple as the building of a new fellowship hall for the church has caused great consequences. The following example is typical:

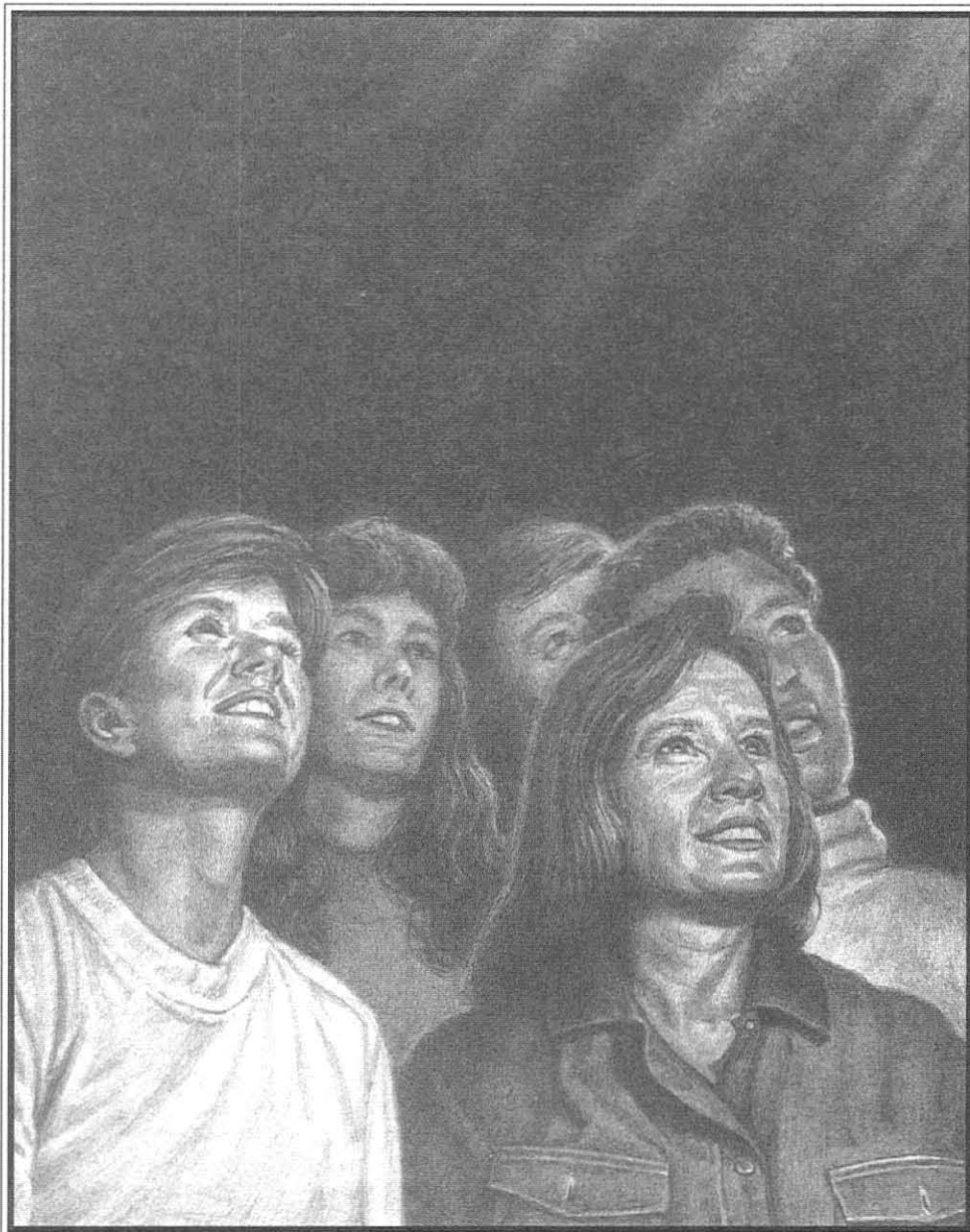
The church members generally agreed to build a fellowship hall. However, they differed in opinion as to the size of the hall needed. Some wanted a larger hall, thinking that the church should look to the future and not just build for the present needs. Another significant group believed that the church should not incur debt by going beyond the means which were currently available. They suggested that a hall be built that could later be expanded as the need arose, but which would suit their current needs. The pastor unwisely threw his not inconsiderable influence on the side of those wanting the larger hall. During the following week, comments could be heard among the dissenting members. These included: "It is fine for the pastor to say that we need to have a bigger hall. He will not be around when we have to find the money to pay off the debt," or, "If these people want a hall that size they can pay for it. Not a cent of my money is going into it." Thus the church became divided, and the pastor's influence was greatly diminished among a significant segment of the church.

Generally speaking, the strong influence of the pastor permits Satan a further opportunity to exercise his own influence. It is much easier to control one man's mind than many men's minds. The pastor is not superhuman. He is like the rest of humanity—fallible before the pres-

offering, occasionally doing a little busy work around the church, and assisting with an ordinance or a baptism. The ministry for which they were called and ordained is rarely fulfilled. The same is true of the elders. The responsibility of eldership in many churches has become not much more than announcing a hymn, reading announcements, offering corporate prayer, but in no wise giving the spiritual leadership for which they were ordained.

Finally, by ministers filling roles for which they were not ordained or called, they sometimes go through a whole year without bringing one soul to the Lord. As a result, respect for these ministers generally drops dramatically, and the church becomes fragmented.

The present organizational situation is perfectly designed to put control in the hands of a few people, thus frustrating the gospel commission. The spread of the end-time gospel is greatly hampered, and the laity remain content in their inertia. The likelihood of Satan gaining control in such a centralized organizational structure is very great indeed. The answer is simple. Let us, from the local church to the General Conference, return to a truly representative form of government where the talents and initiatives of each dedicated individual can be at the service of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the commission of the Lord. □



Are You Ready for Jesus to Come?

THE story is told of a pastor who preached a sermon on the second coming of Christ. He discussed some of the signs of Jesus' coming. Then he declared, "Jesus' coming is very near!" The congregation chorused, "Amen!" Then the pastor asserted, "We need to be getting our characters ready to meet Him!" Then the congregation fell silent!

Some may have been silent because they felt inadequate, while others may have been reluctant to meet the chal-

lenge. We like the idea of Jesus taking us to heaven to escape this world, but when asked about it, we question our readiness for it. How are we to know if we are ready for Jesus' appearing?

"Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ's, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All we have and are is consecrated to Him. We

long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things." *Steps to Christ*, 58.

"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:37-39, NKJV.

If you do not fit this description, you need to diligently study the Bible and get down on your knees in prayer and discover what it means to be a Christian. But do not be discouraged, because Jesus wants you in heaven, and He is doing all He can to prepare you for it. He just needs your cooperation. Claim Jesus' power in faith!

Some people ask me, "Do you feel you are ready for Jesus to come?" To tell you the truth, I choose not to be anxious about it, but I am careful to maintain my relationship with Jesus. I strive to grow, and then I rest by faith in Jesus. See *Steps to Christ*, 68-71.

Jesus wants us to reach out, to do a work for Him in seeking to warn and redeem the lost. Let us maintain a trusting, obedient relationship with Jesus, striving to grow; to reach out to others in whatever way Jesus leads us, and then resting in Him. God has promised, "I am the LORD that doth sanctify you." Exodus 31:13. And the apostle Paul says, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Timothy 1:12. This is righteousness by faith.

Do you seek after Jesus with your whole heart? Are you content with your earthly home, or do you desire your heavenly home? Why do you want your heavenly home? In carefully examining our answers, many of us might find that heaven does not seem real to us. Our earthly homes are comfortable, and we are quite content here. We are not seeking the Lord with our whole heart, nor are we eagerly awaiting His coming. A desire to avoid bills, be cured of an illness, escape hardships or other worldly cares will not enable us to attain heaven. Only a first-love relationship with Christ, seeking after Him with the whole heart, will bring the fiery chariot that will carry us home.

"Those who think of the result of hastening or hindering the gospel think of it in relation to themselves and to the world. Few think of its relation to God. Few give thought to the suffering that sin has caused our Creator. All heaven suffered in Christ's agony; but that suffering did not begin or

Doneta Wrate

end with His manifestation in humanity. The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to the heart of God. Every departure from the right, every deed of cruelty, every failure of humanity to reach His ideal, brings grief to Him. When there came upon Israel the calamities that were the sure result of separation from God—subjugation by their enemies, cruelty, and death—it is said that 'His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.' Judges 10:16. 'In all their affliction he was afflicted . . . and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.' Isaiah 63:9.

"His Spirit 'maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.' As 'the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together' (Romans 8:26, 22), the heart of the infinite Father is pained in sympathy. Our world is a vast lazarus house¹, a scene of misery that we dare not allow even our thoughts to dwell upon. Did we realize it as it is, the burden would be too terrible. Yet God feels it all. In order to destroy sin and its results He gave His best Beloved, and He has put it in our power, through co-operation with Him, to bring this scene of misery to an end." *Education*, 263-264.

Eternity is found in our devotion to our Heavenly Father. The happiness of eternity is created by the Christlikeness of the people. Heaven must be found in our hearts today before we can know the happiness of heaven tomorrow when Jesus comes again.

"It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 415.

Jesus will have a people perfectly reflecting His character before He pours out the latter rain. This people will believe that it is better to die than to sin, because they love Jesus so much they do not want to let Him down. This is the type of people that will be able to live through the time of trouble. As Jesus and His Father God were One, so His people and Jesus will be one. Their ears will be tuned only to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. They will be emptied of self, and live only to give glory to Jesus.

Do you doubt your ability to meet this standard? Have faith in Jesus and in

His mighty power to change your heart and life. Submit yourself to Him, and He can work His character in you by teaching you in the little things now.

When Jesus pours out the latter rain, His people's missionary efforts will be imbued with power never seen before! And the world will react to such missionary efforts and power! Although there will be many conversions, the world's anger will also be stirred up,

When Jesus pours out the latter rain, His people's missionary efforts will be imbued with power never seen before!

resulting in persecution such as has never been seen before. At first we will be shocked by it, regretting that we had stirred up such a reaction. However, as the Holy Spirit struggles with us, and we have our "night in Gethsemane," we will rise up again to do God's work. This time of persecution will consume from us any remaining earthliness. See *The Great Controversy*, 621; *Prophets and Kings*, 589; *The Acts of the Apostles*, 524. God will be the Center of all our desires. Satan will hit us in our weakest points. By thus being exercised, our weakest points will become our strongest points. When we are ridiculed and physically abused, we will pray for the conversion of our tormentors and will return good for evil whenever possible. Jesus is preparing us for this experience by teaching us in the little things that happen to us now.

After the national Sunday law is enacted some hide in the caves in the mountains, while others spend their time in dungeons and prisons; but heavenly angels keep them company. Since the death decree is soon to be enforced, a raging mob begins to gather around each waiting company, eager to do away with those who are supposedly the cause of all their troubles. Even before the death knell tolls, the mob surges forward, but each praying company is surrounded by a rainbow of promise. The mob falls back! Every face, both of the wicked and the saints, turns pale at the sight of the

glory of God. A voice thunders from heaven announcing the day and hour of Jesus' coming. It is at this time that the saints are delivered from those who seek their ruin and death. See Daniel 12:1.

Soon we look up and see a small dark cloud in the east. Looking at one another, we ask, "Is that Jesus? Is that He for whom we have waited?" As time passes, we observe the cloud, and notice that it is gradually growing

closer, and larger! Around the edges a bright light is beginning to glow. Hope begins to blossom within us! Then the cloud above bursts forth with the radiance of a hundred suns! We behold millions of angels and Jesus on His throne! A cry ascends, "Who can live in the awful presence of God?" The saints see Jesus smile at them. "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Corinthians 12:9), He assures them. A cheer of victory ascends! When the wicked see Jesus, they call for the rocks to fall upon them.

Millions of angels descend to the earth. You see one flying right toward you, smiling happily. He introduces himself, "Hello, my name is ——. I have long waited for this moment!" He takes you by the hand, and together you ascend up into the presence of Jesus, to stay with Him forever.

"The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love." *The Great Controversy*, 678. □

¹ The home of lepers and nauseous, pestilential disease.

What Position Did (or Does) the Seventh-day Adventist Church Take Concerning the Human Nature of Christ?

UNTIL recent years the Seventh-day Adventist Church consistently taught that Christ took our fallen human nature, and that we must be partakers of His divine nature if we are to be saved.

However, today there are those within Adventism who argue that when Jesus came to this earth as a babe, He took the unfallen human nature which Adam had before he sinned.

But did He?

And has the church changed its position on this matter?

When God created Adam He endowed him with conditional immortality. As long as he remained obedient, and therefore sinless, he was not subject to death. Death entered the human family when Adam sinned—not before.

Since Christ's divine nature was never subject to death, had He taken Adam's prefall, sinless, human nature, neither of His two natures would have been subject to death.

The whole purpose of Christ's coming to this earth would have been negated if neither of His two natures had been subject to death. Our entire hope of reconciliation with God rests upon the life, death and resurrection of Christ *as one of us*.

The Bible gives no account of children having been born to Adam before the Fall. Therefore, there was no sinless

line of descent through which Christ could have entered humanity.

We know that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Ghost (see Luke 1:35 and Matthew 1:18) and was indeed the Son of God. But who, exactly was Mary, His mother? It was through her that Jesus entered humanity.

Galatians 4:4—"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law."

Romans 8:3—"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

Those who accept 2 John 7—"For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist"—and at the same time reject Hebrews 2:17—"Wherefore in *all* things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren"—must find a way to separate Christ's flesh and blood humanity—which He inherited through Mary, His mother—from His *human nature* which He also inherited through her. (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

The Bible has some things to say about the human flesh and the human nature of Christ:

Romans 1:3—"Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the *seed of David according to the flesh*."

Hebrews 2:16—"For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the *seed of Abraham*."

Question—Were both Abraham and David flesh and blood human beings? And did they both have a fallen human nature?

Answer—Yes. No one disputes that.

Question—Then if Mary, the mother of Jesus, came through the lineage of Abraham and David (and she did—see Matthew 1:1 and Matthew 1:17-18), was she of the seed of Abraham and David?

Answer—She was.

Question—So was she a flesh and blood human being with the same fallen nature as they had?

Answer—Of course. But some *DO* dispute this.

Unless we are prepared to accept the impossibility that Mary bypassed the fallen human nature of her ancestors and miraculously "inherited" Adam's prefall, sinless human nature, then we must accept that Christ, through the laws of heredity, was born with the same fallen human nature that Abraham and David had—as was His mother.

When leading Seventh-day Adventists openly state in writing, as some have, that the church has never taken a posi-

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tion on the human nature of Christ, one has to question either their education or their integrity.

After the 1844 disappointment there were many people who still believed in the second coming of Christ. Various groups referred to themselves as Adventists, but their doctrine differed from that of the Seventh-day Adventists.

Therefore, in 1872 the brethren in Battle Creek printed up a list of "Fundamental Principles" indicating where Seventh-day Adventist doctrine differed from that of the other groups of Adventists. The *second* item in this list is as follows:

"That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, that One by whom God created all things, and by whom they do consist; that He took on Him the *NATURE* of the *SEED* of Abraham for the redemption of our fallen race; that He dwelt among men, full of grace and truth, lived our Example, died our Sacrifice, and was raised for our justification."

This statement tells us that as of 1872 Seventh-day Adventists believed that Jesus took on Him the *NATURE* of the *SEED* of Abraham—not the prefall nature of Adam.

Then in the 1923 edition of *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*, printed at the Review and Herald Publishing Association in Washington, D.C., 174, is a note to question #6 in the study, "A Sinless Life," stating what the church was teaching *at that time* concerning the human nature of Christ.

That note is as follows:

"In His humanity Christ partook of our sinful, fallen natures. If not, then He was not 'made like unto His brethren' (see Hebrews 2:17), was not 'in all points tempted like as we are' (see Hebrews 4:15), 'did not overcome as we have to overcome,' and is not, therefore, the complete and perfect Saviour man needs and must have to be saved. The idea that Christ was born of an immaculate or sinless mother, inherited no tendencies to sin, and for this reason did not sin, removes Him from the realm of a fallen world, and from the very place where help is needed. On His human side, Christ inherited just what every child of Adam inherited—a sinful nature. On the divine side, from His very conception He was begotten and born of the Spirit. And all this was done to place mankind on vantage ground, and to demonstrate that in the same way everyone who is 'born of

the Spirit' may gain like victories over sin in his own flesh. Thus each one is to overcome as Christ overcame. See Revelation 3:21. Without this birth there can be no victory over temptation and no salvation from sin. See John 3:3-7."

Sadly, the day came when in the newer editions of *Bible Readings for the Home Circle* some of the notes in the

While it is true that there is an element within the church which argues in favor of this change, there are many who do not accept it at all. They believe that the original position of the church on the human nature of Christ, *was and is* correct according to the Bible.

Furthermore, they do not accept *any* change in *any* of our original doctrine

On His human side, Christ inherited just what every child of Adam inherited—a sinful nature.

study on the human nature of Christ had been changed to reflect the change that was creeping into the church.

Whereas in the 1923 edition of *Bible Readings for the Home Circle* the note to question #6 says that Christ was made in *ALL* things like unto His brethren, the newer editions say: "Just how far this likeness goes is a mystery of the incarnation which men have never been able to solve."

Also in the same newer editions a change was made in the note to question #7 of the same study. The 1923 edition says that Christ lived a sinless life "in sinful flesh," but the newer editions say that He lived a sinless life "in the flesh."

That may seem like only a slight difference, but it changes the entire foundation under the original Seventh-day Adventist position on this matter—a very subtle change, but a very dangerous one!

So, has the church changed its position on the human nature of Christ?

Not exactly.

which would require them to step off of the platform of truth upon which the Seventh-day Adventist Church was founded.

To them any so-called "new light" which cannot be accepted without rejecting some portion of our original doctrine, is not light at all. It is darkness—a gift from the prince of darkness!

Galatians 1:8—"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

Romans 16:17—"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."

Hebrews 3:14—"For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end."

May the Lord help us to study and treasure the truths He has entrusted to our church. □

The Spirit of Prophecy Speaks

"The Jewish nation had been preserved as a witness that Christ was to be born of the *seed* of Abraham and of David's line." *The Desire of Ages*, 44.

"In taking upon Himself man's nature in its *fallen condition*, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin." *Selected Messages*, book 1, 256.

"It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin." *The Desire of Ages*, 49.



The Prophetic Gift in the Gospel Church, Part 2

IN Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians he thus speaks of the work of the Spirit, saying: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." 1 Corinthians 12:7-11. Those manifestations are all

given by one and the selfsame Spirit. How unlike the communications of Spiritualism, which are from a variety of spirits, many [all] of them being lying spirits!

Paul proceeds in his discourse by comparing the church with the human body, representing the gifts of the Spirit as members of the body—the eyes, ears, hands, and so forth—saying: "Now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. . . . And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers?

are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." Verses 18, 28-31. We here read of the Lord's setting these gifts "in the church;" do we read elsewhere of His setting them out of the church?

Charity, or Love

The more excellent way is to have a church with the gifts of the Spirit; it is a more excellent way than simply to "covet" gifts. That "more excellent way" is fully set forth in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, in the apostle's discourse on charity—fervent love to God, and to our fellow men. Instead of simply coveting some particular gift for ourselves, it is better to seek entire consecration to the Lord—to have His love in our hearts—to "follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy." 1 Corinthians 14:1. However, this discourse on charity does not dispense with the gifts of the Spirit. We read: "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." 1 Corinthians 13:8-10. By this it is understood that the gift of prophecy may be manifest, as it may please the Lord, until the perfect state shall come. In that state, when the Lord is seen face to face, prophecy will no more be needed. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." Verse 12.

Prophecy in the Early Church

On looking through the book of Acts, the fact is apparent that the Lord had many sons and daughters who were favored with divine revelations. In chapter 11 is mentioned the case of Agabus, who predicted the great dearth that was to come on the land of Judea, which prediction moved the Lord's people to provide relief for the poor saints in Judea. See verses 27-30. The exact fulfillment of this prophecy established the faith of the believers in Agabus as a true prophet among them, so that when at Caesarea, nineteen years after, he told them what would be done to Paul at Jerusalem,

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there seemed to be no question as to the certainty of the fulfillment of his prediction, for they at once besought Paul not to go to Jerusalem. See Acts 21:10-12. In the church at Antioch, four prophets are mentioned; namely, Barnabas, Simeon (Niger), Lucius, and Manaen. See Acts 13:1. It seems also that Philip, the evangelist, who resided at Caesarea, "had four daughters, virgins," that were prophets. See Acts 21:8-9.

Paul, when writing his epistle to the Ephesians, spoke of the gifts of the Spirit on this wise: "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive ["a multitude of captives," margin], and gave gifts unto men. . . . And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in ["into," margin] the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Ephesians 4:8, 11-16.

The Lord gave these gifts for the accomplishment of a certain purpose in His church (perfecting saints and edifying the church), and there still exists a need for such work to be done; who will say that the Lord will not even now, as formerly, manifest those gifts for the same purpose, until probation shall end? It is further seen from the writings of the apostle that he recognizes these gifts as members of the body of Christ; and as such, who has a right to mutilate that body, and say that this or that gift is not now necessary?

The Apostasy

We find in the Scriptures that the manifestation of the gift of prophecy is closely allied with obedience to the law of God. When the people faithfully fol-

lowed the Lord, He favored them with instruction through His prophets. As they fell into sin and departed from His law, they had no vision from God, as already shown. So it is emphatically true, as expressed by Solomon, "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." Proverbs 29:18. They are happy, for as they obey

and precede the second coming of Christ, and be the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel." *Rose's Neander*, 330, 332.

John Wesley, in speaking of the Montanists, says: "By reflecting on an odd book which I had read in this journey (*The General Delusion of Christians With Regard to Prophecy*) I was fully convinced of what I had long suspected:

We find in the Scriptures that the manifestation of the gift of prophecy is closely allied with obedience to the law of God.

the Lord's law, He is pleased to favor them with instruction through His prophets.

Paul said to the elders of the Ephesus church: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Acts 20:29-30. Also to the church in Thessalonica he said that there should "come a falling away," and "that man of sin be revealed." And of him the apostle said that he should sit "in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4.

It is a fact that while the early church maintained their purity, the Lord manifested among them the gifts of His Spirit; but as the apostasy developed, their condition became more and more like that of ancient Israel, of whom He said: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Isaiah 59:2.

Neander, in his *Church History*, thus speaks of the Montanists of the second century: "The Montanists looked upon it expressly as something characteristic of this last epoch of the development of the kingdom of God that, according to the prophecies of Joel then in course of fulfillment, the gifts of the Spirit should indifferently be shed abroad over all classes of Christians of both sexes." "It appears also to have been the doctrine of the Montanists that the season of the last and richest outpouring of the Holy Spirit would form the last age of the church,

(1) that the Montanists, in the second and third centuries, were real, Scriptural Christians; and (2) that the grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn, was not only that faith and holiness were wellnigh lost, but that dry, formal, orthodox men began even then to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves, and to decry them all, as either madness or imposture." *Wesley's Journal*, volume 3, 496.

To the question, "If you allow [that these were] miracles before the empire became Christian, why not afterward, too?" Mr. Wesley answers, "Because after the empire became Christian, a general corruption, both of faith and morals, infected the Christian church, which, by that revolution, as St. Jerome says, 'lost as much of her virtue as it had gained of wealth and power.'" *Wesley's Works*, 706.

The Refreshing

In Acts 3:19-21 is brought to view a time of refreshing spoken of in close connection with Christ's second coming. This undoubtedly refers to the same time as that mentioned by the apostle James, when he says: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." James 5:7-8.

The early and latter rain is also mentioned by the prophet Joel in connection

with his description of the last days. The coming of the “former rain moderately” is called, in the margin of the text, “a teacher of righteousness, according to righteousness.” Joel 2:23. The outpouring of the Spirit of God on the day of Pentecost—the coming of the Comforter as a teacher—was comparable to the “former rain,” which caused the newly

thereof.” Of these he says: “Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth. . . . Their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.” 2 Timothy 3:1, 5, 8-9. Jannes and Jambres were chief magicians of Pharaoh, who sought to resist the work of the Lord through Moses by counterfeit miracles. The

right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits: get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.” Isaiah 30:8-11. By referring to 1 Samuel 9:9, we learn that a seer and a prophet mean one and the same, for there we read that “he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer”—one who had visions from God and prophesied. The force, then, of the above scripture is that the gift of prophecy will be connected with the proclamation of God’s law in the last days. This the masses will reject, because they do not like reproof, preferring a smooth path.

It is seen then that as the end is nearing, and Satan works in power, the Lord gives showers of blessings to His people, thus defeating the purposes of Satan.

sown seed of the husbandman to take root and grow. So in the ripening of the harvest of the earth, just before the end, the Husbandman—our heavenly Father (see John 15:1)—is waiting for the “latter rain,” the “refreshing,” to aid in the ripening of the harvest of the earth. The Lord has said by His prophet, “Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.” Zechariah 10:1. And thus will be fulfilled His promise: “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.” Hosea 6:3.

Perilous Times

The time immediately preceding the second coming of Christ is presented as perilous, as a time of the working of Satan in mighty power, and also a time in which the Lord’s people will be in a special sense “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” 1 Peter 1:5. Why should it be a thing improbable for the Lord to pour out in a special manner His Spirit to instruct, strengthen, and keep His people from the wiles of Satan in that trying time?

In writing to Timothy, Paul says, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.” He then enumerates eighteen sins to be found among a people having a “form of godliness, but denying the power

Lord, by the hand of His servant Moses, wrought in a manner that the magicians could not counterfeit. See Exodus 7:11; 8:18-19. It is seen then that as the end is nearing, and Satan works in power, the Lord gives showers of blessings to His people, thus defeating the purposes of Satan. So they are kept by the power of God, and the folly of counterfeit workers made manifest.

Final Deliverance

In many scriptures the Lord compares the deliverance of His people from Egypt, with the final deliverance of His saints. As a sample see Ezekiel 20:35-37. One feature that was connected with the deliverance of Israel, is mentioned by the prophet Hosea when he says, “By a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.” Hosea 12:13. So if there is a similarity in the last deliverance to that from Egypt, we may look for the gift of prophecy to be connected with the preparation for the deliverance.

Law and Prophet’s Message

In the following words of Isaiah is shown to the prophet what is to be expected in the last days: “Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever [“the latter day,” margin, Hebrews]; that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us

Spirit of Prophecy

In the New Testament, where Paul is speaking of the people waiting for Christ’s second coming, he says: “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 1:4-8. Thus all the gifts are to be manifest among that people who stand at last prepared to meet Christ in peace at His coming.

From this it also appears that one gift is singled out, the confirmation of which prepares the way for all the gifts to be developed in the church. That one gift he calls the testimony of Jesus. To ascertain the meaning of this scripture, we will compare it with others. In Revelation, chapter 12, after the persecution of the Dark Ages, we find the apostle speaking thus of the last of the church in her probationary state: “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Verse 17. The remnant of the church is the last of the church in its probation here. This is seen in Joel’s prophecy of the Lord’s people just before the great and terrible day of the Lord. In the preparation for that day He says salvation shall be “in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.” Joel 2:32. This remnant will have war made on them for keeping all of God’s commandments, and for having manifested among them the testimony of Jesus.

By looking in Revelation, chapter 19, we get a Scripture definition of the

“testimony of Jesus.” This is John’s account, given while in vision on the Isle of Patmos. He mistook the beautiful angel that was before him, for an object for him to worship, and he said: “I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” Verse 10. We now have an inspired definition stating that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

When we have the right definition of a word or phrase, it is proper to substitute the definition in the sentence. Substituting thus in 1 Corinthians 1:6-7, the text would read, The spirit of prophecy “was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And in Revelation 12:17 it would read that the dragon went to make war with the remnant who “keep the commandments of God, and have the” spirit of prophecy. We see, then, that the remnant church, the members of which will be keeping all of God’s commandments, are to have the gift of prophecy among them, and that that gift is to lead out in preparing the way so that all the gifts will at last be manifested among the people who are waiting for Christ’s coming. Thus, as the Lord’s people return to obedience, to the keeping of all His commandments, the gift of prophecy is restored to His people.

Prophesyings

In the first epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, chapter 4, he speaks of Christ’s second coming, the resurrection of the righteous, and the change of the living saints. In the fifth chapter he shows that that day will come upon the masses as a thief in the night. He says, however, “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” 1 Thessalonians 5:4. That people who will be found watching for Christ’s coming, whom He calls “children of light,” He exhorts as follows: “Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-21.

What is more consistent than to expect the Lord to teach directly His people who are to pass through the perils of the last days and be prepared to meet the Saviour in peace at His coming? It is that point of time to which the patriarchs, and the true prophets of all past time, have looked with intense interest, when the conflict of ages—the controversy between sin and righteousness—is to close, and the age for which all other ages were made is to be brought in. It cannot be that God, who is abundant in mercy, will refrain from specially instructing His people. Thanks be to God, He has not left this as a matter of supposition; for He will guide His people by the spirit of prophecy, as the Scriptures clearly teach.

Proving the Gift

There is no surer way to prove a prophetic gift than by comparing it with the description of such gifts as were manifested in Scripture times, and testing it by the rules therein given. There are seven complete rules given in the Scriptures by which we may know a genuine gift of prophecy. [These rules will be covered by the author in a later article.]

The gifts, and especially the gift of prophecy, have a part to act in bringing the church into “unity” and harmony. “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.” 1 Corinthians 14:33. In fact,

There is no surer way to prove a prophetic gift than by comparing it with the description of such gifts as were manifested in Scripture times, and testing it by the rules therein given.

the gathering of a people from the confused elements of earth, and the various nations of the world, to move forward as one, is one of the best evidences of a genuine work of the Lord.

The true gift of prophecy will not give any revelation to take the place of the Scriptures. While it may shed light on the Scriptures, leading the people into the “unity of the faith,” its great work will be that of counsel, and instruction on how to live, act, and move in these last days of peril.

Conclusion

The question may arise, What need have we of the gift of prophecy? We have the Old Testament, the words of Christ and His apostles, and the Revelation. Did not Christ forbid more prophesying when He said, “If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book”? Revelation 22:18. We reply, Should the Lord bestow the gift of prophecy upon a person for the instruction and guidance of His people, it would not be an addition to the book of Revelation.

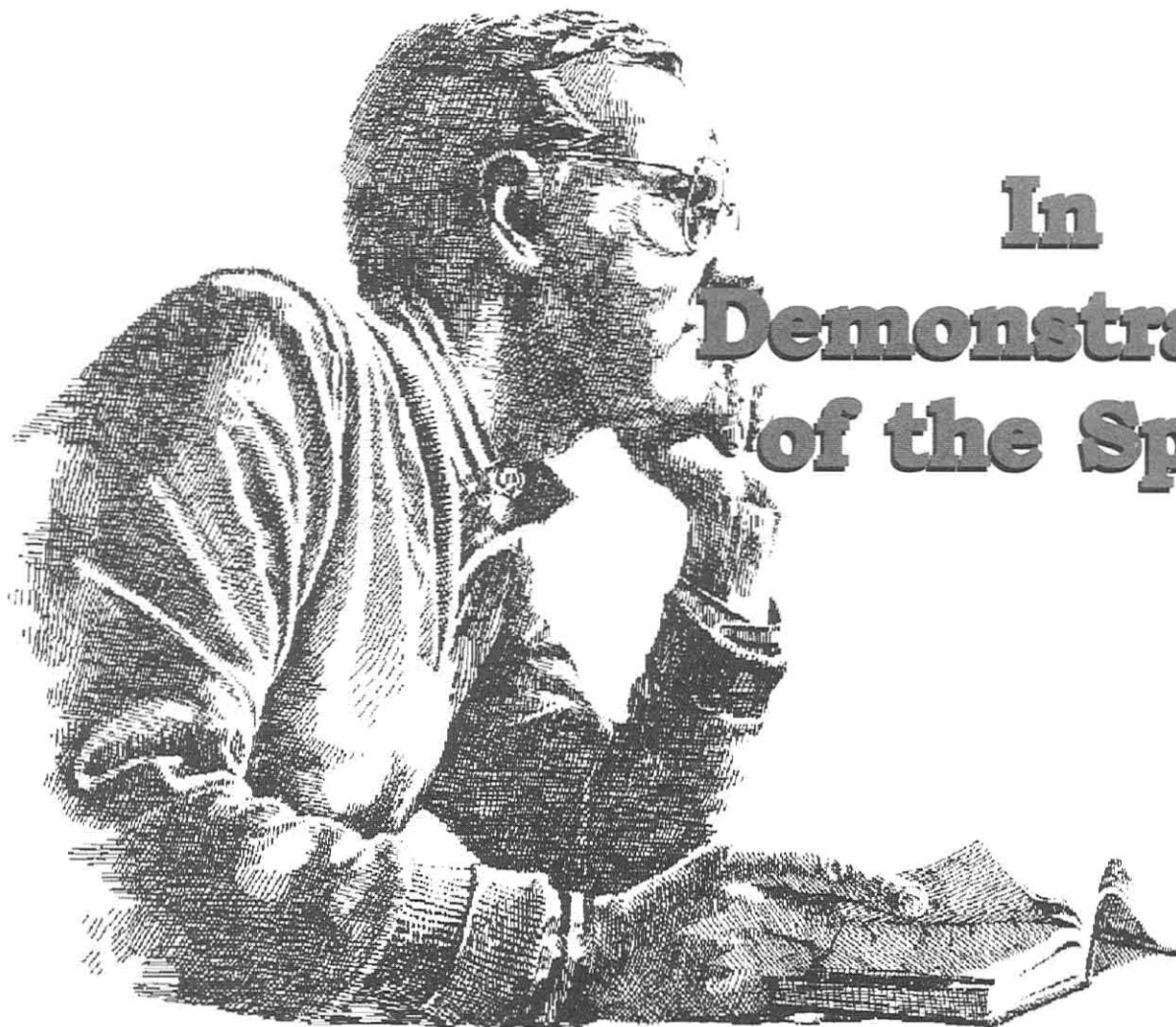
After the Lord had spoken from Sinai, and given the law to His people, with statutes and judgments, they might have said, We have the Lord’s Word now, and do not need prophets. The Lord knew best; and as we have seen, He multiplied visions and similitudes by His prophets for the instruction of that people. This did not add to nor take from that already given them; but it did show them where they were led astray by circumstances peculiar to their time. These revelations shed also a clearer luster on the truths they had already received, and made bright the light relating to the promised Messiah and His glory.

With the subject of the gifts opened before us in the Scriptures, with the fact so plainly manifest that the gift of prophecy is to be connected with the last work of God’s people in probationary time, and with rules placed in our hands by

which to test such gifts, is it not important that the mind be divested of prejudice, not “despising” such a gift, but, on the contrary, looking for a work of this character that is to be developed in these last days? □

To be continued.

The Prophetic Gift in the Gospel Church, 17-32



In Demonstration of the Spirit

AND my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." 1 Corinthians 2:4-5.

We want to obtain the same experience as had the inspired apostle. He does not disparage the human understanding. Every jot of ability is necessary in the work of the ministry, but all the capability that is in your possession should be sanctified, "because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." 2 Thessalonians 2:13. Two great forces are united. Through living faith, divine influences are combined with human effort. It is by this cooperation of man with God, that we become laborers together with Him.

Those who labor in Word and doctrine, are not to be novices. The Word of God gives directions for their course. The Bible is in our hands, and the task of

searching for a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, is appointed us. It is at the peril of our souls, that we neglect the duty of searching for the truth, as for hidden treasures. We are not safe when we are content to float along with the current, believing because someone else believes. The questions of truth that are submitted to us, are of vital interest, in contrast with the idle traditions that are sustained by human authority and church pretension; and we must, through fervent prayer and deep and earnest research, become established and settled, rooted and grounded in the faith, and know, each for himself, that we have the truth. If we are thus established, we shall not depart from the faith when tested and tried, as some have done. Those who put their trust in God, and not in human effort, will be sustained under fierce temptation and trial, and will come forth from the conflict with firm faith and unshaken confidence. Their words will not be the enticing words of men's wisdom, but they will be words spoken in the demon-

stration of the Spirit and the power of God. If the works of the ambassadors of Christ are wrought in God, they will not be elated by praise from human lips; neither will they be depressed because they think they are not appreciated. Their work is to learn what is the mind of God, that they may show themselves approved unto God.

There can be no greater peril to the souls of those who profess to believe the truth, than to cease their research for light and knowledge from the Scriptures. God has put the truth into our hands; and with faithful, thoughtful, prayerful study, and with the counsel of God-fearing teachers, we may become able in the exposition of the Word of truth. You are to pray, and search for the truth on every point of faith and doctrine. You will be brought before critical, opposing councils. You will be tried for your faith, and you will want to know that you have good ground for every point of doctrine. God enjoins upon all men to search the Scriptures; but how doubly important is

Ellen G. White

this injunction to those who teach the Word to others. There will be apostasies from our own ranks, because men and women, even those who are teachers of the truth, have not brought the truth into their lives; and have not become sanctified through it. They have no living connection with God; and so slight is their hold upon the doctrine for the present time, that when trials come upon them, they depart from the faith, thinking that error is preferable to the truth. There should be most fervent, earnest work done in our several Conferences. Unconsecrated, unconverted men, who attempt to open the Scriptures to others, men whose lives and characters do not correspond with their teachings, will be a curse rather than a blessing to the cause. They present arguments in their own human wisdom, but they do not speak in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. They hold the truth in unrighteousness.

In order to have prosperous Conferences, there must be in the several churches, laborers who are consecrated to God, having pure hearts and clean hands—laborers who have purified their souls by obedience to the truth, and are vessels of honor, fitted for the use of the Master. The heavenly unction comes upon men unseen, to quicken those who love and fear God, and to make them powerful in the Word of God. All heaven is interested in the work of saving souls, and if the teacher of Bible truth will seek the Lord, the promise is given he “shall find.” If he asks, he shall receive. If he knocks, it shall be opened unto him. See Matthew 7:7. There is no excuse for anyone being destitute of divine help. There is no reason why anyone should be stumbling upon the dark mountains of unbelief. The Word of God is pledged in His abundant promises; and if we fail, the responsibility rests upon us individually, who have accepted the solemn position that makes us a mouthpiece for God; for the promises are made upon plainly stated conditions; and if we perish, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

We must depart from all iniquity. We must accept the invitation and come to Christ and learn in His school; for we cannot become efficient teachers, unless we learn daily from the great Teacher. We must bruise Satan under our feet. We must lay hold on eternal life. The forgiveness of sin is promised to him who repents, and the crown of life will be

given to him who is faithful unto the end. In order to receive an increase of spiritual grace, we must improve wisely what we already have. If we would be found without spot before the throne of God, we must keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

Faith and works must go hand in hand, but either alone is dead. The whole

and heavenly evidences upon the pathway of others. The bitterest woe will be pronounced upon false shepherds, and upon those who profess to walk in the light of divine truth, and yet make themselves centers to absorb all the God-given rays, resting satisfied in the knowledge that they possess, and making no effort to enlighten others. The parable

Those who have had precious opportunities and privileges, and who possess talents, which they will not use in the service of God, will finally lay them all at the feet of Satan, to be employed as he shall direct.

work of God in the human soul is accomplished through the cooperation of the divine Spirit with the effort of humanity. “Without me,” says Christ, “ye can do nothing.” John 15:5. There are many Christless sermons preached, which are wholly destitute of the power and Spirit of God. The speaker may please the ear; but his words do not impress the soul. God will work through humble men, who love and fear Him, and who will not ascribe the glory to themselves; but will give all the praise of their being a light in the world to the Source of all light. O, for less of self, and more of Jesus! It is human pride and self-confidence, mingled with human depravity, that has enfeebled the churches, until they are sickly, and ready to die.

The ministers of these churches need to be converted. They need divine wisdom to take the place of human wisdom. The church may have divine enlightenment. The Lord God and the Lamb must be its light; for no church can live by its own light, or by sparks of its own kindling. It may be that the mechanical working of the church is like well-adjusted machinery, and this is as it should be; for it is necessary to have order and discipline; but it is not right to let everything stop at this point, and to rest satisfied while destitute of the power of vital godliness. Light must come from God to the people, as the Word is preached in demonstration of the Spirit and with power. The members of the church must diffuse their derived glory all around them; for they cannot retain the light, unless they reflect its bright

which our Lord has given, condemning the faithless servant who hid his Lord's money, condemns every member of the church who is not making a right use of his ability to communicate light and truth to others. Those who do not let the light which God has given them, shine upon the darkened pathway of others, are traitors to their Lord, and a burden to the church. They make it manifest that they do not care for the salvation of others, but only for themselves. Those who have had precious opportunities and privileges, and who possess talents, which they will not use in the service of God, will finally lay them all at the feet of Satan, to be employed as he shall direct. They will become receptacles of darkness, of whom it is written, “If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” Matthew 6:23.

In the time of Christ, and in the days of the apostles, there were unfaithful disciples, who were led from the truth—some through love of the world, others through love of approbation—who deemed that their superior ability was not appreciated as it should be, by their brethren in the church. And there were still others who were led away through lasciviousness. This last sin was existing in the church in the days of Paul, and he made vigorous battle upon it, that it might be destroyed from the midst of the early Christians. Some who may have been looked upon as special lights in the church and in the world, may cease to shine, and become bodies of darkness. “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord

knoweth them that are his." 2 Timothy 2:19. If one star goes out in darkness, another will fill its place.

We may learn the truth of the Bible by living up to all the light that we have, in doing the will of God; or we may do as many others are doing, darken and pervert our belief, and corrupt our faith by disobedience. Men turn away from God's great moral standard of righteousness, and try to doubt that it is "holy, and just, and good." Romans 7:12. They want liberty to sin, and at length they come to doubt that the claims of the law are binding. Because their carnal hearts desire to transgress its precepts, the law of God has become to them a yoke of bondage. Such may, after some disappointment, return to the truth; but they will leave it again, for their hearts are

men upon the walls of Zion—not to hide sin, not to flatter the wrongdoer, not to obtain the sympathy of their brethren, but to meet the approval of God. They will not suppress one syllable of truth that should be brought out, in reproof, or warning, or in vindication of the righteousness of the oppressed, in order to gain the favor and influence of anyone. In a crisis, they will not be found in a neutral position, but they will stand firmly on the side of righteousness and truth, even when it is difficult to take this position; and to maintain it may imperil their prosperity, and deprive them of the friendship of those whom they love.

Self has been petted and favored altogether too much. Those who should have been unselfish and uncorrupted, have permitted self to wield a controlling influence

he can give an intelligent answer to any man that asketh the reason of his hope. It is his privilege, as well as his duty, to believe in a near and present Saviour—One who is by our side, in our hearts. His presence is far more efficacious than the most eloquent sermons, and it is our right to expect that He will be with us in seasons of worship, for He promised when He commissioned His disciples to go and "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," Matthew 28:19, that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," Matthew 18:20, and added, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:20.

It is the presence of Jesus that is needed in our assemblies, to make the preaching of the Word effectual to the salvation of souls. Preaching, in itself, has no natural power to renew the heart, and yet this is the object of preaching. It is the divine influence accompanying the Word, that brings souls in penitence to the foot of the cross. O that Christ's ambassadors would feel their need of Jesus, that their preaching might not be in vain, nor their ministry unsuccessful. When the minister hears the voice of the great Shepherd saying, "Lo, I am with you alway," he works as if in the presence of Jesus; and out of weakness he is made strong. The Word becomes quick and powerful, and, in proportion as faith appreciates the divine presence, and honors it, and trusts it, the preaching is in the demonstration of the Spirit and with power.

If we hide self in Jesus, if we lift up and exalt the Saviour, if we take no credit to ourselves, the preaching will not be in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. Jesus, the world's Redeemer, will be presented before the people as the One who "is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercessions for them." Hebrews 7:25. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." 1 John 2:1.

Then let us do those things that are pleasing in His sight. Let us come in full assurance of faith. Let us draw from the heavenly storehouse, and present to the people things new and old, giving to every man his portion of meat in due season; "and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." 1 Peter 5:4. □

Review and Herald, September 4, 1888.

Those who are workers together with God, must be men of blameless habits, and most unambitious pretensions. Their highest ambition must be, to be found sons of God, and partakers of the divine nature.

not thoroughly changed. The most useful men in the world have not been the exalted, self-sufficient ones, who have been praised and petted by society; but those who have walked humbly with God, who have been unassuming in manner and guileless in conversation, who have given all the glory to God, not taking any of it to themselves, are the ones who have exerted the most decided and healthful influence upon the church. When they stand before the people, as a mouth-piece for God, everything around them is forgotten. Their words come forth in the demonstration of the Spirit and with power. They exert their God-given ability to set things in order in the church, whether it makes them friends or foes. When straight, solemn testimony is needed, in rebuking sin and iniquity, even though it be in those of high position, they will not hold their peace, but will heed the instruction of the God of truth, when he commands, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1. They will stand as faithful watch-

over their lives. O that our ministering brethren would copy the Model! O that they would learn in the school of Christ, lessons of the Master's meekness and lowliness of heart! If the eye were single to the glory of God, the Lord would bless them with His Spirit and power, and it would not then be their ruin. There is great need of the sanctification that comes through obedience to the truth. All resistance of God, all departures from virtue and truth, pervert the faith as well as the morals, while conformity to God's revealed will always increases faith and knowledge. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." John 7:17. Those who are workers together with God, must be men of blameless habits, and most unambitious pretensions. Their highest ambition must be, to be found sons of God, and partakers of the divine nature. It was for the glory of God that the excellent treasure of His truth was committed to earthen vessels. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." 1 Corinthians 1:26. No one should enter the ministry until he clearly understands his own faith, so that

Letters to the Editor



Dear Editors,

What a great work you do with your *Our Firm Foundation* magazine! We anxiously look forward to our monthly issue!

DD, Michigan

Dear Hope International,

I am a pastor of a newly formed self-supporting ministry in Central Africa.

In the past five weeks we received a shipment of assorted literature materials from one of the self-supporting ministries in Australia, and among them there was quite a good supply of *Our Firm Foundation* magazines, dating from 1994-1997. As I am writing this letter I have so far read through those of 1994 and 1995. I will be starting those of 1996 very soon. It is my first time to come across such a sweet-to-read piece of literature, informative and eye opening. My colleagues are also busy reading through this precious spiritual wealth we never thought or dreamt of.

Despite printing being expensive, since we do not have our own facility, our ministry has proposed to start translating most of the articles found in the *Our Firm Foundation* into our local language so that the local people can also dig into this precious wealth for themselves. What a blessing is your Ministry to the people here and the whole world! Keep it up! God has blessed you and He will continue doing so as long as you remain committed to His will and work. May the Lord continue blessing those who support Hope International!

MK, Central Africa

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Greetings and thanks to you always for the love and kind help given to us so far in our spiritual needs of books and literature. I am so grateful that you pray for us!

I have been moved by force from where I was staying in the church elder's house. He asked me to leave in January because the Pastor told him that he will not allow him to be an elder of a SDA Church so long as I stay in his house, because I am self-supporting or independent minister. Members who want to know more about the prophecies and the Spirit of Prophecy teach-

ings used to come to me and put so many questions on him about the truth that Sister White has said that are now seen contrary in the church.

The things we are seeing now in Ghana, especially in the Pentecostal and charismatic churches, really prove and confirm of the soon coming of our Lord. And numerous wars in Africa and other places all prove that almost all the signs are being fulfilled. Please help us here to reach men who have not heard the Three Angel's Messages and even many still in the SDA Church but are not with the truth.

Yours In Christ, EA, Ghana

Dear Hope International,

Was listening to some of my old audio tapes and one of them was Pastor Spears' *Dynamics of Prayer*. Oh, what a hunger came into my soul! Bless you all—you lovely people. I pray every day for our "self-supporting ministries." I pray God's choicest blessing on them. I love Hope International.

Sincerely, RG, New York

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the magazines you have kept sending to me. I am still alive in the power of your effort and by the grace of God.

I must confess that I am growing in Spirit through your publication, despite oppositions from pastors with threats and dis-fellowships. You may never know that every magazine sent to me goes through at least three hands in study and all confess it is the best Adventists are producing.

Thank you. EM, Zambia

Dear in the Lord,

I want to take this moment to express my appreciation and thanks to you for those magazines I received in 1997. I have read them and enjoyed every article in those magazines. I keep on reading them and it has strengthen my faith and believe as a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. It is my hope and prayer that the Lord will give you and the entire staff of Hope International the much wisdom, spiritual insight, and the

Holy Spirit to continue to do this elevated work.

Yours in the Master's Vineyard.

AOA, Africa

Dear Brothers in the Faith,

Praise the Lord for your blessed informative *Our Firm Foundation*! I am so thankful for your effort to print the old Adventist truths. Sincerely,

ET, USA

Dear Hope International,

I thank the Lord very much for the wonderful foresight given to your able leaders, and the founding members for establishing this organization. Please continue with the good work, for God our Father will reward you.

Well, the materials you sent me have greatly helped enlighten as well as strengthened my faith as far as the teaching of Adventist is concerned. As I received the materials my heart was filled with light from *Our Firm Foundation*! It is with joy and happiness that I read you articles.

In a nutshell it is my desire to experience victory in my life more than anything. And as such, I wish to be admitted as a student in your Bible Study Course, in order to be able to learn more about the Scriptures.

Thank you, EA, Ghana

Dear Ones at Hope International:

Our blessings through the Lord Jesus! May He give you courage as you work for Him.

JM, USA

Dear Sir,

I wish to register my appreciation for the parcel you sent me containing the *Our Firm Foundation* magazines and the *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume one. May God bless your work. I read many books, but your materials are really a blessing from God! My eyes have been opened!

My sincere request is that you send me *Spirit of Prophecy*, volumes two and three, and other books, not forgetting those precious magazines.

Yours faithfully, TK, Malawi

Camp Meeting 1998

August 4-9, 1998

Please plan now to join us in fellowship and worship!

Speakers will include the following: Ron Spear, Colin Standish, Russell Standish, Tico Restrepo, Clark Floyd, John Skeete, Dane Griffin, and Jim Hohnberger.

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*If you plan to attend the Hope International Eatonville Camp Meeting, and wish to stay on our grounds, you are more than welcome. Water and restrooms will be available at several locations on the grounds. There will be limited shower facilities, but hookups for water, sewer, and electricity are not available. Please plan on a real **CAMP** meeting!*

As usual there will be no charge for staying on our campus, but we cannot provide either lodging or food. Please do not take it for granted that we will be able to provide special services for those who need them. Instead, please call and let us know what your needs are, and we will do our best to accommodate all who desire to attend. However, we are limited as to what we can do to help during the hustle and bustle of camp meeting.

1998 Youth Camp

July 19-26, 1998
For ages 12-16



Hope International introduces its first-ever youth camp! Here is an opportunity to learn many new skills, in a Christian atmosphere, that can be of an eternal value. The early registration fee is only \$200.00, if received before July 1, 1998. The regular fee is \$250.00.

Classes will include: Bible Study, Medical Missionary, Introduction to Hebrew, Wilderness Survival, Canoeing, Orienteering, and others.

Space is limited so call or write now to request an application. The last day to register is July 15. Please address all inquiries to Diana Garber. You may phone 360-832-6602, or contact us also by e-mail at Diana@HopeInt.org.

Hope International
P.O. Box 940
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