



# *Our Firm* **FOUNDATION**

The 7th-Day Sabbath

Immutable Law of God

Non-Immortality of the Soul

Christ Our Righteousness

Three Angels' Messages

The Sanctuary

Vol. 13, No. 11

November 1998

**The Pope Calls for  
Sunday Observance**

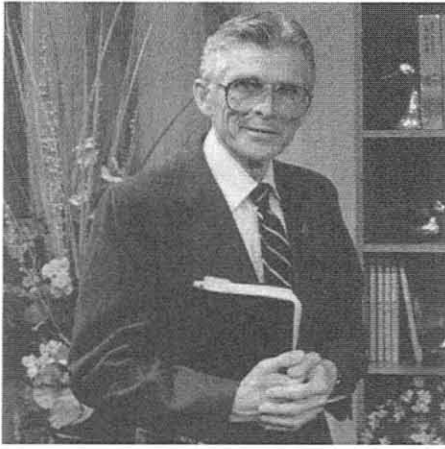
**God's Grace  
Manifested in Good Works**

**Get Ready, Get Ready,  
Get Ready!**



**Transparent  
As the Sunlight**

*See page 4*



# Editorial

**T**HE fast-fulfilling signs of the end of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, and the close of human probation are now ominous. It is an awesome thought that we are soon to face the judgment! The antitypical day of atonement will soon be over. The judgment of the living will soon begin. The Sunday laws hang menacingly over the horizons of our wicked world. The Pope recently released an apostolic letter entitled *Dies Domini* in which he calls for all the world and the various churches to worship on Sunday, which he claims is the Lord's Day. He stated in a previous letter that violators are to be treated as heretics.

This is the first step to instituting a Sunday law. The second step will soon follow. The collapse of the world economy could bring these laws into focus almost overnight. Floods, earthquakes, calamities, murders, and crimes of every kind are rampant in cities, towns—yes, even in some small villages—around the world.

The following inspired statements will support the fact that time has run out for the human race and for the church:

"We are living in the time of the end. The fast-fulfilling signs of the times declare that the coming of Christ is near at hand. The days in which we live are solemn and important. The Spirit of God is gradually, but surely being withdrawn from the earth. Plagues and judgments are already falling upon the despisers of the grace of God. The calamities by land and sea, the unsettled state of society, the alarms of war, are portentous. They forecast approaching events of the greatest magnitude:

"The agencies of evil are combining their forces and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in

our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones.

"The condition of things in the world shows that troublous times are right upon us. The daily papers are full of indications of a terrible conflict in the near future. Bold robberies are of frequent occurrence. Strikes are common. Thefts and murders are committed on every hand. Men possessed of demons are taking the lives of men, women, and little children. Men have become infatuated with vice, and every species of evil prevails." *Testimonies*, vol. 9, 11.

"Last Friday morning, just before I awoke, a very impressive scene was presented before me. I seemed to awake from sleep but was not in my home. From the windows I could behold a terrible conflagration. Great balls of fire were falling upon houses, and from these balls fiery arrows were flying in every direction. It was impossible to check the fires that were kindled, and many places were being destroyed. The terror of the people was indescribable. After a time I awoke and found myself at home. . . .

"O that God's people had a sense of the impending destruction of thousands of cities, now almost given to idolatry." *Evangelism*, 29.

"'Out of the cities, out of the cities!' she [Sister White] declared; 'this is the message the Lord has been giving me. The earthquakes will come; the floods will come; and we are not to establish ourselves in the wicked cities, where the enemy is served in every way, and where God is so often forgotten. The Lord desires that we shall have clear spiritual eyesight. We must be quick to discern the peril that would attend the establishment of institutions in these wicked cities. We must make wise plans to warn the cities, and at the same time live where we can shield our children and ourselves from the contaminating and demoralizing influences so prevalent in these places.'" *Life Sketches*, 409-410.

"More and more, as the days go by, it is becoming apparent that God's judg-

ments are in the world. In fire and flood and earthquake He is warning the inhabitants of this earth of His near approach. The time is nearing when the great crisis in the history of the world will have come, when every movement in the government of God will be watched with intense interest and inexpressible apprehension. In quick succession the judgments of God will follow one another—fire and flood and earthquake, with war and bloodshed. . . .

"The mercy of God is shown in His long forbearance. He is holding back His judgments, waiting for the message of warning to be sounded to all. Oh, if our people would feel as they should the responsibility resting upon them to give the last message of mercy to the world, what a wonderful work would be done!" *Testimonies*, vol. 9, 97.

We are the chosen generation. We are to be a peculiar people:

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Peter 2:9.

It is high time to awake out of our Laodicean slumber. Soon it will be too late!

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." Romans 13:11-12.

"Transgression has almost reached its limit. Confusion fills the world, and a great terror is soon to come upon human beings. The end is very near. We who know the truth should be preparing for what is soon to break upon the world as an overwhelming surprise." *Testimonies*, vol. 8, 28.

May God help us now to make the preparation necessary for eternity.

**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

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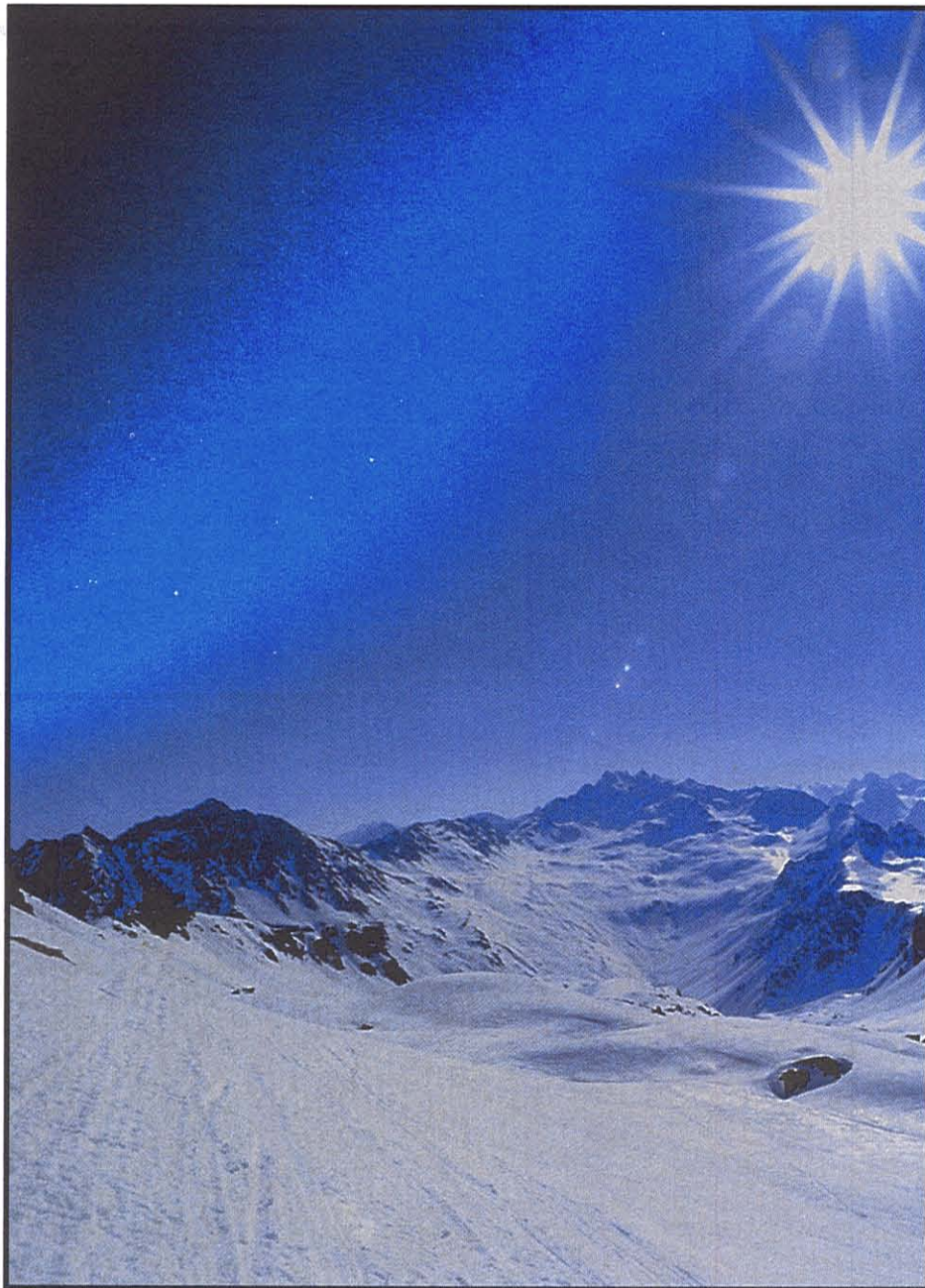
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## Transparent As the Sunlight

### Should Christians Ever Lie?

**I**S it ever acceptable for a Christian to lie? Does a Christian ever find himself in circumstances in which it is better to lie than to tell the truth? Is there such a thing as a “white lie” (a lie which is harmless or will result in bringing good to someone)? Is it all right for a Christian to lie in order to save a friend’s life? For example, did God approve of Rahab’s actions when she lied about the whereabouts of the spies?

During the Second World War, the German authorities systematically

rounded up Jews and sent them to concentration camps where thousands were killed or died from disease and malnutrition. It was against the law to hide or protect them in any way. A few persons dared to disobey this law. In their attempts to protect their friends who were in danger, some resorted to falsehood and deception of various kinds. Does God approve of such actions?

This kind of problem has been called a “moral dilemma.”<sup>1</sup> A moral dilemma is defined as a situation in which one is

forced to choose between two actions, both of which are morally wrong—either choice requiring disobedience to God’s clear instructions. Does God ever allow His children to be placed in such situations?

I believe this issue is very important for us to understand, especially in these last days of earth’s history. The last battle in the controversy between Christ and Satan will be over the law of God. “The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God. Upon this battle we are now entering—a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition.” *The Great Controversy*, 582. Therefore, it is imperative that we who have been given the work of uplifting “the downtrodden law of God” (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, 388) before the world, understand the law and its practical application to our lives.

### The Need for Faith

When we decide that it is necessary to “help God out” by telling a lie, our actions are based on fear rather than faith. We are basically telling God that we think He has lost control of the situation and is either unable or unwilling to help us with our problem. Paul tells us that “without faith it is impossible to please” God. He goes on to say that those who come to God “must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Hebrews 11:6. Thus we see that true faith has two elements—believing that God exists, and that He will reward those who are His faithful servants. “Faith is trusting God—believing that He loves us, and knows best what is for our good.” *Education*, 253. (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.) When we choose to be obedient to God’s commandments, regardless of the possible consequences, we honor Him and He can then reveal His power on our behalf. Thus His name is magnified before the world.

God is like a wise parent who makes laws for His children and requires obedience because He loves them and wants them to be happy. “God desires us to be happy, and He gave us the precepts of the law that in obeying them we might have joy.” *The Desire of Ages*, 308. Often the children do not understand why the parent makes certain laws. However, their happiness hinges

David Dunkin

on their obedience, whether they understand or not, just as it did for Adam and Eve. "Our only safe course is to render obedience to all His requirements, at whatever cost. All are founded in infinite love and wisdom." *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 365.

### God's Law Versus His Love

Some people make a distinction between God's law and His love. They suggest that the God revealed in the law is a God of vengeance and stern rules, whereas Jesus promoted love. However, Jesus declares, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30), and God states that He does not change. See Malachi 3:6. Thus it is clear that the God of the Old Testament is the same God revealed by Jesus in the New Testament. It is impossible that there could truly be a conflict between God's law and His love because "God is love" (1 John 4:8), and "God's law is the transcript [exact copy] of His character." *In Heavenly Places*, 361. "God is love, and His law is love. Its two great principles are love to God and love to man." *The Great Controversy*, 467. Also, Paul says that "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10), and John wrote that "this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." 1 John 5:3. Thus it is clear that any perceived conflict between the law and "the loving thing to do" reveals a misunderstanding of either the law or the true meaning of love.

### God's Protection of His Children

As is evident from the story of Job, when we surrender our lives completely to God, He places a hedge about us which nothing can penetrate except by His permission. The following quotation also bears this out: "The Father's presence encircled Christ, and nothing befell Him but that which infinite love permitted for the blessing of the world. Here was His Source of comfort, and it is for us. He who is imbued with the Spirit of Christ abides in Christ. The blow that is aimed at him falls upon the Saviour, who surrounds him with His presence. Whatever comes to him comes from Christ. He has no need to resist evil, for Christ is his defense. Nothing can touch him except by our Lord's permission, and 'all things' that are permitted 'work together for good to them that love God.'" Romans 8:28." *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, 71.

Although we often bring trials upon ourselves by our wrong choices, God sometimes allows seemingly bad things to hap-

pen to His children through no fault of their own. Sometimes these trials are allowed to help us or others to develop a stronger faith in God. "If received in faith, the trial that seems so bitter and hard to bear will prove a blessing. . . . The Lord will work for all who put their trust in Him." *Ibid.*, 10-11. Often we do not understand the reason for the trial at the time. Listen to Job's response to unex-

sunlight. Truth is of God; *deception, in every one of its myriad forms, is of Satan; and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one.*" *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, 68.

Satan is "a liar, and the father of it." John 8:44. From the very beginning of the controversy in heaven, he has used deception to

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**I**nspiration makes it very clear that under *no* circumstances are we to be untruthful. "The *least departure* from truthfulness and rectitude is a transgression of the law of God."

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plainable suffering and calamity: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Job 13:15. Consider Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail. See Acts 16. Surely they could not understand why God had allowed them to be beaten with "many stripes." Now their feet were in the stocks which made it impossible to lie down except on their wounds. What was their response? They demonstrated their firm faith that God was still leading them by praying and singing songs of praise at midnight! God can honor this kind of faith with unusual demonstrations of His power! No matter what our circumstances, we can take courage from the assurance that "God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as coworkers with Him." *The Ministry of Healing*, 479.

### White Lies

Is there such a thing as a "white lie"? Can I ever bring good to someone or show them love by telling a lie? John speaks very directly to this issue when he says that "we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." 1 John 5:2. Inspiration makes it very clear that under *no* circumstances are we to be untruthful. "The *least departure* from truthfulness and rectitude is a transgression of the law of God." *Testimonies*, vol. 4, 312. "The Bible condemns *every species* of dishonesty, and demands right-doing under *all* circumstances." *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 102. "Everything that Christians do should be as transparent as the

achieve his objectives. See *The Desire of Ages*, 210. But God "cannot lie" (see Titus 1:2), and so has never used deception to accomplish His purposes, which are always designed to bring "good" (see Romans 8:28) to His children. We are to become like Him in character. "Sin has marred and well-nigh obliterated the image of God in man. It was to restore this that the plan of salvation was devised, and a life of probation was granted to man." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 595. It may appear to our human understanding that some good will be accomplished by telling a lie, but this is *never* the case. When we do this, we are trying to use Satan's methods to accomplish God's work, and God cannot bless our efforts.

### The Greatest Commandment

Some today are suggesting that certain commandments are more important than others.<sup>2</sup> For example, it is suggested that the sixth commandment ("Thou shalt not kill") is more important than the ninth ("Thou shalt not bear false witness"). Thus it is argued that when faced with the "moral dilemma" of telling the truth and probably causing the death of a friend, or telling a lie and probably saving his life, it is more important to save his life than to tell the truth. As Dr. Jan Charles Haluska points out,<sup>3</sup> this reasoning assumes that we can predict the future, which we have no ability to do. Are some of the Ten Commandments *truly* more important than others?

A lawyer asked Jesus the question, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?"

Jesus answered, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Matthew 22:36–39. Does this mean that it is more important to love God and our neighbor than to keep the Ten Commandments? On the contrary, it is *only* by keeping God’s law that we can love either God or His children. See 1 John 5:2–3. Then in what sense is Jesus’ commandment

Did God approve of what Rahab did? In Hebrews 11:31 we read that “By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not.” The Bible commends Rahab for her faith—not for her lies! It should not be surprising that God was willing to overlook Rahab’s lying and then to bless her for her faith. He overlooks our sins of ignorance too. See Acts 17:30. However, it does not follow that God approves of lying because He overlooks it in those who don’t know any better.

we lived long enough to do it! We could simply refuse to answer, which would put us under immediate suspicion. However, if we weren’t under suspicion, they probably wouldn’t have come to the door in the first place. We could tell them that they are welcome to look for themselves, which they would be likely to do whether we suggested it or not. Perhaps the reader can think of other options too. However, it might be well to remember that Jesus has promised to give us His Holy Spirit to prompt us with what to say in difficult situations. In fact, He even instructed us not to prepare our speeches ahead of time. See Luke 12:11–12.

In James 1:19 we are admonished to be “swift to hear” and “slow to speak.” If we are careful to follow this admonition, it will give us time to pray for help and give the Holy Spirit time to tell us what to say. I have found that when I have followed this counsel (not as often as I would wish!), the words I was prompted to say were very different than those I had been planning to say, and they were spoken with a gentler, more loving attitude. The Holy Spirit might even prompt us to appeal to the consciences of the enemies at our door, perhaps resulting in the salvation of one or more of them.

Is prolonging the present lives of His children more important to God than that they keep His commandments? It is of infinitely greater consequence to God that we have eternal life than that our earthly existence be extended a few years. Sometimes He even lays His followers in the grave to save them. See *Early Writings*, 17. Our eternal destiny will be determined by our obedience or disobedience to God’s law. “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” Revelation 22:14. Thus by telling a lie to save a friend’s temporal existence, we could lose eternal life. Is that what God wants for us? Is that what we want for ourselves?

Has God any other options than those which we can suggest? “Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing.” *The Ministry of Healing*, 481. When we have considered all the solutions to our dilemma that we can imagine, God has a thousand more. He can give us wisdom to answer the “Gestapo” at our doors if we will only exercise faith, and not doubt His love and power. See James 1:5–7.

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## Rahab did the best she knew. As she learned more about the God of Israel, she no doubt quit lying, changed her occupation, began keeping the Sabbath, and so forth.

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“greater”? These two commandments are greater in the sense that they reveal the principle of love underlying all of the commandments. As Jesus went on to say, “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Matthew 22:40. According to James, if we break one commandment, we have broken them all. See James 2:10. Thus it is clear that all of the commandments are of equal importance.

Since God never tempts us to sin (see James 1:13), He will certainly never place us in a situation in which we are compelled to break one of His commandments. Furthermore, Satan and wicked men are under His ultimate control so they cannot tempt us beyond our strength. “God is faithful, who will not suffer [permit] you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” 1 Corinthians 10:13. When we sin, it is our own choice. “The strongest temptation is no excuse for sin. However great the pressure brought to bear upon the soul, transgression is our own act. *It is not in the power of earth or hell to compel anyone to sin.*” *Maranatha*, 225.

### What About Rahab?

At first glance it appears that Rahab told a “white lie” and God blessed her for it! See Joshua 2. In fact, some are even suggesting that we as Christians could not have done better than Rahab.<sup>4</sup>

Rahab did the best she knew. As she learned more about the God of Israel, she no doubt quit lying, changed her occupation, began keeping the Sabbath, and so forth.

Could not God have miraculously saved the spies, like He did Daniel in the lion’s den and also his three companions in the fiery furnace? Couldn’t He have struck the police with blindness, as He did Lot’s antagonists? Had Rahab told the truth to the authorities who came inquiring about her visitors, she might have had even stronger evidence that the God of Israel was the true God.

### The Gestapo at the Door

I would be the last to condemn those who used deception in attempting to protect innocent Jews during the insanity of the Holocaust. The parallel between this situation and that of Rahab is clear—God will only hold us accountable for the light that we have. It may be instructive, however, to consider what we as enlightened Christians should do in similar circumstances. Suppose you or I were hiding Jews, and the police came to our door confronting us with a direct question, such as, “Are there any Jews here?” What should we say?

If we said “No,” the Gestapo would probably search the place anyway. The outcome for our friends would likely be the same, and, furthermore, we would then have to confess our sin to the police and ask for their forgiveness—if

## Abraham's Moral Dilemma

It would seem that Abraham was faced with a moral dilemma when God told him to sacrifice his son. Abraham knew that it was wrong to kill his son, and yet God had told him to do just that!<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, this son was given to him in a miraculous way. It is hard to imagine a greater test of faith. Previously, Abraham's fear triumphed over his faith when he declared his wife Sarah to be his sister in order to save his own life, thus putting her in great jeopardy. Abraham rationalized that he wasn't telling a lie because she actually was his half sister. However, this cowardly act was intended to deceive and thus was contrary to the intent or spirit of the commandment. See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 130. Now God brought him the ultimate test of his faith, which would provide evidence to the universe that Abraham's faith in God had become unshakable:

"Abraham's great act of faith stands like a pillar of light, illuminating the pathway of God's servants in all succeeding ages. Abraham did not seek to excuse himself from doing the will of God. During that three days' journey he had sufficient time to reason, and to doubt God, if he was disposed to doubt. He might have reasoned that the slaying of his son would cause him to be looked upon as a murderer, a second Cain; that it would cause his teaching to be rejected and despised, and thus destroy his power to do good to his fellow men. He might have pleaded that age should excuse him from obedience. But the patriarch did not take refuge in any of these excuses. Abraham was human; his passions and attachments were like ours; but he did not stop to question how the promise could be fulfilled if Isaac should be slain. He did not stay to reason with his aching heart. *He knew that God is just and righteous in all His requirements, and he obeyed the command to the very letter.*" Ibid., 153. "God estimated Abraham's obedience and unswerving faith, and gave him the name of 'Father of the faithful.' The example of Abraham is recorded in sacred history for the benefit of his believing children. *This great act of faith teaches the lesson of implicit confidence in God, perfect obedience to His requirements, and a complete surrender to the divine will. In the example of Abraham we are taught that nothing we possess is [too] precious to give to God.*" *The Signs of the Times*, April 1, 1875.

Abraham considered obedience to God more important than saving temporal life—even the life of his own son. His (and Isaac's) victory on Mount Moriah stands as one of the foremost examples in all of the Bible of the triumph of faith over fear. What gave Abraham the courage to carry out God's instructions, even when they seemed to be unreasonable? He knew that God is just and righteous in all of His requirements. See *ibid.* "Abraham believed [trusted] God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Romans 4:3.

Notice that when Abraham was presented with what seemed to be a moral dilemma, he followed his primary Source of truth, which was God's audible voice, since he had no Bible. He had been obedient to that voice for many years and knew it well. Today, God speaks to us through His Written Word, which is our primary Source of truth:

"The Bible is God's voice speaking to us just as surely as though we could hear Him with our ears." *In Heavenly Places*, 134. "The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience." *The Great Controversy*, vii.

We are as safe in obeying God's Written Word as Abraham was in obeying God's Spoken Word.

## The Final Conflict

As we enter into the final struggle of the great controversy, will Satan use dif-

*more subtle*, his assaults more determined. If it were possible, he would lead astray the elect. Mark 13:22, R.V." *The Great Controversy*, xi.

Satan is making a special effort now to confuse God's people concerning His law so that they will not be able to give the last warning message to the world with power. How can we convince people to risk their lives by keeping the fourth commandment if we believe that in certain situations, God does not require us to keep the ninth commandment? "From the very beginning of the great controversy in heaven it has been Satan's purpose to overthrow the law of God. . . . *To deceive men, and thus lead them to transgress God's law, is the object which he has steadfastly pursued. Whether this be accomplished by casting aside the law altogether, or by rejecting one of its precepts, the result will be ultimately the same.*" Ibid., 582.

The testimony of Scripture concerning those who live through the final conflict (the 144,000) is that "in their mouth was found no guile [Greek: *dolos*: deceit, subtlety]." Revelation 14:5. It seems that God places a high priority on truthfulness.

## Our Present Need

Our great need now is for a revival of primitive faith and godliness. "It is only as the law of God is restored to its rightful position that there can be a revival of primitive faith and godliness among His professed people." *The Great Controversy*, 478. God does not lie, and

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# How can we convince people to risk their lives by keeping the fourth commandment if we believe that in certain situations, God does not require us to keep the ninth commandment?

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ferent methods than he used in the past? "In the great final conflict, Satan will employ the same policy, manifest the same spirit, and work for the same end, as in all preceding ages. That which has been, will be, except that the coming struggle will be marked with a terrible intensity such as the world has never witnessed. *Satan's deceptions will be*

we are to become like Him in character. God will help us to do this if we allow Him to write His law on our hearts. See Hebrews 8:10; 10:16. As we come to understand the great love He has for us, and that His law is a revelation of that love, fear will be cast out of our hearts and our faith will be firmly established. Then with David we can truly exclaim,

"O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." Psalm 119:97. We will understand that when we choose to keep that law under *all* circumstances, He will not allow us to be placed in any situation for which He has not already provided, and that our puny efforts to "help him out" by telling a falsehood are not just unnecessary, but actually detrimental to the outworking of His plans. Then we can allow God to do His work (running the universe according to His will), and we can concentrate on doing our work (revealing our faith to an onlooking universe by rendering obedience to His commandments). Then truly all of our words and motives will be "as transparent as the sunlight." *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, 68. □

ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Though I have pondered this subject many times, it seemed that no one had good answers until I read an excellent article by Dr. Jan

Charles Haluska entitled, "In Christ There Are No Moral Dilemmas." *Adventist Review*, July, 1997, NAD Edition. For those wishing to explore this subject in greater depth, there are several papers by Ron and Linda Du Preez available from the Adventist Heritage Center. The AHC can be reached at 616-471-3274 or by e-mail at ahc@andrews.edu. I am indebted to these authors for some of my ideas.

- <sup>2</sup> See Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Receiving the Word*, 169. This author perceptively discusses the subtle methods by which Satan is seeking to undermine the faith of God's people in the accuracy, reliability, and ultimate authority of the Bible.
- <sup>3</sup> See Haluska, op. cit.; also Haluska, "Letters to the Editor," *Adventist Review*, February 1998, NAD Edition.
- <sup>4</sup> See Roy Adams, "In Defense of Rahab," *Adventist Review*, December 1997, NAD Edition.
- <sup>5</sup> Although the Ten Commandments had not been proclaimed from Mt. Sinai yet, Abraham was aware of God's commandments and was obedient to them. See Gen. 26:5. They had been passed down verbally by the patriarchs. See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 363.

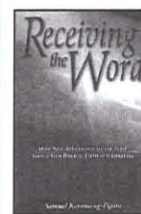
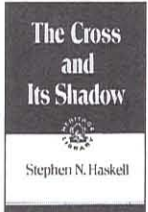
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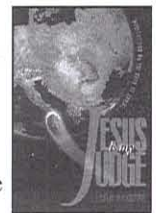
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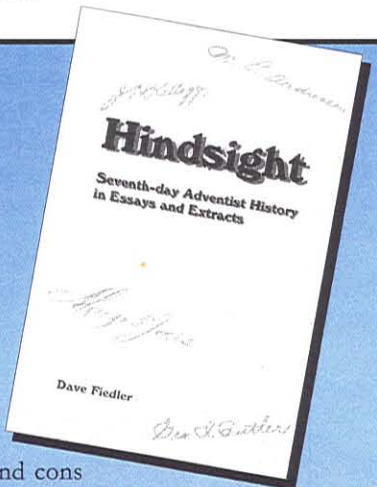
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Dave Fiedler, former managing editor of *Our Firm Foundation*, currently teaches Bible, World History, and English at Oklahoma Academy.

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## The Pope Calls for Sunday Observance

**R**ECENTLY, Pope John Paul II released an encyclical entitled *Dies Domini*, concerning Sunday observance, which captured the attention of talk shows, political pundits, religious leaders and people of all denominations.<sup>1</sup> The encyclical was lengthy and somewhat repetitive. Though written to Catholics, it was, nevertheless, calculated to appeal to Protestants as well in an effort to establish and support a systematic campaign to elevate Sunday observance as a sacred day among all people in all

countries where Christianity has political influence.

Careful analysis of the encyclical leaves no doubt that, by raising the issue publicly, the Pope designs to urge legislation in the near future requiring worship on Sundays in all countries with a strong Catholic heritage and also in the United States, thereby hoping to remove the fundamental, inalienable, human right of liberty of conscience worldwide. However, the Pope's encyclical is flawed in a number of significant ways. Included are

statements concerning history that are erroneous, as well as statements concerning the theology of Sabbath observance that are misapplied to Sunday.

### From Apostolic Times?

The very first sentence in the English translation of the encyclical is as follows: "The Lord's Day—as Sunday was called from Apostolic times has always been accorded special attention in the history of the Church because of its close connection with the very core of the Christian mystery" (§1).<sup>2</sup> John Paul uses Revelation 1:10 and Ignatius of Antioch's letter to the Magnesians as his primary sources for this statement. However, these references do not validate his assertion.

In Revelation 1:10 the Apostle John can be referring only to Saturday and not Sunday, because the Apostles understood the "Lord's day" to mean the Sabbath based on Jesus' own words. See Mark 2:28. Since the Apostle makes no reference to Sunday, or to any change of the Lord's day from the Sabbath in this passage or anywhere else, we can only understand him to be referring to Saturday, the Bible Sabbath.

Saint Ignatius of Antioch was probably martyred around A.D. 115, a short time after the last Apostle was laid in the grave. He was not one of the Apostles. The epistle to the Magnesians is quoted by many (first-day) historians as being outright spurious, or at least corrupted by a translator to replace the term "Lord's life" with "Lord's day." Killen tells us that "In the sixteenth century, fifteen letters were brought out from beneath the mantle of a hoary antiquity, and offered to the world as the productions of the pastor of Antioch (Ignatius). Scholars refused to receive them on the terms required, and forthwith eight of them were admitted to be forgeries. In the seventeenth century the seven remaining letters, in a somewhat altered form, again came forth from obscurity. . . . Again discerning critics refused to acknowledge their pretensions. . . ." He also informs us that Calvin himself "passed a sweeping sentence of condemnation on these Ignatian epistles."<sup>3</sup>

The famous (first-day) historian Kitto makes this observation: "We must here notice one other passage . . . as bearing on the subject of the Lord's day, though it certainly contains no mention of it. It

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Hal Mayer

occurs in the epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians (about A.D. 100). The whole passage is confessedly obscure, and the text may be corrupt. . . . The passage does not refer at all to the Lord's day; . . . it cannot be regarded as affording any positive evidence to the early use of the term 'Lord's day' (for which it is often cited), . . . [and] is purely conjectural."<sup>4</sup>

that the Apostles referred to Sunday as the Lord's day is a distortion of both the Bible and history.

### The Apostolic Sabbath

In actuality, the Scriptures tell us clearly that the Apostles kept the Bible Sabbath. For example: Acts 13:42, 44 informs us that "when the Jews were gone out of the

evidence that the Apostles kept the first day holy, this reference has nothing to do with worship. All that Paul is asking is that the believers put an offering aside on the first day of the week to be given to Paul when he arrives. It makes no reference to the sacredness of Sunday whatsoever. The facts are that the Apostles kept the seventh day holy just as Jesus had done.

### Authority for Changing the Sabbath

While it may be true that Roman Catholics and Protestants alike claim to keep Sunday as a weekly celebration of Christ's resurrection, yet the Pope fails to provide one single scriptural command for making it the Lord's Day, either from the Lord Himself or from the Apostles. Pope John Paul II, however, uses the traditions of the Church councils and the Church fathers as evidence of the authority to make the change from the Bible Sabbath to Sunday. He further admits that it was done by Christians in the fourth century (§64). In describing how Sunday became significant as a doctrine and symbol, he states that the apologists and fathers of the Church used the same scriptural texts that "Christ Himself would have explained to the disciples" (§22). Here his words are revealing and misleading. He states that Christ would have done the same as the apologists and the fathers did, but implies that He did not. Did he mean to suggest that Christ did not have time after the resurrection and before His ascension to explain this to the Apostles? Was Christ not willing to do it before He went back to heaven? If it were so vital to make such an important change, would not Christ have made that clear to His Apostles? Would not the Apostles have told us that Christ made the change? Christ made no change, nor could He have done so, because God does not change. See Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8.

The Pope admits that the shift to Sunday observance developed as a result of a reaction to Judaism's Sabbath (§23). Though the Jews kept the seventh-day Sabbath in response to the divine command, they, nevertheless, had distorted its true meaning, which Jesus Himself tried to restore during His earthly ministry. The Pope recognizes this by saying, "Opposing the excessively legalistic interpretation of some of His contemporaries, and developing the true meaning of the Biblical Sabbath, Jesus, as 'Lord of the Sabbath' (Mark 2:28), restores to the

## Certainly the Jews advocating circumcision would have also accused the Christians of breaking the Sabbath, if they actually were, for these Jews were very quick to accuse them of anything they could.

Hudson, Domville, Robinson, and Morer all clearly state that the epistle to the Magnesians is a forgery, or that Ignatius was not referring to the Lord's day at all. Yet the Pope chooses to use this conjectural statement as if it is a sufficient basis for his argument that Sunday was understood as the Lord's day in the second century.

Given these facts, it can only be said that later generations began to keep Sunday. It cannot be said that the Apostles referred to Sunday as the Lord's day. It is also clear that the reference to Ignatius, which the Pope uses as a basis for His argument, is either a fraud altogether or was forged and changed from its original meaning.

Throughout the encyclical the Pope never verifies from historical evidence that the Apostles ever advocated Sunday observance, or that Sunday was even once referred to as the Lord's day by the Apostles, though the Pope tries several times to implicate that Sunday observance was an Apostolic tradition. The only references that are used to support this theory of Apostolic origins of Sunday observance are historical references of the teachings and practices of the Latin Church well after the last Apostle was laid to rest. Never once is there a Biblical reference from the Apostles given in support of a change from Sabbath observance to Sunday observance. In fact, a careful review of the passages quoted from Scripture in the encyclical reveals that not a single passage authorizes such a change. Therefore, to say

synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. . . . And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God."

Had there been a new day of worship, Paul and Barnabas would have informed these Gentiles that they need not meet on the Sabbath anymore, but rather on Sunday. They were not merely accommodating the Jews, but rather this was a meeting for Gentiles in which almost the whole city came together to hear the Word. The fact that this event occurred fourteen years after the resurrection of Christ, and Luke is writing about it nearly thirty years later, is also significant. If the day had been changed, Luke would have had a remarkable opportunity to make it patently clear.

During the dispute recorded in Acts 15, there was nothing mentioned about the Sabbath. Certainly the Jews advocating circumcision would have also accused the Christians of breaking the Sabbath, if they actually were, for these Jews were very quick to accuse them of anything they could. Had they been keeping another day, these Jews would certainly have chastised them. Yet there is no mention of any Sabbath-breaking at all, making it quite self-evident that the Christians were still keeping the Bible Sabbath.

In His letter to the Corinthians, Paul says: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, . . . upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. Though often twisted to be used as

Sabbath observance its liberating character” (§63). Had the Jews of that time properly kept and represented the Bible Sabbath, there may well have been much less concern about making such a distinction.

What authority does the Pope claim was the basis for the change? The Pope confirms that the change is of human origin. He admits that (at least some) Christians “felt that they had the authority to transfer the meaning of the Sabbath to the day of the Resurrection” (§63). He also calls it the “Church’s day” (§54) and admits that it was a gradual change by saying that “the Lord’s Day [Sunday] tended to become more like the Sabbath” (§23). But never does he provide Biblical authority for a change to the new day of worship.

Christ did not authorize a change to Sunday, but instead reinforced the binding claims of the Sabbath upon all humanity by precept and example. Though still meeting on Sunday, most Christians now teach that the Ten Commandments were not done away with at the cross. They advocate that these divinely mandated precepts are binding, yet many still teach and believe that the fourth commandment was changed at His resurrection because, they claim, it was a Jewish tradition which had to be put aside. The Pope makes this point also (§23, 62), but again he does not provide any Biblical or even apostolic authority for the change. Some Christians (eventually a majority) turned away from the Bible Sabbath because it somehow was inconvenient to be so closely associated in the minds of the pagans with the Jews. However, a true Christian does not consult convenience when considering whether or not to obey a command of God.

Pope John Paul II emphasizes the point that the observance of Sunday is to be a reminder of Creation (§1, 8–15). On the contrary, this is one of the very points of God’s command to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy. “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . . For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” Exodus 20:8, 11. This command tells us that the Sabbath was hallowed for all mankind at Creation—long before there ever was a Jewish nation. It was one of the two institutions established in the Garden of Eden (the other being marriage), and throughout all of Holy Scripture there is never even the slightest hint of a change of

the command. Yet the Pope tries to justify the change on the basis that the Emperor Constantine’s Sunday law in the fourth century (§64) could not be ignored (as if it were somehow divinely inspired). He claims that because “Christians observed Sunday simply as a day of worship, without being able to give it the specific meaning of Sabbath rest,” Constantine’s civil law enforcing Sunday rest was somehow authoritative enough to change the divine command of God and legitimize the alternate day as being sacred. He says “it would therefore be wrong to see in this legislation . . . a mere historical circumstance with no special significance for the Church and which she could simply set aside.” In other words, Constantine’s law somehow gave the Church the authority needed to transfer the Sabbath to another day, in spite of the fact that there was never any Biblical authorization to do so—either from Christ Himself or from the Apostles.

The laws of men (even from the highest authority in the land—the emperor, king, President or national constitution) cannot be the basis upon which the laws of God can

which worshipped the sun, and to direct the celebration of the day to Christ” (§27). Thus he admits again that it was merely by human authority that the change was made—in this case the “wise intuition” of the Bishops of the Latin Church. How “wise” is it to suggest that a direct commandment of God can be replaced with a human institution? How much “intuition” is needed in the sight of God for Him to recognize a human command in opposition to His own specific command? The willful neglect or rejection of the commands of God, have repeatedly led God’s people throughout the millennia into apostasy with all of its consequent evils.

### Sabbathkeeping Throughout History

Further, the Pope does not recognize that there were always some Christians who did not keep Sunday. He states that “Christians observed Sunday simply as a day of worship” (§64), as if all Christians had adopted this practice. It was actually Latin Christianity in its departure from the explicit command of God that eventually led the way to almost

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be changed or put aside. To suggest that because the keeping of Sunday as a day of worship began to occur, and, therefore, it was a legitimate practice, or that laws concerning it would then be valid, is an assumption that is quite out of harmony with the principle of the sovereignty of God and attempts to supplant the authority of Scripture with tradition. It is God alone who makes His laws and it is God alone who can change them. Anyone else who attempts to do so is setting himself up as the man of sin. See 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4.

If God changed the Sabbath law, and, if it were so important for us to recognize that change, would not God in His wisdom have made it plain through Christ or His Apostles? However, Pope John Paul II says that it was “wise pastoral intuition” that suggested the “Christianization of the notion of Sunday as ‘the day of the sun’ . . . in order to draw the faithful away from the seduction of cults

universal rejection of God’s command to keep the Sabbath holy, replacing it with the alternate day of worship.

The closest the Pope comes to admitting that the Sabbath was—and is still—observed by Christians up until today, is his statement that “there have always been groups within Christianity which observe both the Sabbath and Sunday as ‘two brother days’” (§23). The facts are that there have always been “exclusive” Sabbathkeepers right up to the present day who have refused to keep Sunday. For this and other reasons, the Latin Church persecuted and tried to destroy them so long as it had the power to do so.

**The British Isles**—The Irish and Scottish churches kept God’s holy Sabbath day. Roman Catholic T. Ratcliffe Barnett, referring to the seventh century, writes in his book *Margaret of Scotland: Queen and Saint*: “In this matter the Scots had perhaps

kept up the traditional usage of the ancient Irish Church which observed Saturday instead of Sunday as the day of Rest.”<sup>5</sup>

Speaking of the words of Columba on the day of his death, Lucy Menzies (another Roman Catholic author) in *Saint Columba of Iona* says: “This day is the Sabbath, that is, that day of rest, and such will it truly be to me; for it will put an end to my labors.”<sup>6</sup> Menzies footnotes this comment as follows: “Sabbath

**Rome**—Sabbathkeeping was also very widely practiced in Rome at the beginning of the seventh century, so much so that it upset Pope Gregory I to the extent that he felt compelled to issue a bull declaring that if the Antichrist should come, he would keep Saturday as the Sabbath.<sup>11</sup> Also Pope Gregory VII [about A.D. 1074] felt it necessary to “condemn those who taught that it was not lawful to do work on the day of the Sabbath.”<sup>12</sup>

edly a slanderous story, forged by their enemies, and probably arose in this way: because they observed the seventh day they were called, by way of derision, Jews, as Sabbatarians are frequently at this day; as if they were Jews.” It was a common practice for the persecuting Roman Catholics to cause all manner of add-ons and exaggerations to the facts in order to heap opprobrium [reproach] upon their opposition.<sup>15</sup> Notice that David Benedict refers to Sabbatarians in his own day (nineteenth century).

### Catholic Testimony

The *Catholic Convert's Catechism* by Peter Geiermann, states clearly that “Saturday is the Sabbath day” and admits that Catholics keep Sunday because “the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday,”<sup>16</sup>—again an admission of mere human authority for the change. In *The Question Box*, by Bertrand L. Conway, we are informed that “If the Bible is the only guide for the Christian, then the Seventh-day Adventist is right in observing the Saturday.”

### Civil Enforcement

Pope John Paul II also refers to punishment for disobedience to the Church's laws. He states categorically that the (Latin) Church has always upheld the obligation to keep Sunday holy, but that sometimes it was necessary to be prescriptive, or make laws concerning it (§47), and he refers to Constantine's civil law as a legitimate outgrowth of the developing practice in the fourth century (§64). If that is true, then what is the legitimate outgrowth of the practice today? Obviously, Sunday laws are being subtly advocated in this encyclical.

The Pope emphasizes this point: “Therefore, also in the particular circumstances of our own time, Christians will naturally strive to ensure that civil legislation respects their duty to keep Sunday holy” (§67). Lest some may think that he is merely referring to legislation restricting work on Sunday, he states further: “In our own historical context there remains the obligation to ensure that everyone can enjoy the freedom, rest and relaxation which human dignity requires, together with the associated religious, family, cultural and interpersonal needs which are difficult to meet if there is no guarantee of at least one day of the week on which people can *both* rest and cel-

## Sabbathkeeping was also very widely practiced in Rome at the beginning of the seventh century, so much so that it upset Pope Gregory I.

in those days was our Saturday. The practice of calling the Lord's day the Sabbath did not come into use until a thousand years later.” Columba was adopted as a Roman Catholic Saint though he was never a Roman Catholic.

Apparently, the matter of Sunday worship vs. Sabbath worship was significant in the seventh century when Queen Margaret of Scotland called an ecclesiastical congress to pressure the Scots into giving up their religious liberty and their views which were distinct from those of Rome. Catholic historian Bellesheim writes: “The queen further protested against the prevailing abuse of Sunday desecration. ‘Let us,’ she said, ‘venerate the Lord's day, inasmuch as upon it our Saviour rose from the dead: let us do no servile work on that day.’ . . . The Scots in this matter had no doubt kept up the traditional practice of the ancient, monastic Church of Ireland (as the Columban Church was called), which observed Saturday rather than Sunday as a day of rest.”<sup>7</sup> Also Andrew Lang in his *History of Scotland* states that the Celts “worked on Sunday, but kept Saturday in a Sabbatical manner.”<sup>8</sup> Eventually the Celts were ordered to conform to the Sundaykeeping practices of the Church of Rome, or be banished. Their banishment occurred in A.D. 1130.<sup>9</sup>

“There is much evidence that the Sabbath prevailed in Wales universally until A.D. 1115, when the first Roman bishop was seated at St. David's. The old Welsh Sabbathkeeping churches did not even then altogether bow the knee to Rome, but fled to their hiding places.”<sup>10</sup>

**Belgium**—There were also churches in Belgium that kept the Sabbath. Dr. Karl J. Von Hefele refers to the synod of Liftinae (modern Estinnes) and writes “the third allocution of this council warns against the observance of the Sabbath, referring to the Council of Laodicea.”<sup>13</sup>

**Italy**—As late as the sixteenth century Bible Sabbathkeeping was still an issue in Italy. Baptist author Robert Robinson makes the following statement in his book *Ecclesiastical Researches* concerning the Waldensians of Northern Italy: “Some of these Christians were called Sabbati, Sabbatati, Insabbatati, and more frequently Inzabbatati.” Though he rejects the idea that they were called thus because they kept the seventh-day Sabbath, he, nevertheless, quotes the learned sixteenth-century Calvinist historian and jurist Goldastus who said of the Waldenses: “Inzabbatati [they were called] not because they were circumcised, but because they kept the Jewish Sabbath.”<sup>14</sup> Robinson's own interpretation of the word as “living in the mountains” has no basis in linguistics and no other author adopts it. Baptist author William Jones in his *History of the Christian Church* refers to this matter as well. Robinson further quotes Archbishop Usher and acknowledges that many understood that they were given these names because they kept the “Jewish Sabbath.”

David Benedict in his *General History of the Baptist Denomination* makes the following comment: “The account of their practicing circumcision is undoubt-

eborate" (§66). These comments clearly establish the agenda of the Pope in this encyclical to urge civil legislation that requires Sunday observance.

Historically, when the state has adopted religious legislation that harmonizes with Church law, the Church, under cover of the state, has persecuted conscientious dissenters from these laws. If this should happen again in our context (as he puts it), would not dissenters, especially Bible Sabbathkeepers, eventually be persecuted as they were in past history? The answer is obvious. Pope John Paul II is actually advocating that the state adopt civil legislation that will restrict the liberty of conscience of those that cannot, or will not, compromise the Word of God and adopt the alternative day of worship not authorized by Holy Scripture.

In fact, the Bible states clearly that the prophetic little horn will seek to change God's law. "And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time." Daniel 7:25. Is the Pope, in advocating Sunday observance in direct opposition to the command of God to keep His Sabbath, actually fulfilling this prophecy of the great apostate? After all, advocating a change of the explicit commands of the Most High concerning the Sabbath is attempting to change times and laws, specifically God's law to keep His time holy.

While the Pope is not openly urging civil penalties for modern Sunday legislation, any civil legislation will inherently have its penalties for disobedience. The Pope, nevertheless, states that there have been ecclesiastical penalties that, referring specifically to the fourth century A.D., have been instituted in the past. The Inquisition demonstrated that in history all dissent to the Church of Rome ultimately has been crushed, either by the Church or by the state—usually by both in concert with each other. To think that civil laws promoting religious observance today would not have civil penalties attached to them is preposterous.

#### Conclusion

All of this is ominous! Given the right circumstances, Rome, and the churches linked with her in ecumenical alliance,

will eventually establish civil legislation that will ultimately bring religious persecution upon the nations of the world, and specifically upon all those who keep the Bible Sabbath. While the Pope reflects on the solidarity of Sunday observance, let us beware that we not become part of the movement that will lead to the union of the human race against the God of heaven. May God help you to be faithful to His Word and keep His holy Sabbath day on Saturday, the seventh day, as He has commanded—even though you may be opposed by nearly all the rest of the world. □

#### ENDNOTES:

- <sup>1</sup> Those who have access to the World Wide Web may find the entire encyclical, entitled *Dies Domini*, by going to the Vatican's web site: [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).
- <sup>2</sup> The Pope's encyclical contains over 125 paragraphs, divided into 87 numbered sections, or points. "\$1" signifies Section 1.
- <sup>3</sup> Quoted in Andrews, J. N., *The History of the Sabbath*, 240.
- <sup>4</sup> Quoted in Andrews, 242.
- <sup>5</sup> Barnett, T. Ratcliffe, *Margaret of Scotland: Queen and Saint*, 1926 ed., 97; Quoted in Wilkinson, B. G., *Truth Triumphant*, 86-87.
- <sup>6</sup> Menzies, Lucy, *Saint Columba of Iona*, 1920 ed., 188; quoted in Wilkinson, 100; Andrews, 404.
- <sup>7</sup> Bellesheim, *History of the Catholic Church of Scotland*, vol. 1, 249-250; quoted in Wilkinson, 105.

- <sup>8</sup> Lang, Andrew, *History of Scotland*, 1900 ed., 96; quoted in Wilkinson, *ibid*.
- <sup>9</sup> Maclauchlin, *Early Scottish Church*, 400-403; quoted in Wilkinson, 106-107.
- <sup>10</sup> Lewis, A. H., *Seventh-day Baptists in Europe and America*, vol. 1, 29; quoted in Wilkinson, 154.
- <sup>11</sup> *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd Series, vol. 13, Coll. 13, ep. 1. Quoted in Wilkinson, 184.
- <sup>12</sup> Bower, Archibald, *History of the Popes*, vol. 2, 378; quoted in Andrews, 422.
- <sup>13</sup> Von Hefele, Dr. Karl J., *Conciliengeschichte*, vol. 3, 512, sec. 362; quoted in Wilkinson, 184.
- <sup>14</sup> Robinson, Robert, *Ecclesiastical Researches*; quoted in Andrews, 410-412.
- <sup>15</sup> See Andrews, 419-420.
- <sup>16</sup> Geiermann, Peter, *The Catholic Convert's Catechism*, 1977 ed., 50.

### Looking for a complete copy of the Pope's encyclical?

If you have access to the Internet, you may read it by pointing your web browser to the Vatican's website (<http://www.vatican.va>) and clicking on "Dies Domini."

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## The Grace of God Manifested in Good Works

**B**Y grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:8-10. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 5:1.

Since we can be saved only through the grace of God, which is a free gift, why is it that man will to his own hurt, lift himself up in pride and take glory to himself for his supposed good works? The divine favor, the grace of God bestowed upon us through Jesus Christ, is too precious to be given in exchange for any supposed meritorious work on the part of finite, erring man. Man has nothing in himself. The most exalted talent does not originate from man, but is the endowment of his Cre-

ator, and can purchase nothing from God. Gold and silver cannot buy the favor of God; for the wealth of the world is the entrusted talent of the Lord. Let no one think that costly offerings to benevolent enterprises will elevate him in the sight of God, or purchase for him the favor of Heaven, or procure for him a place in the mansions which Jesus has gone to prepare for those who love Him. The precious blood of Christ is wholly efficacious. "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter 1:18-19. "Ye are not your own. . . . for ye are bought with a price." 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

The resurrection of Christ from the dead was the Father's seal to the mission of Christ. It was a public expression of

His entire satisfaction in the atoning work. He accepted the sacrifice that Jesus had made on our behalf. It was everything that God required, perfect and complete. No human being by any work of his own could piece out the work of Christ. When on the cross Jesus uttered the cry, "It is finished!" (John 19:30) glory and joy thrilled heaven, and discomfiture fell upon the confederacy of evil. After that triumphant cry, the world's Redeemer bowed His head and died, and to all appearance the Captain of our salvation was conquered; but by His death He was a Conqueror, and He has opened the gates of eternal glory so that all who believe in Him may not perish, but have everlasting life. See John 3:16.

The sinner's only hope is to rely wholly upon Jesus Christ. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Romans 14:23. Our acceptance with God is sure only through His beloved Son, and good works are but the result of the working of His

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Ellen G. White

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sin-pardoning love. They are no credit to us, and we have nothing accorded to us for our good works by which we may claim a part in the salvation of our souls. Salvation is God's free gift to the believer, given to him for Christ's sake alone. The troubled soul may find peace through faith in Christ, and his peace will be in proportion to his faith and trust. He cannot present his good works as a plea for the salvation of his soul.

But are good works of no real value? Is the sinner who commits sin every day with impunity, regarded of God with the same favor as the one who through faith in Christ tries to work in his integrity? The Scripture answers, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10. In His divine arrangement, through His unmerited favor, the Lord has ordained that good works shall be rewarded. We are accepted through Christ's merit alone; and the acts of mercy, the deeds of charity, which we perform, are the fruits of faith; and they become a blessing to us; for men are to be rewarded according to their works. It is the fragrance of the merit of Christ that makes our good works acceptable to God, and it is grace that enables us to do the works for which He rewards us. Our works in and of themselves have no merit. When we have done all that it is possible for us to do, we are to count ourselves as unprofitable servants. We deserve no thanks from God. We have only done what it was our duty to do, and our works could not have been performed in the strength of our own sinful natures.

The Lord has bidden us to draw nigh to Him and He will draw nigh to us; and drawing nigh to Him, we receive the grace by which to do those works which will be rewarded at His hands. The reward, the glories of heaven, bestowed upon the overcomers, will be proportionate to the degree in which they have represented the character of Christ to the world. "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly." 2 Corinthians 9:6. Thank God that it is our privilege to sow on earth the seed that will be harvested in eternity. The crown of life will be bright or dim, will glitter with many stars, or be lighted by few gems, in accordance with our own course of action. Day by day we may be laying up a good foundation against the time to come. By

self-denial, by the exercise of the missionary spirit, by crowding all the good works possible into our life, by seeking so to represent Christ in character that we shall win many souls to the truth, we shall have respect unto the recompense of reward. It rests with us to walk in the light, to make the most of every opportunity and privilege, to

so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." John 15:1-11. "He

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## The reward, the glories of heaven, bestowed upon the overcomers, will be proportionate to the degree in which they have represented the character of Christ to the world.

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grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so we shall work the works of Christ, and insure for ourselves treasure in the heavens.

Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John 14:12-17. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. . . . Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit;

that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." John 14:21.

From the testimony of Christ we can see that we are regarded by the Lord according to the kind of fruit we bring forth, the kind of works we perform; for they are an index of the way in which we regard Christ. "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." Verses 23-24. These were Christ's words during the last interviews He had with His disciples before His death. The fruits of the life testify to the state of the heart. Jesus said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." Matthew 7:16-20. "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Daniel 12:3. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and

shall hide a multitude of sins." James 5:19-20.

Christians are to be indeed the representatives of Jesus Christ; they are not to be pretenders. Shall the world form its conceptions of God by the course of those who only take the name of Christ, and do not His works? Shall they point to those who claim to be believers, but who are not believers at heart, who betray sacred trusts, and work the works of the enemy, and say, "O these are Christians, and they will cheat and lie, and they cannot be trusted"? These are not the ones who truly represent God. But God will not leave the world to be deceived. The Lord has a peculiar people on the earth, and He is not ashamed to call them brethren; for they do the works of Christ. They make it manifest that they love God, because they keep His

commandments. They bear the divine image. They are a spectacle unto the world, to angels, and to men. They cooperate with heavenly intelligences, and the Lord is most honored and glorified by those who do the most good works.

True piety of heart is made manifest by good words and good works, and men see the works of those who love God, and they are led thereby to glorify God. The true Christian abounds in good works; he brings forth much fruit. He feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, visits the sick, and ministers to the afflicted. Christians take a heart-felt interest in the children that are about them, who, through the subtle temptations of the enemy, are ready to perish. Fathers and mothers, if you have guarded your own children from the wiles of the foe, look about you to save the souls of the children who

have not such care. Have an interest in the souls of those for whom Christ died. There are youth all around us to whom the members of the church owe a duty; for Christ has died for them upon the cross of Calvary to purchase for them the gift of salvation. They are precious in the sight of God, and He desires their eternal happiness. The saving work of Christ is complete only when the members of the church do their part, arising and shining because their light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon them. Christ calls for voluntary cooperation on the part of His agents in doing earnest, consistent work for the salvation of souls. □

*Review and Herald*, January 29, 1895.

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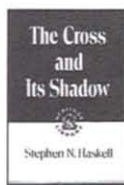


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# True Prophecies

*In this article, continued from last month, J. N. Loughborough addresses the last two of the seven tests of a true prophet. This article is the last in this series.*

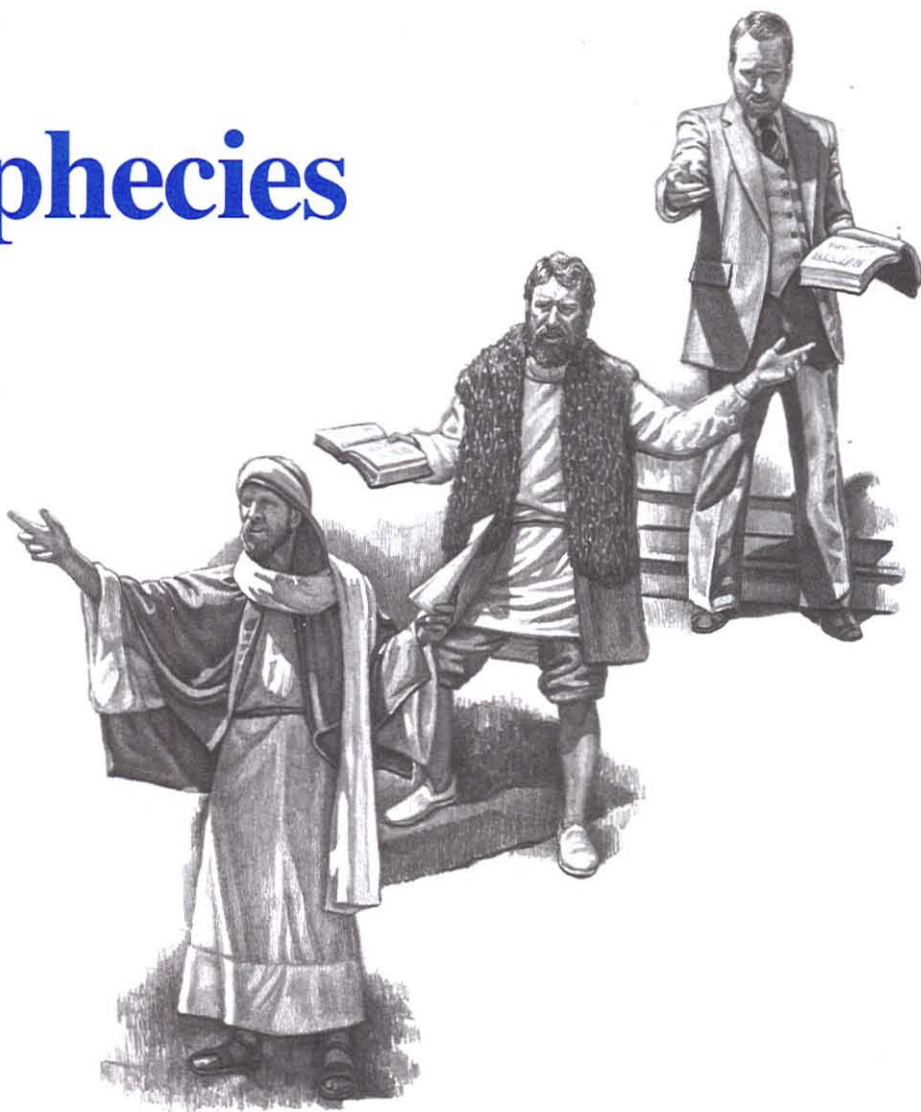
Editors

## Rule Six—Miracles Not a Test of a True Prophet

IT has been affirmed by many theological writers, and stated in commentaries on the Scriptures, that the sign of a true prophet is the working of miracles.

If the working of miracles is proof of a true prophet, then the “false prophet” mentioned in Revelation 19:20 would be declared after all to be a true prophet; for it is said, “The beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast.” The same power is mentioned again in Revelation 13:14 as deceiving “them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast.” By the same application of this rule, we would be driven to the conclusion that even Satan is a true prophet. Certain spirits that will do a special work under the sixth of the seven last plagues, are called “the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” Revelation 16:14.

It is true that miracles are recorded as being wrought by some of the prophets, as in the case of Elijah, Elisha, and Paul. But who has found any record in the Bible of the miracles of Isaiah, Jere-



miah, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, and so forth? Yet these were true prophets of the Lord, and are shown to be such by the rules the Lord has given to test true prophets.

That the working of miracles is not the test of a true prophet, is clearly seen by reading the scriptural record of John the Baptist. That he was a prophet is shown by the prediction of his father, Zacharias, in relating the vision God had given him respecting the son that should be born to him: “And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.” Luke 1:76. Our Saviour Himself recognized John as that very prophet who should prepare the way before Him; for of John He said: “But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he,

of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist.” Luke 7:26-28.

Here then is a plain statement of the Saviour that John was a prophet. Let us apply the test of miracle-working, and see the result. In the Gospel as written by John the evangelist, we have these words: “And many resorted unto him [Christ], and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true.” John 10:41. This statement alone is a complete refutation of the claim that the sign of a true prophet is the working of miracles.

This sixth rule teaches that if a miracle is wrought by a pretender, there will be seen with it, when carefully tested, a

J. N. Loughborough

departure from the sacred truths of God's Word, and a lowering of the standard to meet a heart inclined to shun the way of self-denial. The Lord permits such pretenders to arise, and his course is a test to the true child of God, giving him an opportunity to weigh carefully the tendency or motive of said miracle-worker. Those who cling to God's Word, instead of being captivated by the false miracle-worker, come forth strong in God as the result of such experience.

In these evil days when many are claiming to be "faith healers," "divine healers," or "Christian Science healers," and so forth, it would be well to apply closely the scriptural rules; for it will need divine rules and the illumination of the Holy Spirit to enable us clearly to discern the intent and purpose of some of these "healers," so subtle in their work; while on the other hand are those who openly disregard God's law and His truth for this time.

In this rule six we are counseled to watch the nature of the testimony, whether it draws us nearer to the Lord, or away from Him. Virtually, we are counseled to test the prophet by all the rules, and not decide that he is a true prophet because apparently he is in harmony with one rule. I say apparently, for if perchance he made a prediction, the next question naturally arises, Where did he get his prediction of events to take place? We understand from the Scriptures that anciently unprincipled men, false prophets, "stole" the words of true prophets, and passed them off as their own prophecy, seeking thus to succeed in their deception.

The Lord has told His people in these times that "the devil is a careful student of the prophecies of the Bible." And why is this? Is it to learn the truth, that he may help in the work of the Lord?—No, by no means, but rather that he may tell some of these things that are coming—having stolen them from the Lord's prophets—thus making it appear that his prophecies are true ones.

"Satan closely watches events, and when he finds one who has a specially strong spirit of opposition to the truth of God, he will even reveal to him unfulfilled events, that he may more firmly secure himself a seat in his heart. . . . During his experience of nearly six thousand years he has lost none of his skill and shrewdness. All this time he has been a close observer of all that concerns our race." *Testimonies*, vol. 2, 171-172.

Although Satan's prophets may do miracles, or may speak of things to come, by the aid of what they have seen take place (as the death of a person occurring at a certain hour), or tell of an event to come (of which they "stole" their knowledge from God's prophet), yet in applying all the rules to their

not say, "Ye **may** know them by their fruits," but, positively, "Ye **shall** know them by their fruits." (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

We inquire, What is the fruit to be seen in the work of genuine gifts of the Spirit of God? The answer is found in the statement of Paul respecting the pur-

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## If no true prophets were to be connected with the work, and every prophetic manifestation was to be from an evil source, would He not have said, "Beware of prophets"?

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case, it will soon be seen where they fail to be in harmony with the Lord's standard of true prophets. Satan will not teach submission to God's law, but rather the service of other gods, even though it be the self-pleasing way of shunning the path of self-denial.

### Rule Seven—"By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them"

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." Matthew 7:15-20.

These words of our Saviour recognize the fact that the gift of prophecy would exist in the gospel age. If no true prophets were to be connected with the work, and every prophetic manifestation was to be from an evil source, would He not have said, "Beware of prophets"? The fact that He tells us so definitely how each kind may be known, is the best of evidence that in the work of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is showing "things to come" (John 16:13), would be the true gift of prophecy. This rule, which in our enumeration we have called rule seven, is an infallible one. Christ did

pose of the Lord in placing the gifts in the church: "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, 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 the unity ["into the unity," margin] of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness 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.

Apply this rule to the prophetic gift that has been connected with the third angel's message from its rise, and what is the result?—We find that the continual instruction given through Mrs. White has been in the line of unity and harmony, admonishing to "counsel together" and "press together," to be in union with Christ, thus insuring true fellowship and union with one another.

One of the fruits of true gifts mentioned in the letter to the Ephesian church is the

gathering of a people into the "unity of the faith." What has been the result in this respect in the rise of the third angel's message?—Fifty-three years ago [written in 1911], when our publications and work were all in the English language, when reference was made to the unity and harmony taught in the Testimonies and existing among the believers, our opponents said, "That is very well now, while your work is all in a limited territory, and the believers of one nationality; but should your work spread into different parts of the earth, and gather people of different languages, with their national peculiarities, you would see the unity disappear, and your work go to pieces."

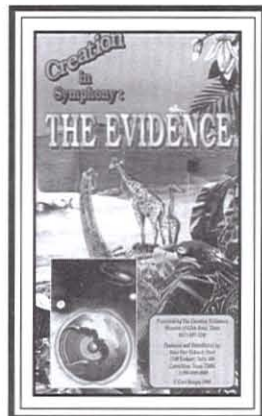
Do we see it going to pieces? How is it? The message is now printed, believed, and advocated in sixty-seven [now in over 140] languages of the world, and has gained a foothold at different places around the world twice—both north and south of the equator—yet there is the same unity and harmony among those accepting the Lord's counsel through the Testimonies as in earlier times. So the visions stand the test of rule seven.

In conclusion, let it be borne in mind that attention has been called in this book to *nine* points of similarity between Mrs. White's visions and those described in the Bible; to *six* points of comparison in the practical work of true vision; and, lastly to *seven* rules. In all of these twenty-two points we find her visions in exact harmony with *true* prophets.

One of the best proofs of the truthfulness of the visions is in the visions themselves. Many of those who read Mrs. White's writings, who know not the origin of the ideas which she advances, say, "When I read Mrs. White's articles it seems to me as though her writings are inspired."

In view of the facts presented in the foregoing pages, it is well for all to heed the admonition of King Jehoshaphat to the host of Judah, "Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." 2 Chronicles 20:20. □

*The Prophetic Gift in the Gospel Church*, 93-100.



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## Get Ready, Get Ready, Get Ready!

**T**HERE is an urgency that **now** is the time—**today** is the day of salvation. For so long we have been confessing with our mouths the present judgment, the nearness of the end of time and the soon return of our Lord Jesus Christ. However, we continue to live our lives just as if these events were far off into the future. The pleading of the angel sent of God is: “Get ready, get ready, get ready!”

In order to be ready to receive Christ at His Second Coming we must understand that He is coming to us by His Holy Spirit **today**. We must recognize Him **now**; then we shall recognize Him when He comes in the clouds of heaven.

There are many aspects to our preparation, but I would like to discuss two of them which I consider to be foundational. The first is **where** we live—the physical preparation—the second is **how** we live, or **who** we serve—the spiritual preparation. This does not mean that the physical is first in priority ahead of the spiritual. The preparation should be going on simultaneously—each enhancing the other.

While we were in our suburban setting, prior to our move out into the country, we were preparing physically, simplifying our lives, beginning to redeem our time, and spiritually beginning to see our true condition and our need of a Saviour to change us. Our country location has provided the opportunity for the on-going preparation, while it also has strengthened our faith and dependence upon God.

God has chosen for His people the environment where it is best for them to live while in the process of getting ready. When He created our first parents He placed them in a beautiful garden setting—among the holy ministries of nature.

However, with everything that God has done, Satan has created a counterfeit. Satan did not want man to be in a quiet place where he would be sensitive to the will of God, so he set up a false and artificial environment called a city. You can read about it in Genesis, the fourth chapter. When Cain was sent away from his family he started the first city.

God is calling His people today to leave the cities for a quiet, country (rural) setting. He wants to prepare us not only for the physical crisis that lies just ahead but also for the spiritual crisis—to prepare us in **heart** (our attitudes and affections), in **mind** (our reason and will) and in **character** (revealing Christ in our daily interactions) to give the loud cry and to be ready to meet Christ when He comes.

He says, “I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. **Then** will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.” Ezekiel 36:24-28. (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

God has a work to do in each of our hearts to prepare us for His soon return. He is pleading with us to get ready, and He is calling us to an environment where this work can best be done. Yet how many argue (say), “You mean that if I live in the city or suburbia, I can’t be saved?”

No, but it is ten times harder—a hundred times harder—to get ready in such a place. “There is not one family in a hundred who will be improved physically, mentally or spiritually, by residing in the city.” *Country Living*, 13. This preparation, even in the best environment, is challenging, so why make it ten times, a hundred times, more difficult for ourselves?

“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.” 2 Corinthians 6:17.

Friends, we don’t realize the impact the city and suburbia have on our lives—physically, mentally and spiritually. We may say, “I don’t participate in the world’s sins and pleasures; I don’t touch the unclean things; I just live there for my work and as a witness.” But, generally speaking, what we behold we become.

Alane Waters

## “Junk Food” for All the Senses

Whether we want to or not, we are being fed the world's ways. We are constantly stimulated by the world. Every one of our senses is being bombarded with the subtle lies of Satan, and we become deceived into thinking that they have no effect on us. Every time we drive, our eyes are constantly beholding messages from signs and billboards. They communicate messages to us on how to indulge the flesh, the passions and the appetite. They tell us what to eat, how to spend our money, what will make us happy, where we need to spend our vacations to really enjoy life, and, if people have wronged us, how to go about getting even with them. Everything we see feeds the fleshly nature!

Our ears are constantly bombarded with noises of all kinds, from all directions. Whether while we are sitting at a stoplight with our bodies vibrating from the music in the car beside us, or whether while we are asleep at night and are awakened by loud voices, tires squealing, and sirens blaring, we are impacted.

Recently, we were in a large city holding meetings. The people we were staying with live in a fairly nice and quiet housing development. The first night we were there I was awakened three to four times before midnight by the loud traffic, hotrods, squealing tires, blaring music, and so forth. Then at 2 a.m. I was awakened again—this time by loud, boisterous, foolish voices from a group of youth walking down the sidewalk. In the morning the father in the home said, “How did you sleep?” They had become so accustomed to the constant confusion that they were not even aware of it. But, friends, it does have its subtle effects. We wake up in the morning tired, yet our bodies are racing. We feel the push, rush and hurry before we ever walk out the door.

Our sense of smell is affected as are our lungs. After we returned home, we were walking down our mountain road when someone passed us in a pickup. Immediately, we all noticed the fumes in the air that were very strong and repulsive. For 40 or 50 feet the fumes permeated the fresh air. We realized that the air we had breathed in the city was so filled with exhaust fumes and pollutants that we weren't even aware of it because it had been a gradual change—so pervasive and so imperceptible!

Our tastes become affected when we live in a fast-paced environment. We have so little time to spend in preparing simple, wholesome food! Our meals are fast foods, prepared foods and processed foods—all of which directly impact our taste buds and our health. Look at the number of restaurants, cafes, and fast-food stops in the cities and towns—the

Saviour who longs to save us from our selfishness and pride—our sins. The call to **get ready, get ready, get ready**, is a call to a place where we can be still and know God.

We must be diligent to act on the pleadings of God who loves us with an everlasting love—a love that longs to save us from ourselves. Already it is

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## Country living is not meant to be just a change of address; it is primarily for the purpose of bringing us into an environment which is more conducive to a change in heart, mind and character.

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streets are lined with them! Then, as you go to the grocery store almost everything there is a “quick,” “instant” and “easy” answer to feeding your family.

So also are our spiritual appetites and tastes affected. Individually, we may have a quick prayer, read a daily devotional page, and perhaps even have a short family worship, and then we are off into our day—often not even remembering what the devotional was about!

While we were staying in one home, the neighbor a few doors down the street was burglarized. This bold act took place, not in the darkness of the night, but in the morning hours as people were getting up, taking their morning walks, retrieving their newspapers and going off to work! The impact on the home where we were staying was that they shut and locked all the doors and windows. Thus we become prisoners of fear and violence—locked within our own homes.

### A Place to Find Peace and Rest

Friends, the counsel to move our families out of the cities and into the country is not just so we can live in a better environment. Country living is not meant to be just a change of address; it is primarily for the purpose of bringing us into an environment which is more conducive to a change in heart, mind and character. It should be a place where we are not continually stimulated and bombarded with the things of this world—a place of peace and rest where we can slow down enough to see our real self and recognize our need of a personal

becoming more difficult to leave the cities and move out into the country. “We can leave anytime,” are the words of many.

Friends, we must simply believe what God says: “The more nearly we come into harmony with God's original plan, the more favorable will be our position to secure health of body, and mind, and soul.” *The Ministry of Healing*, 365.

We have seen a great exodus of people leaving the cities and suburbia for a country home. Many are motivated from an investment perspective. They do not see the economy as being stable so they are investing their means in rural properties. Others are moving out for fear of living in the cities, and, yes, even from nice communities where crime and violence is rapidly increasing. The real estate market is dropping in many cities where property values are declining. Some who wish to leave the city cannot sell their homes for what they owe on them. Then, in the reverse, country property prices are increasing one to four times their real value because of the great demand, making it difficult to find affordable homes out in the country.

“**Get ready,**” is the word sounded in my ears. **Get ready, get ready.** He that is to come, will come and will not tarry. Tell My people that unless they improve the sacred opportunities given them, unless they do the work I have given them, Satan will come upon them with the stealthy tread of a thief, to deceive and allure them.’ God wants us to be wide awake, that when He shall come, we shall be ready to say, ‘Lo, this

is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us.' Isaiah 25:9. He is coming to us by His Holy Spirit today. Let us recognize Him now; then we shall recognize Him when He comes in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. God calls upon you to get ready to meet Him in peace." *Review and Herald*, April 30, 1901.

This is the pleading of God to each of us, not just to live in the country, but to prepare our hearts and lives for a home in heaven. This is the call to my heart. This is the message that is being impressed upon me with greater force than I have ever recognized before. This is the Spirit of God pleading with each of us—individuals and families—to prepare to meet our God.

### Preparing Our Hearts

The preparation that we each need is not one of outward reform or compliant behavior. You may say, "Well, you just made quite a point about country living. Isn't that an outward reform?" It can be, but the choice is ours. If we move out into the country to get away from the wickedness of the world only, or just because God said to, and we are not willing to let Him do the work in our

above all our own human desires, and to **choose** it against the clamorings of the flesh, is the heavenly goal to be reached. The getting ready that the Lord is calling us to, begins and operates in our thoughts. Our words, feelings, expressions, actions and even the atmosphere about us, is generated from our thoughts. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7.

There is nothing that is hid from God. He knows the very secrets of our thoughts. We may live in the right place, eat the right foods, wear the right clothes, profess the right doctrines and do the right things, but, if we have lustful thoughts, pride of opinion, if we are holding onto bitterness, or any other **secret sin**, we have not Christ. All of our external good is as "filthy rags." This type of Christian experience is one that is "weighed in the balances, and . . . found wanting." Daniel 5:27.

Some have asked, "How do you know if your heart is right or if you are just works oriented?"

I believe we each can know the answer by what happens in our heart. If we do right because it is right, or because we are supposed to, but in the quietness of our thoughts we wish we could continue doing as we have done in the past,

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## To know God's will for us and to want that above all our own human desires, and to choose it against the clamorings of the flesh, is the heavenly goal to be reached.

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hearts—which is the real preparation—it would be just a form. The country is neither our salvation nor our Saviour, but it is an environment where it is ten times easier to hear the Saviour speak to our hearts to bring us into a deeper relationship with Him. It was when we moved out into the country that my Christian experience began to grow, where my love for Christ has been deepening, and where my longing to be fully cleansed of all sin and self has been most recognized and sought after.

The preparation we need is the preparation of our hearts. It is the submission of our wills to the will of God. To **know** God's will for us and to **want** that

it is self that is making the change. It means self is trying to do what is right, instead of choosing to have self subdued, and having the Spirit empower us to do what is right. But if we see what God is calling us to, and we **want** to do it, and then **choose** to allow our self to be subdued—which means there is not one thin thread of self holding onto the "I wish I didn't have to" or "I wish I could just do it my way"—**then** we have real peace and we are truly yielded to God. I know the difference in my own life, and my husband and children know the difference in their lives. It is not complicated. It is the simplicity of the gospel that even a child can understand.

Our problem is that we have tried to justify our position for so long—excusing our actions, and rationalizing our motives that we have complicated the work of the Spirit in our lives. The complication comes with our unwillingness to believe that His will is really better when my self is clamoring to rule. The complication is our fear of what God may ask us to give up—the fear that we might not really be happy if we always did God's will instead of what self wants. Be honest, friends, isn't this how we complicate His gospel?

The getting ready that our Saviour is pleading for us to do is on an everyday, moment-by-moment basis—beginning with our thoughts. In between speaking appointments our family was planning to take a special-day outing with a picnic lunch. In preparation to leave by 8 A.M., I laid two water jugs and a small package on the bed to take along with us so that on the way home we could return the item and fill our water jugs with better-tasting water than what we had where we were staying. I had told my husband that I wanted to take these items along with us.

A few minutes before 8 o'clock my husband said, "It's time to go." He walked right past the things on the bed and out to the car. The children also went right out to the car. When I came out of the bathroom, walking through the bedroom, I saw the two jugs and the package on the bed and I picked them up. When I went to the kitchen I saw the two sacks with the picnic lunch, which added to what I was already carrying. Meanwhile, my husband and children were all waiting for me with the car running. I was prepared physically for the trip, wasn't I? But what about the spiritual preparation? These were the thoughts that immediately ran through my mind: "Why couldn't he get the stuff on the bed? He knew we were supposed to take it with us? Why didn't someone get the lunch? Why didn't anyone ask if there was anything they could do to help?" Do you see where the focus naturally goes? The big **I** becomes touched! It immediately looks at others as a cause or reason to become wounded, fretful, agitated, or irritated.

However, as fast as those thoughts came to my mind, came the call to my heart to surrender them to the will of God. I knew what God was calling me to—no chafing spirit, no faultfinding words of frustration or irritation, no self-

pity that I always have to be the one to do things, and no pouting or selfish silence. I know the difference from just doing what is right while still holding onto all the negative thoughts and feelings inside, in contrast to really letting go of all of the sin and self. I have never found peace or satisfaction in giving a negative response.

I silently prayed, "Lord, I don't want to feel this way or even think these thoughts. Please, take them from me." And **He did!** I saw things from my family's point of view. My husband's focus was to leave by eight. The children were excited about doing something different and having some much needed family time! The thoughts in their minds were simply different than the thoughts in mine. The Lord helped me to understand their perspective, rather than becoming irritated because they weren't seeing mine.

### What We Think, We Become

Friends, what would have happened—or could have happened—if I chose to hold onto those first thoughts? They would have found expression. It is inevitable that what we think, we become. We carry an atmosphere about us that directly reflects our thoughts and feelings whether we speak them or act them out. It is in the little things of every day, the small occurrences of life, where we are to get ready. We are told, "**get ready for the great day of God by carrying out in the daily life the perfect principles presented to us in the life of Christ.**" We are called by Him to be His representatives. . . . We are to live in conformity to His will, representing Him in life and character." *This Day With God*, 372. Surely we know the difference in our innermost hearts—whether we are His representatives or whether we are trying to act out His will without His power.

As we learn to truly surrender our thoughts, opinions and perspectives to God, as He calls to us in these small annoyances of the flesh, it becomes easier to take hold by faith. Each yielding of the heart leads to greater faith—from victory to victory through Christ. Our characters begin to change. I am recognizing that change in many situations in which I would typically have been quick to respond with the clamoring for an unpleasant expression. However, now I am finding that when the situation arises, my first thoughts have been to do or say

what my Lord is quietly prompting me would be pleasing to Him. It has been an encouragement to me that God can create a new heart—in me! I long for still more. I long for the full experience that when I am doing my will, I will be but carrying out the will of God for me—the two becoming one—the one being His.

we do not let others know, the secrets of our own thoughts are as clear as the light of noonday to God. We are told, "Sin may be concealed, denied, covered up from father, mother, wife, children, and associates; no one but the guilty actors may cherish the least suspicion of the wrong; but it is laid bare before the

**I** knew what God was calling me to—no chafing spirit, no faultfinding words of frustration or irritation, no self-pity that I always have to be the one to do things, and no pouting or selfish silence.

This is the place of true peace and rest for our souls.

Are we preparing? Are we using each moment of our precious probationary time to allow God to work in our hearts—cleansing us from all self and sin? Are we earnestly seeking to live in the environment God has chosen for us to best come to know Him more fully and to be better able to distinguish His voice? The pleadings of God for us to get ready is a call to bring all of our thoughts into His captivity. This means **where** we live and **how** we live. There is no time for us to be acting like Christians on the outside while still holding onto our selfish ways, opinions or habits—excusing them, justifying them or rationalizing them. Even if

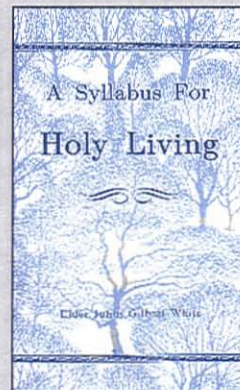
intelligences of heaven. . . . Men may be deceived by those who are corrupt in heart, but God pierces all disguises and reads the inner life." *The Great Controversy*, 486. This is the area that we are called to in our preparation to meet God. We are facing the judgment. We have only this day to prepare—to get ready. How shall we use this moment, this day? Are we willing to have our hearts searched, to have every secret sin cherished in our thoughts revealed, confessed, repented of, and forsaken—to have a new heart created in its place? This decision is ours individually. "**Get ready, get ready, get ready!**" is the message for each of us. □

## A Syllabus for Holy Living

The material in this book will help you understand the urgency of our times, and how to prepare to meet the coming crisis of "the little time of trouble," the sealing, and the latter rain. Most importantly, it will help you understand the reality of victory over sin through the power of the Holy Spirit, and how to share this experience with everyone you meet.

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# The Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement:

## Is It the Answer?

### Part 2

**T**HERE is no question that there has been a great interest among the members of the Reform Movement in the rise of those self-supporting ministries, which, while supporting the Seventh-day Adventist Church, nevertheless, are calling for the God-ordained reforms necessary to prepare a people for the return of Jesus. There have been times when in wonderment they have approached others and myself about the fact that we have not joined with the Reform Movement. I remember a dialogue I had some years ago with the then former General Conference president of the Reform, Pastor Devai, and later with a subsequent General Conference president of the Reform, Pastor Neville Brittain, and even more recently with the present president of the Reform, Pastor Sas. Each of them expressed hopes that we would join their organization. But in spite of my appreciation for these brethren, Hartland, and other such ministries, see very strong reasons why we cannot join this organization.

That brings me to the basis for that decision. This will take the form of two sections—one dealing with the doctrinal differences in the Reform Movement from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and, second, some changes in the patterns of thinking of members of the Reform Movement.

#### Doctrinal Differences

While it is true that almost all of the pillars of the Reform Movement are held in common with the Seventh-day Adventist Church—the sanctuary message, the Sabbath, the state of the dead, righteousness by faith, the binding nature of the commandments of God—there are some clearly identifiable differences:

**1.** They believe that the hundred and forty-four thousand represent all the faithful from 1844 onward. It is true that this was an interpretation that was not uncommonly held in the early days of the Seventh-day Adventist Church when our numbers were few. In the same way the numbers in the Reform Movement are few—totaling no more than fifty thousand members in the two strands of the Reform. The above interpretation, however, cannot be sustained from the Scriptures. In Revelation, chapter 7, we have the first detailing of the one hundred and forty-four thousand. The account is explicit:

“And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Revelation 7:14.

It seems clear that the statement that they have come out of great tribulation refers to the time of Jacob’s trouble after the close of probation. They indeed must be the living saints who will be alive when Jesus comes the second time. This is supported by Sister White in the following statement:

“Soon we heard the voice of God like many waters, which gave us the day and hour of Jesus’ coming. The living saints, 144,000 in number, knew and understood the voice.” *Early Writings*, 15.

Sometimes I have heard representatives of the Reform Movement argue that in the partial resurrection, just prior to the coming of Jesus, those who have died in the hope of the three angels’ messages will be resurrected. That is true. However, the concept of the 144,000 having gone through the time of trouble is insurmountable evidence against the position that they take.

**2.** The Reform Movement believes in closed (some call it close) communion—meaning that only those who are members in good and regular standing in the Reform are permitted to partake of the communion emblems. This is in contradistinction to the words of Jesus:

“Christ’s example forbids exclusiveness at the Lord’s Supper. It is true that

Colin Standish



open sin excludes the guilty. This the Holy Spirit plainly teaches. See 1 Corinthians 5:11. But beyond this none are to pass judgment. God has not left it with men to say who shall present themselves on these occasions. For who can read the heart? Who can distinguish the tares from the wheat? 'Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.' For 'who-soever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.' 'He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.' 1 Corinthians 11:28, 27, 29." *The Desire of Ages*, 656.

**3.** The Reform Movement teaches that under no circumstances may a divorced person be remarried. Should they do so, they will be disfellowshipped from the Reform. While we cannot help but admire their strong stand for the veracity and endurance of the marriage sacrament, nevertheless, Inspiration does not sustain such a position. When Jesus made His statement in the Sermon on the Mount, it surely authorized remarriage of the innocent party:

"But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Matthew 5:32.

"And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Matthew 19:9.

The understanding that the "innocent" party is free to remarry is sustained by the Spirit of Prophecy:

"I saw that Sister ———, as yet, has no right to marry another man; but if she, or any other woman, should obtain a divorce legally on the ground that her husband was guilty of adultery, then she is free to be married to whom she chooses." *The Adventist Home*, 344.

Sister White endorsed the remarriage of a man who had done everything that he could to reestablish his marriage with his first wife who had violated the marriage vow several times:

"In regard to the marriage of your daughter with J, I see where you are troubled. But the marriage took place with your consent, and your daughter,

knowing all about him, accepted him as her husband, and now I can see no reason why you should carry any burden over this matter. Your daughter loves J, and it may be that this marriage is in the order of God in order that both J and your daughter may have a richer Christian experience, and be built up where they are deficient. Your daughter has

has remained faithful to the doctrines and practices as published in Inspiration. One has to agree that the members of the Reform Movement are far more committed to the truth and practices of Seventh-day Adventism than are the members in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Yet there is a point that we cannot overlook—both the Bible and

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## There is a point that we cannot overlook— both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy talk about a terrible falling away among God's people.

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pledged herself to J in marriage, and to break her marriage vows would be far from right. She cannot now disannul her obligations to him. . . . I had a personal knowledge of his former relations with his first wife K. J loved K far too well; for she was not worthy of his regard. He did all in his power to help her, and sought in every possible way to retain her as his wife. He could not have done more than he did do. I pleaded with her, and tried to show her the inconsistency of her course, and begged her not to obtain a divorce; but she was determined and willful and stubborn, and would have her own way. While she lived with him, she sought to secure all the money possible from him, but she would not treat him kindly as a wife should treat her husband.

"J did not put his wife away. She left him, and put him away, and married another man. I see nothing in the Scripture that forbids him to marry again in the Lord. He has a right to the affection of a woman." *Selected Messages*, book 2, 339-340.

**4.** The Reform Movement claims to be the loud cry of Revelation 18. But in all honesty, its leaders would have to acknowledge that in its more than seventy years of existence the Reform Movement has been little more than an inaudible whisper in presenting the end-time message. Thus the claim is hard to sustain.

**5.** The Reform Seventh-day Adventist Movement has claimed that it

the Spirit of Prophecy talk about a terrible falling away among God's people:

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." 1 Timothy 4:1.

It will be noted that these are people who live at the end of time, who once walked in the light, but yet they become spiritists by following false doctrine. Sister White says:

"Confederacies will increase in number and power as we draw nearer to the end of time. These confederacies will create opposing influences to the truth, forming new parties of professed believers who will act out their own delusive theories. The apostasy will increase. 'Some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.' Men and women have confederated to oppose the Lord God of heaven, and the church is only half awake to the situation." *Evangelism*, 363.

"The servants of God today encounter difficulties very similar to those against which Nehemiah contended. Human nature is still the same. And Satan is as active, earnest, and persevering now as at any period in the past. Nay, rather, the Word of God declares that his power and enmity increase as we near the close of time. The greatest danger of God's ancient people arose from their inclination to disregard His direct requirements and to follow, instead, their own desires. Such is the sin and danger of His people at the present time. The indolence, backsliding, and

degeneracy in our churches may be traced, in a great degree, to the lax sentiments which have been coming in as a result of conformity to the world. The Sabbath is not as sacredly regarded as it should be. Improper marriages, with their train of evils, have dragged down some of the most useful men to apostasy and ruin." *The Signs of the Times*, January 24, 1884.

How can we ignore the terrible state of the church which we find in counsels concerning God's church? Some Reform leaders have assured me that, while the

tion of almost every kind are in the church. The Spirit of God, which prompts to reproof, is trampled underfoot, while the servants of Satan triumph. God is dishonored, the truth made of none effect." *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 210-211.

6. The Reform Movement has wrongly made the eating of flesh foods a test of fellowship. Sister White does not endorse such a position. While I endorse a vegetarian diet, I cannot go beyond Inspiration:

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## The biggest reason for not joining the Reform Movement is that the creation of a new denomination cannot be validly supported from Inspiration.

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Reform Movement is not without problems, it is not described by the following quotation; yet this is the state of God's church before the close of probation:

"These sighing, crying ones had been holding forth the words of life; they had reproved, counseled, and entreated. Some who had been dishonoring God repented and humbled their hearts before Him. But the glory of the Lord had departed from Israel; although many still continued the forms of religion, His power and presence were lacking.

"In the time when His wrath shall go forth in judgments, these humble, devoted followers of Christ will be distinguished from the rest of the world by their soul anguish, which is expressed in lamentation and weeping, reproofs and warnings. While others try to throw a cloak over the existing evil, and excuse the great wickedness everywhere prevalent, those who have a zeal for God's honor and a love for souls will not hold their peace to obtain favor of any. Their righteous souls are vexed day by day with the unholy works and conversation of the unrighteous. They are powerless to stop the rushing torrent of iniquity, and hence they are filled with grief and alarm. They mourn before God to see religion despised in the very homes of those who have had great light. They lament and afflict their souls because pride, avarice, selfishness, and decep-

"We are not to make the use of flesh food a test of fellowship, but we should consider the influence that professed believers who use flesh foods have over others." *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 404.

7. The Reform Movement claims to be loyal to the counsels of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, but they have sometimes gone beyond the counsel.

These difficulties are relatively small compared with the gigantic cavern between faithful and unfaithful Seventh-day Adventists today. But, nevertheless, it is never safe to misunderstand the words of Scripture. The biggest reason for not joining the Reform Movement is that the creation of a new denomination cannot be validly supported from Inspiration.

Sister White is very clear that the Laodicean message has the power to bring the latter rain to God's faithful people and to prepare them for His kingdom:

"Those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will receive the latter rain, and thus be fitted for translation." *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 187.

"If ever a people were represented by the Laodicean message, it is the people who have had great light, the revelation of the Scriptures, that Sev-

enth-day Adventists have received." *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 18, 193.

8. The Reform Movement has a hierarchical form of governance as strong as the Seventh-day Adventist Church—some would say stronger. One branch has a church manual, while the other has operating policies that are strictly hierarchical and autocratic, leaving little room for the Holy Spirit's ministry. Both branches of the Reform have worldwide administrative General Conferences claiming ecclesiastical authority over all of its members.

Now we must address some of the contemporary issues in the Reform Movement. There are clear evidences that the homogeneity of belief and practice in the Reform Movement is starting to erode:

### Eroding Developments

1. For example, three leaders of the Reform have assured me that they would have no problem in sharing communion with me because they believe that I believe God's truth. Two of them were pastors who, while acknowledging that that was not the position of the church, nevertheless, stated that it was their personal conviction.

2. On a number of occasions in Europe, Reform pastors and laity have translated for us in our meetings. There is no question that many in the Reform are attracted to the strength and power of the messages presented by self-supporting ministers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They also are attracted to the aggressive outreach and the strong presence of self-supporting work around the world, sometimes contrasting it with what they believe is the rather sluggish progress they see in the Reform Movement.

3. It is because of an increasing attraction some of the members and pastors of the Reform churches have for the self-supporting Seventh-day Adventist work, that on the one hand they see a wonderful possibility of harvesting members from the self-supporting ministries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, while on the other hand they are afraid that there is an influence upon their members that is unsettling. For example, at the General Conference session of the German-based Reform held in the Netherlands in July 1997, one of

the agenda items was the relationship to the independent ministries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

4. The Reform Movement has had considerable difficulty in attracting members from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in times of peace, for they began largely as a one-issue church—the question of serving in the army in times of war. They have found a partial answer to that move recently in the divisions caused by rapid apostasy within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

5. There is considerable disquiet, especially with the German-based Reform, on what is seen as an overpowering direction from the leadership of the churches. It is seen by many as wholly contrary to the counsels such as are found in *Testimonies to Ministers* against rule and ruin and kingly power.

6. There is much self-criticism about the weakness of fulfilling the constant calls of the Spirit of Prophecy to establish the educational work, the health-food work and the health work all over the world. There is no question that the Reform Movement has been very weak in these areas and that the majority of their children have had to go to secular institutions, while some have found their way into Seventh-day Adventist denominational institutions. It is interesting to note that at least some Reform leaders express great apprehension about any of the children of the Reform leaders attending self-supporting colleges—maybe because they believe the influence of these Spirit of Prophecy-based institutions would be very strong upon their youth.

7. There is still much concern about the paternalistic approach and what is seen by some as the very rigid rules of some of the Reform leaders. For example, a European, who was a member of the American-based Reform, found a very deeply committed young lady in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He has subsequently married her, but when he was pursuing courtship with her, he was placed under church censure for courting someone who did not belong to the Reform Movement. This led the young man to sever all ties with the Reform Movement, for he could not see the consistency of this position with the counsel of the servant of the Lord.

8. Occasionally, against Reform Movement practices, some Reform Seventh-day Adventist churches have opened their pulpits to self-supporting Seventh-day Adventist preachers. There is no question that changes are coming. Unquestionably, not all of these are pleasing to the Reform leadership, and indeed not all of them are consistent with the practices of faithful Seventh-day Adventists.

9. At least in one case, a member of the German-based Reform has been divorced and remarried while maintaining his membership in a Reformed Church. He was able to convince his local church that the Reform Movement is wrong in their position.

10. Increasing differences are being seen between the European Reformers (especially in Western Europe) and the South American reformers. The latter are significantly stricter than their European counterparts.

11. While for many years condemning the Seventh-day Adventist Church for soliciting offerings on

Seventh-day Adventists have a common test by which our eternal destiny will be sealed. It is hoped that this short report will have answered at least some of the questions I have been asked.

As for the claims that the Reform Movement has made that it represents to the world the fourth angel of Revelation 18, and that its existence is the solution to the Seventh-day Adventist backsliding and apostasy, they cannot be sustained by evidence. Some go so far as to believe that those claims are arrogant and border on blasphemy. The prophecy regarding the true spiritual revival and reformation called for by the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy writings in no way matches the history of the Reform Movement from the time of its organization to the present time—a span of some seventy-three years. Their frequently hostile attitude toward the self-supporting ministries, which have done much research and broken the ground in the doctrinal areas of Seventh-day Adventism, has been unfortunate.

The bottom line that faces “all” Seventh-day Adventists, including both branches of the Reform Movement and

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**There is no question that changes are coming. Unquestionably, not all of these are pleasing to the Reform leadership, and indeed not all of them are consistent with the practices of faithful Seventh-day Adventists.**

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the Sabbath for church building projects on the basis of their understanding of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 307, the American-based Reform now almost routinely solicits funds on the Sabbath for building projects, including funds for the building of their relatively new headquarters in Roanoke, Virginia.

### Conclusion

This has been a very brief review of my experience with this movement. It is not my intention at this time to review in depth the historical and theological problems involved in the claims made by the Reform Movement for its existence. I have endeavored to be conciliatory, in view of the fact that we all as

also self-supporting work as well as conference work, is plain and simple—the latter rain has not been experienced by any group! That in itself should lead to deep soul-searching. We all face the judgment, the outcome of which will qualify those who will give the loud cry to the world. Ultimately, it is my conviction that the faithful in both branches of the now-divided Reform Movement and those in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, be they conference, self-supporting or laity, together with all of God’s people who have been called out of Babylon into the marvelous light of the three angels’ messages, will very soon be in one fold led by the faithful Shepherd—our Lord Jesus Christ. □

# Our Words

Part 2



**W**HEREFORE the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth." 2 Peter 1:10-12.

This admonition and warning was left on record for all who have a knowledge of the truth, and claim to be Seventh-day Adventists. Our probation is of more value to us than all the gold and silver of the world. Man has been given a second trial; but it was at an infinite cost to Heaven that we were granted another opportunity to form characters of which God can approve. Christ united His divinity with humanity. He possessed the

qualities of infinite and finite. In His person all excellence dwells. His sacrifice was our ransom from the slavery of sin. By His atonement we are enabled to sit with Him on His throne, and share His glory. Then shall we, with such possibilities before us, show ourselves incapable of appreciating the heavenly gift? As the recipients of His grace, shall we not do our part by working out our salvation with fear and trembling? It is God that works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Man works, and God works; but God can do nothing without man's cooperation.

We are responsible for the gift of hearing and for the gift of speech. These gifts may be used to the glory of God. Will not those who have ears to hear, hear as for their lives, and hear to a purpose? Take heed and obey. Truly to believe on the Son of God is to have Christ dwelling in the heart, and to dwell

in Christ. Then the Lord is glorified by a pure and holy service.

"The seed is the word of God." Luke 8:11. "He that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit [even the fruit of the lips, in appropriate words to the glory of God], and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." Matthew 13:23. The fruitful hearer is a sincere believer in Jesus Christ. Christ was fruitful because He had that faith which works by love and purifies the soul. A true believer shows that his character has been transformed by living a spiritual life, by living on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. His consecration is shown by the words that fall from his lips and by his zeal in good works. Has the hearing of the Word humbled our pride? Has it wrought repentance

Ellen G. White

in the soul? Do the fruits of righteousness appear in our lives, shown by our holy conversation? Are we bringing forth fruit to the glory of God, or do others see how little we, who profess to believe the truth, reveal it in our lives?

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.” Ezekiel 36:25-28. Will not those thus cleansed manifest it by the words spoken? Will they not be holy in all manner of conversation? Having received the message of truth for this time, will they not reveal this truth “in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? . . . The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. . . . Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” 2 Peter 3:11-12, 10, 13-14.

“Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.” 1 Peter 1:13-17.

Let all who read these words take heed, and ascertain the character of the fruit borne by their words. Is Christ formed within us, the hope of glory?

If so, the society of the frivolous will be avoided. If we put on Christ, and wear His garment of righteousness, we shall certainly reveal this by pure and holy conversation.

There is too little conversation among Christians in regard to the precious chapters in their experience. The

Spirit, is communicated to God’s servants by the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth. This will supply the necessities of all who hunger and thirst after righteousness. But if we make no preparation by self-examination and prayer, we cannot receive this precious oil.

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**The work of God is crippled, and God is dishonored, by the abuse of the talent of speech. Jealousy, evil-surmising, and selfishness are cherished in the heart, and the words show the inward corruption.**

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work of God is crippled, and God is dishonored, by the abuse of the talent of speech. Jealousy, evil-surmising, and selfishness are cherished in the heart, and the words show the inward corruption. Evil thinking and evil speaking are indulged by many who name the name of Christ. These seldom make mention of the goodness, mercy, and love of God, manifested in giving His Son for the world. This He has done for us, and should not our love and gratitude demand expression? Should we not strive to make our words a source of help and encouragement to one another in our Christian experience? If we truly love Christ, we shall glorify Him by our words. Unbelievers are often convicted as they listen to pure words of praise and gratitude to God.

“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” James 1:26-27. Those who do this work must seek strength and wisdom from above. They must be refreshed by drinking from the Stream of Life, that their labors may not become exhausting; for those who are doing God’s service will strive to communicate what they receive. Therefore provision is made for every soul. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.” Zechariah 4:6. The golden oil, representing the Holy

Please read the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah. Great light is given in this chapter. The earnest prayer from the humble, contrite heart will be heard and answered. “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.” Jeremiah 17:7-8. This we have a right to expect if we cooperate with God by consecrating ourselves, soul, body, and spirit, to His keeping. No foolish talking or evil speaking will then be heard. The tongue will utter right things.

The love of God in the heart will lead us to speak gentle words. “Charity [love] suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Shall we not remember this? If the love of God is in our hearts, we shall not think evil, we shall not be easily disturbed, we shall not give loose rein to passion; but we shall show that we are yoked up with Christ, and that the restraining power of His Spirit leads us to speak words that He can approve. The yoke of Christ is the restraint of His Holy Spirit; and when we

become heated by passion, let us say, "No; I have Christ by my side, and I will not make Him ashamed of me by speaking hot, fiery words." Christ's word to all who are connected with Him is: "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 11:29-30.

The education of the speech must not be neglected in our schools. Those who go into society with a desire and a determination to be as Christ commanded them to be, will not condescend to un-Christian conversation. They will seek to represent Christ by their Spirit and words. They will aim to promote the happiness of all with whom they come in contact, by revealing Christ as the sin-pardoner, by taking notice of those who are neglected, by informing the ignorant, encouraging the desponding, comforting the afflicted, supporting the weak; and in these labors of love, they will realize that they have a divine Helper.

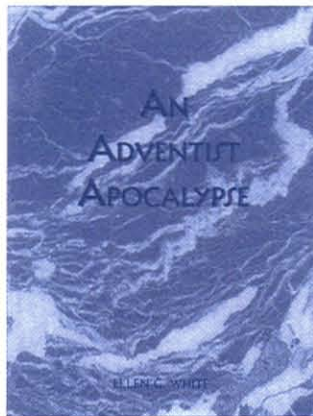
"I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in

his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." Isaiah 63:7-9. This should be the theme of our conversation.

The Lord has rich blessings for all who serve Him in righteousness and truth. Great thoughts, noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth, unselfish purposes, yearnings for purity and holiness, will bear fruit in words that reveal the charac-

ter of the heart-treasure. This is religion. Let us pray, as did David, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer." Psalms 19:14. □

*Review and Herald*, January 25, 1898.



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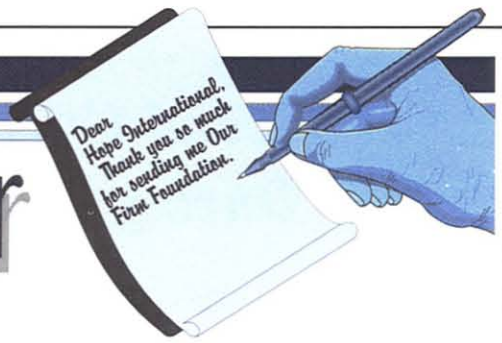


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# Letters to the Editor



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I want to let you know how much I appreciate your work and your magazines! Really, it was joy unspeakable! I have been sharing the books with my Christian friends. The books caused quite a stir as some accepted the truths therein even though some "stiffened their necks."

I really learned something! The works of the inspired E. G. White, if read slowly and prayerfully, are quite touching!

With Christian Love,  
Yours in Christ, *TS, Idaho*

Dear Sir/Madam,

I thank you so much for the *Our Firm Foundation* magazines you have sent me!

I want to assure you that after I read those magazines I came to understand clearly the 1888 message and really see its significance. I believe that we really live in the day where Christ should be our righteousness. These magazines also broadened my understanding of the health message and its significance. Dealing with these messages led me to buy myself a set of *Testimonies for the Church*.

Thank you for everything!  
*MN, Africa*

Dear Sir,

I just want to say thank you for the four Bibles and the tracts you sent me. May God bless you for your kindness, and may the Lord bless you for the work you are doing for Him!

*PS, South Africa*

Brethren in Christ:

This is to acknowledge receipt of the books that you sent me. Glory to Christ Jesus! I am very happy and have recently been going very hard

on them. How I enjoyed the books and the *Our Firm Foundation* magazines! Really, it was joy unspeakable! I have been sharing the books with my Christian friends. The books caused quite a stir as some accepted the truths therein even though some "stiffened their necks."

I really learned something! The works of the inspired E. G. White, if read slowly and prayerfully, are quite touching!

With Christian Love,  
*MD, Zimbabwe*

Dear Staff,

We do enjoy and gain a blessing from each issue of *Our Firm Foundation*. We are living in a grand and awful time—so much trouble going on, and yet we know our Jesus is coming soon! It is our prayer that we all will be found ready when He comes so we can all be together with Him forevermore.

Sincerely,  
*RD, Arizona*

Dear Editor,

I acknowledge with thanks the safe receipt of a Bible, spiritual books, taped messages and *Our Firm Foundation* magazines. I believe the same will go a long way in preparing me and others for the soon coming of Jesus Christ. May the Almighty God continue to shower His blessings upon you and may you continue to shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars as you continue to turn many to righteousness.

*MM, Machakos*

Dear Friends,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! Thank you very much for the assistance you have provided me these last months. I have been receiving your magazine, *Our Firm*

*Foundation*, and it is spiritually rich and lovely.

I am very happy with the counsel which is found in your magazine. It guides, inspires and encourages people very much! I like the study of prophecy and more especially the Ellen White writings.

Yours faithfully,  
*MH, Zambia*

Dear Friends,

I am more than glad to tell you that above all other magazines, I am educated by *Our Firm Foundation*! What a God-inspired magazine!

Unfortunately, I am sad to tell you that I am presently unemployed, hence I can hardly afford a subscription to *Our Firm Foundation*. However, as time and funds permit—God willing I shall subscribe and try also to subscribe for those poor brothers and sisters who cannot afford the magazine for themselves.

I beseech you to try to send me those good magazines!

Again, be notified that those books such as *Final War* that you once sent me were put to good use, and several people have appreciated those books. If possible, please send more copies.

Thank you.  
*OG, Zimbabwe*

Dear Hope International,

What a blessing it is to receive *Our Firm Foundation* monthly! I share the articles with as many people as I can. Often the articles are more spiritual than the Sabbath sermons in our church. The articles are such an inspiration to my work and encourage me to continue searching the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy! Please be encouraged and continue to work, for the night is soon coming.

Sincerely,  
*PL, USA*

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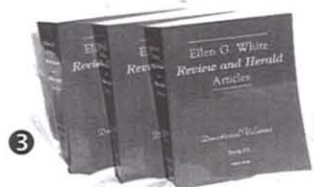
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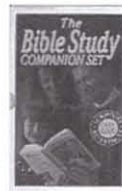
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