Lay Members Go Forth

God, Death, And Limitations

Wake Up

The Church On Trial

Competition In The Church

Peace Or Pieces? see page 8
Thank you for sending the copies of Our Firm Foundation. We find the magazine very beneficial and are distributing it to various individuals here at Uchee Pines. We agree with you that it should go to every home in America.

P.S. It is simply great! People are benefiting from reading it. We give it to certain non SDA's also. They have enjoyed it.

Agatha M. Thrash, M.D.
Preventive Medicine
Uchee Pines Institute
Seale, Alabama

We love Our Firm Foundation. I just don't want to put it down. We are so excited about it that we gave away the inserts to our friends so they could subscribe.

I have one more item I'd like to share and that is the tremendous article "Out of the Cities." Since we've been married, almost six years now, my husband and I have talked about this very counsel, and within the last four months have felt "very convicted" on this issue. We have prayed much about it and have shared our feelings with both family and friends (Adventists) and have received both positive and negative responses. I xeroxed several copies of this article and we've been spreading them far and wide. Presently our home is up for sale and in the Lord's time we'll sell it and move our little family out to the beauty, quietude and peace of Nature. We are praying God will lead us to the chosen spot where we will have time with our children to teach them of our wonderful Saviour.

Hinsdale, Illinois

I found the Firm Foundation in a basket of various magazines in my son's home. After reading it through I was so deeply impressed that I ordered eight issues and you all sent me ten. I have given and mailed all issues but one to keep, and in all I have read this issue four times.

Hubert Butterfield
Berkley Springs, West Virginia

I am so excited about your publication; finally someone has done it! My husband is a graduate of Loma Linda, teaching now at Louisiana State Dental School; perhaps that is why we seem to get every publication that comes along.

I've added some extra money along with my subscription donation and would like you to send a copy to the two addresses I have included. Send them your November issue, and with the rest of the money send to the church your Christmas issues. I'm sure our Lay Activities Leaders and Elders in our church will want to order more.

Your publication makes me proud to be a Seventh-day Adventist.

Harriet Butler
Secretary
New Orleans First Seventh-day Adventist Church

I received the last copy of Our Firm Foundation. I am glad you purpose not to deal with personalities etc. I am sure this is heaven's best counsel, just give the truth and may our people be awakened.

Right now I am not able to send you the subscription money, it may be I can do so later. Would appreciate getting the paper. You see I am an old man up in my nineties and live on Social Security and the checks are small.

Though I am up in years I am studying about a dozen people, and am giving two Revelation Seminars, so I am busy.

I am glad you quote from Sister White. We are favored above all people with such messages from her pen. It was my privilege to live close by her for about seven years.

Many, many times have I heard her speak, and you did not go to sleep.

A revival and reformation is our greatest need. Let us pray for it, that it may come.

I will be pleased to receive any books, tracts, tapes, for I can hand them out to others. I am missionary leader in our church.

Clark Warren
Clearlake, California

Volume 1, Number 1 of your new publication, Our Firm Foundation, has just been received. I appreciate the truth and important messages that it contains.

Your editorial, setting forth your goals, is to be commended. We certainly need a revival and reformation. In the church there is a lack of belief in the Spirit of Prophecy, which includes our wonderful "Health Reform" message. People are baptized with jewelry, which they continue to wear, and other members join in the wearing of earrings. No one seems to care. We also have false accusers of the brethren which is a matter of deep concern.

I am glad you will give "the straight testimony and present Christ and Him crucified."

My contribution is enclosed for a subscription. Please also send me a copy of your first issue. Many thanks!

Rolland Truman, J.D.
Commissioner (Ret.) Superior Court
Los Angeles County

Ralph Larson's article "A Test and a Sign" in the November issue was excellent. We are told in 2 Corinthians 13:5 "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." The article suggests a basis for such an examination, stating that the greatest test of our faith is how we react when God makes a requirement that we do not understand.

This article is a beautiful approach to the Sabbath truth. Would it be possible to make reprints available? I would like to make it available to all of the members of our local church.

Lloyd Nedley
Troy, Michigan

We will be printing reprints of selected articles; a listing will appear in our books and tapes section. Photo copies may be made of any portion of this magazine without infringing upon the copyright.—Eds.
Table of Contents
Vol. 1, No. 3 January, 1986

ARTICLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Church On Trial</td>
<td>Ellen G. White</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The accused and accuser exposed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God, Death, and Limitations</td>
<td>Vince Christensen</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A look at God's intervening hand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace or Pieces?</td>
<td>Dave Fiedler</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A key issue examined</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Victory Over Appetite</td>
<td>Ellen G. White</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming to grips with the age-old struggle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition In The Church, part one</td>
<td>Vernon W. Shafer</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An expose' of “Christian” rivalry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Afternoon At Elmshaven</td>
<td>Vince Christensen</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An interview with Grace White Jacques</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Gospels Beneath The Surface</td>
<td>Dennis Priebe</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the roots to the fruits of doctrine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Doctrine Of The Nicolaitans</td>
<td>Ron Spear</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is it? What will it do?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wake Up!</td>
<td>Ellen G. White</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A soul-stirring message of hope</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faithfulness In Reproving Sin</td>
<td>Ellen G. White</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our responsibility to God and the Church</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prenatal Education</td>
<td>Colin Standish</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where education begins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay Members Go Forth</td>
<td>Ellen G. White</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A challenge to all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DEPARTMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letters to the Editor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food For Thought</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Invitation To Writers

We are accepting unsolicited manuscripts for future editions of Our Firm Foundation. Acceptance or rejection will be communicated only if manuscript is accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Address all editorial correspondance to: Managing Editor; Our Firm Foundation; P.O. Box 940; Eatonville, WA 98328.
Ellen G. White

“And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.” Zechariah 3:1

The third chapter of Zechariah contains truths that can be dwelt upon with benefit. There are lessons that are profitable for all. Here are represented the people of God, as it were a criminal on trial. Joshua, as high priest, is seeking for a blessing for the people, who are in great affliction. While he is thus pleading before God, Satan is standing at his right hand as his adversary. He is an accuser of the children of God, and is making the case of Israel appear as desperate as possible. He presents before the Lord their evil doings and defects. He shows their faults and failures, with the hope that they will appear of such a character in the eyes of Christ that He will render them no help in their great need. Joshua, as representative of God’s people, stands under condemnation, clothed with filthy garments. Aware of the imperfections of Israel, he is weighed down with discouragement. Satan is pressing upon his soul a sense of guiltiness that makes him feel almost hopeless. Yet he stands there as a suppliant, with Satan arrayed against him.

But let us see what position Christ takes toward Joshua and the accuser: “And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord who hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” [3:2]

Satan would cover the people of God with blackness, and ruin them; but Jesus interposes. Although they had sinned yet Jesus took the guilt of their sins upon His own soul. He snatched the race as a brand from the fire. With His long human arm He encircled humanity, while with His divine arm He grasped the throne of the infinite God. And thus man has strength given him that he may overcome Satan, and triumph in God. Help is brought within the reach of perishing souls; the adversary is rebuked.

“Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And He answered and spoke unto those that stood before Him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him He said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.” [3:5] Then the angel with the authority of the Lord, made a solemn pledge to Joshua: “If thou wilt walk in My ways, and if thou wilt keep My charge, then thou shalt also judge My house, and shalt also keep My courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by. Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at.” [7,8]

Notwithstanding the defects of the people of God ever since the fall, Jesus will not turn away from the objects of His care. He has the power to change our raiment, to remove the filthy garments, to place upon the repenting, believing sinner His robe of righteousness, and write pardon against his name.

Satan commenced his work as an accuser in heaven. This has been his work ever since the fall, and it will be his work in a special sense as we approach nearer to the close of time. He is aroused when he sees a people on the earth, who, even in their weakness and sinfulness, have respect unto the law of Jehovah. He has no intention that they shall obey God. He delights in their unworthiness, and has devices prepared for every soul, that all may be ensnared and separated from God. He would accuse and condemn God, and all who strive to carry out His purposes in this world, in mercy and love, in compassion and forgiveness. Every manifestation of God’s power for His people arouses the enmity of Satan against them. Every time God works in their behalf, Satan with his angels is aroused to work with relentless vigor to compass their ruin. He is jealous of every soul who makes Christ his strength. His object is to instigate evil, and when he has succeeded, throw all the blame upon the tempted one, presenting him before the Advocate, clothed in the black garments of sin, and endeavoring to secure to him the severest penalty. He would urge justice without mercy. Repentance he does not allow. The penalty, he argues, can never be remitted, and God be just.

The sinner cannot contradict or answer the charge of Satan against him, but our Advocate presents His wounded hands, and makes an effective plea in behalf of the repenting one who has placed his case in the hands of Jesus. Our Saviour silences this bold accuser by the unanswerable argument of the cross. Jesus stands to plead His own blood in behalf of the

continued on 12
God, Death, And Limitations

Vince Christensen

Since the inception of the great controversy in the dark recesses of Lucifer's mind, the questions concerning God's true character and motives have been in hot debate. A debate that has even made its way into God's church. This fact should come as no great surprise since the questions first surfaced in God's church in heaven.

God is omnipotent, eternal, and infinite—hardly the qualities that would suggest the slightest of limitations in addressing this debate, but that is indeed what we find God faced with—and Satan knew it. I would like to suggest that Satan's knowledge of God's loving, long-suffering benevolent character was one of the very things that encouraged him on his way. (See Patriarchs and Prophets, 39) What? Do you mean to say that God caused Satan to fall? No, but by virtue of God's long-suffering nature Satan indulged the thought that God would be unable to immediately stop him and his millions of sympathizers, thus encouraging him to continue. Satan knew that God would accept no worship but that based on love. To halt Lucifer immediately in his rebellion by meting out the death sentence would instantly send shockwaves of fear and apprehension throughout the universe.

The wages of sin has always been death, but God must now delay the execution of justice, allowing Satan a probationary time in which the nature of sin would ultimately be unmasked.

As a result of God's seeming dilemma, Satan gained an advantage in Eden as he spoke to Eve from the boughs of the forbidden tree. Based on his own experience with God's merciful delay of justice, he formulated the prize deception that is yet being told and retold in assorted disguises: "Ye shall not surely die." (Or God is too loving to kill you.) We are well aware of the way many churches have blended this concept into their doctrine of the state of the dead, but now another form of "ye shall not surely die" has made its way into Adventist circles. That's right, it has come in among our ranks in a slightly altered form: "God does not kill."

It is quite apparent that God takes no delight in the performance of such duties; "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11)

Nevertheless He apparently is involved, as we can readily see in the following quotations.

"While life is the inheritance of the righteous, death is the portion of the wicked... Those who have not, through repentance and faith, secured pardon, must receive the penalty of transgression, "the wages of sin." They suffer punishment varying in duration and intensity, "according to their works," but finally ending in the second death. Since it is impossible for God, consistently with His justice and mercy, to save the sinner in his sins, He deprives him of the existence which his transgressions have forfeited, and of which he has proved himself unworthy." The Great Controversy, 344

"I was shown that the seven last plagues will be poured out after Jesus leaves the sanctuary. Said the angel, 'It is the wrath of God and the Lamb that causes the destruction or death of the wicked... The saints, in unison with Jesus, pass their judgment upon the wicked dead. Behold ye,' said the angel, 'the saints, in unison with Jesus, sit in judgment, and mete out to the wicked according to the deeds done in the body, and that which they must receive at the execution of the judgment is set off against their names." Early Writings, 52, 53
The question that must be settled is not does God kill...

"Fire comes down from God out of heaven. The earth is broken up. The weapons concealed in its depths are drawn forth. Devouring flames burst from every yawning chasm. . . . It is the time of the judgment and perdition of ungodly men,—the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion."

"The wicked receive their recompense in the earth. They 'shall be as stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up saith the Lord of hosts.' Some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days. All are punished 'according to their deeds.' The sins of the righteous having been transferred to Satan, he is made to suffer not only for his own rebellion, but for all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit. His punishment is to be far greater than that of those whom he has deceived. After all have perished who fell by his deceptions, he is still to live and suffer on. In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch,—Satan the root, his followers the branches. The full penalty of the law has been visited; the demands of justice have been met; and heaven and earth, beholding, declare the righteousness of Jehovah." The Great Controversy, 672, 673

These statements should suffice to settle the matter, but the question continues in many minds. It is admirable to focus on the benevolent and benign aspects of God's character, but let us not carry it to the extreme of doing away with His sovereignty and justice. Granted God is not in the business of destruction. "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17) but once an individual is shown the issues of life and death and still chooses death, God is obliged to carry out the sentence. This is what is meant by His "strange" act.

"For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, He shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that He may do His strange work; and bring to pass His act, His strange act. Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth." Isaiah 28:21, 22

It is indeed strange for God after once having granted life to a created being, then to remove that life, but there are times when this extreme measure is apparently called for.

"Then the wicked saw what they had lost; and fire was breathed from God upon them, and consumed them. This was the EXECUTION OF THE JUDGMENT. The wicked then received according as the saints in unison with Jesus had meted out to them during the 1000 years. The same fire from God that consumed the wicked, purified the whole earth." Review and Herald, vol. 1, 12 (Present Truth) November 1850, 86, 87

The question that must be settled is not does God kill, but does God intervene in the natural order of events?

Let us examine some examples that can help to clarify the issue: the first intervention that we find comes right in the garden after Adam and Eve's sin. God placed an angel with a flaming sword at the entrance of the gate barring our first parents from the tree of life. Apparently they would have continued to live had God allowed them to continue eating of that special tree. (See Patriarchs and Prophets, 60) Although the question can be viewed from both angles concerning what caused their death, the eating of the forbidden fruit or God's barring them from the tree of life, the question of whether or not God refused to give them continued access to life is answered with an obvious yes.

God then allowed the course of sinful man to continue unchecked for hundreds of years until, we are told, He actually "repented" (was sorry) that He had made mankind. We will only know when looking upon the records in heaven the horror of those years. God then sent a flood.

It was not long after the flood that again God finds Himself forced to intervene in Man's affairs at the tower of Babel.

"And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth." Genesis 11:6-9

A few years pass and we see God Himself coming to earth to confirm the evil deeds of Sodom and Gomorrah, and then after preserving a questionably righteous man with his two daughters we see Him scourching the entire city with fire and brimstone.

God intervenes again while securing the release of His chosen people by sending ten loathsome plagues upon the Egyptians. Then after they safely stand on the other side of the Red Sea, they watch the wall of water held back by God's hand come crashing down around Pharaoh and his chariots.

Later in their journey they faced another encounter with God's intervention concerning an even more deadly threat: rebellion in the camp. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram apparently felt convinced that they were called of God to lead the camp into the Promised Land against the instructions that Moses had given. They confronted Moses, and again we see God intervene.

"And Moses said, Hereby ye shall
...but does God intervene in the natural order of events?

know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord.

"And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also. And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred fifty men that offered incense." Numbers 16:28-35

And we see in the verses following that as a result of a general disaffection of the people in Moses' leadership, a plague from the Lord broke out, leaving 14,700 dead before the pleadings of Moses and Aaron could stay the carnage by their intercessory prayers.

Christ Himself revealed the "strange act" of God as He pronounced the rebuke that blasted the barren fig tree. Thus we can readily see that God will indeed intervene in the natural order of events if it serves the purpose of illustration or mercy.

One must also keep in mind that God intervenes in sustaining ways as well: Noah received instruction to build an ark, God gave Joseph dreams that ultimately placed him in a position to help his family during the seven years of famine, He gave manna in the desert for over a million people, and water from a rock, to name a few examples.

Then as we look down to the time of Christ we see the ultimate intervention: Jesus dying upon the cross in our place and for our sins. We must keep in mind that God is continuing this great controversy, not because He by any means takes delight in the pain, suffering and death that fills our world, but because He honors the free choice of all His creatures. All of us must choose, based on the evidence presented, whom we will serve. God at times has used extreme and unusual measures to reveal the principles of life, even allowing the supreme object of His love, Jesus Christ, to be put to a cruel death so that we could choose life.

God honors our choices and then carries them out, whether it be for life or death. God even honors our choice for eternal limitations although He would desire to save us from such a fate, as we see from two sobering statements from Ellen White.

"God holds us responsible for all that we might be if we would improve our talents. We shall be judged according to what we ought to have been, but were not; what we might have done, but did not accomplish because we did not use our powers to glorify God. For all knowledge that we might have gained but did not, there will be an eternal loss, even if we do not lose our souls." Testimonies to Ministers, 147

"Every time one of the glorious faculties with which God has enriched man is abused or misused, that faculty loses forever a portion of its vigor and will never be as it was before the abuse it suffered. Every abuse inflicted upon our moral nature in this life is felt not only for time but for eternity. Though God may forgive the sinner, yet eternity will not make up that voluntary loss sustained in this life.

"To go forth into the next, the future life, deprived of half the power which might be carried there is a ter-

rible thought. The days of probation lost here in acquiring a fitness for heaven, is a loss which will never be recovered. The capacities of enjoyment will be less in the future life for the misdemeanors and abuse of moral powers in this life. However high we might attain in the future life, we might soar higher and still higher, if we had made the most of our God-given privileges and golden opportunities to improve our faculties here in this probationary existence." This Day With God, 350

Does God intervene? The answer is yes and no. God intervenes in the affairs and natural cycles of mankind for the purpose of stopping the advance of evil. God intervened in the meting out of justice upon Satan and his sympathizers to insure that, once revealed, sin would never rise up again. God also intervened in the natural life span of the antediluvian world by sending a flood. Billions of wicked inhabitants were destroyed, and Satan himself, compelled by God to endure the tempest of His wrath, feared for his very life. (See Story of Redemption, 67) But God does not intervene in the choices of man. God tenaciously clings to any means of persuading man to turn from his sins, but He will not lift His sovereign finger to force a soul other than he chooses to go.

God is in the business of life. Whatever it takes to enhance our lives and secure the happiness of the universe He will do. Sometimes this intervention has involved hard-to-understand and hard-to-explain actions on the part of God, but as we look back from eternity we will see that God has been just and fair in all His dealings with man. God alone holds the keys to life and death, and He has a history of using them in wonderful ways to unlock the sin-encrusted door to our hearts, while settling the questions in the great controversy: Is God merciful? Is God just? The answer is a resounding Amen and Amen.
Peace Or Pieces?

The scene is a familiar one, not new to the Adventist Church. Though a decade or two has passed since such voices were last heard, now the proclamation goes forth again, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen! Come out of her my people." Familiar words; and well they might be, for is this not a part of our message? Yet now, as on previous occasions, the church faces the challenge of having this message applied to herself. The question is here: shall it be peace, or shall it be pieces? We must each decide.

These charges differ from those brought against the church from the outside, and even from those brought by Ron Numbers, Walter Rea, and Desmond Ford. These charges assert not that the basis of the church is wrong, but that the church has shown herself disloyal to that base. Every scandal, every shortcoming, every failure of the church or its officers adds weight to the claim. But is the conclusion true? Has the church become Babylon? Should you and I withdraw from its fellowship? With the Seventh-day Adventist Church, shall it be peace, or shall it be pieces? Let us see.

Note first that the call to "come out of her" is based on the identification of Babylon. Without this identification the challenge disintegrates. Let us then examine first, not the statements saying what the church is not, but the evidence showing what Babylon is.

"The wine of Babylon is the exalting of the false and spurious sabbath above the Sabbath which the Lord Jehovah hath blessed and sanctified for the use of man, also [it teaches] the immortality of the soul. These kindred heresies, and the rejection of the truth, convert the church into Babylon."

To this list may be added "the eternal torment of the wicked," and "the denial of the pre-existence of Christ prior to His birth in Bethlehem."

These points are clear. Any organization which propagates these false doctrines is easily identified as Babylonian. But there is also mention of "the rejection of the truth." Could this one item alone be enough to constitute the church a part of Babylon? What specific truth, if any, is meant?

Reading the context of the statement makes it clear: "The whole chapter [Revelation 18] shows that Babylon that has fallen is the churches who will not receive the messages of warning the Lord has given in the first, second, and third angels' messages. They refused the truth and accepted a lie. They refused the messages of truth."

To our list we may now add the rejection of the three angels' messages. Babylon is quite clearly defined. But what of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

It would be comforting to say that the church is alive and well, spotlessly pure and above reproach, but to do so would be unrealistic. Were that the case, accusations would never be entertained. The charges are serious, and deserve careful thought. Come, let us consider the church.

The line of reasoning goes something like this: The Advent movement began well enough, but soon came word that they had fallen into the Laodicean condition. Then they became legalists (dry as the hills of Gilboa), and rejected the beginnings of the Loud Cry and the Latter Rain when the Lord sent "a most precious message message" in 1888. The situation became so bad during the 1890s that Ellen White could no longer consider the General Conference Association to be the "voice of God." And in 1901 she was forced to call for a complete re-organization of the work. In fact, right until the end of her life in 1915, Sister White continued to reprove and rebuke the church. So goes the reasoning. And it is all true. But through all that, the message never came that the church had become Babylon.

Of course, the reasoning doesn't stop with 1915. Problem areas can be found in the medical work, in our educational system, and, of late, in financial dealings. A disintegration from the Lord's will is serious, but the question at hand is, When did the denomination become Babylon? What invisible line marked her sudden fall?

Dave Fiedler
Many conjectures could be made on that point, but what value would they have? Let's go back to inspiration. If Ellen White never identified the church as Babylon during her lifetime, did she at least give us some statement as to the future?

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

The evidence didn't exist in 1893, and I for one must confess that I don't know where to find it in 1886. But what does Inspiration say? What about the church? Sure, there are the glowing, encouraging statements, but Sister White was very much a realist. It would be unbelievably naive to think that there would be no possibility of problems. Surely she would not leave us unawared. What then is the worst possibility brought to light by the Spirit of Prophecy? Does it make provision for the church becoming Babylon?

“Jerusalem is a representation of what the church will be if it refuses to walk in the light that God has given. Jerusalem was favored of God as the repository of sacred trusts. But her people perverted the truth, and despised all entreaties and warnings. They would not respect His counsels. . . . Christ turned from them, saying: ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how can I give thee up?' . . .

“So Christ pours and weeps over our churches, over our institutions of learning, that have failed to meet the demand of God. He comes to investigate in Battle Creek, which has been moving in the same track as Jerusalem. . . . Words of warning and reproof have been treated as idle tales.”

All this is contingent upon the church refusing “to walk in the light that God has given.” The parallel to the Jews warns of serious consequences. But note what she says: Not Babylon, but “Jerusalem is a representation of what the church will be if. . . .” Those who identify the Seventh-day Adventist Church as Babylon have missed the mark by at least 530 miles. We need not wonder at this blindness; there is a reason for it.

“Now let us look at the facts. How Satan would exult to have a message go broadcast that the only people whom God has made the repositories of His law are the ones to whom this message [of Revelation 18] applies.”

Fairness and thoroughness require that we consider one more set of questions: Is it possible that the church could pass through the “Jerusalem stage” and subsequently deteriorate to the “Babylon stage”? What about the closing moments of this earth’s history? Where will the church stand then?

Perhaps the best answer lies in an interesting, but seldom considered, statement from the pen of Ellen White. Let’s get the background first.

At the turn of the century there was an outbreak of fanaticism known as the Holy Flesh Movement which took place in the state of Indiana. The conference president and various other workers were carried away with this “spiritualistic delusion.” The theological base of this movement was devastatingly false and deserves consideration in its own right, but we will be looking just now only at the methods used.

One eyewitness wrote:

“They have a big drum, two tambourines, a big bass fiddle, two small fiddles, a flute and two cornets, and an organ and a few voices. They have Garden of Spices as a song book and play dance tunes to sacred words. They shout ‘Amens’ and ‘Praise the Lord,’ ‘Glory to God,’ just like a Salvation Army service. It is distressing to one’s soul.”

Sister White’s response dealt predictably with the situation at hand, yet it also contains a valuable sidelight which points to the standing of the church in the last moments of time.

Those who identify the Seventh-day Adventist Church as Babylon have missed the mark by at least 530 miles.

“I will not go into all the painful history; it is too much. But last January the Lord showed me that erroneous theories and methods would be brought into our camp meetings, and that the history of the past would be repeated. I felt greatly distressed.”

“The things you have described as taking place in Indiana, the Lord has shown me would take place just before the close of probation. Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions . . .

“Better never have the worship of God blended with music than to use musical instruments to do the work which last January was represented to me would be brought into our camp meetings.”

Now notice two points: These practices with which Sister White had so little sympathy are to be “brought into our camp meetings” “just before the close of probation.” Does this mean that the church has become Babylon? She never so much as hints it. Instead, she twice refers to our “camp meetings.” The point is clear—in the closing days there is still a church with which Ellen White is willing to identify. What about the rest of us? Are the sins of the church so great an embarrassment that we must withdraw? Can that be justified when the church does not qualify as Babylon?

But this is no cause for denominational smugness. We have a new question to face: Will the church qualify as Jerusalem? The same prophecy that points to ‘Jerusalem’ “just before the close of probation,” points as well to serious problems within that church. Can we, as members of this denomination, simply sit back and wait in complacency until another “spiritualistic delusion” sweeps through our ranks? How much better to diligently “walk in the light the Lord has given,” paying careful attention to all His “words of warning and reproof.” Let us work and pray with all the energies the Lord has given us that the day may never come when the Seventh-day Adventist Church shall seal its rejection of truth—or as did Jerusalem—with the blood of martyrs.

“I tell you, my brethren, the Lord has an organized body through whom He will work. There may be more than a score of Judases among them; there may be a ‘false Peter’ who will under circumstances of trial deny his Lord; there may be persons represented by John whom Jesus loved, but he may have a zeal that would destroy men’s lives by calling down fire from heaven upon them to revenge an insult to Christ and to the truth. But the great Teacher seeks to give lessons of instruction to correct these existing evils. He is doing the same today with His church. He is pointing out their dangers. He is presenting before
them the Laodicean message.

"He shows them that all selfishness, all pride, all self-exaltation, all unbelief and prejudice, are dangerous, and unless repented of, those who cherish these things will be left in darkness as was the Jewish nation. Let every soul now seek to answer the prayer of Christ. Let every soul echo that prayer in mind, in petitions, in exhortations, that they all may be one even as Christ is one with the Father, and work to this end... Also [let every soul echo] this prayer which He offers to interpret the process through which His followers are sanctified, 'Sanctify them through thy truth.' John 17:17"16

This is no time to split off from the depositary of God's law. It is peace we need, not pieces. Peace founded on truth, built up by love. Not the peace that would cry "Peace, peace; when there is no peace," but rather the "Great peace" possessed by those who love the law.

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1. Selected Messages, Book 2, 68
2. Testimonies to Ministers, 61
3. Selected Messages, Book 2, 68
4. Testimonies, vol. 1, 141-146 (1857)
5. Review and Herald, March 11, 1890
7. Testimonies, vol. 9, 261
8. Life Sketches, 386
9. Selected Messages, Book 2, 69, emphasis supplied
10. Testimonies, vol. 8, 67, 68
11. See Testimonies, vol. 5, 728; ibid., vol. 4, 231; Review and Herald, June 4, 1889
12. Selected Messages, Book 2, 68
13. Evangelism, 595
14. Hetty H. Haskell, Letter to Miss Sara McInterfer, September 17, 1900
15. Selected Messages, Book 2, 37, 36

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Special Thanks

The staff of Our Firm Foundation extend a special note of thanks to Mr. Harry Anderson for his kindness in giving to us the beautiful picture of Christ which appeared on the cover of our special December Outreach issue. We believe that this picture, never before published, will draw the attention of many people to the Advent Message contained in that paper. Thank you, Brother Anderson, and may the Lord bless your work in the future as He has in the past.

—Ellen G. White

"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." 1 Corinthians 9:24, 25

Here the battle between self-control and selfish indulgence is set forth. There is work for us to do, stern, earnest work, to decide which shall obtain the mastery. All our habits, tastes, and inclinations should be in accordance with the laws of health and life. By this means we may secure the very best physical conditions, and have mental clearness to discern between the evil and the good.

There are many expensive indulgences that are at the same time very injurious. They derange the digestive organs, and destroy the appetite for simple, wholesome food, and sickness and suffering are the result. With dyspepsia [indigestion] and its attendant evils comes the loss of a sweet disposition. There is irritability, fretfulness, impatience; and harsh, unkind words are spoken, which may result in the loss of a dear friend. Thus the books of Heaven show loss in many ways.

God is not unwilling that we should enjoy the blessings of life. He has placed in our hands abundant means for the gratification of natural appetite. In the products of the earth
The more the appetite is indulged, the more imperative are its demands, and the more difficult it is to control.

There is a bountiful variety of food that is both palatable and nutritious, and of these articles we may freely eat. We may enjoy the fruits, the vegetables, and the grains, which our benevolent heavenly Father has provided for our use, without doing violence to the laws of our being. Such a diet will nourish the body, and preserve its natural vigor, without the use of artificial stimulants and luxuries.

Intemperance commences at the table in the use of unhealthful food. After a time, as the digestive organs become weakened, the food does not satisfy the appetite, and there is a craving for more stimulating food and drinks. Tea, coffee, and flesh-meats produce an immediate effect, and are freely indulged in. Under their influence, the nervous system is excited, and in some cases, for the time being, the intellect seems to be invigorated, and the imagination to be more vivid. But there is always a reaction. The nervous system, having been unduly excited, borrowed power for present use from its future resources; and all this temporary invigoration of the system is followed by depression. The appetite, educated to crave something stronger, soon calls for tobacco, wines, and liquors.

The more the appetite is indulged, the more imperative are its demands, and the more difficult it is to control. The more debilitated the system becomes, and the less able to do without unnatural stimulants, the more the passion for these things increases, until the will is overborne, and there seems to be no power to deny the unnatural craving.

We are to be temperate in all things. Not only should we be careful to exercise judgment in the selection of proper food, but intemperance in eating, even of healthful food, will have an injurious effect upon the system, and will blunt the mental and moral faculties.

Parents are many times responsible in this matter. They educate the taste of their children by indulging them in the use of unhealthful articles. They permit them to eat rich pastries and highly seasoned food, and to drink tea and coffee. They are thus laying the foundation for perverted appetites and ruining the health of their children. They should help them in this respect, and not place temptation in their way.

Frequently mothers permit their children to eat candy and sweetmeats, and the habit thus formed, besides involving unwise expenditures of money, is ruinous to the health. One mother said to me, as she placed a package of candy in her child's hand, "It is only five cents' worth." It was a very poor quality of candy and highly colored. The child looked into my face with much interest, to see how I regarded the matter. Said I, "The lessons in the selfish indulgence of taste which you are giving your children are setting their feet in an evil path. You, as their guardian and teacher, should be helping them to overcome. You should be teaching them to cease to do evil and to learn to do well."

Besides the injury that is done to the health, these indulgences of taste are in the end expensive. Though but a trifle may be spent at each time, they soon aggregate quite a sum; and this money might be spent for some useful purpose, or be given to the cause of God. Will you ponder these things my Christian friends, and see if you cannot, by self-denial, and the better habits, accomplish more with your life than you have done hitherto?

Christian women can do much in the great work for the salvation of others by spreading their tables with only healthful, nourishing food. They can educate the tastes and appetites of their children; they can form in them habits of temperance in all things, and encourage benevolence and self-denial for the good of others. The moral sensibilities of Christians should be aroused upon this subject; that they may help those who are so weak in self-control as to be almost powerless to resist the cravings of appetite. If we could realize that the habits we form in this life will affect our eternal interests, we should be much more careful than we now are; and by our example and personal effort we might be the means of saving many souls from the degradation of intemperance and crime, and the consequent penalty of death.

Here is the battle before us, to subdue self and be temperate in all things if we would secure the incorruptible crown of immortal life. The prize is within our reach, and everyone may win it who will strive lawfully. But how many who have had precious opportunities and great light and privileges seem devoid of reason in regard to the purpose of life, and fail to realize the shame and confusion that will be theirs when they shall receive sentence according as their works have been. They might rise intellectually and morally if they would govern themselves; but this they will not do, for they love self supremely.

The lives of such persons are a shallow pretense. They do not aim at any high standard in personal character; but their attention is taken up with matters of dress, style, personal appearance, equipage, sensuous enjoyment. Reproof and warning are refused or disregarded. They do not like the effort it would require, and so make no exertion to change their course. After looking in the mirror, they forget what manner of characters they found represented there, and pursue their accustomed round of folly, which they call freedom and enjoyment.

They do not understand righteousness. If they would for a time change their course of action, and live a self-decaying, godly life, being temperate in all things, they would have wisdom and strength, and power to live a noble, useful life.

To attain to such a life in this self-indulgent, lawless age, we must daily have the Spirit of Christ. But He is willing to bestow it upon those who range themselves under His blood-stained banner, fighting the battles of the Lord. There are precious victories to gain; and the victors in this contest against appetite and every worldly lust will receive a crown of life that fadeth not away, a blessed home in that city whose gates are of pearl and whose foundations are of precious stones. Is not this prize worth striving for? Then let us so run that we may obtain.
Never disparage one soul for whom Christ has died

sinner. He has unveiled the disguised tempter, and shown him in his true light, as a malignant enemy to Christ and man. The condemnation and murder of the Son of God were brought about by Satan's false accusations, and that against One who was pure, holy, and undefiled. This work has forever alienated from Satan the affections and sympathy of the heavenly world. Not one thought of sympathy remained in their hearts for him who had been an exalted angel. This same work he is carrying on in the hearts of the children of disobedience,--those whose minds are subject to his control. The cross of Calvary shows how far Satan will carry his work.

This counterfeit justice that Satan advocates, God abhors; it must not come into the experience of the sons and daughters of God. Satan's censoring must not be imitated by any one who is a partaker of the mercy and the love of God. Let not one of His professed children climb upon the judgment seat to accuse or condemn another. Guard your own soul; watch closely for the first jealous thought, the first suggestion to question or judge others. God has not set you to be a judge over your brethren; and while you do so, your own soul will be as destitute of the Spirit of God as were the hills of Gilboa of dew and rain. Those who are ready to accuse and find fault with others, commit sin against their own souls. Those who would bring others to justice, should be the embodiment of spotless purity themselves. Never disparage one soul for whom Christ has died; for when you accuse and condemn His followers, you accuse and condemn Christ. Be instruments in the Lord's hands of saving souls "with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." [Jude 23] We must not be severe with the infirmities of others, but attend zealously to our own individual case.

Angels of God are watching the character you develop, they are weighing your words and actions; therefore take heed to your ways; examine closely your own heart, prove whether you are in the love of God. When Jesus is abiding in your heart by faith, when His love controls the heart, you will have love for your brethren and sisters. When you see, or think you discern a defect or error, you will not blaze it abroad; but tell him his fault between thee and him alone. By the blood of Christ he may be cleansed. It was this blood, the mighty argument of the cross of Calvary, that broke the power of Satan as an accuser.

Those who are connected with, and are laboring for, the church of God, stand in the same position as Joshua is represented as occupying. As God's servants see the defects of Israel, as those who have the same spirit as the hills of Gilboa, who hold no oil in their lamps. Have your lamps supplied with the oil of the grace of Christ. Should everyone in the church let his light shine forth to others as God designs he should, what a work would be done. A living church will be a working church. Bring your powers to Jesus; put them into exercise. Think, meditate, watch, and pray. A close connection with Jesus will increase your power of accomplishing good, your intellect will be strengthened. The time that will try men's souls is just before us. We shall then have no advocate to rebuke the devil, and plead in our behalf.

Every soul must resist the discouragement that Satan will surely suggest, that our sins are too many and too grievous to be pardoned. Sinner, Jesus loves you. He has thrust His own arm into the burning to rescue you. Then let faith take the place of doubt, hope and courage the place of fear and unbelief. Daily confess your sins, and hope for pardon. Let not the careless or indifferent attitude of any one dishearten you, or dull the life current flowing though your soul. If you see that those who ought to be wide awake, who ought to be enamored to the flock, do not meet their high and holy responsibility, then feel to the depths of your soul that there is more need for you to meet the requirements of God and keep His charge.

You must act like living men; work with fidelity.

The Lord proclaimed from Sinai, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." [Exodus 20:8] Do you keep the Sabbath according to the commandment? Do you command your children and your household after you, as did Abraham? Parents have not done their work with fidelity in their families. They have not felt a burden for souls, even for their own children. They have not restrained them, but have indulged them, not the least in their reading of the books of heaven against them. When you see your children out of the ark, without God, and without hope in the world, make haste; for the storm of God's wrath is coming upon the children of disobedience. God has committed to each one sacred trusts. He has given talents to each to be improved, not buried; these talents he will demand of you ere long. Do not wait for some one to do your work. If our life is hid with Christ in God, Satan's miracle-working power, already being manifested, will not deceive us.

But there is a more important feature in this lesson. Its full meaning will be experienced by those who shall be alive at the coming of the Lord. There are those who will keep God's charge to the very close of time. They will know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. Satan's malignity will be intensified toward them, as he sees that his time is short. He knows that he is sure of those who are under his delusions, but those who will not be deceived by him, he will persecute until the final rebuke of God is put upon him. He will perform miracles to fasten the deception upon the already deceived, and to deceive others. I wish to impress upon you the necessity of a close and holy walk with God. To say that we believe on the Son of God is not enough.

We must have Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. "If?" is the temptation that strikes against Jesus. In fullest confidence we must accept Jesus as our Saviour, and reveal Him in our life and character. Thus may we stand amid the perils of the last days.

Review and Herald, September 22, 1896

12 Our Firm Foundation January, 1986
In our American culture with its historic emphasis on individualism there is a very common belief that "It is a dog-eat-dog world out there, and to be adequately prepared we need to teach our children how to compete. To get out there and win." The persistent theme has been that children must be taught to be competitive in order to survive in a competitive world. This pervasive philosophy has been most openly apparent in the emphasis on competitive sports in our schools. The influence of this attitude, however, is by no means limited to sports or athletic activities. Careful observation will reveal that this belief has just as significantly infiltrated into many other areas of our educational system, but where it may appear less obvious.

The competitiveness value has become so well ingrained into our educational philosophy that for many it has taken on the proportions of a sacred cow. But, notwithstanding the vigor with which some would defend this position, there are still some important questions that must be raised. First, is this concept based upon sound principles; that is, is it true? Second, and most important to the Christian, is it in harmony with the teachings and directions of the Word of God; i.e., the principles and guidelines articulated in the Bible and through His inspired messenger?

It is of interest that these issues have begun to attract the concern of secular, social scientists who are beginning to bring together a growing mass of evidence that questions the assumed positive role of competitiveness in education.

Dr. M.J. Meadow in her presidential address to the Division of Psychologists Interested in Religious Issues at the recent meeting of the American Psychological Association in Toronto warned: "We are on the brink of nuclear holocaust because we have been socialized from our cribs to compete." She charged that religious institutions have sold out to competitive nationalistic and economic interests, teaching universal love with their lips while their own behavior has modeled these divisive activities.

She continued: "We, as psychologists know which lesson will be the better learned--the preached one or the one taught by modeling and reinforcement. . . .

"To accomplish this, however, parents and social leaders will have to begin reinforcing cooperative, rather than competitive, behavior from the time children are born. In the classroom, instead of pitting children against each other in a win-lose spelling bee, each child would supply one letter until the word had been spelled correctly, at which point the entire group would be congratulated."

At the same meeting a number of scientists stressed similar concerns and chided Christians for supporting competitive behavior contrary to their "love ethic" preaching.

Dr. Janet Spence of the University of Texas and 1984 president of the American Psychological Association, recently presented an address to the Washington State Psychological Association in Spokane in which she reported some significant research she and her associates have been doing on the factors that relate to achievement. In her study, Dr. Spence defines competitiveness as "the desire to win over others and to be number one, the enjoyment of head-to-head contests; competitiveness differs from mastery in its interpersonal flavor . . . being better than other people versus pitting one's self against a challenging task."

Mastery is defined as "preference for taking on challenging tasks and meeting internally-prescribed standards of performance."

Dr. Spence goes on to describe their findings:

"In every instance, the results indicated the significant and often substantial contribution of achievement

Vernon W. Shafer, Ph.D.

January, 1986 Our Firm Foundation
Scripture is replete with a continuing emphasis on the virtue of humility.

A recent investigation of the performance of the cockpit crews of com-FAA inspectors showed exactly the same pattern as that of the most effective nurses, including being high in expressiveness and low in competitiveness.

Dr. Spence acknowledges that there are obviously many situations in life that are inherently competitive, but she makes this observation:

"As individuals, we must be willing to compete and to dare to risk failure if we are to gain desired outcomes. However, too many individuals—parents, teachers, employers—believe that in order to become a successful competitor, one must learn to relish and value competition for its own sake—to develop competitiveness as a generalized personal quality. As our data show, this is individualism run amok, likely to hamper the individual and to be destructive to the group."

What modern psychologists are just discovering about the negative effects of competition is certainly not news to the student of the Scriptures. For replete in Scripture is the continuing emphasis on the virtue of humility. The paradoxical truism of Christ's ministry and example voiced by the Saviour was, "Whoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." (Matthew 23:12) "Whoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:26-28) And again, "For he that is least among you all, the same shall be great." Luke 9:48

It is of interest to note that these statements represent a completely opposite point of view from Dr. Spence's definition of competitiveness as "The desire to win over others and to be number one."

The apostle Paul expressed the same anti-competitive perspective of the Gospel when he admonishes, "Honor one another above yourselves." (Romans 12:10 NIV) Paul further points to Christ as our ultimate example in stepping down from His throne of glory to share man's lot in order to save him. (Philippians 2:5-11) Throughout Scripture this theme is presented as the foundation principle of God's order.

By contrast, the enemy of souls is clearly identified as the author of envy and competitive striving to be first, saying, "I will be like the most High." (Isaiah 14:14) and "I am, and there is none besides me," Isaiah 47:10 NIV

It is not unexpected that we should see the same principles being pervasively articulated and emphasized by God's messenger to the Church as those expressed by Biblical writers. I suspect it is because it is such a common battle for us all to let go of the struggle to be first that the Lord has seen fit to provide us with so much instruction and warning about this problem. There are some 22 pages of references on this and closely related topics in The Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White.

Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to review all of this rich and voluminous material, any perusal of these writings leaves one with several distinct impressions. First is an appreciation of the grave importance that the Lord places on this issue and His concern that we be adequately warned about its seriousness. Second is that the problem permeates every aspect of our lives and must be continually guarded against as one of the primary avenues through which Satan is determined to seduce us away from God. "It is Satan's work to excite pride and ambition, selfishness, and love for supremacy." (Medical Ministry, 48)

Third, in speaking about this issue, both Biblical writers and Mrs. White place emphasis on the basic principles involved. These are applied in a wide variety of situations from competition and rivalry between ministers, physicians, institutions, husband and wife, or in the classroom or in sports, but in all circumstances the basic principle is the same. Thus our study should focus on identifying the underlying principle rather than on becoming hung up on specific application.

The fourth impression is that in our personal spiritual life as well as in the education of our youth, this perspective of the subduing of self is of primary importance. This is the reason that the enemy of souls works so hard to entice us into the mistaken notion that our Christian witness and influence will be greater if we sacrifice our distinctiveness and conform to the world. (See Testimonies to Ministers, 472-474)

The reader is urged to study extensively this huge body of precious material, but as an introduction to that study here are just a few of the multitude of comments on this topic by Ellen White:

"While self is unsubdued, we can find no rest." (The Desire of Ages, 336) This observation is made in the context of describing how helpless we are in our own power to overcome the "masterful passions of the heart" and that it is only through the divine connection that self can be subdued. Again she observed "Only the power of God can banish self-seeking and hypocrisy." (The Desire of Ages, 709)

In speaking about the closing events of Christ's earthly ministry, Ellen White makes this comment,

"While they were contending for the highest place, He to whom every knee shall bow, He whom the angels of glory count it honor to serve, bowed down to wash the feet of those who called Him Lord. He washed the feet of His betrayer." (The Desire of Ages, 649)

Another interesting dimension of this problem and its potential effects even upon our theology is related in connection with the religious leaders of Christ's time.

"The hypocrisy of the Pharisees was the product of self-seeking. The glorification of themselves was the object of their lives. It was this that led them to pervert and misapply the Scriptures, and blinded them to the purpose of Christ's mission ... As leaven, if left to complete its work, will cause corruption and decay, so
does the self-seeking spirit, cherished, work the defilement and ruin of the soul." The Desire of Ages, 409

"Your energy and efficiency in the upbuilding of My kingdom, Jesus says, depend upon your receiving of My Spirit. You must be partakers of My grace, in order to be a savor of life unto life. Then there will be no rivalry, no self-seeking, no desire for the highest place. You will have that love which seeks not her own, but another's wealth." The Desire of Ages, 439

"The leaven of truth will not produce the spirit of rivalry, the leaven of ambition, the desire to be first. True, heaven-born love is not selfish and changeable. It is not dependent on human praise. The heart of him who receives the grace of God overflows with love for God and for those for whom Christ died. Self is not struggling for recognition. He does not love others because they love and please him, because they appreciate his merits, but because they are Christ's purchased possession. If his motives, words, or actions are misunderstood or misrepresented, he takes no offense, but pursues the even tenor of his way. He is kind and thoughtful, humble in his opinion of himself, yet full of hope, always trusting in the mercy and love of God." Christ's Object Lessons, 101, 102

True, heaven-born love is not dependent on human praise

"The salvation of human beings means much more than many realize. It means that we are to choose God's way rather than our own. The Lord cannot save men while they refuse to humble themselves under the reproofs and warnings that He sends, strenuously asserting their own will, and following their own course of action." Upward Look, 134

It is seen that the underlying problem of all competitive efforts is to put self first, whether it is applied to individuals or to institutions. God's messenger makes it very clear what is the origin of this spirit. At the same time there is the caution that we are not immune to having this spirit contaminate even our efforts to share the Gospel.

There is a continued desire for supremacy that persists among God's people

"Never should the managers of our institutions attempt, in the slightest degree, to take advantage of one another. Such efforts are most offensive to God. Sharp dealing, the effort to drive sharp bargains with one another, is a wrong that He will not tolerate. Every effort to exalt one institution at the expense of another is wrong." Testimonies, vol. 7, 174

"Not consolidation, not rivalry or criticism, but co-operation, is God's plan for His institutions." Testimonies, vol. 7, 174

"There should be no rivalry between our publishing houses. If this spirit is indulged, it will grow and strengthen, and will crowd out the missionary spirit. It will grieve the Spirit of God, and will banish from the institution the ministering angels sent to be co-workers with those who cherish the grace of God." Testimonies, vol. 7, 173, 174

Again the wish to exalt self is seen as the antithesis to our effort to work with Christ in saving souls.

"He [Jesus] showed what is the principle that bears sway in the kingdom of heaven, and in what true greatness consists, as estimated by the standard of the courts above. Those who were actuated by pride and love of distinction were thinking of themselves, and of the rewards they were to have, rather than how they were to render back to God the gifts they had received. They would have no place in the kingdom of heaven." The Desire of Ages, 446

We are further told that though there is a continued desire for supremacy that persists among God's people (Selected Messages, vol. 2, 382; Selected Messages, vol. 1, 125), no man should work for God with this kind of ambition (Testimonies, vol. 7, 198) because his service for God is marred by this spirit (Christ's Object Lessons, 52). Pride and ambition which lead to strife for supremacy (Patriarchs and Prophets, 403, 404) are seen as the fruit of a divided heart (Sons and Daughters of God, 286) and shut men out of God's kingdom (Evangelism, 102). It is an attitude that will cease to exist among Seventh-day Adventists when persecution comes.

(Testimonies, vol. 6, 401)

It is with this kind of perspective that the warning against conformity to the world is emphasized since Mrs. White says of Satan, "He will use every possible advantage you give him to control minds." (Upward Look, 20) "In all who are under the training of God is to be revealed a life that is not in harmony with the world, its customs, or its practices." (The Desire of Ages, 363) In fact this truth is articulated even more specifically in her description of a vision of Satan's plan for defeating the church.

"As the people of God approach the perils of the last days, Satan holds earnest consultation with his angels as to the most successful plan of overthrowing their faith. . . . Says the great deceiver . . . 'Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God will be our most effective helpers. Those of this class who are apt and intelligent will serve as decoys to draw others into our snares. Many will not fear their influence, because they profess the same faith. We will thus lead them to conclude that the requirements of Christ are less strict than they once believed, and that by conformity to the world they would exert a greater influence with worldlings. Thus, they will separate from Christ; then they will have no strength to resist our power, and eelong they will be ready to ridicule their former zeal and devotion.' " Testimonies to Ministers, 472

Part II will appear in our next issue.

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
An Afternoon At Elmshaven

Vince Christensen

While driving through a grove of manzanita trees toward the St. Helena Adventist Hospital, I noticed a small wooden sign pointing to the left toward Elmshaven. After having lunch at the hospital, I headed back down the hill toward my late-afternoon appointment. Having some extra time to spend, I decided to turn up the narrow lane that led to Mrs. White's last home. I felt a reverent hush as I pulled into the small parking lot. The fine-crafted home stood with a noble bearing among the trees. Everything seemed suspended in time. One could almost hear the click of horses' hooves and the rub of harness as Sister White, bundled up in her carriage, returned home from a speaking engagement. I slowly walked through the grounds, relishing the peaceful atmosphere, visualizing what must have been. Upon finding no one at the main house, I went around back, and there I found her sitting on the front porch of her little cottage reading the mail. It wasn't Ellen White, but she looked much the same in my imagination. As soon as her eye caught sight of me she looked up with an infectious smile.

"Oh, hello there," she said; "would you like a tour of the house?" I answered with an eager "yes." She then told me to go around to the front while she removed her garden boots.

In a few moments she opened the tall front door and motioned for me to come in. The tour began in what was once a bedroom but now serves as a small museum filled with pictures, books, and documents, neatly displayed in glass cases. As she began to explain some of the items of interest she mentioned in passing that she was E.G. White Jacques, granddaughter of Ellen G. White. She then said that she knew her grandmother quite well since she was fifteen years old when Ellen White died.

Seizing the opportunity, I told her that I was associated with the new Adventist layman's magazine Our Firm Foundation and that I would like, with her approval, to interview her for a future edition. She answered that she had seen a copy of our introductory edition, liked it very much, and would be happy to oblige.

The following are excerpts from an uninterrupted two-hour conversation in Ellen White's living room and study on September 5, 1985.
Q. What was it like to be around Ellen White?
A. The whole atmosphere was cheerful. She was quick, but never in a hurry. She had what I call "dispatch." She was very orderly--she always put things away where she could find them, (which I haven't learned to do yet).
She was very fond of her family. She never looked at you with accusing eyes--when she looked, you knew that you were loved. She loved to have her family around her.
She also had a good sense of humor. On one occasion the nurse that had come to give Grandma a salt rub [a salt rub is having salt rubbed on the skin to improve circulation] apparently got mixed up and picked up the wrong container. Something just didn't feel right to Grandma. Upon investigation they discovered that she had gotten into the sugar instead of the salt at which Grandma said, "What are you trying to do, sweeten me up?"

Q. Tell me about the Sabbaths that you spent with Ellen White.
A. The Sabbath was a gem in the week. On Friday in preparation for the Sabbath we would all busy ourselves with the chores, but what we liked best was decorating with flowers.
As the sun set over the hills we were all scrubbed up and ready for the Sabbath. We would walk over to Grandma's house and slip in through the side door and take our places in the living room. If it was cool we would sit by the fire. Soon we would hear little footsteps coming down the stairs. She would make the rounds, stopping to kiss each one.
Then she would sit down and pick up the Bible and read--no comment, no questions, no remarks, just read. We would then kneel and have sentence prayers followed by a hymn; altogether it lasted only ten minutes or so, no more.
Then we would all bring out our Bibles and study the Sabbath School lesson. Then singing, singing, singing--she had a nice voice.
Afterward we would read the special letters from friends or the latest chapter from Acts of the Apostles. One letter that I remember in particular was from Elder Stahl. He told about how God had miraculously delivered the missionaries from some hostile, intoxicated natives by surrounding the mission with angels that appeared to the natives as soldiers.
Then if there was time we (the children) would gather together in a group and play a Bible card or a guessing game. It was a happy, happy time; we all loved to be there.

Q. Tell me about your attendance at church. Did your grandmother often speak during her last few years?
A. Oh yes, she spoke quite often, perhaps at Calistoga or maybe at the college. The White family sat on the front pew. We all sat very still. I remember one of her most often repeated texts was 2 Peter 1:5-7: "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness charity." Then she would say, "We add and the Lord multiplies."

Q. What did your family do for Sabbath lunch?
A. We would often take our lunch with us. Grandma loved to eat outdoors. In addition to the few simple-to-prepare items, my mother would bring a hot dish all wrapped up to stay warm for Grandma and the little ones. I remember how they would spread out the tablecloth on the grass and scatter some cushions, then they would take the bridles off the horses and put on the nose bag full of corn; you could hear them crunching.

Q. What did you do in the afternoon?
A. After lunch, Grandma, being up in years and somewhat fatigued from preaching, would rest while we went on a brick walk. I think my father wanted to use up some of the children's excess energy; he always walked us quite fast. When we returned, Grandma was always interested in what we had found along the way: a hummingbird's nest, fern, or an unusual rock. Then by the time we would get home the sun was going down. The horses could go only so fast.
As the sun went down we would again gather together around the fireplace and have a short worship consisting of a brief reading, a song and a prayer. I remember Grandma saying, "The angels are weary with long public prayers. Some people would pray around the world."

Q. What did you do in the evening?
A. Out would come the popcorn poppers and we would position ourselves near the fireplace and hold them out over the flames while my dad would peel apples and pass them around. I don't know why he always peeled them--I think he just wanted something to do. Afterward, for the little ones, we would play "button, button" with a long string around the living room.

Q. What about your activities during the week?
A. She wanted us to come and be with her every day. Sometimes we would come up the backstairs into the study to where she was writing and she would stop what she was doing and give us each a hug. If it was near mealtime she might give us a peppermint. To dismiss us she might say, "I think that the apples on such and such a tree are ripe. Why don't you go down and pick some for yourself?" She was always thoughtful even when she was telling us to run along.

Q. What did you learn on a personal level from your grandmother?
A. I learned from her "Commit yourself unto the Lord and He shall bring it to pass." Her attitude toward life was gathering the roses and ignoring the thorns. She would cast her burdens at the feet of Jesus.
I think that a person who trusts in the Lord will have a very interesting life. Never will there be a dull moment--sometimes the howling desert, but never a dull moment.

Q. I'm sure that you are aware of the statement in Selected Messages, page 412 that says, "Somebody is to come in the spirit and power of Elijah, and when he appears . . ." did she mean to say that someone was going to come in the future and fill a position similar to that of hers as a messenger from God?
A. I recall one time when she was asked if someone would come to take her place she replied, "I don't know." Then she turned and pointed to her books and said, "There is sufficient here to carry us through to the kingdom."

After I had spent a delightful September afternoon with Mrs. Jacques, pausing in various rooms of the house, she ended the tour in Mrs. White's bedroom. It is a lovely spacious room with a beautifully carved wooden bed. On the wall hangs a painting of Jesus standing with His arms outstretched. She turned to me and with a gleam in her eyes she said "Come, that's it, just come. Isn't that just like Jesus? When it's all said and done, He says come, just come."
With that she smiled and turned toward the hall. I felt irresistibly drawn to Christ.
There are those who have voiced their doubts concerning Mrs. White's inspiration and even her Christian life. All I can say is, go visit Mrs. E.G. White Jacques. "Come, that's it, just come."
Two Gospels
Beneath The Surface

No perfection
Justification alone
Christ-unfallen nature
Sin as nature
Predestination

Perfection
Justification/Sanctification
Christ-fallen nature
Sin as choice
Free choice

The past several years have been a time of real pain for Seventh-day Adventists. We were not around at the last time of major crisis in Adventist history during the early 1900s. We have all seen pastors leave the ministry before now for various reasons, including an occasional pastor who felt that Seventh-day Adventist beliefs were not compatible with his own beliefs; but now we are seeing young, bright, conscientious pastors saying, "I can no longer preach Adventism and be true to my conscience and the Bible." Some church members have felt that they were hearing a different brand of Adventism proclaimed from a Seventh-day Adventist pulpit, one which they felt to be totally incompatible with the Seventh-day Adventist mission and message.

What is going on in our beloved church? Ministers and laymen have become confused. Desperate cries have gone out from both sides, attacking the other position, while those in the middle wonder how they can possibly make a decision about who is right, or whether they should just silently slip out the backdoor of Adventism. Is there any answer, or are we doomed to stumble along while our church crumbles beneath us?

I am convinced that there is a reason for the pain we are suffering today, and that there is a solution to our theological dilemma. We have been told that our church must be judged by the gospel. I accept that challenge. The gospel lies at the heart of Christianity, and without the gospel there would be no point nor purpose in Sabbathkeeping. But what is the gospel? This is the critical question which has been pounding at the consciousness of pastors, teachers, and laymen.

I am going to propose that there are two versions of the gospel being proclaimed within Adventism. I am going to outline them from presuppositions to conclusions, with the hope that doing so will explain why some men and women are having a crisis of conscience with Seventh-day Adventist teaching. Of course I will specify which gospel I believe to be in harmony with the Bible and Adventism, but perhaps the greatest good to come from what I am about to say will be the clarification of the opposing positions, so that we will be better prepared, individually, to
In the past it has been relatively easy to identify "offshoot" groups and stay within the mainstream of Adventism

A recent article was titled "Exodus From Adventism," in which was compiled a list of 100 Seventh-day Adventist ministers and teachers who left Adventism for reasons of conscience. In the article was this comment: "The denomination would give the appearance that it is frantically attempting to rid itself of the unwelcome doctrines of salvation by faith alone and the all-sufficiency of Scripture as the sole doctrinal norm." 1 Now those are broad charges. Is it possible to be more specific about just what is meant here?

In South Africa, Francis Campbell attempted to pinpoint the specific areas of controversy in these words: "The denomination has never been able to define clearly its position on the nature of Christ, perfection, original sin-areas which are vital to an understanding of righteousness by faith. As a result various streams of theology exist within the church, leaving our members in a state of confusion." (ibid.) I believe that his insights were extremely accurate and get right to the heart of the difficulties we are experiencing. For I agree that as a church we have never defined clearly our beliefs in these three critical areas--sin, Christ, and perfection and because of our lack of clarity and divergent views in these areas, we have been wandering in the theological desert for these past 40 years of uncertainty and frustration. Because we have held contradictory views in these areas, we have been unable to clearly define our message and our mission.

The following lines were written by Aage Rendalen, who once served as a Seventh-day Adventist editor in Norway. "In the 1950s Adventism began a remarkable house cleaning. A number of doctrines which had bothered theological purists for years were given a public funeral. With the rising level of biblical knowledge in the church, as well as increasing contact with evangelical theologians, many leading Adventists felt embarrassed about some of the doctrines that had survived the nineteenth century. Chief among these were the doctrines of the split atonement and the sinful nature of Christ. With the publication of the book Questions on Doctrine in 1957, both views were repudiated. The work of clarification progressed up to the beginning of the 1970s. By then the traditional belief in a latter-day perfection had come under attack and seemed to be on the way out. . . . In spite of frantic efforts by a few vocal defenders of Adventist tradition, the doctrines of the sinful nature of Christ and human perfectibility in this world were slowly sinking. The weight of biblical evidence had simply overcome what little buoyancy was left. With the dawning of the eighties a new crisis of unsurpassed magnitude is now confronting the church. What is thought to be the very foundation of Adventism--our 'sanctuary theology'--is coming under close examination. At the same time the authority of Mrs. White as God's messenger is being re-evaluated. With the evangelical church of the 1950s the Adventist leaders started something the extent of which they did not anticipate. The traditional Adventist landscape was being radically changed, and as a result a crisis of identity set in. Today, the very validity of the movement has become an open question to many. They feel that this is not the church they joined. The doctrinal superiority . . . which the evangelist had held out to them now appears to lie in shambles. Can this really be 'the only true church' they ask." 2

As I read his article, I got the feeling that, from a quite different perspective, he was stating what I want to state, for he has pinpointed the issues at stake in the controversy and the historical development of these issues over the past 30 years. He has, in fact, hit the nail right on the head. These are the issues which need to be defined if there is any hope that the real gospel will ever stand up. I would like to repeat one extremely important sentence in his article. "With the evangelical church of the 1950s the Adventist leaders started something the extent of which they did not anticipate. The traditional Adventist landscape was being radically changed." How very, very true. Of special note is the book of those years which was seen to be extremely influential in changing the Adventist landscape.

I have come to believe that the things we have seen in the late 70s and early 80s are but the inevitable harvest of the seeds planted during the 50s and 60s. These theological seeds have matured into a consistent and logical theological harvest. What I am saying is that, given the presuppositions, the conclusions are necessary, even inevitable, and many thinking Adventists have seen the necessity of living out the implications of those conclusions. Moreover, both the presuppositions and the conclusions are widely believed within the Seventh-day Adventist Church right now by a wide range of scholars, ministers, and laymen. Thus it is not just a matter of beliefs outside of Adventism versus those within Adventism. Both systems of theological belief are alive and growing in the Seventh-day Adventist Church today. Now let us look more specifically at the individual components of these systems of belief.

The Central Issue

The pivotal issue which determines the direction of both systems of belief--the foundation and premise of the whole controversy--is the question, What is sin? You see, the gospel is all about how we are saved from sin. It is sin which has caused us to be lost, and the gospel is the good news of how God redeems us from sin. Now most of us have assumed for perhaps our whole lifetime that we know what sin is, but as is typically
true for most things that we assume without examining them carefully, our assumptions may be just that, unproved assumptions that need careful rethinking. It is just at this point that Adventism has been challenged as having unclear and even erroneous definitions of sin which have led to erroneous positions in righteousness by faith.

The vital question is, What is the nature of sin for which man is considered guilty, so guilty that he must die in the fires of hell unless he is rescued by the grace of God? We must be precise in defining the nature of this sin, so that we will know just what it is that the gospel rescues us from. Of what must we be forgiven? What must be healed for us to escape eternal death? When you go to see a doctor, he must first determine precisely the nature of the problem afflicting you before he can prescribe a therapy or medicine which can heal you. Just so with sin. We must know wherein our guilt lies, so that we will be able to apply the gospel to the correct illness.

The Gospel As Defined In “New” Or “Reformation” Theology

In Geoffrey Paxton’s challenging book, *The Shaking of Adventism*, he says that we rejected righteousness by faith in 1888 because we rejected the historic doctrine of original sin. He identifies original sin as the foundational principle of Reformation theology. (pp. 98-114) Now original sin is simply the belief that we are guilty because of our birth as sons and daughters of Adam. We are guilty by nature, before any choice of good or evil can enter the picture. Our condemnation comes from Adam, we are guilty because of our inherited depravity. “There is sin in the desire of sin.” “Sin is declared to exist in the being prior to our own consciousness of it.”

Thus sin and guilt apply to nature, and the gospel must deal with the reality of guilt as a part of the nature of man which can never be removed until eternal life. In this view, weakness, imperfection, and tendencies are sin. It is an interesting and significant point that the Reformers built their doctrine of original sin on the premise of predestination, which teaches that God leaves some men to suffer and die in their sinful and guilty natures while He elects to send His saving grace to others through the gospel. Since these two doctrines fit together very naturally, it is a bit strange that while predestination has been rejected by most Christians today,
you begin with the foundational premises of this system, you must logically end with its conclusions. I believe that this is one reason it has become so attractive to many long-time Adventists. Then, if we desire to be logical and biblical, are we forced to join in this understanding of the gospel, with the only other option being both illogical and unbiblical?

I believe that the true gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ and Paul, is based on different presuppositions and leads to different conclusions. I believe that this gospel is the only one which deals adequately with the great cosmic issues in the controversy between God and Satan. I believe that this is the only gospel which will provide security and hope for the Seventh-day Adventist Church and for individuals asking the age-old question, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Following, then, is a short summary of the other option, the other way of understanding the gospel promised in the Old Testament and realized in the New Testament.

choose for or against God. The gospel is built solidly on the foundation of free choice—the two most important words in the history and in the future of the universe.

The Nature Of Sin

This conclusion leads to a decision about the nature of sin. Sin is not basically the way man is, but the way man chooses. Sin is the consent of the mind to what seems desirable and thus breaks its relationship with God. To talk of guilt in terms of inherited nature is to overlook the important category of responsibility. Not until we have joined our own will to mankind’s rebellion against God, not until we have actively entered into opposition to the will of God, does guilt enter in. Sin is concerned with a man’s life, his rebellion against God, his willful disobedience, and the distorted relationship with God which ensues. Sin is concerned with a man’s will rather than his nature. If responsibility for sin is to have any meaning, it cannot also be affirmed that fallen human nature makes man inevitably guilty of sin. Inevitability and responsibility are mutually exclusive concepts in the moral sphere. Thus sin is defined as choosing wilfully to rebel against God in thought, word, or action. In this gospel sin is our willful choice to exercise our fallen, sinful nature in opposition to God’s will.

The Nature Of Christ

Building on this foundation, we move to the nature of Christ. If sin is not nature but choice, then Christ could inherit our fallen, sinful nature without thereby becoming a sinner. He remained ever sinless because His conscious choice was always obedience to God, never allowing His inherited nature to control His choices. His inheritance was just the same as our inheritance, with no need to resort to special intervention by God to prevent Jesus from receiving human sinfulness from Mary.

Christ accepted voluntarily the humiliation of descending, not only to the level of fallen man, but also to the level to which man had fallen through the sin of Adam and the sins of succeeding generations. Because man was not in the state of Adam before the fall, something far more drastic was needed if the effects of Adam’s fall were to be overcome. Christ must descend to the depths to which mankind had fallen, and in His own person lift mankind from its fallen depths to a new level of life. Jesus stooped from the very heights to the very depths to lift us up, to be our Saviour. If Jesus had assumed a perfect human nature untouched by the fall, then He would not have stood side by side with man in his need. If Jesus had assumed unfallen human nature, there would have been a great gulf created by sin. It was fallen humanity that He was to represent before God. He stood at the side of fallen sinners to mediate between sinful man and holy God.

If Jesus assumed perfect human nature, He spanned the gulf between God and man, but the gulf between fallen and unfallen man still needed to be bridged. If, however, Christ shared our fallen, sinful nature, then His mediatorial work bridges the whole gulf from God to fallen man in His dire need. Only by entering into our situation in the deepest and fullest sense and identifying Himself fully with us was He able to be our Saviour. Any other condition except in sinful flesh would have been challenged at once by the enemy, and would have influenced the thinking of the universe.

It is at least of interest to note that this understanding of Christ was the one believed strongly by Jones and Waggoner in their righteousness-by-faith messages of 1888, which were endorsed so highly by Ellen White. In fact the accenting power of their messages was this understanding of Christ’s life—the Lord Jesus Christ, who was loyal to God in sinful flesh.

Justification

From here the gospel message moves to our situation. The gospel is the good news about God’s character, that God both forgives and restores. The gospel is both God’s declaration that we stand righteous in the merits of Christ and God’s renovation of our sinful lives so that, gradually, we may be restored into His image. The gospel is both a legal verdict and a transforming power. Union with Christ is the key to the faith through which justification must take place. The gospel includes justification—a uniting with Christ by faith in the

Sin is our willful choice to exercise our fallen, sinful nature to rebel against God

The Gospel As Defined In Adventism

The basic presupposition of this gospel is that the heart of the cosmic controversy between God and Satan revolves around the issue of free choice. God took terrible risks with the universe to protect freedom of choice. Why did God allow the misery of sin? Because of the worthlessness of forced obedience and the necessity of the possibility to sin if righteousness was to be possible. Jesus came to this earth to be killed by Satan to allow all men to choose freely once again. And the agony of sin will not end until Satan freely bows down and confesses Jesus’ Lordship. This means that the greatest tragedy of the universe is Satan’s maligning of God, a tragedy even greater than my sins. Thus the issue to be resolved is how fallen beings, angels and fallen beings will choose in the great controversy, either for God or for Satan. All of this means that the gospel can never be based on predetermination of any kind, which essentially bypasses any right of man to
basis of which we are declared righteous; and sanctification—a growing more like Christ through the daily exercise of a constantly growing faith on the basis of which we are made righteous.

Perfection

Finally, this gospel can speak comfortably and biblically about Christian perfection, which is simply letting God do His full work in us as we depend ever more fully upon Him by trusting faith. This view is not extremism in perfection. It is not trying to be good enough to please God and to be saved; it is not removal of our sinful nature; it is not dependence on our internal goodness.

Perfection is total victory over sin, when through total trust in Christ's power sin becomes repulsive and we have no desire to transgress God's will. If sin is our willful choice to rebel against God in thought, word, or action, then sinlessness is our willful choice not to rebel against God in thought, word, or action. The purpose of perfection is not to save us, but to honor Christ. It is not the eradication of our sinful nature, but the subjection of that nature through a relationship with Christ. It is not a plateau, but unceasing growth and teachableness. It is not being free of temptation, but refusing to yield to temptation. It is not autonomous goodness, but total dependence so that we are all through rebelling.

This gospel affirms that it is possible to have a sinless character in a sinful nature. Perfection remains always the goal, while abiding in Christ is the method. Thus my concern is not primarily with the end product, but with my relationship with and my trust in Christ today. Only with this understanding of Christian perfection of character does the Seventh-day Adventist message of the Second Coming carry motivating power. This understanding demands agonizing with God in prayer. Do we know what it means to wrestle with God as did Jacob? Are our souls drawn out after God with intensity of desire until every power is on the stretch? Do we cling with unyielding faith to the promises of God?

Conclusion

These, then, are the two gospels being proposed within Adventism. Do you see why these two systems are incompatible with each other? Do you see that compromise between them is impossible; that you must make a choice for your personal faith? I challenge you to study and pray for yourselves, so that you will know what you believe and why, rightly dividing the word of truth. May informed and Spirit-guided decisions be made that will stand up under the pressures of the last days, and more important, under the scrutinizing eye of God as He probes our consciences to see if we have made honest decisions, or if we have rationalized and equivocated, seeking the easier way. May the good news be God's good news and not man's invention.

2. Age Rendalen, "Adventism: Has the Medium Become the Message?" Evangelica, December 1982, 35
3. Desmond Ford, "The Relationship Between the Incarnation and Righteousness by Faith," in Documents From the Palmdale Conference On Righteousness by Faith, 28

LEARNING TO LIVE

Did you stand by your window this early morn
And watch the birth of a day
As the sun arose from its natal couch,
Bedecked in bright array?
Did you walk unshod on the velvet grass,
And scatter the jeweled dew?
Did you drink in your fill of gentleness
To last you the whole day through?
Did you look in the heart of a crimson rose,
And breathe in its fragrant store?
Did you hark to the song of a mockingbird,
As he rendered his best encore?
Did you look in the eyes of a little child
As you folded her close to your breast,
And search their depths to find the source
Of her innocent happiness?
Did you hold the hand of a troubled soul,
That trembled in anxious fear,
And whisper a comforting word to show,
The "why" of your glistening tears?
Did you find your way to a wooded glade,
There bowered on the needled sod,
Pour out your soul in a psalm of praise
As you knelt alone with God?
If you've done all this and more,
And gave all you had to give,
You have been in touch with the Infinite,
And have learned how to really live.
C.R. Munroe, 1964

Food For Thought

Elder A.T. Jones,
Dear Brother, there is a subject which greatly troubles my mind: While I do not see the justice nor light in enforcing by law the bringing of the Bible to be read in the public schools, yet there are some things which burden my mind in regard to our people making prominent their ideas on this point.

These things, I am sure, will place us in a wrong light before the world. Cautions were given me as to this point. There were some things shown me in reference to the words of Christ: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things which are God's"—placing the matter where the church would have no right to enforce any thing of a religious character upon the world. Yet in connection with this were given words of caution. If such a law should go into effect, the Lord would overrule it for good; and the book which the State and the Christian world have forced upon the notice of the people to be read in the schools, shall it not speak, and shall not the words be interpreted just as they read?

My brother, this objecting to the passing of a law to bring the Bible into the schools will work against us.

Anything that should give the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, should not be obstructed at all. Some things I can not present in distinct lines, but enough is clear to me that I want you to be very careful on what ground you tread; for our enemies will make a decided argument against us, if we shall give them a semblance of a chance.

I think the law-making powers will carry their point in this particular; if not now, a short period ahead. And it is very essential that as a people in a future crisis [school prayer amendment?—Eds.] we take the greatest care that no provocation shall be given our enemies which they will make capital of against us as a people, in the matter of opposing so good a work as the introduction of the Bible into the public schools.

. . . I hope that the Lord will help us not to make a wrong move; but please be cautious on this point.

(Signed) Ellen G. White

Spalding-Mangan's Unpublished Manuscript Testimonies of Ellen G. White, pp. 8, 9

22 Our Firm Foundation January, 1986
Into the early church the devil had already brought his hellish torch of false doctrine. Judaizing teachers were busy agents of Satan, counteracting the pure teachings of the righteousness of Christ and the apostles.

Paul refers to this heresy in Ephesians 4:14:

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

Satan's hatred of Christ has always been aimed at God's perfect righteous law, for it is a transcript of His character. The Law of God is holy, as He is holy. (See Mount of Blessing, 54, 55)

God was in Christ reconciling the world to His holy, perfect law. "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." 2 Corinthians 5:19

From the beginning the arch-deceiver, the father of lies, has set himself and his agents to destroy the law of God by half truths, false theories, and science falsely so-called. He has been very successful. In every generation false prophets, teachers and ministers have led millions astray to the damnation of their souls.

This false indoctrination was happening in John's day, for in the book of Revelation Christ refers to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. "So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans; which thing I hate." Revelation 2:15

What is the doctrine that Christ hates?

"The doctrine is now largely taught that the gospel of Christ has made the law of God of no effect; that by 'believing' we are released from the necessity of being doers of the Word. But this is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which Christ so unsparingly condemned." Signs of the Times, January 12, 1912, quoted in Bible Commentary, vol. 7, 957

It is a subtle, insidious attempt by Satan and his agents to make of none effect the law of God. He has been most successful in every age with this doctrine. Would he not attempt to do the very same thing in the Adventist Church, which claims to live by the law?

Could it be that the same legalism which condemned the Jews could have crept in unawares into the Adventist lifestyle, church, and liturgy? We find that the ministry and leadership of God's church have been responsible to a great degree for the apostasy of the church in its sad history through the ages. "For the leaders of this people caused them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed." (Isaiah 9:16) See 2 Chronicles 36:15, 16; Isaiah 30:9, 10

Eileen White amplifies this truth in the following words: "A nation's sin and a nation's ruin were due to the religious leaders." (The Desire of Ages, 738) "The watchmen are responsible for the safety of the people." Testimonies, vol. 5, 235

Is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans analogous to beliefs held in the church today? Have we unconsciously adopted the devil's lie that we can be saved in sin instead of from sin? "And thou shalt call His name JESUS: For He shall save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21) Do we believe that a little sinning cannot be helped? Do we think that God wants us to avoid the "big" sins-stealing, adultery, murder-while allowing a few "minor" rebellious attitudes and thoughts? But Christ says one can commit adultery in the mind (Matthew 5:28), and that he who hates anyone is guilty of murder. (1 John 3:15) Are we guilty, as were the Jews, of Jesus' indictment in Matthew 15:8, 97-"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." The law demands perfect obedience, which none of us can give in his own strength. But the same perfect obedience Adam gave to the law before the fall is God's standard of righteousness today. Again from inspiration:

"The faith in Christ which saves the soul is not what it is represented to be by many. 'Believe, believe,' is their cry; 'only believe in Christ, and you will be saved. It is all you have to do.' While true faith trusts wholly in Christ for salvation, it will lead to perfect conformity to the law of God. Faith is manifested by works. And the apostle John declares, 'He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar.' [1 John 2:4]" Review and Herald, November 4, 1890, quoted in Bible Commentary, vol. 7, 1073

If God will not accept any relationship that is not totally committed to living obedience to His perfect holy law, how do we reach the standard? By committing our will to Christ every morning and practicing His presence in our life. Through the entire wakening hours of the day we may be overcomers as Christ overcame. "What you need to understand is the true force of the will. It is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, of choice. Everything depends on that right action of the will." Steps to Christ, 47

"The greatest bulwark of vice in our world is not the iniquitous life of the abandoned sinner or the degraded outcast; it is that life which otherwise appears virtuous, honorable, and noble, but in which one sin is fostered, one vice indulged." Mount of Blessing, 94

By giving our will to God we can then do everything God has required of us in His law by the power He provides. God makes no allowance for sin to continue unchecked.

"There is no excuse for sinning. A holy temper, a Christlike life, is accessible to every repenting, believing child of God." The Desire of Ages, 311 (See also My Life Today, 115, Sons and Daughters of God, 156, Christ's Object Lessons, 312)

Why do so many fail? "Many fail of imitating our holy Pattern because they study so little the definite features of that character. So many are full of busy plans, always active; and there is no time or place for the precious Jesus to be a close, dear companion. They do not refer every thought and action to Him, inquiring: 'Is this the way of the Lord?' If they did they would walk with God, as did Enoch." Testimonies, vol. 6, 393

Let us remember that everything depends on the right action of our will. Any writing or preaching which leads us to believe that we do not have to strive to reach the high standard of God's righteous law is teaching the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which Christ hates. He will finally destroy all those who teach or profess this doctrine, for it makes of none effect the law of God.

It is true that God accepts us just as we are when we come to Him; but He loves us enough not to leave us there. Our God is a God of love, hating only that which separates us from Him. As we turn our life over to Christ we are making ourselves a target of Satan and his host, and we may be sure that he will use every tempting to separate us from Christ's presence. The doctrine of the Nicolaitans provides just such a wedge. "It doesn't matter if you sin." The doctrine of the Nicolaitans teaches that we can sin all we want. The doctrine of Christ says that as we look to Him, lifted up upon the cruel cross, we will no longer desire sin. Sin will become hateful, and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans will have no room in our heart with Christ.
Wake Up!

Ellen G. White

The Lord knocks at the door of your heart, desiring to enter, that He may impart spiritual riches to your soul. He would anoint the blind eyes, that they may discover the holy character of God in His law, and understand the love of Christ, which is indeed gold tried in the fire. There are old yet new truths still to be added to the treasures of our knowledge. We do not understand or exercise faith as we should. Christ has made rich promises in regard to bestowing the Holy Spirit upon His church, and yet how little these promises are appreciated! We are not called to worship and serve God by the use of the means employed in former years. God requires higher service now than ever before. He requires the improvement of the heavenly gifts. He has brought us into a position where we need higher and better things than have ever been needed before.

The slumbering Church must be aroused, awakened out of its spiritual lethargy, to a realization of the important duties which have been left undone. The people have not entered into the holy place, where Jesus has gone to make an atonement for His children. We need the Holy Spirit in order to understand the truths for this time; but there is spiritual drought in the churches, and we have accustomed ourselves to be easily satisfied with our standing before God. We say that we are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, while we are poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked.

It is essential that we study the Scriptures far more earnestly than we do. With fervent prayer we should earnestly and thoroughly examine the pillars of our faith, to see that we have no false support. God will not bless men in indolence, nor in zealous stubborn opposition to the light He gives to His people. Many who have come to the faith have received the truths from the lips of teachers, and have not sought a knowledge of the truth themselves. They have not obtained increased light by diligent investigation of the Scriptures, and are not quick to discern the temptations and delusions of Satan. Some are described in the words of Malachi: "Ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts." [2:8]

Those who claim to keep and teach the holy law of God, and are continually transgressing that law, are stumbling-blocks not only to sinners, but also to believers in the truth. They oppose they know not what, because, unfortunately, they are leavened with the spirit of opposition. The loose, lax way in which many regard the law of Jehovah and the gift of His Son is an insult to God. The only way in which we can correct this widespread evil, is to closely examine every one who would become a teacher of the word. Those upon whom this responsibility rests should acquaint themselves with his history since he has professed to believe the truth. His Christian experience and his knowledge of the Scriptures, the way in which he holds the present truth, should all be understood. There has been too little done in examining ministers, and for this very reason churches have had the labors of unconverted, inefficient men, who have lulled the members to sleep, instead of awakening them to greater zeal and earnestness in the cause of God.

The truth has been represented as a "treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." [Matthew 13:44] The man who had bought the field would plow every part of it to make himself possessor of the treasure. Thus it is with the word of God. It is filled with precious things; it is a field containing the unsearchable riches of Christ. Yet many who teach the truth have no ambition to become Bible students, and do not work the mine that contains the precious jewels of truth. They get a runway of a few discourses which they think will make them pass as preachers, but it is impossible for them to bring from the treasure-house of God's word, things new and old. They are not thoroughly furnished for every good work, and are unable to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.
Let our prayers ascend to God for His converting, transforming grace. Meetings should be held in every church for solemn prayer and earnest searching of the word to know what is truth. Take the promises of God, and ask God in living faith for the outpouring of His Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit is shed upon us, narrow and fatness will be drawn from the word of God. Ministers will not handle it carelessly, but prayerfully, reverently, as the guide-book of heaven. They will see the altar upon which they are to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God which is their reasonable service.

When self-denial becomes a part of our religion, we shall understand and do the will of God; for our eyes will be anointed with eyesalve so that we shall behold wonderful things out of His law. We shall see the path of obedience as the only path of safety. God has made it absolute in proportion as the light of truth is brought to their understanding. The claims of His law are just and reasonable, and through the grace of Christ He expects us to fulfill His requirements. The demands of His law must be fully met. Men must advance in the path of duty from light to a greater light, for light unimprover becomes darkness, and a means of treasuring up wrath for themselves against the day of wrath.

Every member of the church is responsible for the talents intrusted to him; and in order to meet his responsibilities he needs to be instructed diligently, patiently, and with the spirit of Christ. This work devolves largely on the minister, but often has no work is so slightly done that it cannot be acceptable to God or accomplish His purpose. Talent must be trained that the very highest service may be rendered by individual members of the church.

When the churches become living, working churches, the Holy Spirit will be given in answer to their sincere request. Then the truth of God's word will be regarded with new interest, and will be explored as if it were a revelation just from the courts above. Every declaration of inspiration concerning Christ will take hold of the inmost soul of those who love Him. Envy, jealousy, evil surmising, will cease. The Bible will be regarded as a charter from heaven. Its study will absorb the mind, and its truths will feast the soul. The promises of God now repeated as if the soul had never tasted of His love, will then glow upon the altar of the heart, and fall in burning words from the lips of the messengers of God. They will then stand where our fathers stood. We cannot be accepted of God in rendering the same service that our fathers rendered. In order to have our life-work blessed of God, we must be as faithful, as zealous, in our time as they were in theirs; we must improve our light as they improved theirs, and do as they would have done if the increased light shining upon us had shone upon them.

We should not open the sacred volume with a light and trifling spirit. We should study God's word with humility, with hope, with prayerful hearts, grateful that such a treasure has been vouchsafed to us. Every doctrine must be brought to the Bible. Every perplexing question must be settled by a "thus saith the Lord." The truth should be woven into our life, that it may influence our spirit and govern our actions. I declare to you in the name of the Lord, that the truth must be elevated. We are not anything like as efficient as we might be. Some of the ministers do not teach the truth as it is in Jesus. They do not eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God. Christ says, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." [John 6:63] His words must become part of our very life; then we shall offer frequent, effectual prayers with the faith, which will bring returns. Then if ministers see that their labors are not effectual to the saving of souls, they will fast and pray, and the Holy Spirit will come upon them. They will work diligently to correct what may be wrong in their character.

The sincerity of their prayers will be demonstrated by their earnest efforts they make to place themselves in the right relation to God. When they see in themselves sins and wrongs that must be confessed and renounced, they must exercise faith that when they repent of their sins God forgives, that renovating power is given to the soul. By faith, living faith, the victory will be gained. In this work there should be no indulgence indulged in, for God calls upon men for the exercise of every power, that He may work with their efforts. Man can never be saved himself, or be an instrument for the salvation of others, until he exercises living faith, and with determined effort acts his part in the work of Christ, which will subdue every unholy passion, and enable him to conquer self. God has given to His people the light of great and solemn truths. He has opened to their understanding the mysteries of salvation; and if these truths are not improved, the favor of God will be withdrawn.
Faithfulness in Reproving Sin

The true people of God, who have the spirit of the work of the Lord and the salvation of souls at heart will ever view sin in its real, sinful character. They will always be on the side of faithful and plain dealing with sins which easily beset the people of God. Especially in the closing work for the church, in the sealing time of the one hundred and forty-four thousand, who are to stand without fault before the throne of God, will they feel most deeply the wrongs of God’s professed people. This is visibly set forth by the prophet’s illustration of the last work, under the figure of the men, each having a slaughter weapon in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer’s ink-horn by his side. “And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.” [Ezekiel 9:2]

Who are standing in the counsel of God at this time? Is it those who virtually excuse wrongs among the professed people of God, and murmur in their hearts, if not openly, against those who would reprove sin? Is it those who take their stand against them, and sympathize with those who commit wrongs?—No, indeed! These, unless they repent, and leave the work of Satan in oppressing those who have the burden of the work, and in holding up the hands of sinners in Zion, will never receive the mark of God’s sealing approval. They will fall in the general destruction of all the wicked, represented by the five men bearing slaughter weapons. Mark this point with care: those who receive the pure mark of truth, wrought in them by the power of the Holy Ghost, represented by the man in linen, are those “that sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done” in the church. Their love for purity and the honor and glory of God is such, and they have so clear a view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, that they are represented as being in an agony, even sighing and crying.

But the general slaughter of all those who do not thus see the wide contrast between sin and righteousness, and do not feel as those do who stand in the counsel of God and receive the mark, is described in the order to the five men with slaughter weapons: “Go ye after him through the city, and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity; slay utterly old and young, both maidens, and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary.” [5, 6]

God said to Joshua (in the case of Achan’s sins), “Neither will I be with you any more except ye destroy the accursed from among you.” [Joshua 7:12] How does this instance compare with the course pursued by those who will not raise their voice against sin and wrong; but whose sympathies are ever found with those who trouble the camp of Israel with their sins? Said God to Joshua, “Thou canst not stand before thine enemies until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.” [13] He pronounced the punishment which should follow the transgression of His covenant.

Joshua then began a diligent search to find out the guilty one. He took Israel by their tribes, and then by their families, and next, individually. Achan was designated as the guilty one. But that the matter might be plain to all Israel, that there should be no occasion given them to murmur, and to say that the guiltless was made to suffer, Joshua used policy. He knew that Achan was the transgressor, and that he had concealed his sin, and provoked God against His people. Joshua discreetly induced Achan to make confession of his sin, that God’s honor and justice should be vindicated before Israel:

“And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him; and tell me now what thou hast done. Hide it not from me.” [19]

“And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed, I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoil a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them. And took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord. And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.” [20-25]

God holds His people, as a body, responsible for sins existing in individuals among them. If there is a neglect with the leaders of the church to diligently search out the sins which bring the displeasure of God upon His people as a body, they become responsible for these sins. But this is the nicest work that men ever engaged in, to deal with minds. All are not fitted to correct the erring. They have not wisdom to deal justly, while loving mercy. They will not be inclined to see the necessity of mingling love and tender compassion with Ellen G. White
There are many who do not have the discretion of Joshua, and who have no special duty to search out wrongs.

faithful reproof of wrongs. Some will ever be needlessly severe, and will not feel the necessity of the injunction of the apostle, "And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." [Jude 23, 24] There are many who do not have the discretion of Joshua, and who have no special duty to search out wrongs, and to deal promptly with the sins existing among them. Let not such hinder those who have the burden of this work upon them. Let them not stand in the way of those who have this duty to do. Some make it a point to question, and doubt, and find fault, because others do the work that God has not laid upon themselves. These stand directly in the way to hinder those upon whom God has laid the burden of reproof, and of correcting the sins that are prevailing, that His crown may be turned away from His people. Should a case like Achan’s be among us, there are many who would accuse those who might act the part of Joshua in searching out the wrong, of having a fault-finding, wicked spirit. God is not to be trifled with, and His warnings disregarded with impunity by a perverse people.

The manner of Achan’s confession is similar to the confessions that some have made, and will make, among us. They hide their wrongs, and refuse to make a voluntary confession, until God searches them out, and then they acknowledge their sins. A few persons pass on in a course of wrong, until they become hardened. They may even know that the church is burdened, as Achan knew that Israel were made weak before their enemies because of his guilt; yet their consciences do not condemn them. They will not relieve the church by humbling their proud, rebellious hearts before God, and putting away their wrongs. God’s displeasure is upon His people, and He will not manifest His power in their midst while sins are existing among them, and fostered by those in responsible positions.

Those who work in the fear of God to rid the church of hindrances, and to correct grievous wrongs, that the people of God may see the necessity of abhorring sin, and that they may prosper in purity, and the name of God be glorified, will ever meet with resisting influences from the unconsecrated. Zephaniah describes the true state of this class, and the terrible judgments that will come upon them: “And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees; that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil.”

“The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord; the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of darkness and gloominess, and a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord; and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord’s wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy; for He shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.” [Zephaniah 1:12, 14-18]

God will not be trifled with. It is in time of conflict when the true colors should be flung to the breeze. It is then the standard-bearers need to be firm, and let their true position be known. It is then the skill of every true soldier for the right is tested. Shirks can never wear the laurels of victory. Those who are true and loyal will not conceal the fact, but will put heart and might into the work, and venture their all in the struggle, let the battle turn as it will. God is a sin-hating God; and those who will encourage the sinner, saying, It is well with thee, God will curse. [Review and Herald, June 8, 1886]
Prenatal Education

Colin Standish, Ph.D.

Christian parenthood is not accidental. It is planned. This preparation involves economics and living conditions, but above all it encompasses the spiritual life of the would-be parents. Only when the parents are in spiritual unity and in harmony with Christ will the Holy Spirit empower them and overshadow the unborn. No better example of this is given in the Scriptures than in the lives of Zacharias and Elisabeth, the parents of John the Baptist.

"Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost." Luke 1:41

"And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost." Luke 1:67

It was no doubt because of this infilling that Gabriel could prophesy:

"For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." Luke 1:15

John the Baptist was a type of Elijah and gave a message parallel to that which will foreshadow the return of Christ.

"Behold, I will send you Elijah before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Malachi 4:5, 6

"And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist." Matthew 17:10-13

Thus there is great significance in the preparation of husbands and wives who will parent a special generation to take the message of Jesus to the world. There is assurance that when the Holy Spirit is manifest in the lives of the parents-to-be, this influence will also pervade the life of the prenate, and will greatly maximize the claims of Christ upon the life and protect the child from a thousand evils.

Sacred questions must be resolved by husband and wife before a child is conceived. Unless they have forged a deep abiding relationship with each other by their individual relationship with Jesus, they are yet unready to begin the parenting of a child. It is irresponsible to parent a child with the hope of rescuing a shaky and insecure marriage. There is nothing a little, inexperienced infant can do to secure the marriage, and most likely he will become the victim of the insecurity of the parents. This situation will in all likelihood lead to erratic management of the child and to inconsistency in the expression of both love and discipline. Such behavior sets the stage for serious emotional and social problems in later life.

The importance of the wife's lifestyle during pregnancy is made clear in Scripture. The angel counseled Manoah's wife:

"She may not eat of anything that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her let her observe." Judges 13:14

The diet and the activities of the expectant mother are of paramount impact upon the healthy development of the embryo and fetus. Just as righteous parents may provide a wonderful benefit for the babe, conversely parents can be responsible for making it almost impossible for the Holy Spirit ever to gain access to the life of a child.

The parent has about eighteen months to provide bases for a secure and balanced personality and temperament, and by far the most important of these are the nine months before birth. The love and security developed in the prenatal environment include the calm and happy disposition of the mother, the healthful and carefully balanced diet she chooses, the avoidance of the use of drugs, spices, or other condiments, the loving relationship with her husband, her secure trust and faith in God and the daily taking of regular and moderate exercise. Thus mothers are counseled:

"Every woman about to become a mother, whatever may be her surroundings, should encourage constantly a happy, cheerful, contented disposition, knowing that for all her efforts in this direction she will be repaid tenfold in the physical, as well as in the moral, character of her offspring. Nor is this all. By habit she can accustom herself to cheerful thinking, and thus encourage a happy state of mind and cast a cheerful reflection of her own happiness of spirit upon her family and those with whom she associates." Mind, Character, and Personality, vol. 1, 131

The achievement of such a prenatal environment is the responsibility of the husband just as much as of the wife. His disposition, helpfulness and loyalty are essential principles in the new life that is being initiated into their family. One of the authors recalls a situation when an expectant mother came to counsel with him shortly after she discovered that her husband was having an affair with another woman. It was almost pointless to urge this devastated spouse to
The temperament of the child is greatly affected by that of the mother

be calm and joyous. As with postnatal responsibilities, the responsibilities of the husband and wife are shared during the prenatal development of their child. Godly partners will second the work of each other in these precious months.

In the complexity of modern living it is most difficult for choices to be made to provide the most ideal circumstances for the development of the prenate. During this time the responsibilities of the wife should be reduced in order to avoid overexertion and the tension of heavy responsibilities.

The common practice of expectant mothers working up to or near to the time of delivery as possible should be carefully evaluated. The responsibilities and interrelationships at work and home are likely to foster tension, especially during periods when the expectant mother is suffering some of the not infrequent physical effects of her pregnancy. Where at all possible, it is wise that a wife greatly reduce or preferably cease formal business, industrial or factory work. This counsel does not fore-shadow the mother becoming indolent during these months. On the contrary, activity is profitable, but as far as possible, it should be activity without the strain or tension that employment outside the home tends to precipitate.

The temperament of the child is greatly affected by that of the mother.

The thoughts and feelings of the mother will have a powerful influence upon the legacy she gives her child. If she allows her mind to dwell upon her own feelings, if she indulges in selfishness, if she is peevish and exacting, the disposition of her child will testify to the fact. Thus many have received as a birthright almost unconquerable tendencies to evil.”

Mind, Character and Personality, vol. 1, 132

While the placenta is a fine filter, it obviously is not perfect; otherwise no nutrients would be supplied to the rapidly growing fetus. Thus, the emotionality of the mother is quickly transferred to the fetus. When the mother is in a frequent state of hyper-excitement, she automatically secretes adrenalin and other physiologically active substances into her blood system. This leads to her hyperactivity. In turn the blood impregnated with the substances reaches the system of the prenate, which automatically increases his hyperactivity. If these incidents occur frequently in the prenate's experience, the foundation of hyperkinetic behavior in later life is securely laid. It is common for parents to relate hyperkinetic behavior to genetic factors, and while this relationship is possible, it is also likely that it may be traced to the prenatal environment.

It is most unlikely that Christian mothers need counseling concerning the deleterious effect of alcohol, tobacco and mind-expanding drugs upon the prenate, although in the United States alone hundreds of newborn babies die annually from drug withdrawal symptoms, and tens of thousands of others are permanently injured because of the drug habits of their mothers. However, even Christian mothers need to be most careful in their use of any drugs, including normally prescribed drugs as well as non-prescription drugs, such as headache preparations. The influence of all these should be weighed in the light of their possible effect upon the unborn child.

Of utmost importance is the sensory input of the mother during pregnancy. This input especially includes what she sees and hears. The mind must be daily reinforced by the sweet messages of the love of Jesus. At least one or two hours a day contemplating the matchless themes of the Scriptures will prove a great strengthener of faith and contentment. The choice of trust-developing music will also enhance the ideal environment for the expectant mother. This is not the time to spend long periods in the fantasy world of television, novels, or other unrealistic media. The wholesomeness of the mind is an essential preparation for parenthood.

Perhaps one other parameter should be explored. The most idyllic environment for the child when he is born is a rural environment where there is opportunity for him to readily learn of the God of nature, and where in his early play he may learn the literal lessons of the garden while exercising and strengthening his body in the fresh air and sunshine so abundantly provided. Such environment would also provide the same benefits for the expectant mother and her spouse. The country provides a place for health-enduring exercise in which, depending upon her strength and capacities, she can facilitate as “natural” a birth as possible.

Tremendous issues are at stake in the education of the new generation. It starts with this all-important development before birth. Thus the Lord has provided the clearest counsel for those who are preparing for parenthood. The prenatal education will set the rudder for the child's future character, stability and success. To initiate a new life into the world without careful personal planning and preparation by parents is a sin.

“They [parents] should understand the principles that underlie the care and training of children. They should be capable of rearing them in physical, mental and moral health. Parents should study the laws of nature. They should become acquainted with the organism of the human body. They need to understand the functions of the various organs, and their relation and dependence. They should study the relation of the mental to the physical powers, and the conditions required for the healthful action of each. They assume the responsibilities of parenthood without such preparation is a sin.”

Ministry of Healing, 380

“Upon fathers as well as mothers rests a responsibility for the child's earlier as well as its later training, and for both parents the demand for careful and thorough preparation is most urgent. Before taking upon themselves the possibilities of fatherhood and motherhood, men and women should become acquainted with the laws of physical development,—with physiology and hygiene, with the bearing of prenatal influences, with the laws of heredity, sanitation, dress, exercise, and the treatment of disease; they should also understand the laws of mental development and moral training.”

Education, 276

If either parent is not willing to take upon himself or herself these sober responsibilities, no new life should be brought into the world.

The final generation of parents will have an all-consuming passion—the representation of God's love by practical Christianity so that their children may choose from the perspective of God's authentic truth. More than anything else the world needs the restoration of the true Christian home.
Lay Members Go Forth

Ellen G. White

There is a much greater work devolving upon the individual members of the church than they realize. They are not awake to the claims of God. The time has come when there should be devised every means that can aid in preparing a people to stand in the day of God. We must be wide awake, refusing to let precious opportunities pass unimproved. We must do all that we possibly can to win souls to love God and keep His commandments. Jesus requires this of those who know the truth. Is His demand unreasonable? Do we not have the life of Christ as our example? Do we not owe the Saviour a debt of love, of earnest, unselfish labor for the salvation of those for whom He gave His own life?

Many of the members of our large churches are doing comparatively nothing. They might accomplish a good work, if, instead of crowding together, they would scatter into places that have not yet been entered by the truth. Trees that are planted too thickly do not flourish. They are transplanted by the gardener, that they may have room to grow, and not become dwarfed and sickly. The same rule would work well for our large churches. Many of the members are dying spiritually for want of this very work. They are becoming sickly and inefficient. Transplanted, they would have room to grow strong and vigorous.

It is not the purpose of God that His people should colonize, or settle together in large communities. The disciples of Christ are His representatives upon the earth, and God designs that they shall be scattered all over the country, in the towns, cities, and villages, as lights amid the darkness of the world. They are to be missionaries for God, by their faith and works testifying to the near approach of the coming Saviour.

The lay members of our churches can accomplish a work which as yet they have scarcely begun. None should move into new places merely for the sake of worldly advantage; but where there is an opening to obtain a livelihood, let families that are well grounded in the truth enter, one or two families in a place, to work as missionaries. They should feel a love for souls, a burden of labor for them, and should study how to bring them into the truth. They can distribute our publications, hold meetings in their homes, become acquainted with their neighbors, and invite them to come to these meetings and Bible readings. Thus they can let their light shine in good works.

Let the workers stand alone in God, weeping, praying, laboring for the salvation of their fellow men. Remember that you are running a race, striving for a crown of immortality. While so many love the praise of men more than the favor of God, let it be yours to labor in humility. Learn to exercise faith in presenting your neighbors before the throne of grace, and pleading with God to touch their hearts. In this way effectual missionary work may be done. Some may be reached who would not listen to a minister or a colporteur. And those who thus labor in new places will learn the best ways and means of approaching the people and can prepare the way for other laborers.

A precious experience may be gained by one who engages in this work. He has upon his heart the burden of the souls of his neighbors. He must have the help of Jesus. How careful he will be to walk circumspectly, that his prayers may not be hindered, that no cherished sin may separate him from God. While helping others, such a worker is himself obtaining spiritual strength and understanding, and in this humble school he may become qualified to enter a wider field.

Christ declares, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit” [John 15:8] God has endowed us with faculties, and has entrusted us with talents, in order that we may use them for Him. To every man is given his work—not merely work in his fields of corn and wheat, but earnest persevering work for the salvation of souls. Every stone in God’s temple must be a living stone, a stone that shines, reflecting light to the world. Let the laymen do all that they can; and as they use the talents they already have, God will give them more grace and increased ability. Many of our missionary enterprises are crippled because there are so many who refuse to enter the doors of usefulness that are plainly opened before them. Let all who believe the truth begin to work. Do the work that lies nearest you; do anything, however humble, that be, like the men of Meroz, do-nothings.

We shall not be stinted for means if we will only go forward, trusting in God. The Lord is willing to do a great work for all who truly believe in Him. If the lay members of the church will arouse to do the work that they can do, going a warfare at their own charges, each seeing how much he can accomplish in winning souls to Jesus, we shall see many leaving the ranks of Satan to stand under the banner of Christ. If our people will act upon the light that is given in these few words of instruction, showing that they sincerely believe the truth which they profess, we shall surely see of the salvation of God. Wonderful revivals will follow. Sinners will be converted, and many will be added to the church. When we bring our hearts into unity with Christ, and our lives into harmony with His work, the Spirit that fell on the disciples on the day of Pentecost will fall on us.
The Best Laid Plans Of Christ And Men
(or How Are We Going To Finish The Work?)

How are we, God's remnant people, going to finish the work He has given us to do in this crisis hour? On the surface, our statistics appear favorable, but what we fail to see is that we are going behind in our statistics, not ahead, considering that 325,000 babies are born every day. We surpassed our goal in the 1000 Days of Reaping, and by 1990 our program Harvest 90 will probably surpass our goal of doubling our membership. But the question must be asked, should our programs set goals of doubled memberships or target select categories of people less resistant to our message? Or should we rather concentrate on doubling our consecration and setting the goal of giving everyone in the world the warning message in God's own time? Could God accomplish the task in less than five years if He had wholly dedicated people?

What we must understand is that no program will succeed in finishing God's work until its leadership, the ministry, and the laity are filled with the Holy Spirit. This experience long looked for, prayed for, can be ours NOW. There are those who say not only in their hearts, but also in all their works, "My Lord delayeth His coming." Because Christ's coming has been long foretold, they conclude that there is some mistake in regard to His advent. But the Lord says, "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come." It will not tarry past the time that the message is borne to all nations, tongues, and peoples. Shall we who claim to be students of prophecy forget that God's forbearance to the wicked is a part of the vast and merciful plan by which He is seeking to compass the salvation of souls? Shall we be found among the number who, having ceased to co-operate with God, are found saying, "My Lord delayeth His coming"?

Christ's true followers will represent Him in character. They will turn aside from worldly policy, and every day will train themselves for service in God's cause. See Review and Herald, June 18, 1901

So when we have a burden for souls, when our consecration is whole-hearted, when the "know not" condition of Laodicea has been changed for exact obedience to everything God has commanded the Church to do in this final hour, then we will be ready to be God's chosen saints, equipped to perform the task of finishing the gospel commission. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." [1 Peter 2:9] The latter rain will fall, the loud cry will be given by God's Remnant Church, His faithful, obedient saints.

The Gospel of Jesus will someday go like fire in the stubble. Look at this marvelous scene: "Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand."

"The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God. The arguments have been presented. The seed has been sown, and now it will spring up and bear fruit. The publications distributed by missionary workers have exerted their influence, yet many whose minds were impressed have been prevented from fully comprehending the truth or from yielding obedience. Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord's side." The Great Controversy, 612

Let us remember that God can use for the finishing of the work only holy people, who weep between the porch and the altar night and day for the sins of the world and of the church.

"If ever God's watchmen needed to be on their guard, it is now.... The trumpet must give a certain sound. There will be a general proclamation of truth, the whole earth will be enlightened with the glory of God, but those only will recognize the light who have sought to know the difference between holiness and sin." The Upward Look, 365

What the Church needs is the power of the Holy Spirit as manifest at Pentecost, and the Holy Spirit can only be poured out upon a people when they have come forth from the upper room experience. That means a putting away of not only differences but also a putting away of sin. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" When we come into harmony with one another under God's direction, then we will see the workers march forward gaining the victory in the face of insurmountable obstacles. The plans of men cannot hasten the work of God and all the host of hell cannot stop the advance of the army of God, united under His direction, following His plans, using His power. God says, "Without Me ye can do nothing" and "With Me ye can do all things." May we never forget so plain a thus saith the Lord.

Ron Spear

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