

Our Firm Foundation

The Seventh-day Sabbath

Christ Our Righteousness

The Immutable Law of God

The Non-Immortality of the Soul

The Three Angels' Messages

The Sanctuary

Volume 16, Number 11

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**A Time of Probation
for Churches**

A Greater Preparation

September 11, 2001, will go down in American history as the date of one of the greatest of all tragedies for our nation up to this time. America and the world will never be the same again. Two of our own commercial jetliners, hijacked by demon-inspired terrorists, crashed into the World Trade Center's twin towers in Manhattan, New York City. Two other planes were hijacked and crashed as well, one of which crashed into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the United States' Defense Department. The impacts, with their resulting fires, and the collapse of the buildings, brought instant death to thousands of Americans, disintegrating frightened passengers and office workers in flames and rubble—to await the final judgment.

As Americans sat shocked and paralyzed before their television sets, watching the trauma played out in the smoking ruins of the multi-billion-dollar World Trade Center, we were reminded of 1941 and Pearl Harbor, when 2,500 service men and civilians died in the three-hour Japanese attack.

The world is stirred with the spirit of war! From now on there will be no more peaceful moments among the children of men—"Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Luke 21:26.

The powers of darkness are making a last effort to gain possession of the souls of all mankind. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:12.

Listen to Isaiah describe the wickedness of our world today: "For our transgressions are multiplied

before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them; in transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter." Isaiah 59:12-14.

How solemn and unprecedented are the scenes which the remnant Seventh-day Adventist Church will soon pass through! This tragedy is a wake-up call to all Seventh-day Adventist leaders, pastors, and laity, for it has catapulted us another giant step toward the very end of time in this present world. Probation is about to close! What did the angel say?

"I was pointed to the remnant on the earth. The angel said to them, 'Will ye shun the seven last plagues? Will ye go to glory and enjoy all that God has prepared for those who love Him and are willing to suffer for His sake? If so, ye must die that ye may live. **Get ready, get ready, get ready.** Ye must have a greater preparation than ye now have, for the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it. Sacrifice all to God. Lay all upon His altar—self, property, and all, a living sacrifice. *It will take all to enter glory.* Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where no thief can approach or rust corrupt. Ye must be partakers of Christ's sufferings here if ye would be partakers with Him of His glory hereafter.' " ¹

As I write I am reminded of another very important vision of our prophet. It is recorded in *Testimonies*,

vol. 9, 11-17, and was also published in the July 2001 issue of *Our Firm Foundation*. You will find some other sobering statements in the compilation in this issue entitled "What Ellen White Saw a Century Ago."

As I read her words, I cannot help but wonder whether Sister White was shown the destruction of the World Trade Center's twin towers.

Now, dear Seventh-day Adventists, not only are we seeing portentous signs in the world, but also sadly we are seeing them in our beloved church.

We are told by our prophet that "the very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God," ² and that just before probation closes, drums, celebration-type music, and dancing would come into our churches. ³ Also, there would be one great final apostasy, called the Omega, just before the end. ⁴ The fulfillment of these prophecies is now before us.

The words of Jeremiah apply to our Laodicean condition: "My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. . . . For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding; they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." Jeremiah 4:19, 22.

May we hasten to yield our hearts and minds fully to God while the last moments of probation linger. ✨

Ron Spear, Executive Editor

References:

- ¹ *Early Writings*, 66-67, emphasis supplied.
- ² *Selected Messages*, book 1, 48.
- ³ See *ibid.*, book 2, 35-37.
- ⁴ See *ibid.*, book 1, 193-205.

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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4 A Time of Probation for Churches

Bob Jorgensen

Does the Seventh-day Adventist Church still represent God's chosen people?

9 What Ellen White Saw a Century Ago

Ellen G. White

Did God show Sister White the recent tragedies in New York City?

12 The Destiny of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Colin Standish

Eight key questions regarding a vital topic

17 Will the Real Adventist Please Stand Up!

Ron Spear

What one thing is the driving force in your life?

24 Separation From the World

Ellen G. White

"It is safer to be joined to the Lord, and lose the favor and friendship of the world."

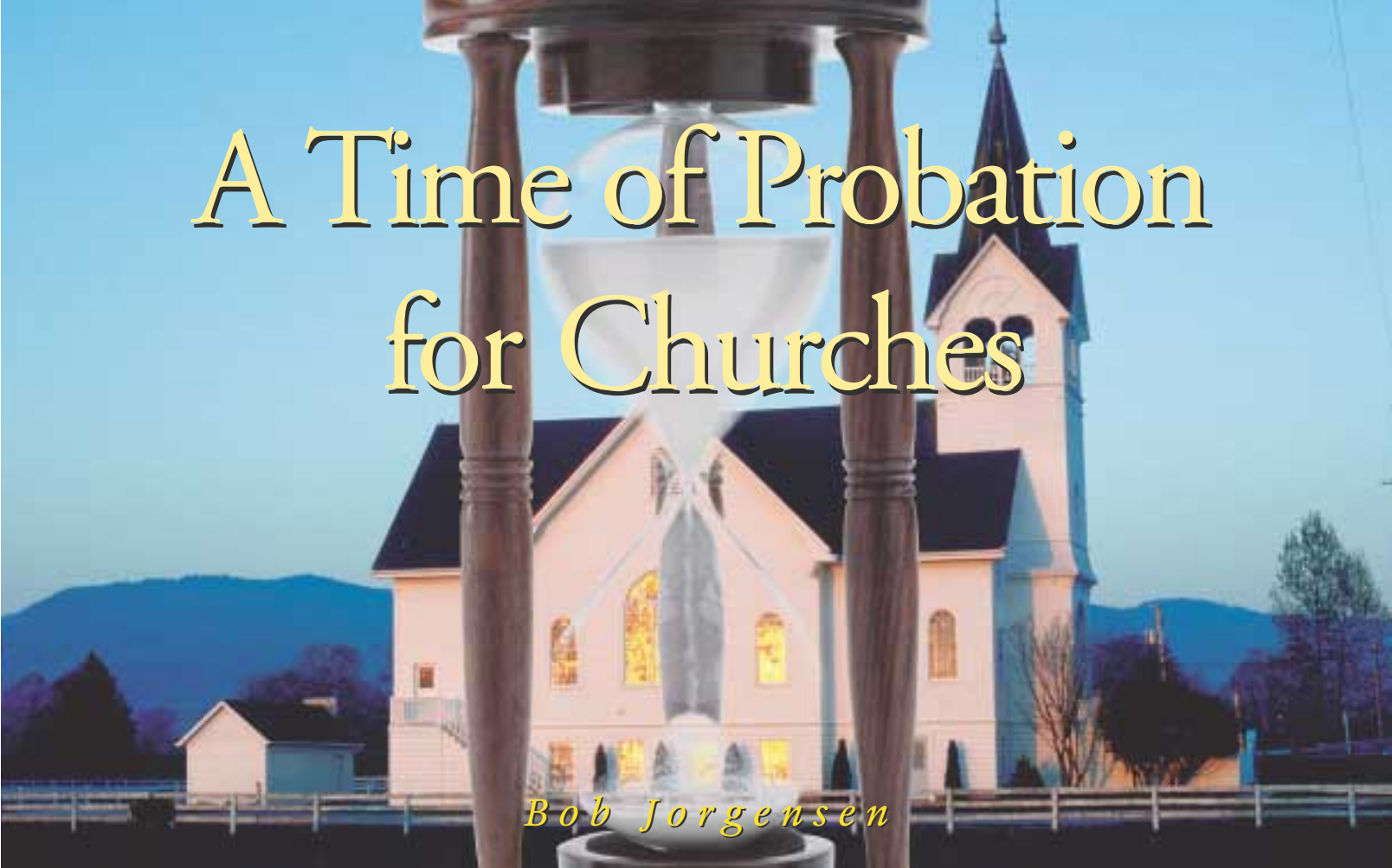
28 Christians, Are We?

Tom Waters

What was the sin of Eli? How can we avoid it?

departments

Defending the Faith	11
The Garden of the Heart	20
News Watch	22
Letters to the Editor	31



A Time of Probation for Churches

Bob Jorgensen

This is the first in a three-part series of articles on the subject of the church. Much misunderstanding exists as to what different groups believe, and which view is correct. This series attempts to set forth answers to these difficulties.

— The Editors

In Seventh-day Adventism there appears to be several directions of thought that have been developing. One of these is the thought that developments of apostasy in the organized conference church have surely reached the point where God has fully spewed the church out of His mouth, and that He has no further use for it. Another view is that no matter how great the apostasy gets in the organized conference church, it will always be God's one and only true church, and that those who determinedly stay with it will eventually be saved. Some of us who have been caught up in the fray are accused of being Judaizers, along with many other unflattering terms, because, though we agree there is great apostasy and worldliness in the

church, we do not agree that the organized church has become Babylon, or that apostasy has caused God to close the door of probation on the organized conference church yet.

Statements have been made that seem to assume that we view the conference leadership as being *the* church. However, in reality the conference leadership is only a *part* of the church—and a small part at that. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has over 12 million members, but only a small fraction of this number are elected officials or employees of the denomination.

The positions and responsibilities of conference leadership could be considered as being a part of the exercise of the gift of “governments.” “Governments” are given for the perfecting of the church, just as are prophecy, teaching, and so forth. But like the other gifts, “governments” can be perverted and misused by those who are in positions of responsibility and leadership. The misuse of such gifts usually results in serious and subtle, yet extensive,

departure and apostasy from God. Yet the misuse of such gifts of the Spirit—even in such a widespread manner—does not automatically cause the rejection by God of the whole church.

In this three-part series we will address several of the many issues relating to this controversy about the church: “The Application of the Vineyard”; “The Close of Probation for Churches”; “The Chosen People and the Fullness of the Time”; “The Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Sealing.”

The Application of the Vineyard

In Matthew 21 is recorded a parable that Jesus told of a vineyard in which a householder set up a vineyard and put husbandmen in charge of it. There were vines in the vineyard that were to be cared for, and fruit to be yielded and harvested. There was a winepress and also a tower. It was walled in with a hedge. In the time of harvest the householder sent servants to receive the fruits of the vineyard. However, the servants were beaten, stoned,

and killed. He sent other servants, and they were treated likewise. He finally sent his son, but he too was killed. Jesus made an application of this parable to the Jewish nation as God's church on earth, and He showed that the ensuing result of rejecting and murdering the Son would be that the kingdom of God would be taken from Israel and given to another group of people.

There are several points that need to be noted carefully. First, in that parable the vineyard represented God's people, or His church.¹ The husbandmen who were left in charge of it were the *leaders* of Israel. The tower was the temple, which was the center of the religious services committed to the nation. In spite of the merchandising and criminal activities going on in the temple it was still claimed by Jesus as belonging, not to the leadership (who were in dark apostasy and rebellion), but rather to His Father. He called it "My Father's house." John 2:16. It was not until a matter of hours before His death that Jesus spoke of the temple as "your house," which was to be left desolate. It was then no longer His Father's house. Yet *it was the Father's house* all through the centuries of dark apostasy and rebellion that preceded those final moments of Christ's ministry and death. In spite of the fact that the husbandmen were in charge of the vineyard and were going contrary to the directions of the master, *it was still the master's vineyard*. Anyone who would say that it belonged to the husbandmen would be taking the side of treason and disloyalty.

The application to Israel is apparent. Though, like an airplane that has been hijacked, the nation was under the leadership and oppression of men in rebellion against God; though at the time of Christ's birth the office of high priest was often gained by fraud, bribery, and murder; yet God claimed the nation as His chosen people, declaring that out of that nation a Light would shine. Those who were seeking the Light were often directed

to that nation. The wise men (who probably had a better understanding than the leaders of Israel) were directed by God first to go to Jerusalem to come in contact with the sacred writings and the temple establishment. After a period of time there, they were directed to go on to Bethlehem.

All of these developments depended upon the existence of a recognized nation and a religious identity in an organized form that God pointed to as His chosen people and His church on earth. We would expect that no one would argue with the assessment given by Inspiration that *at that very time* the Jewish nation had become the agency of Satan to pervert and mislead people from the truth. God

But what made it the last straw? Did God's patience wear out? Was the rebellion getting too close to Him to allow it to continue? Did God just arbitrarily "drop the curtain," as it were, and say, "Enough is enough"? Some other aspects of the fullness of the time will be discussed later, but it must clearly be emphasized here that it was not so much a failure of the patience of God, but rather the loss of ability on the part of Israel that sealed their fate.

When God closed the door and the temple curtain was rent in two, God was saying to the world that Israel had ruined their capability to be of any further value in the development of truth and in the working out of God's plan. By *officially* rejecting Christ and mur-

Inspiration also tells us that at the time of the birth of Christ the height of the deception of sin had been reached—more within Israel than in any other nation.

simply illustrated that He could still fulfill His purpose, in part at least, within the very nation of Israel. Inspiration also tells us that at the time of the birth of Christ the height of the deception of sin had been reached—more within Israel than in any other nation.

We would call attention to another point: The rejection and murder of the servants that were sent did not close probation for the husbandmen and the vineyard. It was the rejection and murder of the Son that finally closed the probation of the Jewish church. It is very important to understand the difference between the rejection of the prophets and the rejection of the Son. Without the rejection of the Son, Israel could conceivably have continued on for many more years rejecting and killing the prophets—yet their probation would still have remained open. However, it was the rejection and murder of the Son that sealed their fate. That was the "last straw," as we sometimes say.

dering Him, they had placed their nation where it was an impossibility for them to develop any more truth. And here every Jew remains who does not accept the Son of God as his Saviour. He must accept Christ as the Messiah in order to progress into an understanding of the New Covenant and the three angels' messages. Much that to us is simple and basic gospel truth is hidden in mystery and darkness to every Jew until he faces the reality of his history and accepts Christ as his Messiah. It is simply a matter of fact that the "organic" function of the human mind of the person and the church that rejects Christ as the Messiah is totally unprepared to understand and participate in the developments of truth that came after A.D. 31.

The fullness of the time here includes the fact that a final, ultimate, testing truth has arrived. It is the time of visitation.² Previously, all other truths pointed to and prepared the way for this development of

truth. In symbols and ceremonies Israel had held the promise of the fullness of time in terms of a final testing truth to arise from within their midst. To have closed their probation previous to the arrival of this final development would have destroyed the whole plan of salvation and given Satan the victory. This will be discussed more fully in the section called "The Chosen People and the Fullness of the Time."

In the light of these considerations, I would like to emphasize that we do not dispute the statement found in *The Desire of Ages*, 232:

"The Sanhedrin had rejected Christ's message and was bent upon His death; therefore Jesus departed

Heaven's purpose was still taking place within Israel.

The Close of Probation for Churches

Recently, there have been discussions in which the idea of a close of probation for churches has been questioned or denied. The idea of a role for the denominated Seventh-day Adventist Church as far as any further usefulness in the development of God's plan, has been rejected by some. Yet, it seems to me that some important statements and considerations are being overlooked.

A concept that is described in the Spirit of Prophecy is that there is an account kept with nations, and when the account, or cup, is full,

cry message is actually an announcement that our country has filled up its cup, which closes its probation. It is when the national Sunday legislation is passed that the limit of God's forbearance will be reached, and national apostasy will be followed by national ruin. See such statements as the following: "As the approach of the Roman armies was a sign to the disciples of the impending destruction of Jerusalem, so may this apostasy be a sign to us that the limit of God's forbearance is reached, that the measure of our nation's iniquity is full, and that the angel of mercy is about to take her flight, never to return."³

Let us consider the experience of Babylon in the time of Belshazzar in which the words were written by the hand of an unseen Watcher on the walls of the palace in burning letters of fire: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." Daniel 5:27. This meant simply that Babylon's probation had come to an end, and that the scepter of power had passed to another nation. When probation for a nation comes to an end, when its cup of iniquity has been filled, it simply means that God withdraws His protection, favor, and blessing, and that nation is left to reap the results of their sin and apostasy. This usually takes the form of destruction or subjugation to another nation.

We are also told that an account (time of probation) is kept with families⁴ and with individuals. An account is kept with cities as well. It was when the men of Sodom tried to rape the angels who visited their city that their cup was filled, and then judgments came upon them. Their probation had closed.⁵

Israel had a standing as a nation and also as a church. Certainly we would not question whether or not they experienced a close of probation as a nation. They are referred to as a nation divorced from God.⁶ Interestingly, and significantly, they are referred to also as a nation unchurched. "It was not the hand of the priest that rent from top to bottom the gorgeous veil that

Israel had a standing as a nation and also as a church.

Certainly we would not question whether or not they experienced a close of probation as a nation.

from Jerusalem, from the priests, the temple, the religious leaders, the people who had been instructed in the law, and turned to another class to proclaim His message, and to gather out those who should carry the gospel to all nations."

Rather, such statements actually serve to illustrate the very emphasis that we are making in this response—namely, that when the majority of the leadership rejects the important truths, God works with other classes within His church. In ancient Israel when the ecclesiastical authorities rejected Jesus, He turned to *another class*—not to another nation or another group. It was not at this time that the gospel was given to the Gentiles, but rather to another class of Israel. Even when talking to non-Israelites He emphasized that "salvation is of the Jews." John 4:22. He did not mean by this that the *leadership* had the clearest light from Heaven, or that they were even walking in the truth—rather, He was confirming that the oracles of truth, and the development of

then its probationary time comes to an end, and judgments take place. One of the many places where this concept is discussed is in the noted section of *Testimonies*, vol. 5, that deals with the sealing of God's people. This section, though written prior to 1898, still deserves some very careful analysis. It gives a last-day application of a prophecy that was written in Old Testament times. On page 208 we find this thought: "With unerring accuracy the Infinite One still keeps an account with all nations. While His mercy is tendered with calls to repentance, this account will remain open; but when the figures reach a certain amount which God has fixed, the ministry of His wrath commences. The account is closed. Divine patience ceases. There is no more pleading of mercy in their behalf."

This idea of an account (time of probation) which is maintained for nations is also discussed in many other passages—such as in *The Great Controversy*, 627. We should be familiar with the fact that the loud

divided the holy from the Most Holy Place. It was the hand of God. When Christ cried out, 'It is finished,' the Holy Watcher that was an unseen guest at Belshazzar's feast pronounced the Jewish nation to be a nation unchurched. The same hand that traced on the wall the characters that recorded Belshazzar's doom and the end of the Babylonian kingdom, rent the veil of the temple from top to bottom, opening a new and living way for all, high and low, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile. From henceforth people might come to God without priest or ruler."⁷

When Christ was crucified, the Jewish nation became unchurched—meaning that it had lost its status as a church in God's eyes. It was no longer His church—His chosen agency for the development of truth—His special depository for the oracles. A new movement now became God's visible church. It has always been this way. When God closes the probation of a church, He points people to a new movement as His church. Thus, when probation closed for the Jewish church at the crucifixion of Christ, immediately the attention of true seekers of truth began to be directed to the new apostolic church which rapidly gained prominence through the Divine—the Holy Spirit—working and intervening.

Thus it was with the Protestant churches in 1844. By rejecting the proclamation of the first angel's message, they closed and sealed their destiny. God at that very time was raising up a new movement, drawing attention to it as the new depository of truth and the oracles of God. The ministry of a prophet marked God's designation of the new movement as being His chosen people—the visible church of God on earth. This movement is what became known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Interestingly, we are clearly told that the Seventh-day Adventist Church will be "weighed in the balance"—which means that it definitely has a probationary status and will come to a time when the account will be settled. Notice how

the statement reads: "In the balances of the sanctuary the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to be weighed. She will be judged by the privileges and advantages that she has had. If her spiritual experience does not correspond to the advantages that Christ, at infinite cost, has bestowed on her, if the blessings conferred have not qualified her to do the work entrusted to her, on her will be pronounced the sentence: 'Found wanting.' By the light bestowed, the opportunities given, will she be judged."⁸ This was written in 1903, several years after 1898, but it repeats a theme that was emphasized in an earlier period when the commentary on the sealing was published in *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 207–216.

described in Ezekiel 9. Perhaps it will help us see that just as Israel was preserved, in spite of rebellion and apostasy, to bring forth the Messiah, so the Seventh-day Adventist Church was brought into existence and will be preserved, in spite of apostasy and rebellion, to initiate the sealing of God's faithful people. Until that sealing commences, until the separating of the wheat and tares takes place, we are unwarranted in concluding that the probation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has closed. And let us keep in mind that the movement that finally emerges following the embattled Seventh-day Adventist Church is a purified movement—the first in history ever to be free of any tares.

Let us keep in mind that the movement that finally emerges following the embattled Seventh-day Adventist Church is a purified movement—the first in history ever to be free of any tares.

That same passage in the *Testimonies*, speaks of a time of visitation (a reminder of Israel's experience as God's church and chosen nation), of rapidly swelling figures (indicating an account, a time of probation, a filling up of the cup), and signs of approaching ruin. It speaks of the little company in the church when the danger and depression of the church is the greatest. It speaks of a time when God's presence has left the church, and of overflowing worldliness throughout the membership of the church. At this time the sealing will commence in the church, followed by the beings with slaughtering weapons carrying out the judgments of God. Let us remember that the sealing renders a person's destiny secure for all eternity.

In the section on the sealing and the Seventh-day Adventist Church we will look more fully at the characteristics of what is taking place in the church in the time

Any new group that attempts to supersede the Seventh-day Adventist Church and yet still contains wheat and tares together, would simply perpetuate apostasy, rebellion, and would undoubtedly arrive at further depths of apostasy than what we already have—but in a shorter length of time. In fact, it would have to either totally disqualify the whole Advent movement since 1844, or else disqualify itself, since all it would be doing is repeating the accomplishments of the Advent movement previously. Furthermore, to supersede the Advent movement of 1844–2001 it would need to provide similar, if not greater, credentials in terms of the ministry of prophecy, of providential interpositions, and compel worldwide recognition on a greater scale than that of the Advent awakening of the 1840s—which we have been told was the purest and greatest since Pentecost.⁹

Many statements clearly refer to a probationary status for the Seventh-

day Adventist Church, and the possibility of filling up its account. See for example in *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 529: "It is time that we were closely examining our hearts to see whether or not we are in the faith and in the love of God. If there is not an awakening among us who have had so great light and so many privileges, we shall sink to ruin and our fate will be worse than that of Chorazin and Bethsaida; 'for,' as Christ said of those cities, 'if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.' Matthew 11:21."

Also see *Testimonies*, vol. 8, 67: "Jerusalem is a representation of what the church will be if it refuses to walk in the light that God has given. Jerusalem was favored of God as the depository of sacred trusts. But her people perverted the truth, and despised all entreaties and warnings. They would not respect His counsels. The temple courts were polluted with merchandise and robbery. Selfishness and love of mammon, envy and strife, were cherished. Everyone sought for gain from his quarter. Christ turned from

them, saying: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,' how can I give thee up? 'How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' Matthew 23:37."

There are some today who feel that they are God's new movement, that they have a "present truth" — that they are now His church, that supersedes the Seventh-day Adventist Church, that they are the pure and true remnant who are giving the loud cry and experiencing the power of the latter rain. It would seem that we need to more earnestly study the passage found in *Early Writings* that clearly describes what qualifies as "present truth."¹⁰ In *Life Sketches*, 196, we have been told that we need not fear for the future unless we forget how the Lord has led, and His teaching, in our past history.

Surely, if we are to be honest with ourselves, we must acknowledge that there is as much or more confusion among all the various ministries, home churches, and independent groups as is to be found in the organized church. I have never heard so many strange teachings and winds of doctrine

being promoted in the organized church as are now taking place in the other channels. There is much ignorance regarding how the Lord has led, and what the pillars of truth have been. Is it not presumptuous for us to feel or claim that probation has now closed for the Seventh-day Adventist (organized) Church, and that our group or our ministry is the superseding representative of the true remnant church? Surely, we must study more diligently and take a more careful survey of all aspects before making any such bold assumptions. ✨

Next month in part two of this series we will cover the topic of "The Chosen People and the Fullness of the Time."

References:

- ¹ See *Prophets and Kings*, 15-22.
- ² See *The Desire of Ages*, 235, and many other similar references.
- ³ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 451. See also *Signs of the Times*, June 12, 1893; and so forth.
- ⁴ See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 165; *Signs of the Times*, September 11, 1884; and so forth.
- ⁵ See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 159.
- ⁶ See *The Acts of the Apostles*, 145.
- ⁷ *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, 1109.
- ⁸ *Testimonies*, vol. 8, 247.
- ⁹ See *The Great Controversy*, 401.
- ¹⁰ *Early Writings*, 63.

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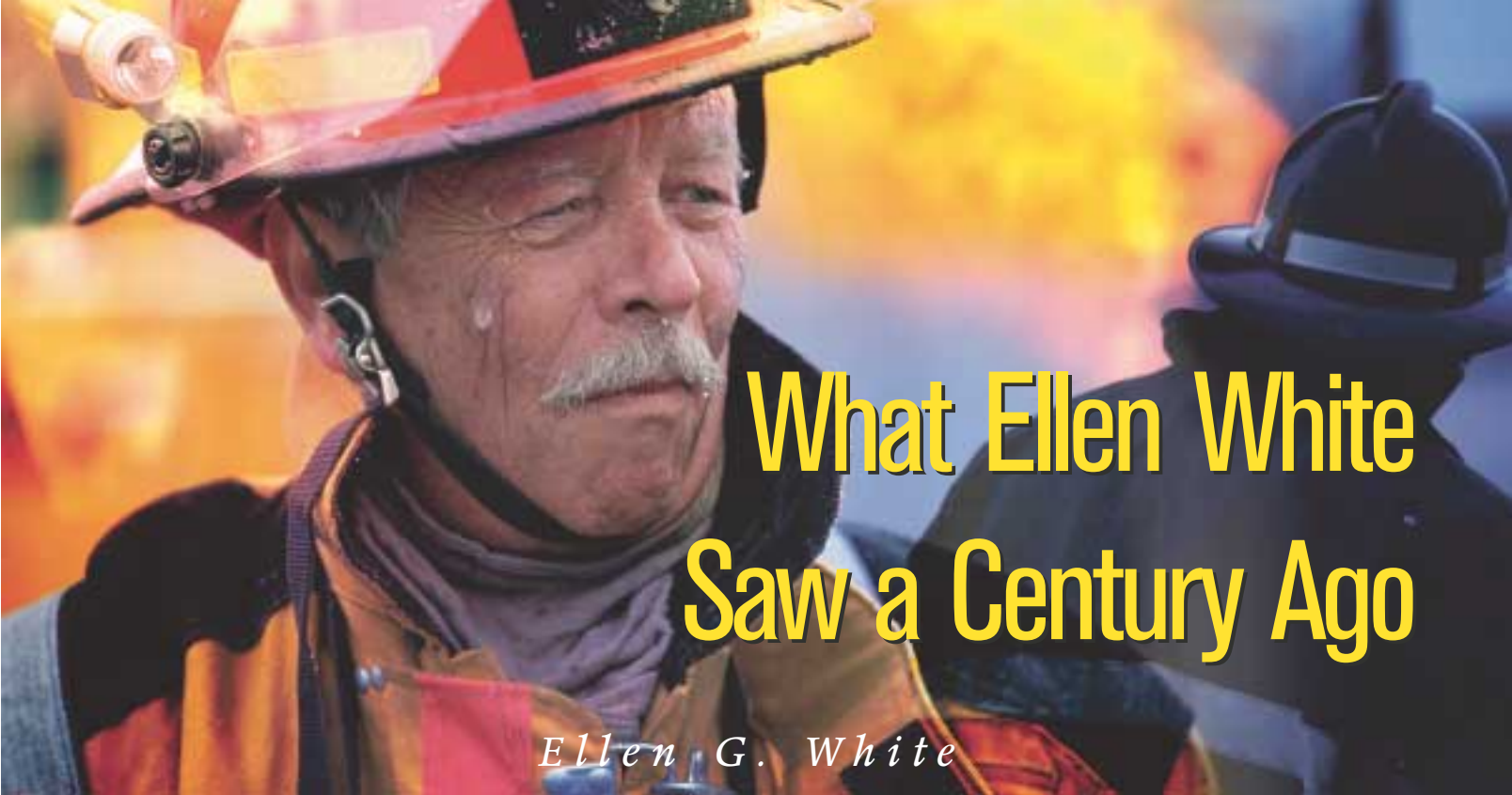
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Our Firm Foundation



What Ellen White Saw a Century Ago

Ellen G. White

In the light of the recent terrorist attacks in the United States, how solemn are the words of the Lord's messenger written a century ago! We share with our readers this sampling of what she recorded, sent to us by Bob Jorgensen. We encourage each one to prayerfully study to know our duty for the hour in which we are living.

The Editors

In the night I was, I thought, in a room but not in my own house. I was in a city, where I knew not, and I heard explosion after explosion. I rose up quickly in bed, and saw from my window *large balls of fire*. Jetting out were sparks, in the form of arrows, and buildings were being consumed, and *in a very few minutes the entire block of buildings was falling and the screeching and mournful groans came distinctly to my ears*. I cried out, in my raised position, to learn what was happening: Where am I? And where are our family circle? Then I awoke. But I could not tell where I was for I was in another place than home. I said, Oh Lord, where am I and what shall I do? It was a voice that spoke: "Be not afraid. Nothing shall harm you."¹

I have seen the most costly structures in buildings erected and supposed to be

*fireproof. And just as Sodom perished in the flames of God's vengeance, so will these proud structures become ashes. . . . The flattering monuments of men's greatness will be crumbled in the dust, even before the last great destruction comes upon the world.*²

The destruction by fire of the stately buildings supposed to be fireproof is *an illustration of how in a short time earth's architecture will lie in ruins*.³

Men will continue to erect expensive buildings, costing millions of money; special attention will be called to their architectural beauty, and the firmness and solidity with which they are constructed; but the *Lord has instructed me that despite the unusual firmness and expensive display, these buildings will share the fate of the temple in Jerusalem*.⁴

New York City

His message must be given in Greater New York. The people must be shown how it is possible for God, by a touch of His hand, to destroy the property they have gathered together against the last great day.⁵

I have no light in particular in regard to what is coming on New

York, only that I know that one day the *great buildings there will be thrown down* by the turning and overturning of God's power. . . . *Death will come in all places. This is why I am so anxious for our cities to be warned*.⁶

On one occasion, when in New York City, I was in the night season called upon to behold *buildings rising story after story toward heaven*. These buildings were warranted to be fireproof, and *they were erected to glorify their owners and builders*. . . .

The scene that next passed before me was an alarm of fire. Men looked at the lofty and supposedly fireproof buildings and said: "They are perfectly safe." But these buildings were consumed as if made of pitch. The fire engines could do nothing to stay the destruction. The firemen were unable to operate the engines.⁷

Other Statements

The ungodly cities of our world are to be swept away by the besom of destruction. In the calamities that are now befalling *immense buildings* and large portions of cities, God is showing us what will come upon the whole earth. He has told us, "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and

putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it [the coming of the Son of man] is near, even at the doors." Matthew 24:32-33.⁸

Already His judgments have begun to fall upon the inhabitants of the land. He can touch the largest so-called fireproof buildings, and in *two or three hours* they are as nothingness, burned to the ground.⁹

Other Things Ellen White Said

O that God's people had a sense of the impending destruction of *thousands of cities*, now almost given to idolatry.¹⁰

We shall see troubles on all sides. *Thousands of ships will be*

money getting, the whirl of excitement and pleasure seeking, the thirst for display, the luxury and extravagance, all are forces that, with the great masses of mankind, are turning the mind from life's true purpose. They are opening the door to a thousand evils. Upon the youth they have almost irresistible power.¹²

But ere long there will be such strife and confusion in the cities, that those who wish to leave them will not be able. We must be preparing for these issues. This is the light that is given me.¹³

The work of the people of God is to prepare for the events of the future, which will soon come upon them with blinding force. In the

destroyer. His temptations are leading multitudes to ruin. Intemperance dethrones reason; sensual indulgence, strife, and bloodshed follow. *Satan delights in war, for it excites the worst passions of the soul and then sweeps into eternity its victims steeped in vice and blood. It is his object to incite the nations to war against one another*, for he can thus divert the minds of the people from the work of preparation to stand in the day of God.

Satan works through the elements also to garner his harvest of unprepared souls. He has studied the secrets of the laboratories of nature, and he uses all his power to control the elements as far as God allows. . . .

While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, *he will bring disease and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation*. Even now he is at work. *In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms*, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous. Destruction will be upon both man and beast.¹⁶ ❀

There will be such strife and confusion in the cities, that those who wish to leave them will not be able. We must be preparing for these issues.

hurled into the depths of the sea. Navies will go down, and human lives will be sacrificed by millions. Fires will break out unexpectedly, and no human effort will be able to quench them. The palaces of earth will be swept away in the fury of the flames. *Disasters by rail will become more and more frequent; confusion, collision, and death without a moment's warning will occur on the great lines of travel.* The end is near, probation is closing. Oh, let us seek God while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near!¹¹

The world over, cities are becoming hotbeds of vice. On every hand are the sights and sounds of evil. Everywhere are enticements to sensuality and dissipation. The tide of corruption and crime is continually swelling. Every day brings the record of violence—robberies, murders, suicides, and crimes unnamable.

Life in the cities is false and artificial. The intense passion for

world gigantic monopolies will be formed. Men will bind themselves together in unions that will wrap them in the folds of the enemy. A few men will combine to grasp all the means to be obtained in certain lines of business. Trades unions will be formed, and those who refuse to join these unions will be marked men.¹⁴

There are not many, even among educators and statesmen, who comprehend the causes that underlie the present state of society. Those who hold the reins of government are not able to solve the problem of moral corruption, poverty, pauperism, and increasing crime. They are struggling in vain to place business operations on a more secure basis.¹⁵

Through spiritualism, Satan appears as a benefactor of the race, healing the diseases of the people, and professing to present a new and more exalted system of religious faith; but at the same time he works as a

References:

- ¹ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 11, 361. All emphasis has been added by the compiler. Note: According to sources at the Ellen G. White Estate, the correct wording here is "explosion after explosion," not "expression after expression," which is a transcription error.
- ² *Selected Messages*, book 3, 418-419.
- ³ *This Day With God*, 152.
- ⁴ *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, 1098.
- ⁵ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 3, 311.
- ⁶ *Review and Herald*, July 5, 1906.
- ⁷ *Testimonies*, vol. 9, 12-13.
- ⁸ *Counsels on Health*, 268.
- ⁹ *The Publishing Ministry*, 190.
- ¹⁰ *Evangelism*, 29.
- ¹¹ *Messages to Young People*, 89-90.
- ¹² *Country Living*, 5-6.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 11.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.
- ¹⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 9, 13.
- ¹⁶ *The Great Controversy*, 589-590.

What Was Accomplished at the Cross?

Holy Bible

How to mark your Bible and be ready to share your faith

“Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”
1 Peter 3:15. We need to be able to give an answer for our faith. Marking your Bible can give you the edge you need. It takes work, but the rewards are worth all the effort.

We pray that you will be blessed by these studies. As you mark them, may you be encouraged to spend more time in God’s Word and to search out the hidden things of God. Always be sure to look for opportunities to share them with others.

The Editors

Bible Marking Directions

- On a blank page in the front or back of your Bible, write the study title, the code, and the first reference. This month’s entry would appear as follows: *What Was Accomplished at the Cross? (WAC) Romans 5:10.*

- Turn to the first verse and write the code, the comment (if you wish to use the comments), and the next reference beside it. If the comment is long, you can write it at the top or bottom of the page, with an asterisk or the code of the study to refer you to it.

- Turn to the next text and repeat the process until you come to the end. Beside the last text, write the study code and “End.”

- Go through the study to check for broken links.

- Share the study with someone!

What did Jesus accomplish by His death on the cross? He paid the price for our sins, didn’t He? Yes, but that is just a superficial answer. Over a dozen things were accomplished by His death. While this study does not assume to cover all of them, we pray you will be blessed as you study each of the following points and ask the Lord what impact it should have on your life.

Romans 5:10—We were reconciled to God.

Hebrews 2:13—We are brought back to our Father’s house.

Zechariah 13:7—God showed how much He abhors sin.

Ephesians 1:7—Jesus earned the right to forgive our sins. See also Hebrews 9:22.

1 John 1:7—To obtain forgiveness, we must walk in the light.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15—He gave us the choice to serve Him out of love for Him.

Romans 5:6-9—He took our place and paid the penalty of the second death that we deserve.

John 17:3-4—Jesus came to show us His Father. He justified God, His laws, and His government, before the whole universe.

Philippians 2:6-8—He demonstrated that the Godhead was

humble and willing to serve.

Isaiah 53:3-5—He proved that God loves us so much that He was willing to endure anything.

Hebrews 5:8—He demonstrated obedience to the point of death.

Luke 23:29-31—Those who do not accept Jesus’ death for their sins will experience hell and the second death. See Revelation 20:13-15.

Matthew 5:17-18—He fulfilled the demands of the law, thereby vindicating the law.

Psalms 85:10—He demonstrated the righteousness and mercy of God.

John 13:1—He loved us more than He loved Himself.

Revelation 5:8-9—Don’t you want to join the redeemed in praising Jesus for what He has shown us by His death?

Revelation 7:9-10—You can if you choose.

For more information on Bible marking, or for a greater selection of studies, go to <http://www.biblemarking.com> or refer to “Mark Your Bible!” in the August 2001 issue of *Our Firm Foundation*.

The Destiny of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Colin Standish

A few months ago, we asked the question, “Is it time for a new denomination?”¹ Our conclusion was: No, in spite of our insubordination as a people, it is not God’s plan for us to organize the true and faithful Seventh-day Adventists into a new organization.

We believe that a thorough study of the words of Inspiration leads to the conclusion that God will purify His church and prepare His people for translation by the sifting and shaking process.

Experience Not a Safe Guide

We must never make crucial decisions solely on the basis of what we observe or what we experience. Two personal experiences have convinced me of the importance of holding to the Word alone:

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, I heard evangelists boldly thunder that Communism would not be a major player in end-time events because Revelation 13 allowed for only two superpowers at the end of

time—the Papacy and America. But when Communism engulfed almost half the population of the world, our evangelists lost their nerve and ceased preaching this message. Yet in 1980 I was impressed to preach this message once again, because I believed the Word of God which “faileth not” — though I could see no evidence of the collapse of Communism. But, as you know, my faith in the Word has since been wholly validated.

Then as we came to the end of the 1980s, the media was ignited by the news that Saddam Hussein of Iraq was planning to rebuild Babylon. But, according to Jeremiah 51:61–62, Babylon will never be rebuilt. I began to preach that Hussein would never achieve his goal—little knowing that the Gulf War would end his dream.

Looking at the state of our beloved church, we see no way for its purification and triumph. Human wisdom dictates that the rampaging decline in the teaching of present truth will be followed by yet deeper

apostasy. Such wisdom would also forecast that the worldliness and wickedness so prevalent in our church today will continue to erode every fiber of morality for which the Seventh-day Adventist movement once stood.

However, we pay scant attention to what human wisdom dictates, for we are men and women of the Book. We demand a plain “Thus saith the Lord.” From inspired sources, we find no basis for forming a new denomination. Rather, we see the angels hard at work, separating the wheat from the tares, and sifting and shaking the house of Israel. Fiery trials and winds of strife will blow away every speck of chaff. Only the pure grain will remain in God’s sieve—the church—that He will have perfectly purified.

Key Questions

I wish to present eight questions that I believe hold the key to the destiny of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination:

1. *Is there still a faithful remnant within the Seventh-day Adventist Church?*

God has always had a faithful remnant. Sometimes we say that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church because its members are the remnant. However, this is a false premise. The remnant are those who do not engage in iniquity (see Zephaniah 3:13), and those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. See Revelation 12:17. They are not the remnant of the *world*, but the remnant of God's *church*.

"Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." Isaiah 1:9. (See Romans 9:27-29 for a New Testament application of Isaiah's prophecy.) We—the members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—would long have been left to our rebellion had it not been for the faithful remnant in the church.

Ellen White tells us that the acceptance of the wine of Babylon would "convert the church into Babylon."² This wine, of course, is the exaltation of Sunday over the true Sabbath and the immortality of the soul, along with related heresies. Sister White makes it clear that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not Babylon because it does not embrace these errors.

It therefore stands to reason that if the worldwide body were ever to endorse Sunday sacredness or natural immortality—or even to make these beliefs optional, as the Worldwide Church of God recently did with the Sabbath—this would be an official sellout to Babylon, and would doubtless require the faithful to leave. Because the church has not taken this step—either in practice, or by the vote of a worldwide General Conference—one cannot claim inspired support for the idea that it is now time to abandon corporate Adventism and start a new organization.

We cannot deny the widespread wickedness so evident in God's church; yet there is still a remnant

of godly leaders, ministers, workers, and laity who give evidence of their unwavering loyalty to God and to His truth. Let me share a couple of statements from Inspiration: "You will take passages in the *Testimonies* that speak of the close of probation, of the shaking among God's people, and you will talk of a coming out from this people of a purer, holier people that will arise. Now all this pleases the enemy. We should not needlessly take a course that will

"Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful

When anyone is drawing apart from the organized body of God's commandment-keeping people . . . then you may know that God is not leading him.

make differences or create dissension."³ "When anyone is drawing apart from the organized body of God's commandment-keeping people, when he begins to weigh the church in his human scales and begins to pronounce judgment against them, then you may know that God is not leading him."⁴ Yes, God still has a faithful remnant within the Seventh-day Adventist Church structure.

2. *Is the Seventh-day Adventist Church still the fold of God?*

The servant of the Lord clearly declares that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's fold:

"The church on earth is greatly beloved by God. It is the fold provided for the sheep of His pasture."⁵

While God has provided the church as a fold for His sheep, we must sadly recognize that wolves—false shepherds—have come over the wall and have scattered the sheep and driven some of them out. Those who are faithful do not lose their salvation if they are wrongfully cast out of the fold, for Christ will not forget who His faithful sheep are. The church is still the fold of God, and He has promised to bring the faithful back into the fold:

and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD." Jeremiah 23:1-4; see also Ezekiel 34:12-14.

Yes, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is still the fold of God.

3. *In light of the apostasy existing in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, is it still the church militant?*

Some would have us believe that the church cannot be the church militant if open sin is allowed to exist uncorrected. However, let us consider the Biblical record. Israel remained God's chosen people and the depository of truth throughout centuries of the most grotesque apostasy—including idolatry, human sacrifices, and much more. By Jesus' time the spirit of rebellion and apostasy was rooted even more deeply; yet Christ still declared to the Samaritan woman: "Salvation is of the Jews." John 4:22. Despite incredible corruption in the temple precincts, Jesus still called the temple "My Father's house." John 2:16. He likewise stated to the Jewish leaders in the parable of the wicked husbandmen: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits

thereof." Matthew 21:43. You cannot take from someone what they no longer possess.

Sister White says: "Has God no living church? He has a church, but it is the church militant, not the church triumphant."⁶ Later on in the same chapter she describes some of the uncorrected apostate conditions existing within the church militant: "False doctrine is one of the satanic influences that work in the church, and brings into it those who are unconverted in heart. . . . Instead of the unity that should exist among believers, there is disunion. . . . Men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves."⁷ How does God then regard the church? "Although there are evils existing in the church, and will be until the end of the world, the

Yet we are promised: "The work is soon to close. The members of the church militant who have proved faithful will become the church triumphant."¹⁰

Yes, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is still the church militant.

4. *Is the Laodicean message able to prepare a people for the kingdom of heaven?*

When we review the Laodicean message, which has primary application to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, there is no question that the church is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Revelation 3:17.

Yet in His great love God gives the antidote: "Gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed,

more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." Hebrews 12:27.

This shaking is frighteningly thorough: "Soon everything that can be shaken will be shaken, that those things that cannot be shaken may remain."¹²

The heresies that come into the church cause the shaking:

"God will arouse His people; if other means fail, heresies will come in among them, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat."¹³

"I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen, and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this will cause a shaking among God's people."¹⁴

A large proportion of God's professed people will be swept out of the church: "When the law of God is made void the church will be sifted by fiery trials, and a larger proportion than we now anticipate, will give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils."¹⁵

Who will be shaken out?—"The careless and indifferent, who did not join with those who prized victory and salvation enough to perseveringly plead and agonize for it, did not obtain it."¹⁶

The angels of God perform the sifting. If humans were to take it upon themselves to call those whom they believed to be faithful out of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, surely they would make many mistakes.

Yes, the shaking and sifting will purify a people unto the Lord.

6. *Are the faithful sifted out of the church while the wicked stay in?*

"For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a

God will arouse His people; if other means fail, heresies will come in among them, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat.

church in these last days is to be the light of the world that is polluted and demoralized by sin. The church, enfeebled and defective, needing to be reprov'd, warn'd, and counseled, is the only object upon earth upon which Christ bestows His supreme regard."⁸

"Let everyone who is seeking to live a Christian life, remember that the church militant is not the church triumphant. Those who are carnally minded will be found in the church. . . . It may be that in the church there are those who are cold, proud, haughty, and un-Christian, but you need not associate with this class. There are many who are warm-hearted, who are self-denying, self-sacrificing, who would, were it required, lay down their lives to save souls. Jesus saw the bad and the good in church relationship, and said, 'Let both grow together until the harvest.' Matthew 13:30."⁹

The church militant will be defective until the close of probation.

and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and . . . eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." Verses 18–19.

In spite of the threat to spew us out of His mouth, Jesus is still knocking at the door of our hearts. See verse 20.

If God's people accept the Laodicean message, they will be taken to heaven: "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."¹¹

Yes, the Laodicean message will purify a people to be translated to heaven.

5. *Will the shaking and the sifting purify God's church?*

The book of Hebrews tells us that God's church will be terribly shaken: "And this word, Yet once

sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." Amos 9:9.

The servant of the Lord says: "The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while *the sinners in Zion will be sifted out*—the chaff separated from the precious wheat."¹⁷

Note that the chaff and tares—or the wicked and unfaithful—are sifted out, while not one grain of wheat falls to the ground. The Bible is very plain that at the end of time the shaking will drive out the wicked as God cleanses His church, but the faithful will remain in Jerusalem: "And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning." Isaiah 4:3–4.

It is also noted that while the terrible judgments of God are poured out upon the unfaithful in His church, the faithful are still in Jerusalem, even when the glory of the Lord has departed. See Ezekiel 9:3–5.

The Spirit of Prophecy is very clear that the end-time shaking will remove the apostate majority from professed Adventism:

"The shaking of God blows away multitudes like dry leaves. Prosperity multiplies a mass of professors. Adversity purges them out of the church. As a class, their spirits are not steadfast with God. They go out from us because they are not of us; for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word, many are offended."¹⁸

"As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition."¹⁹

"At the eleventh hour the Lord will gather a company out of the world to serve Him. There will be a converted ministry. Those who have

had privileges and opportunities to become intelligent in regard to the truth, and yet who continue to counterwork the work God would have accomplished, will be purged out."²⁰

Thus, unlike the first five questions, this question must be answered with an emphatic, NO—the faithful are not sifted out while the wicked remain in the church.

7. Is the Seventh-day Adventist Church still the depositary of God's truth?

"God is leading out a people. He has a chosen people, a church on the earth, whom He has made the depositaries of His law. He has committed to them sacred trust and eternal truth to be given to the world. He would reprove and correct them."²¹

Just as ancient Israel was the depositary of the law, and truth could be found in the Jewish faith, so it is true today in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

"God has called His church, as He called ancient Israel, to stand as a light in the earth. By the mighty cleaver of truth—the messages of the first, second, and third angels—He has separated a people from the churches and from the world, to bring them into a sacred nearness to Himself. He has made them the depositaries of His law, and has committed to them the great truths of prophecy for this time. Like the holy oracles committed to ancient Israel, these are a sacred trust to be communicated to the world."²²

Just as ancient Israel was the depositary of the law, and truth could be found in the Jewish faith, so it is true today in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Yes, saving truth can still be found in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

8. Is the call out of Babylon a call to leave the SDA Church?

"God has a church, a chosen people; and could all see as I have seen how closely Christ identifies Himself with His people, no such message would be heard as the one that denounces the church as Babylon."²³

"Again I say, The Lord hath not spoken by any messenger who calls the church that keeps the commandments of God, Babylon. True, there are tares with the wheat; but Christ said He would send His angels to first gather the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into the garner. I know that the Lord loves His church. It is not to be disorganized or broken up into independent atoms. There is not the least consistency in this; there is not the least evidence that such a thing will be. Those who shall heed this false message and try to leaven

others will be deceived and prepared to receive advanced delusions, and they will come to nought."²⁴

"We see the unbelief, and the stout resistance of some who have had great light, and although evidence has been piled upon evidence, they have kept themselves in stubborn resistance. The Lord has sent messages of warning and entreaty, messages of reproof and rebuke, and they have not been in vain. But we have never had a message that the Lord would disorganize the church. We have never had the prophecy concerning Babylon applied to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, or been informed that the 'loud cry' consisted in calling God's people to come out of her; for this is not God's plan concerning Israel."²⁵

"My brother, I learn that you are taking the position that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is Babylon, and that all that would be saved

must come out of her. You are not the only man the devil has deceived in this matter. For the last forty years, one man after another has arisen, claiming that the Lord has sent him with the same message; but let me tell you, as I have told them, that this message you are proclaiming is one of the satanic delusions designed to create confusion among the churches.”²⁶

There is not the slightest hint in the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy that the Seventh-day Adventist Church will become Babylon. Indeed, the evidence is all in the other direction.

Israel and Judah were called harlots, whores, and adulterers when they joined the ecumenical movements of their day, yet they were never called Babylon. And so today: though our church has moved into the frightening abandonment of its call to be separate from the world, and many members and organizations are embracing the ecumenical agenda, God does not call it Babylon. Yes, it can be called apostate Israel. And in that sense it is more culpable²⁷ than Babylon because of the great light it has had. Just as wicked Judah was allowed to remain while the faithful heralded the birth and ministry of our Saviour during His first advent, so wicked modern Israel is allowed to remain today because it contains a very

small, faithful remnant who are proclaiming the three angels’ messages.

My great burden is that all will now reexamine their relationship with God, His truth, and His righteousness. This is the time to make our calling and election sure and to join the ranks of those who are sighing and crying for the abominations done in the church.

“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 deception of almost every kind are in the church.”²⁸

It would be tragic if one of Satan’s most successful deceptions against the elect would be to convince them that the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as we know it today, were to be so unredeemable that we must abandon it. My earnest prayer is for all to follow God’s plain path to His kingdom. ✨

References:

- ¹ See *Our Firm Foundation*, August 2001, 4; see also *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 211-212.
- ² See *Selected Messages*, book 2, 68; see also *Testimonies to Ministers*, 61-62.
- ³ *Selected Messages*, book 1, 179.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, book 3, 18.
- ⁵ *Signs of the Times*, October 31, 1900.
- ⁶ *Testimonies to Ministers*, 45.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 47-48.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.
- ⁹ *Review and Herald*, January 16, 1894.
- ¹⁰ *Evangelism*, 707.
- ¹¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 187.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, vol. 9, 15-16.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 707; see also *ibid.*, 80.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 181.
- ¹⁵ *Selected Messages*, book 2, 368; see also *Testimonies*, vol. 4, 89.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 182.
- ¹⁷ *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, 911.
- ¹⁸ *Testimonies*, vol. 4, 89.
- ¹⁹ *The Great Controversy*, 608.
- ²⁰ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 20, 320.
- ²¹ *Selected Messages*, book 2, 66.
- ²² *Signs of the Times*, January 25, 1910.
- ²³ *Testimonies to Ministers*, 20.
- ²⁴ *Selected Messages*, book 2, 68-69.
- ²⁵ *Review and Herald*, October 3, 1893.
- ²⁶ *Testimonies to Ministers*, 58-59.
- ²⁷ *American Heritage College Dictionary*, 337, “Deserving of blame or censure as being wrong, evil, improper, or injurious.”
- ²⁸ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 210.

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Will the Real Adventist Please Stand Up!

Ron Spear

We have entered into a crisis hour in our beloved Seventh-day Adventist Church, for now every wind of doctrine is blowing through our churches. "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." Ephesians 4:14.

It is now very evident that the devil has come down with great wrath, for he knows he has a very short time. "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges." Revelation 2:12.

It is time that each of us as Seventh-day Adventists examine ourselves, whether we are in the faith. The doctrines given to us by God through our pioneers and our prophet Ellen White—the sanctuary message, and the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6–12—have separated us from the churches of Babylon. We now have more than 12 million souls claiming to be Seventh-day Adventists by baptism and church membership.

We need to ask now, How many of us keep the Sabbath according to

Isaiah 58:13–14? "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." How many understand how keeping the Sabbath is related to the sanctuary message, which is so clearly presented in Scripture and supported by the Spirit of Prophecy?

How many understand why we are the remnant church? How many understand the 2,300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14, the great disappointment of 1844, and the 1,260-year prophecy of Daniel and Revelation, which reveals the Pope and the Papacy as the antichrist power?

How many believe that they can overcome sin, and that God has enough power to keep them from sinning, that perfection of character is a requirement for eternal life, and that there has been only a small remnant in every generation who

have accepted this qualification and have experienced victory over temptation, having perfected their characters by the power of the Holy Spirit? These qualifications are the only way God can be sure we are safe to save, and that we will never bring sin into His new creation.

Overcoming all sin by the power of the Holy Spirit is the only way God can be absolutely sure that we are safe to save. "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot." Revelation 3:14–15.

The tragedy is that many of our pastors, leaders, and laity believe that the experience of overcoming will be given to Seventh-day Adventists at the time of the Sunday law and the latter rain. This is a deception of Satan, reminding us once again that only a small number have been safe to save in every generation. "Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." Isaiah 1:9.

Why? We turn for the answer to the pen of Inspiration:

“There is no greater evidence that those who have received great light do not appreciate that light, than is given by their refusal to let their light shine upon those who are in darkness, and devoting their time and energies in celebrating forms and ceremonies. Thoughts of the inner work, the necessary purity of heart, are not entertained. The absence of harmony with God becomes apparent. The light grows dim, goes out; the candlestick has been removed. There is much exercising of man-made authority by those to whom God has not given His wisdom because they did not feel the need of the wisdom from above.”¹

natural lineage went back to Abraham; but he had more than the heritage of being an Israelite. In his spiritual life he had overcome and gained the victory over guile (deception), by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus knew he was a Jew, but He called him an Israelite, indicating he was a member of the true spiritual Israel.

Thereby we see that Jesus was telling us that there are two types of Israelites: 1) those in the flesh or lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and 2) the spiritual Jews who were born of the Spirit of God and were obedient to all of the commandments of God.

Paul also deals with this problem of an Israelite of the flesh and an Israelite of the Spirit: “Behold, thou

in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.” Philippians 3:3–4. What we understand then is that Jesus and Paul were telling us that the Jews of Abraham’s lineage who were not born of the Spirit, and were not obedient to God’s gospel portrayed in the Old Testament, were no better in God’s eyes than the Gentiles. On the other hand, truly converted Gentiles who were obedient to the true gospel were considered by Heaven to be true Israelites.

Can we, therefore, apply these same principles to ourselves?

What about the promise of God to ancient Israel? We know that God will not fulfill those promises to the Israel of the flesh—the godless Jews who have now formed a nation called Israel. They can only be *grafted* back in, according to Romans 9 and 11. Consider these verses especially:

“For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” Romans 9:6–8; see also verses 27–28.

“What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. . . . Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” Romans 11:7–8, 20–22.

So now, the true Seventh-day Adventists—Israelites indeed—are those who are obedient to all of the commandments of God, by the Holy

Who were the real Israelites in Elijah’s day at Mount Carmel? . . . God recognized only the 7,000 out of all the Israelites at that time as His true believers, His faithful church members. They were the people who loved God and kept His commandments.

So from Inspiration we can understand why we are so powerless to carry out the gospel commission to its completeness.

Now we must ask another question—Who are the real Seventh-day Adventists?

In answering this question we must ask another: Who were the real Israelites in Elijah’s day at Mount Carmel? Remember, Elijah thought he was the only one who had remained faithful, but God said “No, there are 7,000 who have never bowed the knee to Baal.” See 1 Kings 19:14, 18. Therefore, God recognized only the 7,000 out of all the Israelites at that time as His true believers, His faithful church members. They were the people who loved God and kept His commandments.²

Remember, when Jesus met Nathaniel, He said: “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” John 1:47. Nathaniel’s

art called a Jew, and restand in the law, and makest thy boast of God.” Romans 2:17. “Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.” Verses 23–25. “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” Verses 28–29.

A Jew who did not keep the law by the power of the Holy Spirit was uncircumcised in his heart: “For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence

Spirit. They have overcome all guile (deception). They have crucified the flesh through the Holy Spirit. They have the humility and power of Christ.

When we look prayerfully and carefully into our own hearts and lives, we must ask, Are we not following men—placing our confidence in pastors and leaders who are not preaching and living the present truth as it is in Jesus, the Scriptures, and the Spirit of Prophecy? “Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.” Jeremiah 17:5. Are we striving to reach that experience of being complete overcomers by the Holy Spirit’s power? Are we weeping between the porch and the altar for

the sins of the world and for the sins of our beloved church?

“The crisis is fast approaching. The rapidly swelling figures show that the time for God’s visitation has about come. Although loath to punish, nevertheless He will punish, and that speedily. Those who walk in the light will see signs of the approaching peril; but they are not to sit in quiet, unconcerned expectancy of the ruin, comforting themselves with the belief that God will shelter His people in the day of visitation. Far from it. They should realize that it is their duty to labor diligently to save others, looking with strong faith to God for help. ‘The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.’ James 5:16.

“The leaven of godliness has not entirely lost its power. At the time

when the danger and depression of the church are greatest, the little company who are standing in the light will be sighing and crying for the abominations that are done in the land. But more especially will their prayers arise in behalf of the church because its members are doing after the manner of the world.”³

May the true Israelites—the real Seventh-day Adventists—now please stand up and prepare for the coming crisis. It will come as an overwhelming surprise to all Seventh-day Adventists who have not been born of the Spirit. ✨

References:

- ¹ *Review and Herald*, July 16, 1895.
- ² See *The Acts of the Apostles*, 11; *The Upward Look*, 315.
- ³ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 209-210.

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This month we share with you the next in a series of articles that discuss how we can cultivate Christian character traits in the hearts of our children. "The Garden of the Heart," in the February 2001 issue of Our Firm Foundation, laid the foundation for this series. It is available upon request.

The Editors

In this series, we have studied a number of character traits that Christian parents should seek to develop in their children. With each, I have given a practical definition of the trait we will study. I think it is helpful if we define these words—which are so familiar to us—in practical terms and with illustrations that help us see how we can cultivate these character traits in our children.

Simply stated, patience is waiting calmly for the desired end. This means that our children learn to wait patiently and calmly when mother is busy—not pulling on her skirts yelling, "Mother! Mother!" This means they sit quietly waiting for their meal—not banging on the table or screaming.

Notice what the Scriptures say about this character trait: "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." James 1:4. God's Word describes patience as being vitally important to the Christian experience. If patience has her perfect work, the individual will become Christlike, perfect, and entire—wanting nothing. This means that all the other characteristics of Christ will be developed along with patience. I hope we can understand that we cannot develop and cultivate our child's patience and leave out honesty, meekness, kindness, self-dignity, or respect. These all must be

worked together into the soil of the heart of the child.

Impatience Is Natural

The human heart, without the renewing power of God, is by nature impatient. Some of us seem to have a more amiable personality than others, but most of us find, when we become parents, that we are lacking in patience. Our children are no different; their hearts are naturally impatient, and they want what they want *now*.

Even in infancy you can begin to see the weed of impatience growing. Crying is the only way that babies have to communicate, but all parents know that their children have different types of cries. There is the cry of real need, which should be met as soon as possible according to the need. Then there is a very different cry of impatience. Babies often cry impatiently, and as they get a little older and they can talk, they come to their mother yelling, "Hurry up, Mommy! Hurry! Hurry!"

From babies to toddlers to parents to grandparents—we all suffer with the same thing. We all need the renewing grace of God in our lives to help us overcome this defect, and as parents it is our responsibility to help our children learn the precious lesson of patience. I will give you several practical suggestions on how you can cultivate patience in your children.

Cultivating Patience

Develop Order and Regularity in the Home

Many parents face impatience, both within themselves and with their children, because there is no order or regularity in the home. The most basic way we can begin to cultivate patience in our children is to have a home schedule. Many parents have said to me, "We have written numerous schedules, and they do not work." I have written a few myself, and they were not effective because I did not work the schedules. You see, we like to write a schedule that looks good on paper, but we do not like to make any changes in our practical life to follow the schedule, because it requires discipline. Our adult mind finds many reasons and circumstances to deviate from the schedule, and so our children do the same. If the phone rings, it takes precedence. When somebody drops in, that takes precedence. And so we find that our lives become chaotic.

I would encourage you to start with a foundational, basic schedule: a time for personal worship, family worship, meals, chores, and recreation. Does that mean that you write on your schedule that at 10:00 o'clock we have to fold the clothes, at 10:30 we have to take a walk, and at 10:45 we have to do this?—No, begin with a basic schedule and set aside the blocks in between your

routine daily activities for school or work time (depending on the age of your child) and your free time. For the work time, think of activities that you can do along with your child to improve the house, yard or garden, and during this time you can be teaching your child important, practical lessons. During free time help your children decide on appropriate activities to occupy their time. We teach our children how to make right choices by giving them only right things to do. In other words, we do not say to our children, "It is play time now. Go do what you would like," because often they end up getting into something that we do not want them to do. Instead, we might say, "Okay, now it is time to go outside. Would you like to swing, or play in the sandbox, or ride your bicycle?" Give the children directions with appropriate activities from which they can choose.

Let Others Make Choices

Another way our family cultivates patience, especially in a child who is enthusiastic and wants his opinions to be heard, is to take turns, letting different family members make choices about the day's activities. For example, the father might choose the type of recreation that evening, or the mother might choose the story that will be read. In this way, the child sees that, although he so often likes to make the choices, he is not the only one who has opinions, and he can wait his turn to have the privilege of deciding a family activity.

Train the Child Not to Interrupt

We can cultivate patience in our children by teaching them not to interrupt when we are involved in an important conversation or activity. Our children are by nature very energetic, and when they have something to say, they want Mommy and Daddy to listen right away. However, we can help our children learn patience by teaching them how to act when we cannot be

interrupted. First of all, tell your children, "When Mommy or Daddy is busy (and define what busy is), we want you to stand and wait patiently. I will let you know, by raising my hand, that I know you are there." After you have explained your expectations, then practice them with your children. You might say, "Emily, I want you to come here and just pretend you have something to tell Mommy that is very important. Then Mommy will put up her hand. That tells you that I know you are there, and you can wait patiently until Mommy turns and says, 'Yes, Emily, what do you need?'" This role-playing helps the child clearly grasp exactly what you expect of her. The next time Emily rushes in ready to tell me something, and I hold up my hand, she will remember, Yes, I can be patient.

Now, I want to make something very clear: I am not talking about parents who are so consumed with life that they have no time for their children, and they constantly put them off until the children must become more and more vocal in order to get just a little of their parents' attention. If we want our children to be patient, we ourselves must have realistic goals. We should give them so much of our time each day that when we have those occasional times of occupation, they can learn how to be patient and wait for a few minutes until we can attend to their needs.

As my children have grown older and are now youth, I can just turn and give them eye contact, and they know that I realize that they have a need and that I will make every effort to meet that need as quickly as I can within a realistic time frame.

If you have older children, you may find that when they come up to you and you put up your hand, they may wait for 15 or 30 seconds and then walk away—because they have thought of something else they want to do. (Young children have one-track minds, but older children often think of something else they would rather be doing than waiting for

you.) This is not really patience, and when I see my children start to do this, I will just motion for them to stay, or I will say, "I want you to stay here until I am done." Then I finish up as quickly as possible so that I can listen to what they have to say. This encourages patience in the older children.

In this study we have looked at several simple, practical ways that you can help your children develop the lovely trait of patience. There are many other ways, but I trust that as you begin to implement these, the Lord will lead and guide you as you seek to train your children for the right—for the Lord. ✚

Next month we will discuss how to cultivate perseverance.



Cultivating Christian Character in Children

Alane Waters

In this series Alane presents the important role of the parent as the gardener of the heart. Then 18 different character qualities are discussed, showing some of the common pitfalls, as well as how to practically plant and cultivate the right seeds of character.

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Adventist's Anti-Papal Billboard Stirs Up Catholic Opposition

News Items: "A billboard proclaiming the pope is the Antichrist has unleashed the wrath of the Catholic community, sparked a debate over First Amendment rights, and led to death threats against the man behind the message.

"The red, white and blue sign, located along Interstate-5 just north of Medford, Oregon, reads, 'The POPE Is The ANTICHRIST, Free Proof,' and provides a website address for more information. . . .

"Larry Weathers, a 50-year-old barber from the small town of Talent, sponsored the sign. He says he has no intention of taking it down, despite a flurry of death threats. . . .

"Weathers has been flooded with reaction—both negative and positive—since an editorial published this week in the *Catholic Sentinel* urged the public to call for the sign's removal." *WorldNetDaily.com*, July 28, 2001.

"After receiving hundreds of angry phone calls, a southern Oregon billboard company will not renew a contract for a sign that calls the pope the Antichrist.

"The sign, on Interstate 5 near the small town of Gold Hill, will stay up until May 2002, when the contract expires, says Steve Croft, general manager of sales for Medford-based Outdoor Media Dimensions. . . .

"Croft and Park say the sign, which appeared in May, will need to stay up until next spring because the contract with Rogue Valley Historic Seventh-day Adventist Church is legally binding. . . .

"The controversy apparently hastened a corporate shake-up at Outdoor Media Dimensions. An employee reports that the regional sales manager, Jeff Herson, has been fired and the firm bought by an undisclosed Seattle company. . . ."

Referring to the church group's leader, the article states: "Weathers is part of a loose association of

renegade Seventh-day Adventists who believe the papacy is leading a plot to undermine modern liberties.

...

"Nationwide, dozens of congregations calling themselves 'Historic Seventh-day Adventists' cling to anti-Catholic beliefs that mainline Adventists cast aside decades ago.

"One leader in the movement estimates a U.S. following of about 400,000." *Catholic Sentinel*, August 3, 2001.

Columbia Union College Court Victory Troubling

News Item: "The 4th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled last week that the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment does not permit Maryland to exclude Columbia Union College, a Seventh-day Adventist college, from its Sellinger grant program. This paves the way for CUC to obtain some \$800,000 in grant funds on an annual basis, restricted only by the requirement that they not be used for sectarian purposes.

"In its ruling, the 4th Circuit upheld the lower court decision finding that CUC was 'not pervasively sectarian.' It found little risk that direct financial aid to CUC would result in monies aiding a 'sectarian' purpose. It also rejected the legal principle that direct aid not be given to 'pervasively sectarian' organizations. . . .

"This ruling is a sharp repudiation of the historic principle that direct aid not flow to religious schools and colleges. While it may result in more aid becoming available to religious schools in the short run, the long term implications are troubling. If religious schools are not really all that religious, then why should their religious freedom be protected? Why should they have the right to use religious criteria in hiring and admissions policies? . . . Liberals in Congress are insisting that if faith-based organizations wish more government money, they must forfeit the right to use religious criteria in hiring. If that principle were applied today, our colleges and

hospitals would no longer be able to prefer Seventh-day Adventists in hiring. Unless they could wean themselves away from government funds—a practical impossibility in both cases—they would eventually lose their religious distinctiveness." *Pacific Union Conference Department of Public Affairs & Religious Liberty, Church State Newsflash*, July 3, 2001.

Private Schools in California Threatened by Gender Law

News Item: In California "the State Board of Education shoehorned into California's legal code a new definition of gender. According to Title 5 of the state code, 'gender' no longer means male or female, but instead 'a person's actual sex or perceived sex and includes a person's perceived identity, appearance, or behavior, whether or not that identity, appearance, or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person's sex at birth.' . . .

"California may be the first state to shape-shift its legal code to snare private schools in the net of 'sexual correctness.' The state's Code of Regulations, revised in April, effectively adds transsexuals and transvestites to the list of protected students and employees in California schools—public, private, and religious. . . ."

California's Board of Education "has decided that there can be no discrimination on the basis of gender at any 'local agency.' A local agency is defined as 'a school district, governing board, or county office of education or a local public or private agency which receives direct or indirect funding or any other financial assistance from the state or federal government to provide any school programs or activity.'"

"'Direct and indirect' taxpayer funding that turns private schools into 'local agencies' currently flows into many private religious schools in the state, according to Rohn Ritzema of the Association of Christian Schools International." *World*, June 16, 2001.

“The law recognized that private schools contract to provide educational programs and activities with our money,” Joanne Lowe, Deputy General Counsel for the state education board, told *WORLD*. “If they take our money, they have to play by our rules, and our rules are nondiscrimination.” Ibid.

End-time Perspective: There will be a heavy price to pay by any Adventist organization that damages its separation from the state by accepting any monies or surplus property from the government. Let us always be vigilant advocates of the separation of church and state.

Russians Impressed by the Pope

News Item: “Russians seem to be favorable to a papal visit after seeing extensive media coverage of John Paul II’s trip to Ukraine, where local prelates say the Holy Father greatly advanced the cause of unity between East and West.

“President Vladimir Putin has already said he is open to a papal visit, though he is cautious so as not to offend the Orthodox Church, according to the Italian newspaper *Avvenire*.

“Last month, for the first time, a papal visit captured the attention of Russian television and newspapers. Live coverage—and positive media commentaries—tracked John Paul II’s visits to Kiev and Lviv in Ukraine. . . .

“According to a survey published last week by Interfax Russian news agency, 63% of Russians said they want to see John Paul II. Only 17% are opposed to the visit. . . .

“For years the Communist press portrayed the Holy Father as an authoritarian and despotic head of a foreign hostile power. Instead, Russians saw a frail elderly man, who appeared modest and respectful. . . .

“Meanwhile, Catholic-Orthodox relations will change for the better in Ukraine, says Cardinal Lubomyr Husar, who contends that the rigidity of the Orthodox hierarchy does not reflect the thinking of its faithful. . . .”

Cardinal Husar “said that Ukraine and its Church must become a bridge between East and West. He added that the future of Christianity in his country lies in ecumenism.” *National Catholic Register*, July 15–21, 2001.

Presbyterians Favor Gay Ministers

News Items: “Leaders of the Presbyterian Church (USA) [PCUSA] have voted overwhelmingly [317–208] to overturn a ban on ordaining homosexuals as ministers of the church. . . .

“The measure will now be sent to the church’s regional governing bodies, or presbyteries, for consideration and must be passed by a majority of them over the next year before it can take effect.

“If the proposal is ratified, individual churches would determine whether or not to allow gay and lesbian clergy. *Iwon News (Reuters)*, June 16, 2001.

“An even bigger issue is simultaneously in question: salvation of humanity through Jesus Christ.

“The very essence of Christianity was debated at the annual denominational conference as some delegates proclaimed Jesus is one way to salvation—but not the only way. The significance of this issue cannot be overstated, as Presbyterianism has historically been considered the bastion of conservative Christian theology. . . .

“In the end, an acceptable resolution affirming Jesus as ‘uniquely Savior’ was approved by nearly 80 percent of the Assembly’s commissioners—about 550 delegates representing presbyteries in the United States and around the world. But the debate has left more conservative members of the church wondering where their denomination is heading.” *WorldNetDaily.com*, July 1, 2001.

“Conservatives, meanwhile, have formed a Confessing Church Movement within the PCUSA (CT, June 11, p.15). The movement adheres to three basic beliefs: Jesus alone is the way of salvation; the Bible is God’s revealed Word; and marriage is the only appropriate relationship for sexual intercourse. By implication, joining

churches indicate they will not install ministers who do not adhere to the beliefs. By the end of June, the Confessing Movement had signed up 538 of 11,200 PCUSA congregations.” *Christianity Today*, August 6, 2001.

“According to Agape Press, the latest statistics from the Presbyterian Church (USA) paint a picture of a denomination in rapid decline. In what the denomination notes as the biggest decline in membership since 1994, close to 35,000 names were dropped from the membership roles last year. Other vital church statistics such as baptisms reflect that trend.” *Crosswalk.com (Religion Today News)*, May 8, 2001.

End-time Perspective: The Adventist church tends to follow in the wake of the other denominations in wrestling with spurious errors—only lagging somewhat behind. Could these issues become paramount in our church’s future?

Americans Believe Satan NOT Real

News Item: Nearly three-quarters of Americans do not believe that Satan is real. Even many professed Christians disbelieve in his existence. Only about one in five Catholics, Episcopalians, and Methodists think he is real.

In other survey findings: “69% of Americans believe God is ‘the all-powerful, all-knowing perfect creator of the universe who still rules the world today’; 41% believe the Bible is totally accurate in all it teaches; 40% believe Jesus lived a sinless life on Earth.” 32% believe in proselytizing those of other faiths in personal evangelism. *National Catholic Register*, July 8–14, 2001.

End-Time Perspective: No wonder Satan is so effective, even among Christians, when his existence is disbelieved or unappreciated. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith.” 1 Peter 5:8–9, NKJV.

Now, if we lived lives of greater victory and example, would more people believe in the sinless life of Jesus and the validity of His Holy Scriptures? ❄



Separation From the World

Ellen G. White

“**T**he hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.” Ezra 8:22. Such were the words spoken by Ezra, the Hebrew priest and scribe, to the king of Persia. Ezra was about to return to Jerusalem with authority for the rebuilding of the city, and the enforcement of the law of God. He was accompanied thither by a body of his countrymen to assist in the work. Before them was a journey which would occupy several months. They were to take with them their wives and children, and their substance, besides large treasures for the temple and its service. Ezra was aware that enemies lay in wait by the way to attack, plunder, and destroy him and his company; yet he asked from

the king no armed force for their protection.

Before setting out on the journey, he assembled his companions—men, women, and little children—“at the river of Ahava,” (verse 21), where a solemn fast was proclaimed, prayer offered to God for His blessing upon the undertaking. Says Ezra: “I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.” Verse 22. And in recording the events that followed he adds: “So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.” Verse 23. “Then we departed from the river of

Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way. And we came to Jerusalem.” Verses 31–32.

Ezra and his companions had determined to fear and obey God, and to put their trust wholly in Him. They would not form a connection with the world in order to secure the help or friendship of the enemies of God. Whether they were with the many or the few, they knew that success could come from God only. And they had no desire that their success should be attributed to the wealth or influence of wicked men. Ezra would run the risk of trusting his cause with God. He well knew that if they failed in their important work, it would be because they had

not complied with the requirements of God and therefore He could not help them.

The Scriptures furnish abundant evidence that it is safer to be joined to the Lord, and lose the favor and friendship of the world, than to look to the world for favor and support, and forget our dependence upon God. It was because they were convinced of this truth that the Jews had refused to allow their adversaries to unite with them in the work of building the temple. They saw in the propositions of those idolaters a device of Satan to beguile God's people into union and fellowship with His enemies.

The Lord Himself has established a separating wall between the things of the world and the things which He has chosen out of the world and sanctified to Himself. The world will not acknowledge this distinction; they claim that it is needless. The servants of mammon make every effort to break down the barriers, and destroy the line of demarcation between the holy and the profane. Many of the professed followers of Christ are determined to break it down, and to maintain concord between Christ and Belial. But God has made this separation, and He will have it exist. In both the Old and the New Testaments the Lord has positively enjoined upon His people to be distinct from the world, in spirit, in pursuits, in practice, to be a holy nation, a peculiar people, that they may show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. The east is not farther from the west than are the children of light, in customs, practices, and spirit, from the children of darkness.

This distinction will be more marked, more decided, as we near the close of time. It is not a profession of faith, or a name registered in the church book, that constitutes us children of God. We must have a vital connection with Christ; we must be one with Him, imbued with His Spirit, partakers of the divine nature, crucified to the world with its affections and lusts, renewed in

knowledge and true holiness. Paul wrote to the Colossians: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Colossians 3:3. This is true of all real followers of Christ. They walk in humble obedience to the requirements of God. While in the world, they are the light of the world.

Oh, how many ease-loving souls there are among us, who virtually unite with sinners, and while in their society say and do nothing to awaken conviction, nothing to disturb their carnal security! Many who profess to be sons and daughters of God, and call themselves the light of the world, reflect no light

There is an element called love which would teach us to praise and flatter our associates, and not to faithfully tell them of their dangers and warn and counsel them for their good. This love is not Heaven-born.

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Romans 8:14. They are living examples of Christianity. They are called Christians because they represent Christ in life and character. They cannot follow the customs or practices of the world; for these are from beneath, and are of the wicked one. Those who follow Christ will have the principles of holy love in their hearts. They will cherish the faith that works by love and purifies the soul.

There is an element called love which would teach us to praise and flatter our associates, and not to faithfully tell them of their dangers and warn and counsel them for their good. This love is not Heaven-born. Our words and actions should be serious and earnest, especially before those who are neglecting their soul's salvation. If we profess to be sons and daughters of God, we should pursue such a course toward the unbelieving that our souls will be clear of their blood when we meet them in the great day of final reckoning. If we unite with them in lightness, trifling, pleasure-seeking, or in any pursuit which will banish seriousness from the mind, we are constantly saying to them by our example, "Peace, peace; be not disturbed. You have no cause for alarm." This is saying to the sinner, "It shall be well with thee."

upon its darkness. If these half-hearted, slothful, pleasure-loving professors of Christ were what they profess to be, how much good they might do! It is their privilege to walk in the light of Christ's countenance, to learn His commandments and do them, and by precept and example reflect light upon those who are in the darkness of error. But not partaking of the Spirit of Christ, they do not apprehend and enjoy the privileges of children of God; they are so far separated from Jesus that with their limited conceptions and darkened understanding they cannot comprehend heavenly things, and do not love to meditate upon them. They do not enjoy the presence of God; they know not the power of His grace

Those who persist in neglecting the only salvation that can deliver from the ruin of this fallen state, have no prospect before them better than that of the beasts that perish. This consideration should lead everyone who loves and fears God to be faithful to His trust, to walk in the light, gathering strength and wisdom day by day, that His light may shine forth clear and bright to direct sinners to the Lamb of God. By neglect of the salvation presented in the gospel, the world is becoming more and more hardened. Satan's power increases; his deceptions become more captivating, his delusions stronger. Christians must

now come to the front; the help of every soul is needed. All should let their light shine forth, not merely in profession, but in good works. They should be heavenly guides, setting an example of faithfulness, of self-denial, of prompt, decided, vigorous action to push the triumphs of the cross.

A genuine Christian experience unfolds day by day, bringing to its possessor new strength and earnestness, and leading to constant growth in spiritual life. But the Christian world abounds with professors of religion who are merely religious dwarfs. Many seem to have graduated as soon as they learned the rudiments of the Christian faith. They do not grow in grace

experience. Your faith must be strong, your consecration complete, your love pure and sincere, your zeal ardent, tireless, your courage unshaken, your patience unwearied, your hopes bright. Upon everyone, old or young, rests a responsibility in this matter.

Parents, I entreat you, for Christ's sake, for the sake of your dear children, teach them that God has claims upon them, and that they must be fully prepared for whatever work they may find to do. Educate, train them to have the eye single to the glory of God. In order to grow in grace, they must become acquainted for themselves with the reasons of our faith. Teach them to be learners

wheat. There are betrayers, accusers, traitors, in the camp. These will wound, misrepresent, and falsely accuse you. They are false brethren, meddlesome and indiscrete, stumbling blocks to others. They are doing a work for Satan far more successfully than if they were not connected with the church. Some who have not spiritual discernment will fail to distinguish between the false and the true, and will highly esteem those who have no connection with God. Those who have been indifferent and neglectful, and have failed to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth, will be deceived. They do not comprehend the first principles of doctrine and experience, which secure to man the perfection of Christian character.

Our duty, our safety, our happiness and usefulness, and our salvation, call upon us each to use the greatest diligence to secure the grace of Christ, to be so closely connected with God that we may discern spiritual things, and not be ignorant of Satan's devices. Those who are willing to be instructed will heed the counsels and warnings of the Spirit of God. The Lord gives these admonitions and reproofs in mercy. When His professed people move in blindness, yield to temptation, and lose their hold upon Him, He sends them a message of reproof, of warning, of counsel; if they refuse to be corrected, if they rise up in rebellion, and cast reproach upon the messenger whom He sends, they reject not the messenger, but the Lord. When the people refused to listen to the counsel of Samuel the prophet, the Lord said unto him: "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me." 1 Samuel 8:7.

Some have a heart of unbelief, and in their self-confidence and self-deception they cannot see their errors. They are blind to their defects and their dangers. Did they see their sins and errors, and still continue in them, the Lord would give them up to blindness of mind and hardness of heart, to follow their own ways, and be ensnared and ruined. Anciently when any neglected or refused to heed the words of reproof

Not all the names that stand registered in the church books will at last appear in the Lamb's book of life. There are tares among the wheat. There are betrayers, accusers, traitors, in the camp.

or in the knowledge of the truth. They do nothing, either with their means or their influence, to build up the cause of God. They are drones in the hive. This class will not long stand where they are. They will be converted and advance, or they will retrograde. The perils of the last days will test the genuineness of our faith. Slothful servants will be found under the black banner of the powers of darkness.

The message borne to the people by the faithful servants of God will not be calculated to lull them to carnal security. They will have words to speak to stir them to action. We call upon those who are imitating Meroz to arouse. Go to work; do something for the salvation of souls, something to advance the cause of God; and do it now. You have but little time in which to labor. The Lord has given to every man his work according to his ability. To meet the claims of God, you will have to make personal effort; and in this work you will need the resources of an ever-growing Christian

in the school of Christ, to obtain a knowledge of the Scriptures, to diligently employ every means of grace, that their love may abound more and more, that they may approve things that are excellent.

Everyone who shall be found with the wedding garment on, will have come out of great tribulation. The mighty surges of temptation will beat upon all, and unless they are riveted to the eternal Rock, they will be borne away. Do not think that you can safely drift with the current. If you do, you will surely become the helpless prey of Satan's devices. By diligent searching of the Scriptures, and earnest prayer for divine help, prepare the soul to resist temptation. The Lord will hear the sincere prayer of the contrite soul, and will lift up a standard for you against the enemy. But you will be tried; your faith, your love, your patience, your constancy will be tested.

Not all the names that stand registered in the church books will at last appear in the Lamb's book of life. There are tares among the

and warning sent them of God, His protection was removed from them, and they were left to be deceived and deluded to their own ruin. Only those who, with tears of contrition, listened to the voice of God and gave heed to the warning, escaped the tempter's snare.

Those who refuse to receive reproof and to be corrected, will manifest enmity, malice, and hatred against the instrument that God has used. They will leave no means untried to cast stigma upon the one who bore to them the message. They will feel as did Ahab toward Elijah, that God's servant is the one who is the hindrance, the curse. Said Ahab: "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" 1 Kings 18:17. But Elijah threw back the imputation: "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim." Verse 18.

He who can read the hearts of men as an open book, sees that

which shortsighted mortals fail to discover. Finite wisdom cannot discern the necessity for sharp rebukes, for urgent warnings and entreaties. Those who are themselves deceived in men and in their purposes, will pronounce against the messages of reproof which God sends, and will undertake to interpret the matter to suit their own ideas. They turn aside the counsel of God, that it shall not do the work which He designed. Those who have confidence in them are misled, and through their influence they cast aside the warning which God sends them, and then Satan stands ready with his delusions to ensnare their souls. The Lord would have saved them from the ruin if they had listened to His voice. Those who should have helped them, but who only injured them, must render an account at the bar of God. They have influenced souls to doubt, to disbelieve, to disregard, and finally reject and bitterly oppose His work. Souls

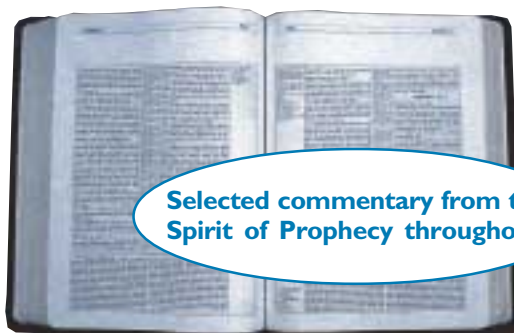
purchased with the blood of Christ are lost, because of the unfaithfulness of those who profess to stand as sentinels for God.

God's Word represents but two great classes among men. Said Jesus to His disciples: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." John 15:19. There are but two classes of religious teachers. Of one class the apostle John declares: "They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." 1 John 4:5. Of the other class he says: "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us." Verse 6.

"Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4. ✨

Review and Herald, January 8, 1884.

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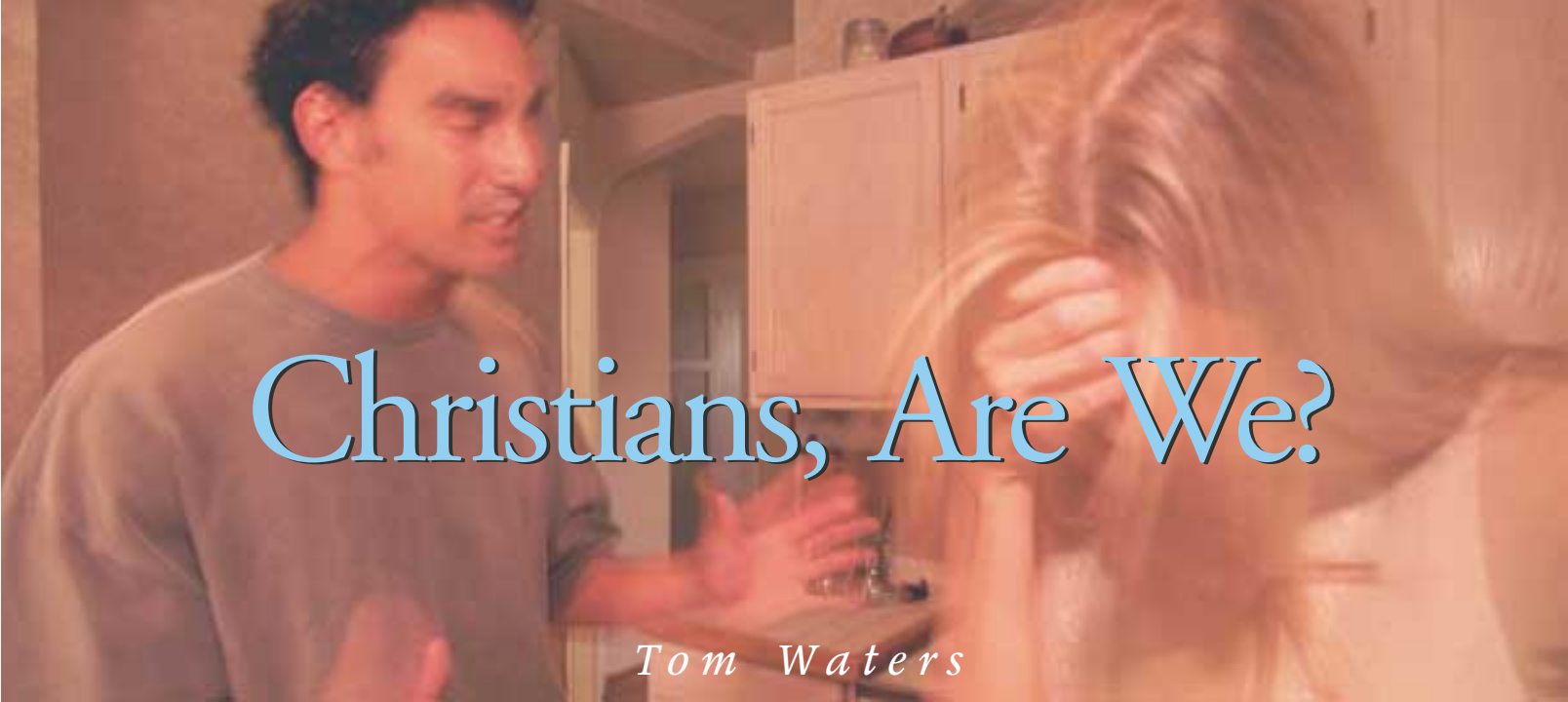
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Christians, Are We?

Tom Waters

Have you thought recently about what it means to carry the lovely name of “Christian” in the world today? Paul the apostle reminds us that we are surrounded by “so great a cloud of witnesses.” Hebrews 12:1. What do they see in you and me? The people of the world, without knowing how to speak the words, are saying: “We would see Jesus. We are hungering and thirsting to see Jesus.” Are we showing them Jesus? Are we really the Christians that we profess to be? Or when people look at us do they think: “Those people aren’t that different from the others I see who profess Christianity. I don’t notice any difference in how they conduct their business, how they treat their wives, or in the way that they train their children.”

The world is longing to see Jesus reflected in the people who claim to follow Him. For too long people have heard about the Cross, but to many it has lost its meaning because the cross that they have seen in you and me has not been the Cross of Christ. When they see self crossed in you and me, so many times they see the self that clamors—the flesh that cries out to be heard.

If unseen observers were watching you in your home, what would they see? We say we are Christians. We carry the lovely name of our Saviour, but what would any observers have heard this past week as they listened to our conversations

on the telephone, and how we speak to our wives, to our husbands, and to our children? What would they think if they saw us retire at night, and then drag ourselves out of bed in the morning with just enough time to throw on our clothes and get on with the day’s work—totally forgetting our Saviour? What would any observers say about our Christianity, brothers and sisters? Would they see Christ, the hope of glory, in us? Would they say: “I want this kind of gospel—a gospel that saves me from myself”? Or would they say: “I see the same selfishness that I struggle with in my own life. Why would I want their Christianity?”

Paul could say in Philippians 1:21: “For to me to live is Christ.” What a powerful statement! Paul was saying, For me to live my daily life is simply to allow Christ to live within me, because “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.” Galatians 2:20. Paul’s Christianity was alive with the freshness of Christ. What about yours and mine?

We profess to believe that Christ can live through us, and that He is the power unto salvation to everyone that believes in Him. However, unfortunately, we are so often like the people described in Ezekiel 33:31: “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they

hear thy words, *but they will not do them*: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.” (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.) Are we sitting before the Lord today, claiming to be His people, singing, “Oh, How I Love Jesus,” when our lives show that we are seeking first that which pleases us alone? With our mouths we profess the love of Jesus, but with our lives we hold on to our selfishness.

A Close Connection

I remember one day when I was sitting at my desk making the necessary calls to close a real estate transaction. That morning I had prayed: “Lord, I want to be kept through this day. Remind me by your Holy Spirit if I begin to wander, if I begin to slip away from the path of holiness.” As I picked up the phone to make the last call that would finalize the deal, the Holy Spirit did just what I had asked Him to do—in that still small voice, God was prompting me to come apart for a few moments and revitalize my connection with Him. But as I felt the impression, I pushed it back. I reasoned: “Lord, I have just one more call to make, and I will be done. I can take time then.” So I picked up the phone and dialed the number. I am sure God knew what was going to happen on that phone call, and He had wanted to prepare me; but I resisted His call.

During that phone call, the transaction began to fall apart. Things were not going the way I wanted and expected them to go, and the flesh began to agitate and to start to rise up inside. I began to try to work through it in my own strength, and by the end of the conversation I was disappointed and frustrated.

Just then my wife came in and said: "Honey, could I have a few minutes of your time?" She needed to work through a little situation she was having with the children. I had told her many times before: "You can come to me anytime. My family is my priority." Yet at that moment was my heart prepared for my wife to come to me?—No, because I had pushed away the impression of the Holy Spirit, and I had begun to operate in the flesh—not in the Spirit. I did not want to deal with what my wife wanted to share with me. Self was not subdued. I told my wife, "Honey, I think you need to handle this situation by yourself. It is a good experience for you. You do not need to come to me with everything." I took my self-pity and frustration out on my innocent wife.

There were others listening as I chided and reproved my wife for something she had not done. Three younger sets of eyes and ears were observing my behavior. This situation affected my entire family. I thank God that the Holy Spirit was able to break through my selfishness, and to help me realize what I had done. As a family we sat down together and talked about what had just happened and how I had let go of the Lord. There, before my family, I confessed and repented of my lack of reliance upon the Lord. The Lord is so good! He is able to bring victory out of defeat if we are willing to cooperate. Through this experience each of us went deeper in our understanding of the importance of responding to God's calls to our hearts and what it means to truly repent.

The Wise and the Foolish

In Matthew 25 we read the familiar parable of the ten virgins. Jesus said: "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and

went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish." Matthew 25:1-2. Have you ever asked yourself, "Am I a wise or a foolish virgin?"

What was the difference between these two groups?—The five who were wise went in through the door to receive an everlasting reward, but the five who were foolish were left outside. I want to remind you that the five who were foolish knocked at the door. They expected to be let in. *Christ's Object Lessons* says of the ten virgins: "All claim to be Christians. All have a call, a name, a lamp, and all profess to be doing God's service. All apparently wait for Christ's appearing. But five are unready. Five

upon their hearts; for them, the crisis reveals only the lovely character of Christ.

Facing the Crisis

One morning, as we were driving to the church where we were conducting meetings, my family was practicing a song we were planning to sing for the sacred service. As we practiced, I felt that we were off a little on our timing in one small section. When I suggested that we change the way we were singing that section, my wife said that she felt that the timing was correct as we were singing it. Now, I want to ask you, Was that a crisis?—Yes, it was. I must decide, Would I allow self to

Was my heart prepared for my wife to come to me?—No, because I had pushed away the impression of the Holy Spirit, and I had begun to operate in the flesh—not in the Spirit.

will be found surprised, dismayed, outside the banquet hall."¹

If all of the virgins claimed to be Christians, as we do, how do we know whether we are among the wise or the foolish? The answer is stated very well in the same reference: "It is in a crisis that character is revealed."² Do you know what a crisis is? It is any difficult situation in which our character is revealed—a trial in which we are tempted to let self rise up. It can be a flat tire when you have to be at the airport in ten minutes. It can be a glass of water spilled on a new sofa. How we react in a crisis reveals the class to which we belong.

God's Word tells us that when the great controversy is ended, sin will never rise up again—throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. None will enter heaven who would violate the peace and happiness of that place. In the large and small crises of life, our characters are being revealed. We can know that if self rises up when we face these crises we are not wise virgins. The wise virgins have experienced the transformation of the grace of Christ

rise up? Would I force my will upon my wife and family as to whether we would count two beats or four? I had to decide right then and there whether I was going to allow the grace of God, which is as free as the air we breathe, to soften and subdue my heart. I allowed the gospel of Christ to keep me! It was a decision of faith.

It is in a crisis that our characters are revealed, over and over again. I remember one winter, the first day that we needed to plow snow off the driveway. As I went out to get into our wood-hauling, snow-plowing truck, I had this thought: "Put the chains on the tires." I did not accept this impression as coming from the Lord because it did not really fit with what I wanted to do right then. I thought: "Lord, there are only three or four inches of snow on the ground; I really do not need the chains. All I am going to do is just push this little bit of snow off the driveway. I pushed six or eight inches off last year without the chains."

As I climbed into the truck, I was thinking: "I'll save time this way. I

have so many other things to do, I really do not have time to put the chains on the tires." I began to plow up the driveway slowly. I reached the end of the driveway without difficulty, and then I turned the truck around and began to come back. As the road started to slope downward, the whole truck began to slide right off the driveway. At that moment I realized why the Lord had impressed upon me to put on the chains. I had failed to remember that there was a solid layer of ice under the snow. As a result I found myself sitting with two wheels on the driveway and two wheels just a few

again, saying: "Do not let go. I want to keep you through this. You will understand why later." Praise God, He gave me the grace to hold on! I stayed there and finished the task—as the subduing grace of God pushed away the wave of self that had been trying to create a crisis inside of me.

When the job was done, I went inside to join my family at the dinner table. As we were eating one of the children said to me, "Daddy, we were watching you out of the window. That was a very big trial, wasn't it?"

I asked, "Children, did you know it was a trial for me because of the expression you saw on my face, or

Finding Rest

As you consider your life, you may be thinking: "No, I am not a Christian. Christ's character is not reflected in my life. No one knows what it is like in my marriage behind closed doors. No one knows the example my children see in me." Do not become discouraged, brothers and sisters. Satan would have us despair, but Jesus is saying to us: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matthew 11:28–29.

Have we been willing to do this? How many of us take time to come to the Burden Bearer? We think we are so busy that we do not have time for the Saviour. We may read a quick devotional page and bow on our knees for five minutes in the morning, but we do not take time to be holy. Jesus invites us to give our burdens to Him, but it takes a commitment to take the time to become acquainted with our Saviour. The devil wants to keep us so distracted and preoccupied with all the busyness of life that we never learn to really *know Jesus*. It takes a conscious commitment to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Inspiration tells us that Jesus found His strength morning by morning: "As a man He supplicated the throne of God till His humanity was charged with a heavenly current that should connect humanity with Divinity. Through continual communion He received life from God, that He might impart life to the world. His experience is to be ours."³

Do you want that experience? Do you want to be a living Christian? I would like to leave you with this thought taken from the book *Mount of Blessing*: "It is the love of self that destroys our peace."⁴ God's grace is sufficient to help each one of us overcome our worst enemy—self. Will you accept the peace He offers—through death to self? ❄

References:

¹ *Christ's Object Lessons*, 412.

² *Ibid.*

³ *The Desire of Ages*, 363.

⁴ *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, 16.

Do not become discouraged, brothers and sisters. Satan would have us despair, but Jesus is saying to us: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

feet from the garden fence and with the plow stuck sitting at an angle in a different direction. I crawled out of the truck to look over the whole sad situation. The plow was twisted at such an angle that it was impossible to unhook it from the truck. My only option was to put the chains on the truck and see whether it could pull itself out of this predicament. First, I tried just one chain on the wheel that I thought would do the job the best, but when I tried to pull forward, the truck only slid farther down, coming to a stop six inches from the garden fence.

At this point there was a crisis building. I jumped out of the truck again and struggled for a while, trying to disconnect the plow, but with no greater success than previously. Back underneath the truck I worked to put the chains on the most difficult-to-reach wheels, while my back sank into a snowdrift. As I lay there in that strange position, a huge chunk of snow and ice broke loose and fell right down my neck. At that moment I was in a crisis! What would not have been a crisis an hour earlier in the day, was now a crisis. Right then that still, small voice entreated my conscience once

because of the circumstances that you saw me in?" I wanted to know whether I had shown any anger and frustration at the situation; if so, I had not passed the test.

They said: "Daddy, we saw it in the circumstances. We know that you had the victory." Praise God!

I wish that my children had the opportunity to see Jesus in me each and every day of their lives, but, friends, the Lord wants to help us now—whether we are eighty years old or five years old—to begin to let His character shine through us. He wants to show our husband or wife that there is, indeed, power in the gospel that we profess. He wants to show our children that the words we speak from the pulpit are not just words that we mouth, but rather the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. Do you want that experience? It does not happen by accident, but it can be our experience, as we are kept by His Spirit moment-by-moment. We do not have a once-dead-to-self - always-dead-to-self religion. God's Word teaches us that true Christianity is the experience of a daily death to self and a resurrection into the newness of life.

letters to the editor

Have a letter to share?

contact editor@hopeint.org or see page 3 for our mailing address.



I am writing to tell you about the letter I received from a pastor in Ghana, West Africa. [The writer had helped Lyla Miller send old *Our Firm Foundation* magazines to Africa.] I never expected to receive a letter, but I have answered it and expect to keep the correspondence up. If I can help this pastor and his church or work in any way, like sending him books or literature, I will do it.

Thank you so much for what you are doing. I would encourage anyone receiving this magazine to send it on to others. I feel that I have really been blessed from God and your organization already, just by receiving this first letter.

May God bless you and *Our Firm Foundation*.

MR, USA

Thank you so much for the *Our Firm Foundation* magazine. Through the years I have found it always to be the "straight message," not yielding to any man. It is an encouragement to know that there are still the "7,000" who will not/cannot bow the knee to the present-day Baal. Our prayers are with you that the Heavenly Father will continue to bless your faithful work!

C, via e-mail

I will start this e-mail by telling you that you publish the best Adventist magazines and articles available today! It has helped me to maintain a closer relationship with Jesus and to have a rock-solid foundation. As an ordained elder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I appreciate the straight testimony that you present in your articles.

JS, via e-mail

From Overseas

We are a very busy church here in Malawi, Africa. Last time I wrote to you I asked you to send us a package of *Earth's Final Warning* magazines.

These are very powerful magazines to be used in our evangelistic crusades as handouts. This year we

had 20 crusades in our districts, and more than 400 souls were baptized. Thousands more accepted Christ and are today in baptismal classes. We need your hands in supplying us with handouts, Bibles, and magazines.

My work in the church is doing medical missionary work. I use the training I took at Hartland Institute in Virginia, and I work day and night, wherever the church calls me.

We have so many people being healed of cancer, T.B., diabetes, stomach ulcers, rheumatism, and so forth, using God's natural remedies.

Apart from this, my work deals with writing pamphlets on health for handouts. Some of these materials are used in hospitals. Some go to the churches to be used in evangelistic crusades. It is a very big work for me alone. I have no income and am not employed by our organization.

With so many requests for my work, many people wanted to know if a health school had been opened, but this needs someone who is willing, and who hears God's call to join hands with me. Prayers are very important. Right now, as I am writing this letter, we have American evangelists conducting a very big, 21-day crusade in a stadium here using their own expenditures. Many thousands and thousands come nightly. We expect thousands to be baptized.

JN, Malawi

May the grace of the Lord be with you. I am hereby begging, if you can send me books of the Word of God. I am a person who likes witnessing in villages and doing Bible studies in the church. But I have no materials like books to use. I am a church elder of the local SDA church. I do not know the Word of God very well. My faith is not very strong. Send me books that can help my faith be strong in Jesus. I want to know more about God and Jesus. And send me tracts so that I can give to the people I witness to.

I shall be very glad if you will send me some books. I am looking for-

ward to receiving some from you.

SM, Zambia

I acknowledge the receipt of the books and magazines you sent me. I thank God for the effort you are doing in furthering the gospel commission. I also thank Hope International for the two videotapes.

All the magazines are already distributed to people and a lot of the recipients have appreciated the contents, which are reviving their souls. I myself have been revived by the books *Laodicea*, *Her Authority*, *Organization*, and *Destiny*, and *Issues Clarified*. I thank God for you people and what you are doing. May the Almighty Father continue showering blessing upon you for the noble course of blowing the trumpet on the walls of Zion and making it give a certain sound.

Kindly brethren, continue laboring in the Lord's vineyard, for God shall really reward you.

MN, Zambia

I thank you for the April copy of *Our Firm Foundation* you mailed to me. It led me to a deep heart-searching, and admonished me to put away evil traits of sinful indulgence in preparations to meet the Lord. The one area I ask you to pray for me in is the point of health reform. I also believe that once one has conquered in the area of appetite, he will be able to conquer any temptation from the devil. I would like to subscribe to *Our Firm Foundation*, but my financial capability is lower than the price. However, I will send what I can.

I am also interested in the book *Preparing for Eternity* compiled by Ron Spear.

CM, South Africa

Greetings in the name of the Lord! I am very happy that I visited your site. I am moved by the enlightening words that I have been reading.

The Lord is using you in His ministry. May He continue to do so. God bless you and I will include your ministry in my prayers.

CG, Philippines



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