



Our Firm Foundation

Does God **DESTROY?**

Volume 18, Number 3

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The Seventh-day Sabbath

Christ Our Righteousness

The Immutable Law of God

The Non-Immortality of the Soul

The Three Angels' Messages

The Sanctuary

Put on the Armor of God



The signs of the times are now ominous that this is the final generation. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church there are members who are striving to be true and faithful, daily searching the Scriptures and walking prayerfully in present truth without a single compromise; they compose the church militant, in preparation to soon become the church triumphant.

“Has God no living church?— He has a church, but it is the church militant, not the church triumphant. We are sorry that there are defective members, that there are tares amid the wheat. Jesus said: ‘The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. . . . So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.’ Matthew 13:24–30.” *Testimonies to Ministers*, 45.

Jesus said the wheat and the tares must grow together until the harvest, which is the end of the world. September 11, 2001 catapulted the world and the church another step closer to the time of the harvest. What are the conditions—God’s requirements—for the church triumphant?

“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.” Revelation 3:5.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” Ephesians 6:10–13.

Those who are members of the church triumphant have overcome all temptation; they have perfected their character in the blood of the Lamb by the power of the Holy Spirit.

“The work is soon to close. The members of the church militant *who have proved faithful* will become the church triumphant.” *Evangelism*, 707. (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

“The life of Christ was a life charged with a divine message of the love of God, and He longed intensely to impart this love to others in rich measure. Compassion beamed from His countenance, and His conduct was characterized by grace, humility, truth, and love. Every member of His church militant must manifest the same qualities, if He would join the church triumphant.” *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 179.

“God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character. It is formed by hard, stern battles with self. Conflict after conflict must be waged against

hereditary tendencies. We shall have to criticize ourselves closely, and allow not one unfavorable trait to remain uncorrected.” *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 331.

The Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy make it very clear, it is the overcomers in Christ who will soon make up the church triumphant.

Soon there will be a triumphant remnant church. In the Scriptures the Christian is spoken of as a soldier, and life as a battle and a march, resulting in either defeat or victory. The precious promises of God’s Word are made “to the overcomer.” In this world of sin the church militant is pictured by the revelator as a warrior riding a white horse and carrying a bow and going forth “conquering, and to conquer.” Revelation 6:2. When the warfare is over, the victors become the church triumphant.

It is not at all strange, therefore, that all Christians are urged to put on the whole armor of God, which is the armor of righteousness, as the only hope of victory over a relentless and cunning foe.

“God leads his people on step by step. He brings them up to different points which are calculated to manifest what is in the heart. Some endure at one point, but fall off at the next. At every advanced point the heart is tested, and tried a little closer. If the professed people of God find their hearts opposed to the straight work of God, it should convince them that they have a work to do to overcome, or be spued out of the mouth of the Lord.” *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, 225.

Dear Seventh-day Adventist soldier, soon you will be called to carry the banner of Christ in the final battle, soon to be fought. It is my prayer that you will be faithful and that you will be a member of the church triumphant. ✠



It is the mission of Hope International and the editors of *Our Firm Foundation* to clearly present Christ and His truth. The days remaining for this world are few, and we must work 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.

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Does God DESTROY?

... and does the answer to this question really matter?

Colin Standish

The Moral Influence theory and its associated claim that God does not destroy, has swept not only through certain academic areas of our church (for example, Loma Linda University) but also among a few self-supporting workers.

At the Sanctuary conference held at Andrews University, 1997, Dr. Woodrow Whidden, Professor of Religion at Andrews University, made a stirring attack upon the manifest error that God does not

destroy. I quote from his position paper:

“Other nettlesome questions rear their wondering heads: Was the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah simply the chance circumstance of an unfortunate conspiracy of atmospheric conditions? (See Genesis 19:24). Ellen White says ‘The Lord rained brimstone and fire out of heaven.’ (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 162). Was the judgment of God on Korah, Dathan, and Abiram only a tragic yawning of a long dormant seismic

‘fault’ line in the Sinai desert? (See Numbers 16:23–35). Ellen White calls this judgment ‘the signal manifestation of God’s power.’ (*Ibid.*, 401). Were the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira only timely coronaries? (See Acts 5:1–10). Ellen White refers to their deaths as the ‘signal manifestation of the wrath of God’ (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 73) and goes on to say that ‘the same God who punished them, today condemns all falsehood.’ (*Ibid.*, 76). Will the ‘lake of fire’ be merely a passive act on God’s part? Referring to the ‘lake of fire,’ Ellen White says that ‘God is to the wicked a consuming fire.’ (*The Great Controversy*, 673).”

Dr. Whidden also documented the evidence that divine wrath was manifested at the Cross:

“But what about the cross? Was it or was it not a manifestation of God’s *holy wrath* against sin? If the plain, straightforward words of Ellen White mean anything, the following challenge needs to be very squarely faced: any well meaning person who feels that the ‘moral influence’ theory cancels out the substitutionary theory of atonement as a manifestation of God’s ‘wrath’ against sin, needs to be prepared to rip the chapter ‘Calvary’ out of *The Desire of Ages*. I realize that my challenge is a bit shocking, but sometimes words are just too plain to be ignored! Please carefully note the following citations from this climactic chapter of Ellen White’s most spiritual work:

“ ‘Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. . . . The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. . . . Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father’s reconciling face. . . . Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin,

bringing the *Father's wrath* upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God." *The Desire of Ages*, 753. (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

"He, the Sin Bearer, endures the wrath of divine justice, and for thy sake becomes sin itself." *Ibid.*, 756.

Again in his colorful language, Dr. Whidden declared:

"In addition to these forcefully clear statements, Ellen White makes it abundantly evident that there is precious little emphasis on the passive justice of God:

"Justice demands that sin be not merely pardoned, but the death penalty *must* be executed. God, in the gift of His only begotten Son, met both these requirements. By dying in man's stead, Christ *exhausted the penalty and provided a pardon.*" *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7A, 470. (Emphasis in the original.)

"As Christ bore the sins of every transgressor so the sinner who will not believe in Christ as his personal Saviour . . . will bear the penalty of his transgression." *Ibid.*, 471.

"Is there any substantive difference between pulling a plug on somebody's life support system and switching on the 'juice' to an electric chair? Again, I believe the answer is self-evident! For Ellen White says, our God is love; but His love is expressed in active justice, not just passively. He is certainly our 'friendly' neighborly 'God' (see Graham Maxwell's *Servants or Friends*, Redlands, CA: Pineknoll Pubs., 1992. I took this metaphor of God the friendly neighbor from an advertisement for this book which appeared in a recent edition of *Christianity Today*), but He is more than just some benignly concerned neighbor poignantly beckoning over the back fence pleading with us to knock off the 'foolishness' of our romp in the fields of sin. He is also the Holy God who has acted and will once again act in just wrath against the rejecters of His merciful offer of redemption. Again there are just too many

references to God's active execution of justice to say that justice is merely a passive 'letting us go.' "

Dr. Whidden's statements above cannot be controverted, but let us examine Scripture which even more forcibly dispels this unbiblical and thoroughly dangerous error. How can we rationalize God's prophecy to the antediluvian world?

The Flood

"And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them." Genesis 6:7. "And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die." Verse 17.

Jehovah identifies Himself as the Creator, and with the double use of

against God, there can be no doubt that the wicked are destroyed eternally by God.

"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." Revelation 20:9.

Either our God is truthful in stating that the fire of the second death comes from Him out of heaven, or we declare Him a liar. Scripture clearly declares that it is impossible for God to lie. Revelation 20:9 is a plain "Thus saith the Lord." Dare we challenge God's trusted Word? Why does He declare this to be His strange act if He does not in an act of great love destroy the unrepentant? See Isaiah 28:21.

The final eradication of sin and sinners forever from the universe with the destruction of Satan makes this issue plain. How many more times does our God have to utilize

Jehovah identifies Himself as the Creator, and with the double use of "I, even I," He emphasizes that it is He, the Creator, who destroyed life.

"I, even I," He emphasizes that it is He, the Creator, who destroyed life. The unity of this verse is impelling. The God who created – it was He who destroyed. No other power did the destroying.

The Eternal Destruction of the Wicked

Only those who believe that God does not destroy, based at the best on a doubtful use of Scripture, can claim that God does not destroy the wicked. Some Moral Influence theorists are willing to concede that God has destroyed the earthly life of disobedient humans, but hold that it is Satan who is responsible for the eternal death of the wicked. While Satan's fall, deceptions, and temptations have been responsible for myriads of humans rebelling

the first personal pronoun "I," in order to convince us that He most certainly *does* destroy?

"Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will

I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.” Ezekiel 28:15-19.

done by the people, who the day after the destruction of Korah and his company came to Moses and Aaron, saying, ‘Ye have killed the people of the LORD.’ Numbers 16:41. “Notwithstanding they had had the most convincing evidence of God’s displeasure at their course, in the destruction of the men who had

Second, this concept has led to outrageous arguments by some proponents. These proponents assert that it is Satan who destroys the wicked at the time of the executive judgment. When asked what happens to Satan, they reply, “Satan commits suicide.” How earnestly these people need to urgently evaluate their conclusion in the light of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 405, quoted above.

Third, there is *no* way anyone can die the second death of annihilation without an act of God. Even if we cast doubt on God’s plain Word, all life in the universe is upheld moment-by-moment by Him. At the very least He has to remove His sustaining “hand.” (Of course Scripture, as we have seen, testifies that He does much more than that.)

If, because of a false sense of His tender mercy, justice, and love, we insist that God plays no part in the death of the wicked — either actively or passively, then logically we will progress (as have many before us) to the doctrine that all will be saved. That such a logical consequence of this false teaching does take place was emphasized to the authors by one proponent of the “God does not destroy” error, who declared, “God would be a greater monster than Adolph Hitler if He destroyed the wicked.” He then declared, “Ultimately even Satan will be saved!” Such a doctrine encourages a lack of preparation to stand before the judgment bar of God.

Our God is love. See 1 John 4:8. That the plan of salvation may be complete and so that the universe may be cleansed once more and the universal distress of eternal beings be once more eliminated, God, in an act of unimaginable love, destroys sin and sinners forever.

“The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.” Nahum 1:5.

Indeed solemn and eternally consequential are the dangers of speculation beyond God’s revealed Word.✠

“Notwithstanding they had had the most convincing evidence of God’s displeasure at their course, in the destruction of the men who had deceived them, they dared to attribute His judgments to Satan. . . . It was this act that sealed their doom.”

“I will destroy thee!” “I will cast thee to the ground! I will lay thee before kings!” “I will bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee!” “I will bring thee to ashes!” Finally, God declares to Satan, “never shalt thou be any more.”

If God’s Word means anything, it is time long overdue that we ceased to be carried away by “the treacherous sophistry of the rabbis.” *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, 102.

The Spirit of Prophecy Speaks

The voice of God’s last-day messenger is as impelling as that of Scripture. Below are two unequivocal statements. The first deals with the destruction of Korah and his company. When many of the children of Israel rebelled, they attributed the judgment of God to the judgment of Satan. By this they committed the unpardonable sin. What a fearful warning to those who are flirting with the same concept today.

“But Korah and his companions rejected light until they became so blinded that the most striking manifestations of His power were not sufficient to convince them; they attributed them all to human or satanic agency. The same thing was

deceived them, they dared to attribute His judgments to Satan, declaring that through the power of the evil one, Moses and Aaron had caused the death of good and holy men. It was this act that sealed their doom. They had committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, a sin by which man’s heart is effectually hardened against the influence of divine grace.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 405.

The second statement makes the distinction between the judgments of God and the judgments of Satan.

“A single angel destroyed all the first-born of the Egyptians and filled the land with mourning. When David offended against God by numbering the people, one angel caused that terrible destruction by which his sin was punished. The same destructive power exercised by holy angels when God commands, will be exercised by evil angels when He permits.” *The Great Controversy*, 614.

A Dangerous Error

Again, we assert that the notion that God does not destroy is extremely dangerous. Souls will be lost by accepting it. First, by implication it declares our wonderful God to be a liar. Such accusers of God will have no place in His kingdom.



Let us begin to sing the “song of Moses and the Lamb” *now*.

Frank Thorp

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the “church militant” is very soon to become the “church triumphant.” “And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that *had gotten the victory* over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.” Revelation 15:2. (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.) And their song was a song of *victory*. Who does not desire to stand on that golden sea?—Only victors may.

To the overcomer God has promised great things. On reading those promises (see Revelation, chapters 2 and 3), we find that the word “overcometh” is used, which is the present tense. So the work of overcoming is present. When we read in the Testimonies that only those who have the “victory over pride, over selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action” receive the “refreshing;” and that “we must reflect the image of Jesus *fully*” (see *Early Writings*, 71) before we can be “sealed,” it makes the work of overcoming one of paramount importance. “How shall we get the victory over all these things” is a question of all-absorbing interest just now.

Many have supposed that, in order to know that victory is ours, we must encounter trials, pass through them, and, by *reflection*, know that we have overcome. We can know *now* that the victory is ours over every evil thing. What says the Word?—“And this is the victory that *overcometh* the world, even our faith.” 1 John 5:4. Can we not have faith now?—That is victory. Thank God for victory!

Christ says, “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire.” Revelation 3:18. In other words, buy “faith and love.” See *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 158. He gives us of his *own*. He wants us to buy *his* faith, “the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12. But his faith was “*tried to the utmost*.” See *Maranatha*, 217. He was “tempted in *all points* like as we are” (see Hebrews 4:15), and for that reason is “able to succour them that are tempted (Hebrews 2:18).” Then when we take his faith into our hearts, we may *know* that we are safe; for *his faith* is a *tried* faith, “tried gold.” Thanks be to God.

None should gather from this that we are not to be tempted but what we want to do when tempted, is to remind Satan that he is a vanquished foe, and that the faith we have is already tried. The temptations will pierce self, and the struggles self will make to keep alive will cause us agony of soul; but then

is when we are to tell the enemy what kind of faith he has to deal with. “The angel said . . . ‘Ye must die that ye may live.’ ” *Early Writings*, 66.

We know that there will come times when, if we consult our feelings and impulses, it will seem to be the most unreasonable and inconsistent thing we can do to claim victory. But *then is the time to claim it*.

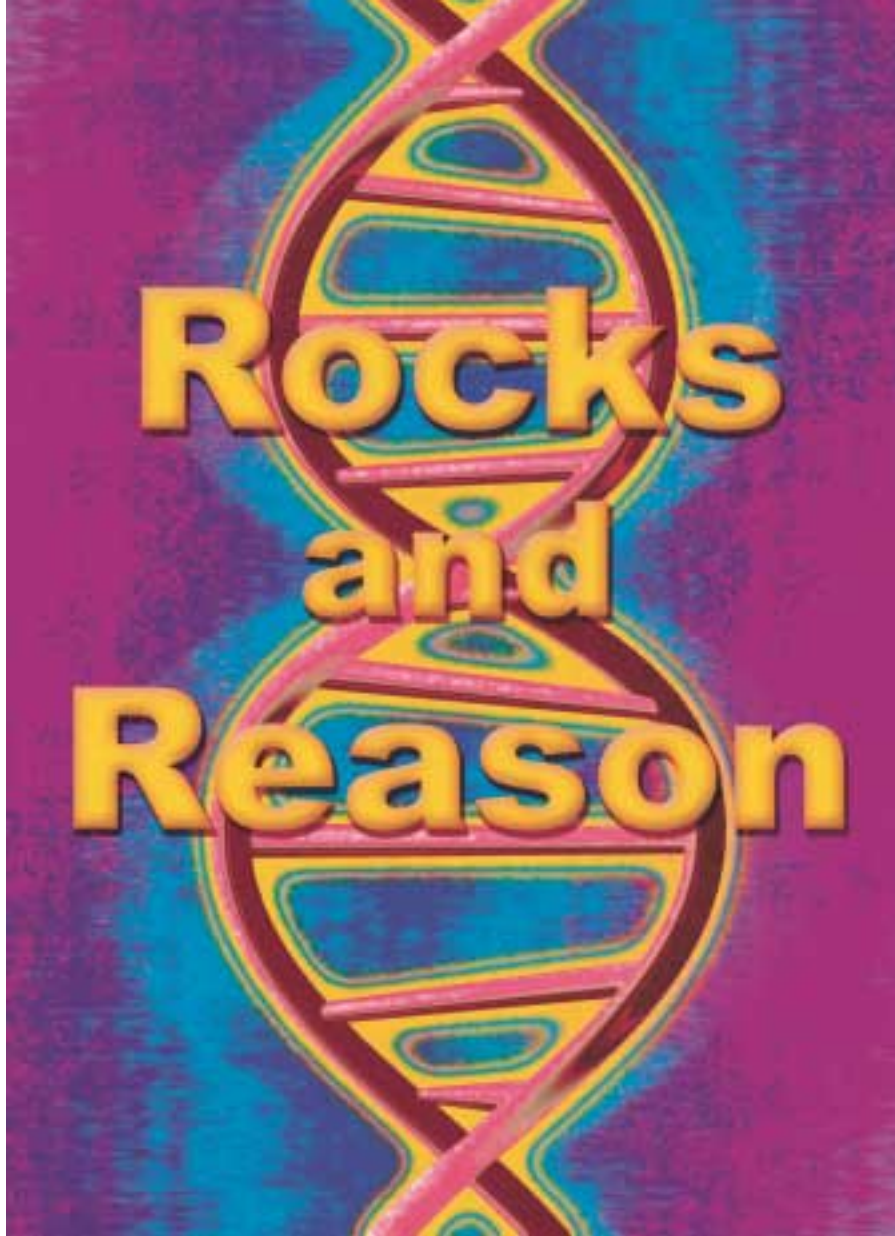
“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I *have overcome* the world.” John 16:33. Then we have great reason to “be of good cheer,” and to “rejoice with joy unspeakable” (1 Peter 1:8); for He *has overcome* the world; and if we have Him, we have the victory over the world. We need not have any anxiety over the matter at all. “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them.” Why?—“Because greater is he that is *in you*, than he that is in the world.” 1 John 4:4.

Then we can praise God for victory *now* and *forever*. If we do not claim victory now, and talk it, think it, sing it, believe in it, and rejoice in it, when fierce trials come upon us, we will not have the courage to do it then.

We read in 2 Chronicles 20:12, that when the great host came up around Jerusalem, Jehoshaphat stood before the Lord and said: “We have no might against this great company . . . neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.” That was their victory. Their eyes were upon God, and they realized that of themselves they were helpless. What did the Lord say?—“The battle is not yours, but God’s.” Verse 15. There is where many fail. They think the battle is theirs. It is God’s. When the Lord fought that battle for ancient Israel, He did it with singers; and He can fight that way still.

Then let us begin to sing the “song of Moses and the Lamb” *now*, and we shall sing it by-and-by on the sea of glass. See Revelation 15:2-3. ❀

Review and Herald, May 30, 1893.



Overwhelming evidence of a Creator

Ralph Larson

Let us start with rocks. They are in better supply than reason, being found almost everywhere on earth. They have been there for ages, which has given men of science plenty of time to study them. And scientists have reached some very firm conclusions about rocks (no pun intended.)

For an example of what I mean, please see *Biblical Archaeology Review* magazine for May/June 2001. This issue features a front-page article about rocks, complete with pictures. It seems that in the rock-strewn desert areas south of Israel, called Sinai and Negev, some rocks have been found lying or standing in circles. It is said that

142 such rock circles are now known. Observe how they are described:

“They are unmistakably purposeful arrangements of carefully selected crude stones set vertically into the ground.” Ibid., 31. (The picture on the front cover shows them lying flat on the ground.) (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

Photo: Digital Vision

Why this firm conclusion? What is there about a few rocks, often less than a dozen, in a desert, that would produce such an unqualified assertion? – The answer is too simple to be satisfying. *“It is because they are in a circle.”*

“Come now, Master Scientist,” we say. “What is so impressive about that? Don’t rocks ever come in circles of themselves, just by chance?” – He looks at us with mingled amusement and contempt. “Most emphatically not,” he says. “Rocks were spread over the land by the glaciers of the ice age. The glaciers did not arrange them in circles.” “Not ever, Master Scientist?” – “No, not ever.” “But what about the geological ages? In a million years or a billion years, couldn’t it happen?” He is becoming impatient with us. – “Of course not. Such a thing would be utterly impossible. Wherever and whenever you find rocks in a circle, you know that you are looking at somebody’s handiwork. Somebody arranged them that way. It cannot have happened in any other manner.” We thank him and withdraw, realizing that in his conviction he is as firm as, well, a rock.

In harmony with his conviction, the rest of the article in *Biblical Archaeological Review* is devoted to scholarly speculation about who might have arranged the rocks in circles, and for what purpose the arranging might have been done.

We go on our way, pondering the principle that has been so forcibly stated to us. *Somebody arranged them that way. It could not have happened in any other manner.*

Still pondering, we approach a laboratory where some other scientists are working on a different project. They are studying a human cell, or more accurately, what they have found *inside* a human cell. As we think about this, we need to remember that a human cell is only a few ten thousandths of an inch in diameter. And there is a world inside that cell, but that is getting ahead of our story.

The scientists place the number of those tiny cells in a human body at 100 trillion, give or take a few billion. Within every cell is a nucleus. Within every nucleus there are chromosomes. Within the chromosomes there are genes. Scientists estimate the numbers of these things, but we will not concern ourselves about these numbers. They are too mind-boggling. We are going to need all of the powers and capacities of our minds to deal with the next things that are inside the genes, which are inside the chromosomes, which are inside the nuclei, which are inside the cells.

Inside the genes there are DNA strips, the scientists tell us. The letters are the initials of scientific

are all there in those chemical blueprints in the DNA strip, in every cell, with no exceptions. There is a complete “you” described in every one of your 100 trillion body cells.

We recognize that this would require a lot of information, but we are hardly prepared for what the scientists say about it. One tells us that if all of the instructions and specifications that are in one DNA strip were written out in English, (are you ready for this?) they would fill *1,000 books of 600 pages each*. And all of this is in a human body cell that is smaller than a pinhead. Are you beginning to feel dizzy? Another scientist helpfully suggests, “There is enough storage capacity in the DNA of a single

If twelve rocks lying in a circle are proof of an unmistakably purposeful arrangement, what is proven by the millions, perhaps billions, of purposeful arrangements in a DNA strip in a body cell?

words that we do not need to learn. The letters DNA will suffice for us. And so, what are DNA strips? – They are chemical strips (some say ribbons) in coils small enough to fit inside a tiny human cell, but, if uncoiled and laid out straight, they would be six feet long. We will let our minds struggle with that for a while and then move on to our next question: What are these strips for? – They are the “blueprints” for every part of your body, the scientists say. They lay out, in chemical code, specifications for the color of your skin, your hair, and your eyes. They define your muscles, your bones, your tendons, your teeth, your fingernails and your toenails. You are all there, every bit of you.

Does this help you understand why scientists are now beginning to suspect that another “you” might be “cloned” from a cell taken from any part of your body? It is because you

seed to store the *Encyclopedia Britannica* 60 times over.” See Vance Ferrel’s *Origin of Life, Evolution Disproved Series*, Book Two, pages 292–305.

Dazed and reeling from this assault on our faculties of comprehension, we suddenly have a saving thought. Remember what the scientists said about the rocks in the desert? If a dozen or so rocks are found in a circle, this is absolute proof that someone has arranged them, they had said firmly. It could not have happened by chance. Remember these words in the *Biblical Archaeology Review* article?

“They are unmistakably purposeful arrangements. . . .”

If twelve rocks lying in a circle are proof of an unmistakably purposeful arrangement, what is proven by the millions, perhaps billions, of purposeful arrangements in a DNA strip in a body cell? And

we must remember that the DNA strips not only indicate the purpose of their arranger, they are purposeful themselves. They *cause* the body to take its final form, with all of its amazing capabilities.

At this point we must prepare our minds to deal with the astonishing conflict between rocks and reason. If we say to the rock scientist, "The world is filled with purposeful arrangements which are much more complicated than the rock circles in the desert. They range from DNA strips to the air we share with the plants. They give off oxygen for us to breathe, and we give off carbon dioxide for them to

"The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."
Romans 8:7.

The carnal (unconverted) mind is enmity against God, even though the person may not realize that this is true. Educated men have a tendency to think of themselves as possessing minds that are above the ordinary level, and that are so well trained and disciplined that they will never misinterpret any evidence. But a mere glance at the long list of clever and deceptive tricks that have successfully deceived scientists is more than enough to refute that idea.

When we turn our eyes the other way and consider the infinitude of microscopic arrangements that exist within our tiny body cells, we are overwhelmed with awe by the infinite attention to detail that is there demonstrated.

breathe. If, as you say, an arrangement is proof of the existence of an arranger, a Creator, then you must believe in a Creator God who made all of these arrangements." To our utter amazement he answers us with a thunderous "No! There is no Creator God!" He seems to be entirely unaware of the conflict between his rocks and his reason. As for us, we realize that we might as well try to reason with a rock.

We fare no better when we approach the DNA scientists. If we say to them, "Do not all these myriads of purposeful arrangements indicate the existence of an arranger, a Creator God?" we are likely to be met with the same firm and uncompromising denial, "No! There is no Creator God!"

How are we to understand this amazing conflict between evidence and conclusions, between rocks and reason? — The Apostle Paul gave the simplest and clearest explanation:

The list begins with Haeckel's faked drawings of embryos, which were published in many scientific books. It is worth noting that when Haeckel was called into question for his fakery, his defense was that he knew many other scientists who were doing the same thing. The list of deceptions moves on to Piltdown Man, Java Man, Peking Man, Colorado Man, and the latest example in the November 1999 issue of *National Geographic* magazine, which devoted several pages to describing a skeleton which was allegedly part bird and part dinosaur. It was belatedly discovered that the skeleton was a fake, made of parts glued together. [See *Science News*, January 15, 2000.]

Let learned men deny the obvious results of their own investigations if they wish. We need not join them. We can rejoice in the truth, even though it does enormously stretch our minds in two directions. When we look up at

the sky on a clear night and observe our "milky way," our galaxy, which is only one of many galaxies, and realize that astronomers tell us that it contains billions of suns, we struggle to comprehend the greatness and power of our God. Yet, the power cannot be denied or even doubted. The suns are there, obviously arranged. We just have to say that the power is infinite, measureless, beyond computation or even expression.

When we turn our eyes the other way and consider the infinitude of microscopic arrangements that exist within our tiny body cells, we are overwhelmed with awe by the infinite attention to detail that is there demonstrated.

And is this not just the kind of a God we need? A God for whom none of our life problems are too large for His solution, or too small for His attention? — Surely we can safely rest our case in the loving hands of such a God.

"Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. . . . His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest. . . . The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son." *Steps to Christ*, 100. ❀



Last time we identified the beast—a religio-political power which received a “deadly wound” in 1798. Now, we look at the image of the beast which causes all those who will worship the beast to be killed.

Bible Marking

As you mark this study in your Bible, we hope that it will be a blessing to you and that you will be better equipped to give an answer for your faith. See 1 Peter 3:15. Let us pray the Lord of the harvest to give us opportunities to share His truth with others while it is still day.

“Church members are to do evangelistic work in the homes of their neighbors who have not yet received full evidence of the truth for this time. . . . The presentation of the truth, in love and simplicity, from house to house, is in harmony with the instruction that Christ gave His disciples.” *Ye Shall Receive Power*, 147.

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:

The Image,

TI 1: Rev. 13:1-8; 17:15

- Turn to the first verse and write the comment (if you wish to use the comments), and the next reference in the margin near 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 reach the end. Beside the last text, write “**End TI.**”

- Go through the study to check for broken links.

- Share the study with others!

The Image

Code: TI

TI 1: Revelation 13:1-8; 17:15.

The first beast arose out of the sea. Waters represent existing civilizations—in this case Europe.

TI 2: Revelation 13:10-11.

“Another beast” came “up out of the earth”—a largely unpopulated area—at the time the first beast received the “deadly wound.”

TI 3: Revelation 13:11.

This beast came up peaceably as a plant grows, not by conquest.

TI 4: Revelation 13:1.

The first beast had crowns representing kings.

TI 5: Revelation 13:11.

No crown for this beast, only “two horns like a lamb” representing a new, young America in 1798 separating church and state.

TI 6: Revelation 13:11-12.

Civil power will be used to enforce religion.

TI 7: Revelation 13:16-17.

Citizens will be forced to receive the mark of the beast—worship on Sunday.¹

TI 8: Revelation 14:1; 7:4.

A small remnant will receive the seal of God in their foreheads.²

TI 9: Revelation 13:15-17.

America makes the image of the beast by enforcing Sunday laws.

TI 10: 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.

Satan often uses religious leaders.

TI 11: Revelation 13:13-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10.

Religious leaders will deceive by wonders, miracles, power, and signs.

TI 12: Revelation 16:13-14.

These leaders have unclean spirits—the spirits of devils.

TI 13: Matthew 24:24.

All but the “very elect” will be deceived.

TI 14: Luke 21:34-36.

Let us all watch and pray that we might not be deceived.

¹ See the November 2000 *Our Firm Foundation* for a study on “The Mark of the Beast.”

² See the February 2000 *Our Firm Foundation* for a study on “The Seal of the Living God.”

*Are you
ready to
follow
Christ
wherever
He goes?*

Harvey Steck



*Wasted
Warnings*

of a Future Crisis

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. *These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.* These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." Revelation 14:1-4. (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

Do you want to be one of those people who are described in these

verses — those who "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth"? I am sure you do. I know that I want to. However, if we expect to someday be in heaven where Christ is, we must begin where He began in His experience in this world.

Christ showed us an example in His humble birth, His growing up as an obedient Son in Nazareth, His baptism, and His service as a medical missionary for three-and-a-half years. These first four steps of Jesus' life may not seem difficult for us to follow; however, Jesus' life did not end there.

Then came Gethsemane and Calvary — the finale of His earthly life, which preceded His resurrection and ascension. What about these closing scenes — the mob, the abuse and false accusations in trial? What about being nailed to the cross — are we ready to follow the Lamb *wherever* He goes?

Between the life of service and the ascension to heaven is an

experience of test, suffering, and death that all must pass through.

Experiencing What Christ Experienced

As we follow Christ's example, there are some things that we will *not* experience. Christ was our Sin-bearer and Sacrifice for sin. If we will accept by faith the life and death of Christ for us, we will not be called to bear the punishment of our own sins or the sins of others. However, there is much of Jesus' experience during His last days on earth that we *will* parallel to one degree or another.

Consider this oft-repeated passage:

"It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love

will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross." *The Desire of Ages*, 83.

The whole plan of salvation was at stake in Gethsemane and Calvary, and all will be at stake again when the final generation face Satan's greatest temptations after the close of probation. Are we prepared to face that test?

"Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 69.

A Preview of the Crisis

Was Jesus taken by surprise by the crisis at the end of His earthly life? — No; He knew what was coming. In John's record of the Last Supper, he writes, "Now before the feast of the passover . . . *Jesus knew that his hour was come* that he should depart out of this world unto the Father." John 13:1.

After Jesus washed the disciples' feet, He again showed His love for the disciples by telling them that He was soon to be betrayed, "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he." Verses 18–19.

A few minutes later Jesus gave the disciples another warning,

"All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." Matthew 26:30–32.

Note that Jesus warned them that they would desert Him, but He also gave them hope for the future, leaving them with a promise that He would rise again and meet them in Galilee. How did Peter and the rest of the disciples respond to Jesus' warning? — "Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will

I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. *Likewise also said all the disciples.*" Verses 33–35.

If you were one of the disciples, and you were expecting Jesus to be crowned King of the Jews — and that you would be reigning with Him — would you also have responded to Jesus' warning in protest? Or would

If you were one of the disciples, . . . would you also have responded to Jesus' warning in protest? Or would you have received it as a call for self-examination and preparation?

you have received it as a call for self-examination and preparation?

On at least three previous occasions, Jesus had warned the disciples of what was coming. Notice the reaction of the disciples each time:

1. The coasts of Caesarea Philippi: "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? . . . From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. *Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.*" Matthew 16:13, 21–22.

Peter did not want to believe that Jesus — his hero — would suffer such things. Here we see Peter laying the foundation for his later reactions in the upper room, on the road to Jerusalem, and in Christ's trial.

2. Galilee: "And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. *And they were exceeding sorry.*" Matthew 17:22–23.

3. Going up to Jerusalem: "And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again." Matthew 20:17–19.

Now, notice what happened immediately following Jesus' warning:

"Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him." Verse 20. Jesus' followers were so determined to believe that Christ's glorious kingdom would be established in this world, that His warnings regarding the future passed right by them — and they sought to make sure that they would have a high place in His kingdom.

Jesus' third warning, which we read in Matthew 20, is also recorded in Luke 18:31–33. Notice the next verse in Luke's account: "And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." Verse 34.

Wasted Warnings

Earlier we read in John, chapter 13, that in the upper room Jesus knew that His hour had come. What was the attitude of the disciples — were they meditating upon the warnings that He had given them previously? Did they also recognize that the hour had come, that the dreaded time was upon them? — Luke provides the answer in his relation of the incident: "And there

was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." Luke 22:24.

Even when the disciples deserved to suffer the consequences of their own self-centeredness, Jesus warned them of the sifting to come, "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." Verses 31-34.

was opened to the disciples by the words of Christ. The events connected with the close of probation and the work of preparation for the time of trouble, are clearly presented. *But multitudes have no more understanding of these important truths than if they had never been revealed.* Satan watches to catch away every impression that would make them wise unto salvation, and the time of trouble will find them unready." *The Great Controversy*, 594.

Are we preparing today to follow the Lamb by faith wherever He leads us – or shall we follow the experiences of the disciples and be just as unprepared as if Christ had never shown us what is to come just ahead?

shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. . . . And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Matthew 24:9-13.

When they betray us, they will be betraying Christ: "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matthew 25:40.

How does Satan feel when we respond to our trials the same way Jesus did? – "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 12:17.

We already read Jesus' warning in Luke 22:31 that the disciples would be sifted. The Spirit of Prophecy echoes that warning for us:

"The days of purification of the church are hastening on apace. God will have a people pure and true. In the mighty sifting soon to take place we shall be better able to measure the strength of Israel. The signs reveal that the time is near when the Lord will manifest that His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor. . . .

"The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who have step-by-step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. The contest is between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. In this time the gold will be separated from the dross in the church. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired

"The events connected with the close of probation and the work of preparation for the time of trouble, are clearly presented. But multitudes have no more understanding of these important truths than if they had never been revealed."

Christ tried to help His disciples understand that suffering, persecution, and death were just ahead, and they needed to prepare for it. But what good did these warnings do the disciples? Is there a parallel for us today?

"Before His crucifixion the Saviour explained to His disciples that He was to be put to death and to rise again from the tomb, and angels were present to impress His words on minds and hearts. But the disciples were looking for temporal deliverance from the Roman yoke, and they could not tolerate the thought that He in whom all their hopes centered should suffer an ignominious death. The words which they needed to remember were banished from their minds; and when the time of trial came, it found them unprepared. The death of Jesus as fully destroyed their hopes as if He had not forewarned them. So in the prophecies the future is opened before us as plainly as it

Our Future Foretold

Jesus said, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches." Revelation 22:16. Let us consider what Jesus testified to us, and its parallel with the experience of Christ and His disciples.

In Revelation 13:16-17, Christ foretold the mark of the beast, and that none will be able to buy or sell without the mark – which will be enforced by the uniting of church and state. Verse 15 tells us that this persecution will culminate in a death decree. Let us remember that Christ was also arrested and put to death by a union of church and state, religious and civil power – the Jews and the Romans.

As with the disciples, there is coming a sifting (Luke 22:31), and many will be offended (Matthew 26:31) and will betray us as Judas betrayed Christ: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and

for its brilliancy will then go out in darkness. Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat. All who assume the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ's righteousness, will appear in the shame of their own nakedness." *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 80-81.

Are you prepared to meet the crisis? Note that the sifting will purge out not just the hypocrites but also those who, though sincere, have failed to gain an experience that is sufficient to lay the foundation for the coming crisis.

"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. By uniting with the world and

partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, *who once rejoiced in the truth*, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren. When Sabbathkeepers are brought before the courts to answer for their faith, these apostates are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the rulers against them." *The Great Controversy*, 608.

You and I are rejoicing in the truth today. What will we do in the midst of the storm just ahead?

Do you feel secure in your future plans and expectations? That assurance is well-founded if you

have a living, obedient experience in Christ. Or are you resting your confidence upon self-centered plans and the deluded assurances of the devil, leaving yourself vulnerable to be utterly shaken in the test ahead?

Next month we will consider Jesus' victory in Gethsemane and the steps that He took to prepare for that victory. ❀

— — —

We recommend the study of Elder W. D. Frazee's book entitled *Coming Events and Crisis at the Close*, from which many of the insights shared in this article were gleaned. You may purchase a copy (stock# BEFW-CECA) from Hope International for \$12.95 plus shipping and sales tax (see page 3).



The Final Conflict Between Truth and Error

By Ellen G. White

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Ellen White's Writings: Their Role and Function Part 2

Dennis Priebe

Last month we considered Ellen White's claims that (1) her work is all of God, or it is of the devil; and that (2) "In no case have I given my own judgment or opinion." We also began to consider what she meant by referring to her work as a "lesser light."

Roy Graham has explained lesser light in a helpful way: "The moon is called in Scripture the 'lesser light.' We know that it shines with 'borrowed light' from the sun. But this does not make the moon any less 'authoritative.' It has its sphere and its appointed task in God's creation. So when Ellen White used this term to describe her work, she was not just being modest or humble; she is not saying that she is a second-class prophet; she is not saying that her messages are of a less important or less urgent nature than those of the biblical prophets. Rather, she is emphasizing the function of her role and her mes-

sages. The work of any one prophet cannot be compared to the cumulative light that shines across the centuries from the many prophets whose works are found in the Holy Scriptures. But the Source of her ministry is the same as theirs, and while her work was primarily for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, this fact in no wise diminishes the importance of her role to that people. . . . She is one and the canonical prophets are many. But both she and they were commissioned by the Holy Spirit to accomplish specific tasks for God's people. It is important to discern the distinctive function of both." Roy E. Graham, "How the Gift of Prophecy Relates to God's Word." *Adventist Review*, October 14, 1982, 16, 18.

I believe he helped us to understand lesser light, especially in this sentence. "The work of any one prophet cannot be compared to the cumulative light that shines across

the centuries from the many prophets." Could it be that *any* prophet as a single light is a lesser light pointing to the greater light of the prophets who preceded him? If the Source of the ministry of all prophets is the same, then the Authority of all prophets is the same, and lesser cannot refer to authority. Greater refers to the cumulative effect of the Scriptures, namely, the combination of *many* prophets writing under Inspiration. Ellen White is one prophet writing near the end of time, compared to the many prophets collected within Scripture. Lesser light is lesser in relation to the greater cumulative light of many prophets shining through the books of the Bible. Thus, lesser light does not apply to authority or to the quality of inspiration, but to the function and purpose of Ellen White's writings.

We have always taught that Ellen White must be tested by the

Bible, but what does this assertion mean? When Paul was writing his letters how could the Christians of his day be sure that his letters were from God? Paul commended some Christians who studied the Scriptures to see if he was teaching truth. See Acts 17:10–11. What did they study to test his messages? — Obviously, the Old Testament, which was their Scripture. Paul's letters would be accepted if they were in agreement with the Old Testament. Now, we must remember that Paul did take some new directions which seemed to conflict with currently held beliefs. However, the crucial question was, Did he contradict what the Old Testament taught? As long as Paul did not contradict the Scriptures, then he could take some new directions. So we see that Paul's writings were tested by previous revelation.

Now, what happened when Paul's writings were accepted after passing the test? — They became part of the standard to test future claimants to the gift of prophecy. Paul's writings, along with the other writings of the New Testament, are now used to test anyone who claims to have the gift of prophecy.

Would it not also be true that Jeremiah's message or Isaiah's message or Ezekiel's message would have to be tested by the writings of Moses? If they passed the test, they would then become part of the Scriptures which would test later writings. Could it be that Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel were lesser lights, individually, pointing back to the greater light which was given through Moses? As individual prophets spoke and wrote, were they not being tested at all times by previous revelation? But when they were accepted, having passed the test, did they not function authoritatively for the people of God? When Ellen White's writings pass the test, do they not function in the same way? If she passes the test, then she is a genuine prophet, and she becomes as authoritative as any biblical prophet.

Some will object immediately that this reasoning is making her

part of the Canon. No, the Canon is closed; and we have no desire to add her to the Canon. However, does this mean that she has less authority than the canonical prophets? What about Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist? They were not part of the Canon, but were they authoritative? The authority of a prophetic message depends upon revelation and inspiration, not canonicity. The messages of these prophets came directly from God and were authori-

points to the continuance of prophecy in the church. Scripture says that we will have further messages coming from God in the same way that messages came through Bible prophets.

How, then, should we approach our study of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy? — The Bible must remain first in our study. When we study any topic, we must go to the Bible first to understand God's will. We will go next to Ellen White to understand God's will on the topic

I am sure that the questions of the early church about Paul were the same questions that the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers had about Ellen White.

tive; yet, they never became part of the Canon. An extremely important principle here is that *a writing is canonized because it is authoritative; it is not authoritative because it is canonized*. The authority of a prophetic writing precedes the canonization of that writing. So, the question we are really interested in is not whether Ellen White is canonical, but is she authoritative? It is the question of authority that is crucial.

I am sure that the questions of the early church about Paul were the same questions that the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers had about Ellen White. The early church surely asked, "If the fullness of revelation has come in Jesus Christ, why do we need to listen to this man Paul? Jesus Christ is the greater Light. He is the supreme Light. Who is this Paul?" Now listen to our questions. "The greater light has come in Scripture. Why should we listen so carefully to Ellen White? Why should we take her seriously if the fullness of revelation has come in Scripture?" Perhaps not only the questions, but also the answers will be similar.

This position does not deny *Sola Scriptura*, because Scripture itself

under study. Only after we have done this study of the messages of God can we form our opinions and our own interpretations of what God is saying. We dare not place our opinions before the Bible or before the messages of Ellen White. The Bible must be first as the source and the foundation of our message. Ellen White's writings come after that, to illuminate and to amplify that message, and only then may we make judgments about doctrines, God's will, and our responsibilities.

Sometimes it is suggested that Ellen White herself said that her writings were not necessary for our salvation. This statement may clarify her meaning: "If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have kept God's law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or

engraved upon the tables of stone. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 364.

What she is saying is that God gives messages according to man's need. If man had been obedient to God's law in its unwritten form, we would never have had many of the specific directions given by Moses.

We must be alert to God's Word and be willing to obey it wherever we find it.

Does Ellen White Have Doctrinal Authority?

Is it true that Ellen White is authoritative on devotional and counseling levels, but not on the doctrinal level? We need to refresh our memories about early Adventist history. "When they came to the point in their study where they said,

It seems that one of the functions of the prophetic gift was to establish which scriptural interpretations were correct and which were not.

Each of these messages was given because of need – because God's people needed additional information. Does that mean that the Ten Commandments were unimportant? Or does that mean that the additional information given by Moses to the people of Israel was unimportant because it need not have been given?

It is safe to say that the messages of Isaiah and Jeremiah came to Israel because of their unfaithfulness in obeying God's will as expressed through the writings of Moses. Their messages should not have been given, but because of Israel's unfaithfulness, we have them. Does that mean that they are less important? Are they not extremely important for God's people to study and to follow? Just so, Ellen White's writings would not have been given if God's people had been faithful to the messages contained in Scripture. God would not have needed to send more messages. However, because God's people did not understand and obey the messages of Scripture, her messages were sent. Does that make them less important? Or of less authority? When God speaks, He speaks for a purpose. And whenever He speaks, we must listen, just as it was important for Israel to listen to Isaiah or Jeremiah speaking for God.

'We can do nothing more,' the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to how we were to labor and teach effectively. Thus light was given that helped us to understand the Scriptures in regard to Christ, His mission, and His priesthood. A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God was made plain to me, and I gave to others the instruction that the Lord had given me." *Selected Messages*, book 1, 206–207.

When the brethren were at an impasse in their studies because they held contradictory opinions, the Spirit of the Lord would take Ellen White off in vision and explain scriptural passages regarding Christ, His mission, and His priesthood. This material was certainly doctrinal, and it was very authoritative when she returned from vision and told the brethren what God had told her. Obviously, some men would have to give up their opinion about truth when her message came through vision. It seems that one of the functions of the prophetic gift was to establish which scriptural interpretations were correct and which were not.

"The Lord shewed me in vision, more than one year ago, that Brother Crosier had the true light, on the cleansing of the Sanctuary, etc.; and that it was His will that Brother C. should write out the view which he gave us in the *Day-Star Extra*, February 7, 1846. I feel fully authorized by the Lord, to recommend that *Extra*, to every saint." *A Word to the "Little Flock,"* 12.

Certainly we are dealing with doctrinal material here. At this time, a few days before the new time set in 1845, "Ellen was with the band at Carver, Massachusetts, where she saw in vision that we should be disappointed, and that the saints must pass through the 'time of Jacob's trouble,' which was future. Her view of Jacob's trouble was entirely new to us, as well as herself." *Ibid.*, 22. The time of Jacob's trouble certainly impinges on doctrine.

"I beg leave to state . . . what I have seen in vision relative to these things on which you have written. I fully agree with you, that there will be two literal resurrections, 1000 years apart. I also agree with you, that the new heavens, and the new earth (Revelation 21:1, Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13), will not appear, till after the wicked dead are raised, and destroyed, at the end of the 1000 years. . . . You think, that those who worship before the saint's feet, (Revelation 3:9), will at last be saved. Here I must differ with you; for God shewed me that this class were professed Adventists. . . . In the 'hour of temptation' . . . they will know that they are forever lost; and overwhelmed with anguish of spirit, they will bow at the saint's feet. You also think, that Michael stood up, and the time of trouble commenced, in the spring of 1844. The Lord has shown me in vision that . . . Michael's standing up (Daniel 12:1) to deliver His people, is in the future." *Ibid.*, 11–12. Here she is speaking authoritatively on issues that are clearly doctrinal.

Now, let us review the story of one of the early conferences. "Our first conference was at Volney in Brother Arnold's barn. There were

about thirty-five present, all that could be collected in that part of the state. There were hardly two agreed. Each was strenuous for his views, declaring that they were according to the Bible. . . . Brother Arnold held that the 1000 years of Revelation 20 were in the past; and that the 144,000 were those raised at Christ's resurrection. And as we had the emblem of our dying Lord before us, and were about to commemorate His sufferings, Brother Arnold arose and said he had no faith in what we were about to do, that the Sacrament was a continuation of the Passover, to be observed but once a year.

"These strange differences of opinion rolled a heavy weight upon me, especially as Brother Arnold spoke of the 1000 years being in the past. I knew that he was in error, and great grief pressed my spirits. . . . The light of Heaven rested upon me. I was soon lost to earthly things. My accompanying angel presented before me some of the errors of those present, and also the truth in contrast with their errors. That these discordant views, which they claimed to be according to the Bible, were only according to their opinion of the Bible, and that their errors must be yielded, and they unite upon the third angel's message. Our meeting ended victoriously. Truth gained the victory." *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, 97-99.

She was given specific information about the doctrinal errors of the people in that meeting and also the truth in contrast with these errors. She was told by God which was which. The brethren meeting together accepted the message from God on doctrinal issues, and some had to yield their erroneous positions.

"At that time one error after another pressed in upon us; ministers and doctors brought in new doctrines. We would search the Scriptures with much prayer, and the Holy Spirit would bring the truth to our minds. Sometimes whole nights would be devoted to searching the Scriptures, and earnestly asking God for guidance. Compa-

nies of devoted men and women assembled for this purpose. The power of God would come upon me, and I was enabled clearly to define what is truth and what is error.

"As the points of our faith were thus established, our feet were placed upon a solid foundation. We accepted the truth point by point, under the demonstration of the Holy Spirit. I would be taken off in vision, and explanations would be given me. I was given illustrations of heavenly things, and of the sanctuary, so that we were placed where light was shining on us in clear, distinct rays." *Gospel Workers*, 302. Once again, she defined truth and error on points of doctrine, by means of the messages given to her in vision.

"The foundations of our faith . . . were laid at the beginning of our work, by prayerful study of the Word and by revelation." *Ibid.*, 307. Notice the two phrases, "by prayerful study of the Word and by revelation." God's

revealed many things pointing out the truth, thus saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Isaiah 30:21." *Selected Messages*, book 3, 32.

"I was sent by the Lord from place to place to rebuke those who were holding these false doctrines." *Evangelism*, 610.

The issue to be decided is not whether she is speaking on doctrinal issues or on pastoral issues, but whether she is speaking for the Lord at all. If she is speaking for the Lord, then the Lord will speak pastorally, He will counsel, He will direct, He will encourage, and He will speak doctrinally. It is totally improper to make a distinction between doctrinal and pastoral authority.

We must be sure that we understand the full implications of her inspiration, and what that means for us. "In my books [*Patriarchs and Prophets*, *The Great Controversy*, *The Desire of Ages*], the truth is stated, barricaded by a 'Thus saith the Lord.' The Holy Spirit traced these

The issue to be decided is not whether she is speaking on doctrinal issues or on pastoral issues, but whether she is speaking for the Lord at all.

Spirit speaking through His messenger helped to lay the foundations of our faith. "Serious errors in doctrine and practice were cherished. . . . God revealed these errors to me in vision and sent me to His erring children to declare them." *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 655-656. The evidence is clear that she did understand her writings to have full authority in doctrinal areas.

"The Lord has given me much light that I want the people to have; for there is instruction that the Lord has given me for His people. It is light that they should have, line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. This is now to come before the people, because it has been given to correct specious errors and to specify what is truth. The Lord has

truths upon my heart and mind as indelibly as the law was traced by the finger of God upon the tables of stone." *Selected Messages*, book 3, 122. She also says, "There is one straight chain of truth, without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written." *Ibid.*, 52.

She recorded, "All who believe that the Lord has spoken through Sister White, and has given her a message, will be safe from the many delusions that will come in these last days." *Ibid.*, 84. What a magnificent promise! Her messages can be a tremendous blessing if we will accept them and not try to dodge their full impact upon our lives. God has chosen to speak clearly and authoritatively to His people in these final days of earth's history. Praise His name! ✨



*Is unity among God's people important?
How can we achieve it?*

Ray DeCarlo

When Christ was upon this earth, He spent entire nights in prayer for His disciples. See Luke 6:12. However, He did not pray for them alone. Looking down through history at the condition of His people until the close of time, He prayed for us. In the prayer recorded in John, chapter 17, He said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." Verse 20.

It is wonderful to think that Christ was praying for *us*. He saw the trials and temptations that His people would encounter, and the great burden upon His heart was that we be united. His desire was "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Verse 21.

Have you ever considered that the unity we are to possess with one another is actually a testimony to the world that God has sent Christ? It proves that through Christ we, who are wicked, corrupt, and vile,

can become righteous and come into perfect unity with one another.

Christ prayed for unity. He longed to see it among His followers. Why then is it so lacking today? — Inspiration provides us with this insight: "The cause of division and discord in families and in the church is *separation from Christ*. To come near to Christ is to come near to one another. The secret of true unity in the church and in the family is not diplomacy, not management, not a superhuman effort to overcome difficulties — though there will be much of this to do — but *union with Christ*." *The Adventist Home*, 179. (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

If there is friction or division in our homes or in our churches, it is evidence that someone has stepped away from Christ. *All of our efforts will not bring true unity unless we are all united to Christ*.

The servant of the Lord uses this illustration: "Picture a large circle, from the edge of which are many lines all running to the center. The nearer these lines approach the

center, the nearer they are to one another. Thus it is in the Christian life. The closer we come to Christ, the nearer we shall be to one another. God is glorified as His people unite in harmonious action." Ibid.

Unity of the Faith

In Ephesians, chapter 4, Paul lists spiritual gifts that are given to the members of the church, and at the conclusion of this list, he tells us why they are given. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Verse 13. There is coming a time — and I believe it is in the very near future — when God's people will have perfect unity of faith.

Jesus talked about this very thing in His unity prayer. He prayed, "Sanctify them [set them apart for a holy purpose] through thy truth: thy word is truth." John 17:17. Unity of the faith is predicated upon the truth. There can be no unity of faith outside of the truth. Any effort to unify outside of the truth will not result in true unity; it is ecumenicalism.

Sister White gave this admonition, "Our church members see that there are differences of opinion among the leading men, and they themselves enter into controversy regarding the subjects under dispute. Christ calls for unity. But He does not call for us to unify on wrong practices. The God of heaven draws a sharp contrast between pure, elevating, ennobling truth, and false, misleading doctrines. He calls sin and impenitence by the right name. He does not gloss over wrongdoing with a coat of untempered mortar. I urge our brethren to unify upon a true, scriptural basis." *Selected Messages*, book 1, 175.

We see this situation frequently today. When disagreements come among the leading brethren, lay people begin to take up the issue and soon someone begins calling for unity. They say, "Let us just forget about our differences. We need to unite in brotherly love." We have

seen how very important unity is; however, let us be careful.

The only true unity we should ever seek for is that which is built upon the platform of truth. To take any other position is to compromise the integrity of the Word of God. If those calling for unity want to simply gloss over differences on important doctrinal truths, although my heart breaks to see separation, I must say with God's faithful people of old, "Then let there be difference, and even war." *The Great Controversy*, 45.

Oneness in Diversity

Inspiration gives us another example of true unity from the natural world, "We are to bear in mind that the branches in the True Vine are the believers who are brought into oneness by connection with the Vine.

"The connection of the branches with one another and with the Vine constitutes them a unity, but this does not mean uniformity in everything. Unity in diversity is a principle that pervades the whole creation. While there is an individuality and variety in nature, there is a oneness in their diversity; for all things receive their usefulness and beauty from the same source. The great Master Artist writes His name on all His created works, from the loftiest cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop upon the wall. They all declare His handiwork, from the lofty mountain and the grand ocean to the tiniest shell upon the seashore." *Review and Herald*, November 9, 1897.

When you look into the forest do you see all the same trees? Are they all oaks? Are they all pines? Yet they all thrive in harmony. What a lesson for us! We need to learn to respect one another in our diversities. Even though each of us is unique, that does not and should not prohibit us from being one together in Christ. We all bring different qualities and traits that can enhance the efficiency of the work; yet, how often we see our differences as obstacles. We want to impose our will upon one another. We say in

our hearts and with our actions, if not with our words, "If this person would only do things like I do them everything would be just fine." God has never called us to be the standard for another.

Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32. The primary application of this verse is certainly God's promise to make us free from sin, but I also believe it applies to our subject. God has given each of us religious freedom, and it is a gift most of us hold very dear. We often

The only true unity we should ever seek for is that which is built upon the platform of truth.

talk about freedom from Romanism or from the state; yet, while we cry out for freedom, we bring others into slavery by imposing our own opinions and views upon them. God calls us to freedom in Him, and this freedom can be found through oneness in diversity.

There is only one true Standard, one Example whom we can safely pattern ourselves after – our Savior Jesus Christ. Following any other man will always lead to great disappointment. We need to look to Jesus, and by beholding Him, we will be drawn into true unity with one another.

Unity Predicted for God's People

The Bible predicts that there will come a time when the church will be perfectly united in faith. Sadly, this is certainly not the case today. I see it all too frequently. I will give messages in a church and receive a wonderful response. The people will say, "Thank you. What a wonderful message." And the next week another preacher will speak doctrines in their pulpit exactly opposite of what I presented; and again, the people will say, "Amen. Praise the Lord."

Many of our people are in such a lukewarm condition that they no longer can see the difference between truth and error; or, in some cases, they were never taught all of the fundamental doctrines of our faith. They could not show you what they believe from the Word of God. What a tragedy!

We can claim the Bible promise that someday things will be very different. Consider this prophecy from Isaiah 52:1: "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem,

the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean." Praise the Lord! The day is coming when there will no longer be unclean, unconverted people in God's church. We will not baptize people for the sake of numbers. We will not baptize people before they have learned and accepted the doctrines of our faith.

The day is coming when God's people will all be united in purity of faith. Isaiah continues with these words in verse 8, "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for *they shall see eye to eye*, when the LORD shall bring again Zion." God's people will be united; God's Word is true and faithful. The only question is, *Will we be among those who will unify on the platform of eternal truth?*

Unity of the Spirit

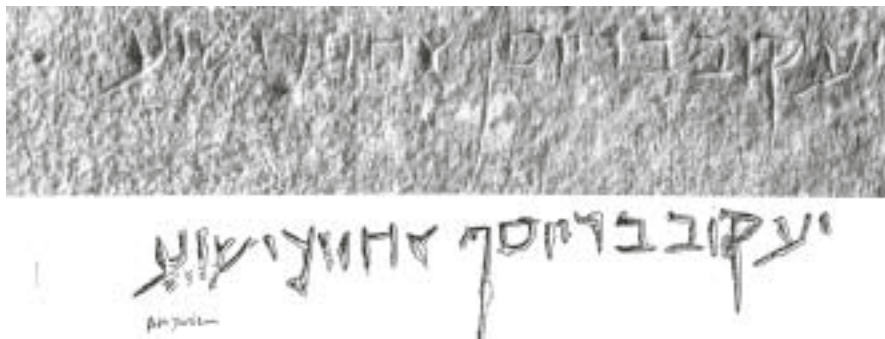
The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy talk about another aspect of unity, and that is unity of the Spirit. Here is how the Apostle Paul described this vital experience: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord,

continued on page 30...



James' Burial Box

News Item: "After nearly 2,000 years, historical evidence for the existence of Jesus has come to light literally written in stone. An inscription has been found on an ancient bone box, called an ossuary, that reads 'James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus.' This container provides the only New Testament-era mention of the central figure of



Christianity and is the first-ever archaeological discovery to corroborate Biblical references to Jesus.

"The Aramaic words etched on the box's side show a cursive form of writing used only from about 10 to 70 A.D., according to noted paleographer André Lemaire of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (popularly known as the Sorbonne University) in Paris, who verified the inscription's authenticity. The ossuary has been dated to approximately 63 A.D.

"The new find is also significant in that it corroborates the existence of Joseph, Jesus' father, and James, Jesus' brother and a leader of the early Christian church in Jerusalem. The family relationships contained on the new find helped experts ascertain

that the inscription very likely refers to the Biblical James, brother of Jesus (see, for example, Matthew 13:55-56 and Galatians 1:18-19). Although all three names were common in ancient times, the statistical probability of their appearing in that combination is extremely slim. In addition, the mention of a brother is unusual—indicating that this Jesus must have been a well-known figure." *Biblicalarchaeology.com*, November/December 2002.

End-Time Perspective: As the darkness deepens around our world, how gracious is our Lord to

give more evidence that His Word is true to those who do not believe, and also affirming the faith of those who already believe.

Dialogue or Compromise?

News Item: (Agape Press) "United Methodists and the Muslim community will be entering a four-year national dialogue next year. But one conservative Methodist leader says the effort will compromise the gospel of Christ. Anne Marshall, a spokesperson for the Commission, says that two major Muslim groups have praised the United Methodists for initiating attempts at 'interfaith understanding.' However, not everyone thinks the ecumenical give-and-take between the two religious groups is a good idea.

Mark Tooley, executive director of United Methodist Action, says this is a continuation of the overall trend in mainline churches to give priority to dialogue with leaders of false religions, thereby de-emphasizing evangelism and the message of Christ. . . . Members of the United Methodist Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns say through the dialogue they hope to explore what they call 'a deeper understanding of Islam.' " *Crosswalk.com*, Religion Today Summary for October 11, 2002.

End-Time Perspective: It is interesting that the ecumenical push is not just among the Christian denominations, but it is also widening to all other faiths.

Promoting Spiritism and Paganism

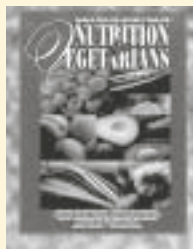
News Item: (Agape Press) "The United States Justice Foundation, a pro-family law firm, is taking legal action against a California public school after district officials refused to cancel a controversial 'Day of the Dead' celebration taking place this week. The fourth-grade event includes pagan rituals and a sexually explicit video. 'What they had the kids doing was literally building altars, bringing in pictures of dead relatives and dead pets to be placed on the altar for very specific remembrance,' Richard Ackerman, counsel for the plaintiff, explains. 'I'm not disputing the celebration fits within a curriculum designed to give a historical perspective of Latino culture. That's not the issue. It's when you step over the line and have students actually engage in the practices.' According to the attorney, the school is arguing that culture, religion, and state are all separable from each other. Superintendent Wong says the school is not teaching a specific religion, and that within the curriculum it is

appropriate to teach about cultural events. And while he is confident the school has done nothing wrong, the district official acknowledges the potential for controversy exists." Ibid., Religion Today Summary for October 31, 2002.

News Item: (CNSNews.com) "Frustrated by an unsuccessful campaign to achieve religious recognition from the Boy Scouts of America, a Seattle-based Wicca church has launched its own youth program, which is based on tolerance for different beliefs, including differences in sexual orientation. SpiralScouts founder Pete 'Pathfinder' Davis believes that many of the things the Boy Scouts are doing are 'socially inappropriate.' He said he created the SpiralScouts to 'fill the void left by prejudicial treatment of other established children's programs.' It says it offers children the opportunity to develop interpersonal and life skills and a pagan world-view, in addition to learning 'the usual handicrafts of scouting and woodland lore.' . . . The Boy Scouts of America do not appear to be concerned about the new competition." Ibid.

End-Time Perspective: We are being confronted by the powers of darkness not only through deception and counterfeit, but also at the other end of the scale, raw paganism. How important it is for us to understand and use the test given by God in Isaiah 8:19-20 to discern and expose Satan's lies: "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." ❀

Books for Better Health



Nutrition for Vegetarians Reg. \$14.95
By Agatha and Calvin Thrash Sale: \$13.25

BETA-NFVE

Just the resource you need to help start and maintain a low-fat, high-fiber diet. Gives advice on how much protein, vitamins, and calcium you need, with special consideration for those who are pregnant; how to avoid and treat diabetes; and how to manage an effective weight-control plan. An outstanding book that has helped thousands to understand and embrace better health through a vegetarian lifestyle.



Taste and See Reg. \$11.95
By Penny King Sale: \$10.50

BEKP-TSEE

Allergy-relief cooking! Kitchen-tested recipes provide a comprehensive design to cover almost anyone's food allergies and to provide a variety of workable solutions.

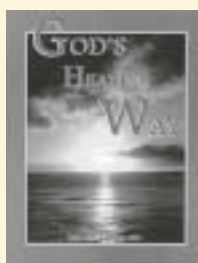
A collection of recipes containing no meat, dairy products, vinegar, sugar, wheat, baking powder, or eggs, and little or no salt or fat.



Something Better Reg. \$9.95
By Katy Chamberlin Sale: \$8.75

BECK-SBGO

This book exposes some of the myths and prejudices against a diet high in live foods. Better overall health, more energy, and a clearer mind can be achieved by following God's original design.



God's Healing Way Reg. \$11.95
By Mary Ann McNeilus Sale: \$10.50

BEMM-GHWA

This simple yet profound study guide is designed to make medical missionary work more than a mechanical routine to be used for the sick and ailing. While simple remedies are amazingly effective, it is the cooperation of the human element with divine power that exhibits God's great power to heal. *God's Healing Way* inspires us to look to God as the Great Healer and to value simple remedies as priceless. God is the ultimate as well as the immediate source of all healing.

Sale ends April 30, 2003.

OBEDIENCE



the Condition of Salvation

*Wonderful are the possibilities placed
before those who study and practice the
truths of the Word of God.*

Ellen G. White

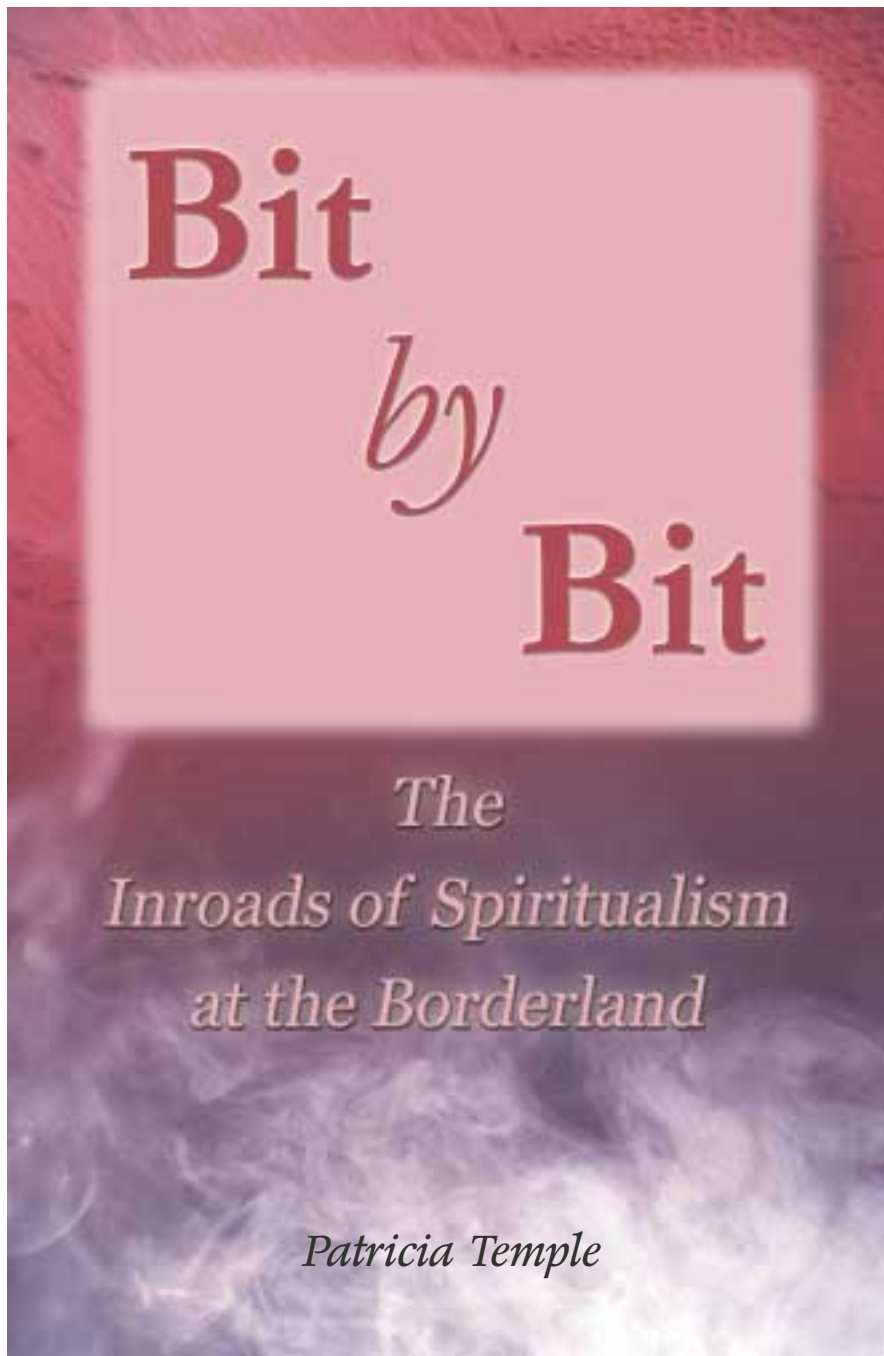
Thus saith the LORD;
Execute ye judgment and
righteousness, and deliver
the spoiled out of the hand
of the oppressor: and do no wrong,
do no violence to the stranger, the
fatherless, nor the widow, neither
shed innocent blood in this place.
For if ye do this thing indeed, then
shall there enter in by the gates of
this house kings sitting upon the
throne of David, riding in chariots
and on horses, he, and his servants,
and his people. But if ye will not
hear these words, I swear by myself,
saith the LORD, that this house shall
become a desolation." Jeremiah
22:3-5.

These words show plainly that obedience to God's commands is the condition upon which His promises are fulfilled. These commands are not grievous. God has given them for the good of His people. His law is the hedge which He has built around His vineyard for its protection. The Lord has plainly declared that He will abundantly bless His people if they will obey the laws of His kingdom. It is their life to obey. In keeping God's commandments there is great reward.

God desires men and women to awake to a sense of His great mercy and loving-kindness. Every blessing we receive comes from Him. The Governor of the universe, He takes cognizance of the words and actions of human beings. He knows whether His children are deserving of praise or of condemnation. Each human being will be rewarded or punished according to his works. Retribution must come upon those who disregard the laws which God has made. Those who are loyal and obedient will be rewarded with the richest blessings. Those who are disloyal and presumptuous, who dishonor the laws of God's kingdom, refusing to repent, will surely be punished with death.

It is Satan's studied plan to keep God out of men's thoughts, and in carrying out this plan, he has great success. He is constantly bringing forward plans that keep

continued on page 27...



Those who will not stand for truth will soon fall for error. Those who will find good in all evil will soon declare evil of all good.

I once observed an interesting incident that clearly illustrated the deceitfulness of alcohol.

Some people who liked to drink had a bottle of liquor that was not their usual brand. When they sat

down and poured drinks, each one tasted it and declared, "This is horrible liquor!" However, they downed it, and soon took a second draught.

This time they declared, "Well, I guess it's all right."

The drinking continued, and soon they decided, "You know, we were wrong about this stuff; it's really not bad at all."

By the time the bottle was almost empty, they were saying, "Thish ish

the besht liquor I ever tashted!" And this confident declaration was soon followed by drunken collapse.

It is the same with people who take that first drink or that first cigarette: they recognize it is horrible; yet, if they do not immediately take heed and turn away from it completely, they will rapidly reach the point where their whole life centers around the indulgence of that enslaving substance.

Sensual sin, self-indulgence, and spiritualism work in exactly the same way. No one ever knows to where that first drink, smoke, or wrong choice will lead.

"Looking upon this picture [of Solomon's apostasy], we see what human beings become when they venture to separate from God. One false step prepares the way for another, and every step is taken more easily than the last. Thus souls are found following another leader than Christ." *Testimonies*, vol. 7, 219.

In our study on the subtleties of spiritualism, I feel we can best proceed by contrasting the ways of God with Satan's counterfeits, because, in nearly every way, spiritualism is the exact opposite of God's truth. And yet, the mystery is that it can come into the church and pass as truth so easily.

One of the reasons that spiritualism is so deceptive is that our society and culture is thoroughly permeated with Greek philosophy and spiritualistic concepts. In the Dark Ages of apostasy under the tyranny of Rome, the light of the Scriptures was hidden, and almost every aspect of religion was replaced by ideas and attitudes from pagan idolatry and spiritualism.

At the time of the Reformation, some light from the Word began to penetrate, and a group of people took a step out of the darkness. Tragically, they settled down again very quickly, dug themselves in, and were content to remain just one step outside the gates of Rome.

Several reformers were raised up, each one taking a step forward, only to quickly dig themselves a hole,

and remain in self-righteous contentment only a step away from whatever they had come out of.

It seems to be a law of spiritual life that those who cease their progress toward the Promised Land soon retreat to Egypt. God is not content unless we heed His call to progress to the light, ever learning and ever developing “unto the perfect day.” Proverbs 4:18.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, God poured great light upon the world through the

years, playing church, fooling ourselves that we are Christians, but refusing to make that complete surrender that would make all the difference.

God will not empower a compromise! He only empowers total surrender. This may help in understanding why so many people fail at finding any victory in their Christian walk. Those who try to overcome by cutting down, taking one little step at a time, or trying each day to do just a little better, are

So, how are these two sides seen in the church? — In many ways. People say, “As long as I am progressing a little bit in my Christian experience I am all right.” “We mustn’t go to extremes. You know, those who seek to obey God in all things are legalists.” “We have to have balance; we can’t be religious all the time. We have to relax and have some entertainment once in a while.”

Notice the expressions: just a little bit will not hurt; to be too religious is somehow harmful; do not give up all worldly pleasures. However, what does God say?

“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14:33.

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” 2 Corinthians 6:17–18.

“Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.” Isaiah 52:11.

“You may see no real danger in taking the first step in frivolity and pleasure seeking and think that when you desire to change your course, you will be able to do right as easily as before you yielded yourselves to do wrong. But this is a mistake. By the choice of evil companions many have been led step-by-step from the path of virtue into depths of disobedience and dissipation to which at one time they would have thought it impossible for them to sink.” *The Adventist Home*, 519.

So, when you hear suggestions of compromise, of fence straddling, of fear to stand up and be counted, know that it is not the way of God. Reject it, for it is spiritualism! “My message to you is: No longer consent to listen without protest to the perversion of truth.” *Selected Messages*, book 1, 196. ❀

So, when you hear suggestions of compromise, of fence straddling, of fear to stand up and be counted, know that it is not the way of God. Reject it, for it is spiritualism!

prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. 1844 marked the close of a long period of ignorance and the opening of a new era of heavenly illumination. The truths of God’s law beamed out from the Most Holy Place as the judgment scene was shown to have begun in heaven. Very few were willing to walk in that light and follow as the Holy Spirit led the way. It is interesting that virtually none of the reformed Protestant churches ever severed their connection to the spiritualism that had come as a legacy from Rome and heathen idolatry. To this day, almost all Protestant churches cling to the concept of the immortality of the soul, which leaves them wide open to Satan’s deceptions.

Truly, the Holy Spirit strives with and woos all people on earth, seeking to lead them into salvation; however, when God calls a person, there must be a total surrender before he can really know the full power of God to change his life and recreate him in the likeness of Jesus — thus filling his heart with a peace and satisfaction that can never be found elsewhere. With Jesus, *it is all or nothing*. He pleads for us to give Him the whole heart; yet, many of us limp along for

doomed to failure because they are practicing salvation by evolution. God speaks and it is DONE!

“As the will of man cooperates with the will of God, it becomes *omnipotent*. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. *All His biddings are enablings*.” *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 333. (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

Satan, on the other hand, asks for just a little. He never comes along and says, “Here, let me take over and run your life;” or, “Hey, I want you to be totally enslaved to drink, so start guzzling.” Rather, he tempts us to make just a little compromise — veer just a bit off of what we know is right, take just one little drink, or go there just once and take a peek.

Satan uses deceit and dishonesty. He specializes in half-truths and fantasies, because he knows that if he can keep us compromising just a little, he will be able to drag us to eternal ruin soon enough.

Jesus is honest and respects our free choice, so He tells us straightforwardly, If you want to be Mine, you have to make the choice, and you have to be all Mine. I cannot help you unless you come all the way over.

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their minds absorbed in pleasure and moneymaking. The minds of the great majority of men are so taken up with the things of time, with worldly interests, that the things of eternity find no place in their lives. Irrespective of the warnings in the Word of God, they show a most surprising indifference to the laws of His kingdom.

Selfishness, covetousness, and fraud bear sway in the world. There are thousands and millions of people who know nothing of their true relations to God, nothing of the laws that He has made, nothing of the consequence of disobedience. Many are not ignorant of the facts, but they do not apply these facts to their own case. All know that they must die, but they do not ask themselves the question, "What shall be the future of my soul?" They know that there is a judgment to come, but their minds are so darkened that they are utterly unconcerned regarding what this judgment will bring to them. They have no realization of the sinfulness of sin. They follow a course which the Lord of heaven has declared must end in eternal death.

God's character is revealed in the precepts of His law. This is the reason why Satan wishes this law to be made of none effect. But notwithstanding all his efforts, the law stands forth holy and unchanged. It is a transcript of God's character. It cannot be impeached or altered.

Wonderful inducements are held out to us to lead us to strive to attain to the standard held up before us in God's Word. Every encouragement is offered. Every provision has been made that we may be so conformed to the divine character that Christ can take us to live with Him in heaven. Exceeding great and precious promises have been made to us, but they are fulfilled to us only as we gain a knowledge of God. This knowledge is given to those who become partakers of the divine nature. Those who are saved must in this life gain a fitness to dwell with the royal family in the courts of heaven.

If we have that faith that works by love and purifies the soul, we shall gain an experience more valuable than gold or silver or precious stones. The Holy Spirit works in the children of obedience. He who is a partaker of the divine nature will think the thoughts of God. His perceptions will be

sanctified by the grace of Christ. He will work in Christ's lines, manifesting His kindness, thoughtfulness, mercy, and love, helping and encouraging those around him.

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matthew 5:48. Wonderful are the possibilities placed before us, and to these possibilities we may attain by studying and practicing the truths of the Word of God. But if we do not lay hold of Christ, if we do not daily gain an experimental knowledge of Him as our sufficiency, we are on losing ground.

There are many professing Christians who have not yet reached the height and breadth of Christlikeness. We are to behold Christ by faith as the One whose perfection of character we are to gain. With an intense, prayerful desire to be like Him, we are to behold Him, full of tenderness and love. Then, as we behold, we shall be changed into His likeness. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. ✠

Signs of the Times, November 30, 1904.

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HOLINESS THE Power OF THE CHURCH



*The professed church of God
is called to be
the light of the world.*

Ellen G. White

The professed church of God may be possessed of wealth, education, and knowledge of doctrine, and may say by her attitude, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (Revelation 3:17); but if its members are devoid of inward holiness, they cannot be the light of the world. The church is to reflect light into the moral darkness of the world, as the stars reflect light into the darkness of the night. These who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof, do not reflect light into the world, and will not have power to reach the hearts of the unsaved. Without vital connection with Christ the value of truth cannot be made to appear in good fruit in the world; but if Christ is formed within, the hope of glory, His saving grace will be manifested in sympathy and love for perishing souls.

Every soul truly converted to God will be a light in the world. Bright, clear rays from the Sun of Righteousness will shine forth through human agents who use their entrusted ability to do good; for they will cooperate with heavenly agencies, and labor with Christ for the conversion of souls. They will diffuse the light which Christ sheds upon them. The Sun of Righteousness shining in their hearts will shine forth, enlightening and blessing others.

The rays of heaven shining from human agents will exert a subduing influence upon those whom Christ is drawing to Himself. The church is weak before the angels of heaven, unless power is revealed through its members for the conversion of those who are perishing. Unless the church is the light of the world, it is darkness. But of the true followers of Christ it is written: "We are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." 1 Corinthians 3:9.

The church may be composed of those who are poor and uneducated; but if they have learned of Christ the science of prayer, the church will have power to move the

arm of Omnipotence. The true people of God will have an influence that will tell upon hearts.

It is not the wealth or the educated ability which the members of the church may possess that constitutes their efficiency. The members of the church may have been so situated that they may have had every spiritual advantage, they may have been so situated that they have had opportunity to know the truth, to know Jesus Christ their Lord; but notwithstanding their advantages, if they are not humble, praying men and women, there will not be with them the hiding of the power of God. They will not exert that influence that will be far-reaching as eternity in its results, and men will not see their good works, and glorify God because of His people's faithfulness. It is when the Sun of Righteousness shines forth from the people of God that Christ is glorified and His kingdom advanced. It is then that they are chosen vessels of salvation, and are fit for the Master's use.

If the churches established in our world would follow Christ, they would pray as Christ prayed, and the result of their prayers would be seen in the conversion of souls; for when communication is opened up between souls and God, a divine influence is shed upon the world. When the members of the church abide in Christ, they deliver an effective testimony in their lives. They fulfill the words of Christ, "Ye are my witnesses." Isaiah 43:10. By their influence all the day long by precept and example, they say, Come, "behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29.

The Lord is our light. The Lord is our salvation. This is the period in the earth's history when light will surely be given to the Lord's chosen people. The world's Redeemer "is light, and in him is no darkness at all." 1 John 1:5. Jesus says, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John 8:12.

To those who will appreciate light, and who in their turn will

impart light to others, God will give increased light. Saints and prophets of former ages were recipients of precious light and knowledge that was to be unfolded to the chosen of God in these last days. The disciples of Christ were honored in having Christ, the Light of the world, among them. But they failed to

The scribes and Pharisees did not receive or teach the Scriptures in their original purity, but interpreted the language of the Bible in such a way as to make it express sentiments and injunctions that God had never given. They put a mystical construction upon the writing of the Old Testament, and

The church may be composed of those who are poor and uneducated; but if they have learned of Christ the science of prayer, the church will have power to move the arm of Omnipotence.

appreciate their great privileges and blessings, until Jesus had left them. When His presence was no longer with them, they realized that they had been blessed with association with the only-begotten Son of the infinite God.

That they might fully realize the blessing that had been bestowed upon them, the Lord Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, which would bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever He had said unto them. In their blindness and unbelief they had not comprehended the value of the celestial truth presented to them; but the Holy Spirit was to illuminate the lessons of Christ before their minds, that they might have an appreciation of heavenly things.

Jesus is the Fountainhead of knowledge, the Treasurehouse of truth, and He longed to open before His disciples treasures of infinite value, that they in turn might open them to others. But because of their blindness He could not unfold to them the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. He said to them, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." John 16:12. The minds of the disciples were to a great degree influenced by the traditions and maxims of the Pharisees, who placed the commandments of God on a level with their own inventions and doctrines.

made indistinct that which the infinite God had made clear and plain. These learned men placed before the people their own ideas, and made patriarchs and prophets responsible for things they never uttered.

These false teachers buried up the precious jewels of truth beneath the rubbish of their own interpretations and maxims, and covered up the plainest specifications of prophecy regarding Christ. They made the keeping of the commandments of God appear to be a rigorous round of ceremonies, so needless and foolish that the force of God's law was destroyed. They heaped exactions upon the commands of God that could never be met, and thereby lessened respect for God.

When the Author of truth came to our world, and was the living Interpreter of His own laws, the Scriptures were opened to men like a new revelation; for He taught as One having authority, as One who knew whereof He was speaking. The minds of men were confused with false teaching to such an extent that they could not fully grasp the meaning of divine truth, and yet they were attracted to the great Teacher, and said, "Never man spake like this man." John 7:46. ❀

Signs of the Times, September 11, 1893.

continued from page 21...

beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”
Ephesians 4:1-3.

In these verses Paul gives seven prerequisites that must take place before we can have unity of the spirit. They warrant a careful study:

When we are tempted to be impatient or to shut that person out of our lives, we should think of Christ. Looking back over our life experience let us consider, What has He endured because of us?

1. “Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” The word vocation means our calling, and to walk means to live. Paul is telling us that we need to live in harmony with our calling. What is our calling? — 1 Thessalonians 2:12 says, “Walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.” If we desire unity of the Spirit, it is essential that we live our lives in a way that brings glory to God, and we do this by revealing His character in all aspects of our lives. If we are living contrary to the calling of God, then it is certainly impossible to have unity of the Spirit.

2. “With all lowliness.” Lowliness means with humility, with humbleness of mind. If our hearts are filled with pride and self-opinion, how can we ever have unity with one another? — We need a greater portion of humility. We are so proud of our opinions that if someone dares to question them, we find it highly offensive. We think, “How dare they question me! How could they be so foolish as to not understand things as I do.” We must learn the lowliness of Christ if we are going to obtain unity of the Spirit.

3. “And meekness.” Steps 2 and 3 seem very similar; yet, a study into the Greek word used here brings out

greater depth of meaning. An excellent translation for meekness in this text would be gentleness. How many of us are as gentle as we should be when we have differences with our brethren? — We think to ourselves, “I am going to defend the truth;” however, we do it like a raging bull. The Lord wants us to reveal meekness and gentleness in all our interactions with one another — even when we are called to rebuke sin, or when our opinions are crossed.

4. “With longsuffering.” Long-suffering means to respond with forbearance or patience when we are tried. Do you know someone whose personality clashes with yours, and it seems like, no matter what they do, it “rubs you the wrong way”? It is then that we need to be long-suffering. When we are tempted to be impatient or to shut that person out of our lives, we should think of Christ. Looking back over our life experience let us consider, What has He endured because of us? The Lord wants to teach us to show the same long-suffering spirit that He has shown toward us during the many times that we have dishonored and shamed Him.

5. “Forbearing one another.” Here God’s Word takes us even a step beyond long-suffering. The Greek word translated forbearing literally means to bear with or to endure to the point of suffering. Sometimes there are differences, and we think, “I just cannot tolerate this person. It is just too much for me to bear.” It is then that we need to cry out to the Lord and ask Him to soften our hearts, because the Scripture tells us to bear with one another, even if we suffer, in order to maintain unity of the Spirit.

6. “In love.” How are we to forbear with one another, even if it causes us suffering? — In love. And certainly this is the only way that we can. We must have the love of Christ transforming our hearts. The love of the world will never suffice; only heaven-sent, godly love will give us the grace to treat each other as Christ has treated us.

Inspiration gives us this rebuke and counsel: “In the church of God today brotherly love is greatly lacking. Many of those who profess to love the Savior neglect to love those who are united with them in Christian fellowship. We are of the same faith, members of one family, all children of the same heavenly Father, with the same blessed hope of immortality. How close and tender should be the tie that binds us together. The people of the world are watching us to see if our faith is exerting a sanctifying influence upon our hearts.” *Testimonies*, vol. 8, 242.

7. “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit.” To endeavor is to make an earnest, diligent effort. We must put forth earnest effort if we are going to have unity of the Spirit. We must be persistent, because unity today does not assure unity tomorrow. Daily, we must determine that, by the grace of God, we are going to live the life of Christ and strive to bring about the unity Christ prayed that we would possess. Notice what the Lord promises if we will follow the steps outlined in these verses, “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit *in the bond of peace.*” Ephesians 4:3. Do you want peace in your family and in your church? — Then we must pray and labor for it.

It is my earnest prayer that each of us will endeavor every day to have unity of the faith and unity of the Spirit. God longs to see it, Jesus prayed for it, and prophecy predicts that it will be found among God’s true people before Christ comes again. The Lord is not slack concerning His promises. Let us allow Him to work in and through us to His honor and glory. ❀



Enclosed is a check for the "Bibles for Africa" fund. I am praying for all your concerns and needs as expressed in your newsletter. I am certain that as you continue to surrender your will to God, He will supply all your needs and abundantly bless you. I have asked God to supply more than needed and to answer all your prayers according to His will.

EP, Pennsylvania

Am enclosing my renewal for my subscription, which I really appreciate. After reading, I take it to my local library. People need to know Bible truth. May God bless each article in every issue.

DK, Nebraska

Your publications mean a great deal to me—especially the *Our Firm Foundation* magazine. They continually bless my life with their lightgiving pages and help so much in making the choices and decisions that face God's people.

At this time, I can't afford to pay for the subscription. Will you please continue to send it? I will try to send what I can as soon as I can.

Thank you! And may God prosper and defend you.

GR, Oregon

We are glad for *Our Firm Foundation* and read it through. I'm sorry we can't share it more with others. We also get the *Review*, and so know where our church stands.

We receive *Last Generation* and *Remnant Herald* and are encouraged there are some that uphold the standards.

Hartland had a good camp meeting this summer. We spent a blessed Sabbath day there. We pray for you.

DA, Wisconsin

Thanks for your messages. God bless each one as you help the work go to all the world.

KK, Texas

Thanks for the Bible studies! I am blessed daily through the seventh-day truth and most thankful that it has given me a complete understanding of what God wants to do for me and of His love for me.

KH, Oklahoma

Why did all these churches change their Sabbath to Sunday? I always was taught to believe it was Sunday too. I was also taught when I was young that the commandments were Old Testament and didn't apply to us these days. Could you enlighten me where all this comes from?

Please enroll two of my friends in your study course. They are interested in studying the Word with me.

DR, Indiana

Please send Bible studies to my friends. They are Catholic. I told them I would send them an excellent Bible study.

PB, Virginia

May God bless you and His Holy Spirit direct you all. Please accept this gift and use where needed. Praying for you.

ID, Ohio

We can't be there in person, but we are in spirit. Please use this gift where needed.

EO, Minnesota

I am a receiver of *Our Firm Foundation*, and thank you for the beautiful reading. I thank you so much for the work that you are doing in sharing the straight testimony.

VR, Canada

From Overseas

I received the box of three issues of magazines, and again, I thank you a million times for these magazines. Our brethren here will have a spiritual feast when I give this to them.

Our country is in panic because of the many series of bombings, and we will soon be required to get a National ID. We all here feel this is a prelude to the New World Order and that Jesus' coming is very near.

I am praying for your work there. You are doing a very good work encouraging us all here. It is my earnest prayer that we all will meet in heaven.

JB, Philippines

We are a young couple, both SDA, living in the countryside, farming, and doing literature evangelistic work. We are working as laymen self-supporting medical missionaries and preaching the third angel's message. We have taken the initiative of recording audio tapes and lending them to people with interest, and the few books we have are exposed to people as a small, humble, mobile lending library. We also make home Bible studies and meet on Sunday and Thursday. We distribute health and gospel tracts. We photocopy materials of great importance and share them with others in villages and cities.

We are requesting some missionary materials to share. We could lend video tapes as well, but we lack them. Our work is growing and people are demanding our services. Glory and honor be to our Saviour as you consider the line of work we've taken. Any assistance will be highly appreciated.

DB, Zambia

I am spell-bound. I don't have appropriate words to express my gratitude for what you have done on behalf of ——— SDA Church. May the Lord abundantly bless you and continue doing so for the great work you are doing. Indeed, you are fulfilling the great commission our Lord has assigned us. We may not be able to give you anything in return, but please rest assured, our Lord has promised He will definitely give you a just reward. May the Good Lord bless you for sending such an extraordinary consignment.

HK, Zimbabwe

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Your Instructors

John and Windy Skeete started the Temple Restored ministry in 1990. They reside in Ladysmith, Wisconsin, where they conduct a ten-week course in medical missionary work. They have also held meetings around the United States and in foreign countries on the sanctuary, the third angel's message, and health. John has a certificate in hydrotherapy and massage from Charles Thomas, M.D., and Windy is a naturopathic doctor and a master herbalist.



Nothing will open doors for the truth like evangelistic medical missionary work. This will find access to hearts and minds, and will be a means of converting many to the truth.—Evangelism, 515.

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