Special Issue: Message to Laodicea
It is with sadness that I write this editorial. I have just returned from the funeral of a dear friend, Elder Robert Pierson, retired president of the General Conference.

I stood before his coffin in the church in Fletcher, North Carolina, and as I looked at his peaceful sleep in Jesus, I remarked to Dr. Colin Standish who was standing by me, “Here lies a great warrior for God, a man who loved his church and its great message.” My mind turned back to the 1950s when as a young missionary I traveled through the Iurii Forest with my division president. That was the beginning of a long friendship that ended January 21, 1989, as he closed his eyes in Jesus while pastor of the Kailua Church in Hawaii.

Even though he had retired from a long and fruitful ministry, he was active in the Lord’s service to the very end. I know that we will meet again soon, for the grave cannot hold such a watchman for God. When the trumpet sounds and the voice of the archangel echoes and echoes throughout the earth, he will hear and know his Master’s call and come forth to everlasting life. “Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” Revelation 14:13.

During the last two years, I had on a number of occasions spent several hours with Elder Pierson. His great desire was to see a tremendous revival and reformation take place in this church, so dear to his heart.

In his writing, preaching, and discussions, he often referred to the following statements by Ellen G. White: “A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work.” Selected Messages, book 1, 121. “Before the final visitation of God’s judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times.” The Great Controversy, 464.

He prayed and worked hard to bring about revival and reformation during his administration, and in his retirement he continued to pray and work to help it happen. He now sleeps in Jesus, and the task rests on us, dear reader. We must now seek that great revival and reformation, that apostolic godliness may come once again to our leaders, pastors, and laity and the power of Pentecost may rest upon us with the fire of God’s Spirit. Let us remember that this experience is more than 100 years overdue.

God has been waiting for this great demonstration. It will come, but only from a victory-over-all-sin experience by the power of the Holy Spirit reigning in the soul. It is the third angel’s message in verity as expressed in daily living. It is the faith of Jesus and the law of God united in the souls of the saints. See Selected Messages, book 3, 172.

God speaks to us in 1989: “Christ and His righteousness—let this be our platform, the very life of our faith.” Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel’s message, and I have answered, “It is the third angel’s message in verity.” Evangelism, 190.

“The theme of greatest importance is the third angel’s message, embracing the messages of the first and second angels. All should understand the truths contained in these messages and demonstrate them in daily life, for this is essential to salvation. We shall have to study earnestly, prayerfully, in order to understand these grand truths; and our power to learn and comprehend will be taxed to the utmost.” Ibid., 196.

This demonstration must and will be given by a holy people who will then give the loud cry to the world. This demonstration must be made in the Seventh-day Adventist Church before it can be given to the world. When it is, it will bring a separation, a shaking which will develop two parties in the church.” “Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” Matthew 24:44. This is our message, the very message that the three angels flying in the midst of heaven are proclaiming. The work to be done now is that of sounding this last message of mercy to a fallen world. A new life is coming from heaven and taking possession of all God’s people. But divisions will come in the church. Two parties will be developed. The wheat and tares grow up together for the harvest.” Selected Messages, book 2, 114.

This demonstration and separation is accompanied by the message to the Laodiceans. We are told there will then be separation and unity all at the same time. See Testimonies, vol. 6, 400–401. Everything that can be shaken will be shaken, and what cannot be shaken will remain. See Testimonies, vol. 9, 15–16; vol. 3, 324. Many will rise up against the message to the Laodicean Church and will reject an persecute the messengers who give it. See Testimonies, vol. 1, 181–187. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” 2 Timothy 3:12.

Let us remember that when the Laodicean message has done its work, God will have a purified Seventh-day Adventist Church. The faithful, loyal, and obedient will remain. The disloyal, unfaithful, and disobedient will have joined the cause in Babylon’s churches, and will become the worst persecutors of God’s faithful people. See Testimonies, vol. 5, 463; The Great Controversy, 608–609.

May God help us now to bring our lives into harmony with the great message of the third angel. For Jesus’ sake, for our dear friends who lie sleeping in their dusty tombs, let us give the Laodicean message. Let us live it by God’s power. Let us put on that great demonstration of what God can do through fallen human beings by His power, His holiness, His perfection, and His character revealed in His church in this final crisis hour. This is my prayer.

Ron Spear—Editor
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Hope International is a special ministry assisting in the God-given work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We believe this Remnant Church of Bible prophecy has been brought into existence by the calling of the Lord, and we look for its final triumph in purity at the second coming of Christ. That the church does not now perfectly reflect the will of our Lord is cause for sorrow, but not for discouragement. The Word of God stands pledged that all within her borders will be sifted and tried, and though the greater portion will fail the test, there will yet remain a remnant to honor the Lord by their obedience to all His commands. Therefore, Hope International urges upon all the duty of supporting the Seventh-day Adventist Church in every way possible, insofar as is consistent with the principles of the government of God and the leading of His Holy Spirit upon the heart.
A study of and Ellen how were placed those 4 trines. through know them, has been. "Many of our people do not realize how firmly the foundation of our faith has been laid. My husband, Elder Joseph Bates, Father Pierce, Elder Edson, and others who were keen, noble, and true, were among those who, after the passing of the time in 1844, searched for the truth as for hidden treasure. I met with them, and we studied and prayed earnestly. Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the Word. Again and again these brethren came together to study the Bible, in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power. When they came to the point in their study where they said, 'We can do nothing more,' the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to how we were to labor and teach effectively." Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 2, 56-57.

And yet before we were officially organized in 1863, the infant church was beginning to slide into a dangerous condition called Laodicea. Ellen White wrote of her concerns in the year 1852: "As I have of late looked around to find the humble followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, my mind has been much exercised. Many who profess to be looking for the speedy coming of Christ are becoming conformed to this world and seek more earnestly the applause of those around them than the approbation of God. They are cold and formal, like the nominal churches from which they but a short time since separated. The words addressed to the Laodicean church describe their present condition perfectly." Early Writings, 107.

This tendency of the church to unite with the world led her to write in Selected Messages, book 1, 68-69:

"It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed. God did not design that His people, Israel, should wander forty years in the wilderness. He promised to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there a holy, healthy, happy people. But those to whom it was first preached, went not in 'because of unbelief.' Hebrews 3:19. Their hearts were filled with murmuring, rebellion, and hatred, and H could not fulfill His covenant with them.

"For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, un consecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years."

These statements are from manuscripts written to the church in our very beginnings. Then why are we still here? Year by year the Laodicean condition has taken a death grip on the church. Let us review briefly the historical events leading up to the Minneapolis conference of 1888. The church was drifting off course into troubled waters, and in 1882 the prophet wrote:

"I am filled with sadness when I think of our condition as a people. The Lord has not closed heaven to us, but our own course of continual backsliding has separated us from God. Pride, covetousness, and love of the world have lived in the heart without fear of banishment or condemnation. Grievous and presumptuous sins have dwelt among us.

Ron Spear
And yet the general opinion is that the church is flourishing and that peace and spiritual prosperity are in all her borders.

"The church has turned back from following Christ her Leader and is steadily retreating toward Egypt. Yet few are alarmed or astonished at their want of spiritual power. Doubt, and even disbelief of the testimonies of the Spirit of God, is leavening our churches everywhere. Satan would have it thus. Ministers who preach self instead of Christ would have it thus. The testimonies are unread and unappreciated. God has spoken to you. Light has been shining from His Word and from the testimonies, and both have been slighted and disregarded. The result is apparent in the lack of purity and devotion and earnest faith among us." Testimonies, vol. 5, 217

And what has caused this alarming condition? Many have accepted the theory of the truth who have had no true conversion. I know where I speak. There are few who feel true sorrow for sin, who have deep, pungent convictions of the depravity of the unregenerate nature. The heart of stone is not exchanged for a heart of flesh. Few are willing to fall upon the Rock and be broken." Ibid., 218

What was the cause of this alarming condition of Laodicea? Bear in mind that Laodiceans do not recognize their deplorable state of spiritual wretchedness and blindness. They believe that they are all right when they are all wrong:

"What greater deception can come upon human minds than a confidence that they are right when they are all wrong! The message of the True Witness finds the people of God in a sad deception, yet honest in that deception. They know not that their condition is deplorable in the sight of God." Ibid., vol. 3, 252-253

"They lack almost every qualification necessary to perfect Christian character. They have not a practical knowledge of Bible truth, which leads to lowliness of life and a conformity of their will to the will of Christ. They are not living in obedience to all God's requirements." Ibid., 254

This condition led up to the 1888 conference. The message of Waggoner, Jones, and Ellen White was the message to the Laodicean church. She reveals to us the message and the events of that day:

"We think the Lord with all the heart that we have precious light to present before the people, and we rejoice that we have a message for this time which is present truth. The tidings that Christ is our righteousness has brought relief to many, many souls, and God says to His people, 'Go forward.' The message to the Laodicean church is applicable to our condition. How plainly is pictured the position of those who think they have all the truth, who take pride in their knowledge of the Word of God, while its sanctifying power has not been felt in their lives! The fervor of the love of God is wanting in their hearts, but it is this very fervor of love that makes God's people the light of the world.

"The True Witness says of a lukewarm, lifeless, Christless church, 'I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.' Revelation 3:15-16. Mark the following words: 'Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' Verse 17. Here is represented a people who pride themselves in their possession of spiritual knowledge and advantages. But they have not responded to the unmerited blessings that God has bestowed upon them. They have been full of rebellion, ingratitude, and forgetfulness of God; and still He has dealt with them as a loving, forgiving Father deals with an ungrateful, wayward son. They have resisted His grace, abused His privileges, slighted His opportunities, and have been satisfied to sink down in contentment, in lamentable ingratitude, hollow formalism, and hypocritical insincerity. With Pharisaic pride they have vaunted themselves till it has been said of them, 'Thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.'

"Has not the Lord Jesus sent message after message of rebuke, of warnings, of entreaty to these self-satisfied ones? Have not His counsels been despised and rejected? Have not His delegated messengers been treated with scorn, and their words been received as idle tales? Christ sees that which man does not see. He sees the sins which, if not repented of, will exhaust the patience of a long-suffering God. Christ cannot take up the names of those who are satisfied in their self-sufficiency. He cannot importune in behalf of a people who feel no need of His help, who claim to know and possess everything." Selected Messages, book 1, 357-358

Christ cannot importune in behalf of a people who feel no need of His help, who claim to know and possess everything

Did the church, its leaders, and laity receive the Laodicean message of 1888? Again Sister White speaks to us:"

"God gave to His messengers just what the people needed. Those who received the message were greatly blessed, for they saw the bright rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and life and hope sprang up in their hearts. They were beholding Christ..."

"But there are those who despised the men and the message they bore. They have taunted them with being fanatics, extremists, and enthusiasts." Testimonies to Ministers, 95, 97

"Messages bearing the divine credentials have been sent to God's people; the glory, the majesty, the righteousness of Christ, full of goodness and truth, have been presented; the fullness of the Godhead in Jesus Christ has been set forth among us with beauty and loveliness, to charm all whose hearts were not closed with prejudice. We know that God has wrought among us. We have seen souls turn from sin to righteousness. We have seen faith revived in the hearts of the contrite ones." Review and Herald, vol. 2, 397

The rejection of the righteousness of Christ is seen in the regrettable experience referred to by Mrs. White in a letter written November 19, 1902:
"I have been instructed that the terrible experience at the Minneapolis conference is one of the saddest chapters in this history of the believers in present truth." The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, 1796

She elaborated upon this "sad chapter" in a letter written from Australia to her nephew Frank Eberden and his wife: "Never before have I seen among our people such firm self-complacency and unwillingness to accept and acknowledge light as was manifested at Minneapolis. I have been shown that not one of the company who cherished the spirit manifested heal them. They have obscured their spiritual eyesight. They would not that God would manifest His Spirit and His power; for they have a spirit of mockery and disgust at My word. Lightness, trifling, jesting, and joking are daily practiced. They have not set their hearts to seek Me. They walk in the sparks of their own kindling, and unless they repent, they shall lie down in sorrow. Thus saith the Lord: 'Stand at your post of duty; for I am with thee, and will not leave thee nor forsake thee.' These words from God I have not dared to disregard." Ibid., 1067-1068

"The faith of Jesus." It is talked of, but not understood. What constitutes the faith of Jesus, that belongs to the third angel's message? . . . Faith in the ability of Christ to save us amply and fully and entirely is the faith of Jesus

at that meeting would again have clear light to discern the preciousness of truth sent them from Heaven until they humbled their pride and confessed that they were not actuated by the Spirit of God, but that their minds and hearts were filled with prejudice. The Lord desired to come near to them, to bless them and heal them of their backslidings, but they would not hearken. They were actuated by the same spirit that inspired Korah, Dathan, and Abiram: . . .

"When I purposed to leave Minneapolis, the Angel of the Lord stood by me and said: 'Not so; God has a work for you to do in this place. The people are acting over the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. I have placed you in your proper position, which those who are not in the light will not acknowledge; they will not heed your testimony; but I will be with you; My grace and power shall sustain you. It is not you they are despising, but the messengers and the message I sent to My people. They have shown contempt for the word of the Lord. Satan has blinded their eyes and perverted their judgment; and unless every soul shall repent of this their sin, this unsanctified independence that is doing insult to the Spirit of God, they will walk in darkness. I will remove the candelstick out of his place except they repent and be converted, that I should

"An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's message through Brethren [E. J.] Waggioner and [A. T.] Jones. By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world." Selected Messages, book 1, 234-235

What a solemn thought! We rejected the Laodicean message and kept the world from hearing the loud cry of the fourth angel of Revelation 18. Let us look at the evidence:

"Many present the doctrines and theories of our faith; but their presentation is as salt without savour; for the Holy Spirit is not working through their faithless ministry. They have not opened the heart to receive the grace of Christ; they know not the operation of the Spirit; they are as meal without leaven; for there is no working principle in all their labor, and they fail to win souls to Christ. They do not appropriate the righteousness of Christ; it is a robe unworn by them, a fulness unknown, a fountain untouched." Evangelism, 697

The message to Laodicea is a call from the True Witness to understand the three angels' messages by experience so that God's church, at the end of time, can put on the final demonstration to the world of what God can do with fallen human beings when they submit themselves fully to Him. Acceptance will bring victory over every sin, through the faith of Jesus, in the life. This is the source of power to keep the righteous law of God perfectly.

The faith of Jesus was not experienced at Minneapolis in 1888. The eyes of the leaders were blinded and caused the rejection of the precious message God sent.

"The third angel's message is the proclamation of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ. The commandments of God have been proclaimed, but the faith of Jesus Christ has not been proclaimed by Seventh-day Adventists as of equal importance, the law and the gospel going hand in hand. I cannot find language to express this subject in its fullness.

"The faith of Jesus." It is talked of, but not understood. What constitutes the faith of Jesus, that belongs to the third angel's message? Jesus becoming our sin-bearer that He might become our sin-pardoning Saviour. He was treated as we deserve to be treated. He came to our world and took our sins that we might take His righteousness. And faith in the ability of Christ to save us amply and fully and entirely is the faith of Jesus." Selected Messages, book 3, 172. See also ibid., 168, 184; Evangelism, 190, 196; Education, 76-77; Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 454; Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, 2

Let us remember the message to Laodicea is reproof, rebuke, and a call to buy of Jesus His gold tried in the fires of self-denial and sacrifice, yes, total commitment to stop sinning by the power of the Holy Spirit.

"Again and again has the voice from heaven addressed you. Will you obey this voice? Will you heed the counsel of the True Witness to seek the gold tried in the fire, the white raiment, and the eyesalve? The gold is faith and love, the white raiment is the righteousness of Christ, the eyesalve is that spiritual discernment which will enable you to see the wiles of
Satan and shun them, to detect sin and abhor it, to see truth and obey it.

"The deadly lethargy of the world is paralyzing your senses. Sin no longer appears repulsive because you are blinded by Satan. The judgments of God are soon to be poured out upon the earth. 'Escape for thy life' is the warning from the angels of God." Testimonies, vol. 5, 233

As we examine Testimonies, vol. 1, 181, we find a message of warning to the church applicable today:

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

"The testimony of the True Witness has not been half heeded. The solemn testimony upon which the destiny of the church hangs has been lightly esteemed, if not entirely disregarded. This testimony must work deep repentance, and all that truly receive it will obey it and be purified."

A great shaking in the church will come from preaching the straight testimony, which is the message to the Laodiceans. Many will rise up against this message, but it will be given again and again until the True Witness commands the sealing angels to leave them alone. They are joined to their idols, and the sealing angels leave them at last.

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

This message will test all members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Two parties will develop as a result of the preaching of the straight testimony.

"A new life is coming from heaven and taking possession of all God's people. But divisions will come in the church. Two parties will be developed. The wheat and tares grow up together for the harvest.

"The work will grow deeper and become more earnest to the very close of time. And all who are laborers together with God will contend most earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. They will not be turned from the present message, which is already lightening the earth with its glory. Nothing is worth contending for but the glory of God. The only rock that will stand is the Rock of Ages. The truth as it is in Jesus is the refuge in these days of evil." Selected Messages, book 2, 114

Both separation and unity will be seen in the church while the straight testimony is being given. See Testimonies, vol. 6, 400-401.

Who, then, will give this message?

"The Lord will use in His work men who are as true as steel to principle, who will not be swayed by the sophistries of those who have lost their spiritual eyesight. . . . He [Nehemiah] took a firm, unyielding stand for the right." The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 2, 1135

The Lord will use in His work men who are as true as steel to principle, who will not be swayed by the sophistries of those who have lost their spiritual eyesight, called the common people, fitting them to carry the truth to many places. Now is the time for us to awake and do what we can." Loma Linda Messages, 83

"The Lord must be given an opportunity to show men their duty and to work upon their minds. No one is to bind himself to serve for a term of years under the direction of one group of men or in one specified branch of the Master's work; for the Lord Himself will call men, as of old He called the humble fishermen, and will Himself give them instruction regarding their field of labor and the methods they should follow. He will call men from the plow and from other occupations, to give the last note of warning to perishing souls. There are many ways in which to work for the Master, and the Great Teacher will open the understanding of these workers, enabling them to see wondrous things in His Word." Counsels on Health, 395

Ellen White summarizes the Laodicean problem:

"Christ longs to work mightily by His Spirit for the conviction and conversion of sinners. But, according to His divine plan, the work must be performed through the instrumentality of His church; and her members have so far departed from Him that He cannot accomplish His will through them. He chooses to work by means, yet the means employed must be in harmony with His character." Testimonies, vol. 5, 189

"I have been shown that the greatest reason why the people of God are now found in this state of spiritual blindness is that they will not receive correction." Ibid., vol. 5, 255

Up until this day the church has not been willing to receive the correction of the Laodicean message. She turned from it in 1888; will she refuse again in 1899? May God help us in this hour to yield our wills to His will, that the long delayed latter rain may be poured out.

God is ready, our High Priest is ready, the angels are ready. The whole universe is anxious to see the great controversy ended. The question is, How many Seventh-day Adventists are now ready? The time has come when there will be no more delay."

March 1989 Our Firm Foundation 7
SEVENTH-DAY Adventists today have very mixed feelings about the name Laodicea. Reading the last of Christ's seven letters to His church, we recognize that the early Christian believers in the town of Laodicea in what is present-day Turkey represented the Lord's remnant people in the end-time. We much prefer the term remnant to the term Laodicean. We are proud to be God's end-time people. We frequently remind ourselves that we are the church which is the "apple of His eye." We draw assurance from the promise that this ship is going through all the way to the kingdom. There is to be no other church, no other movement to take our place this side of eternity. Yes, we much prefer the term remnant.

"These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." Revelation 3:14-16. "The message to the church of the Laodiceans applies especially to the people of God today." Review and Herald, vol. 4, 548. "The message to the Laodicean church is highly applicable to us as a people." The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, 961. "The message to the Laodicean church is applicable to our condition." Selected Messages, book 1, 357.

The word Laodicea itself means a people adjudged (The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary, 638). We can be comfortable with that definition, for indeed we are in the end-time judgment, and it supports our belief that we are God's end-time people. But we feel that the message Christ sent to Laodicea surely cannot apply to us today. We are winning souls to Christ faster than ever. Some conferences have already surpassed their Harvest 90 goals. Our church is over five million strong. We operate the largest Protestant educational system in the world. Our health institutions and lifestyle practices have been the envy of the secular world. The number of our missionaries and our title and offering per capita have been the envy of the religious world. Seventh-day Adventists have never been more highly respected than today.

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Revelation 3:17.

How can it be? Surely our tremendous outreach endeavors warrant more than censure, more than rebuke. Lord, where is the balancing factor in Your message to us? Surely we are doing something right. It would be much more encouraging if You could have at least said something supportive. Surely You wouldn't intend to discourage Your people—Your remnant church. Such a stern message might raise doubts in the minds of Your people—especially the new believers—as to whether or not we are indeed Your last-day people. Lord, we confess that there are a few watchmen that might be teaching some error, but they are in the vast minority. We have to confess that in spite of leadership repeatedly voting for revival and reformation, the membership find it difficult to keep from drifting closer to the Laodicean condition. Lord, we appreciate Your concern, but we really find it difficult to apply Your message of rebuke to Your church today. We are ver-

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reluctant to share it with Your remnant people. We don’t want to scare them, or to cause them to feel insecure. We have just celebrated together the one-hundredth anniversary of righteousness by faith. Surely you don’t mean to imply that we are still “wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” We are sure that You understand. Inreach tends to discourage us and interferes with our outreach programs. We really believe that we must put forth every effort in carrying the gospel to those who do not know the truth.

“The message to the church of the Laodiceans is a startling denunciation, and is applicable to the people of God at the present time. . . The Lord here shows us that the message to be borne to His people by ministers whom He has called to warn the people is not a peace-and-safety message. . . The testimony, so cutting and severe, cannot be a mistake, for it is the True Witness who speaks, and His testimony must be correct.” Testimonies, vol. 3, 252-253

“If all of those who come together for meetings of edification and prayer could be regarded as true worshipers, then might we hope, though much would still remain to be done for us. But it is in vain to deceive ourselves. Things are far from being what the appearance would indicate. From a distant view much may appear beautiful which, upon close examination, will be found full of deformities. The prevailing spirit of our time is that of infidelity and apostasy—a spirit of pretended illumination because of a knowledge of the truth, but in reality of the blindest presumption. There is a spirit of opposition to the plain word of God and to the testimony of His Spirit. There is a spirit of idolatrous exaltation of mere human reason above the revealed wisdom of God.

“There are men among us in responsible positions who hold that the opinions of a few conceited philosophers, so called, are more to be trusted than the truth of the Bible, or the testimonies of the Holy Spirit. Such a faith as that of Paul, Peter, or John is considered old-fashioned and insufferable at the present day. It is pronounced absurd, mystical, and unworthy of an intelligent mind.

“God has shown me that these men are Hazaels to prove a scourgé to our people. They are wise above what is written.” Ibid., vol. 5, 79

It would be well if we would read and reread these counsels from the pen of the Lord’s servant to His people. If all of our five million believers were true worshipers, much would still remain to be done for us. Our prevailing spirit is infidelity and apostasy manifested by opposition to the plain word of God and to the testimony of His Spirit. We tend to place our human reason above the revealed wisdom of God. We trust more what man says than what is said in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. We consider ourselves wiser than what is written.

We should not be surprised that we find it difficult to understand or see that indeed this is our condition today. The Faithful and True Witness prophesied nearly two thousand years ago that His end-time people would have a false perception of their spiritual condition. He knew that outward appearances would be deceiving. Thus He warned us that our natural eyesight would be undependable. He warns us that only as we listen to Him can we see and perceive our true spiritual condition. Christ knew that only a startling message of denunciation offered hope to awaken His spiritually blind remnant people.

“The eye is the sensitive conscience, the inner light of the mind. Upon its correct view of things the spiritual healthfulness of the whole soul and being depends. ‘The eyesalve,’ the Word of God, makes the conscience smart under its application; for it convicts of sin.” The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, 965

“The eyesalve is that wisdom and grace which enables us to discern between the evil and the good, and to detect sin under any guise.” Testimonies, vol. 4, 88

To use fulfillment of prophecy to identify the antichrist power and then to refuse to recognize Christ’s prophecy of a people wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked as applicable to us is to deny that we are Christ’s final church. To fail to recognize our condition and to obtain the remedies Christ offers is to follow in the footsteps of our spiritual ancestors in failing to be God’s final generation. We must give serious attention to our own spiritual condition. Just as did the disciples, we must have a sobering inreach before we can have a truly effective outreach. We must not pride ourselves for our outreach achievements while being vastly outpaced by world population growth as at present. We cannot preach to every nation, kindred, tongue and people a gospel which we do not understand or experience ourselves. We cannot finish the Lord’s work if we are not doing the Lord’s work.

What does it mean to be spiritually naked, as Christ says we are?

“What is it that constitutes the wretchedness, the nakedness, of those who feel rich and increased with goods?—It is the want of the righteousness of Christ. In their own righteousness they are represented as clothed with filthy rags, and yet in this condition they flatter themselves that they are clothed upon with Christ’s righteousness. Could deception be greater?” Our High Calling, 349

If we are dressed with the filthy rags of our own righteousness we are spiritually naked, for we cannot at the same time be dressed with Christ’s righteousness.

What is it that constitutes the wretchedness, the nakedness, of those who feel rich and increased with goods?—It is the want of the righteousness of Christ

“It [the Laodicean message] is not merely theoretical, but practical in every particular.” Testimonies, vol. 3, 252

There are great differences of opinion today among us as to what is the practical, day-to-day experience of covering our nakedness with the robe of Christ’s righteousness. There are many believing and teaching that we are not to have, indeed cannot have, our sins removed from our lives until Christ’s second coming. They claim that Christ’s robe of righteousness is credited to our account in the books of heaven, and for us to wear it is to have an
external covering, but without an internal victory over sin. Sanctification (overcoming sin)—"the work of a lifetime"—is understood to take place at Christ's second coming. To attempt to overcome sin in this present life is salvation by works, negating the need for Christ's robe of righteousness. It is believed that the saved will continue to sin until Christ returns, and that Christ's righteousness covers them now and until then. Not many years ago one of our prominent leaders was disfellowshipped and defrocked for teaching these and other related doctrines, now known as the New Theology. These beliefs are presently causing a shaking in Adventism. They are struggling with historic Adventism for the heart and soul of God's people.

What is the practical application of wearing Christ's robe of righteousness? Does it mean that we keep sinning and confessing, sinning and confessing until Christ comes, as the New Theology asserts? What does it mean to have our nakedness covered with Christ's righteousness?

"Unless they trust in the righteousness of Christ as their only security; unless they copy His character, labor in His spirit, they are naked; they have not on the robe of His righteousness." The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, 1166; italics supplied

To have Christ's righteousness is to have His character. Christ's character of perfect obedience (righteousness) must be put on in this life, not at Christ's second coming.

"There will be no future probation in which to prepare for eternity. It is in this life that we are to put on the robe of Christ's righteousness. This is our only opportunity to form characters for the home which Christ has made ready for those who obey His commandments." Christ's Object Lessons, 319

This internal transformation in life is the putting on of His robe of righteousness and the result of His dwelling within us. Sanctification (overcoming sin) takes place moment by moment as we continually surrender to Him, and since it must be done every day of our life it is the work of a lifetime.

"By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah." Ibid., 312

Righteousness (right-doing) in this present life by the daily indwelling of Christ—"the third angel's message in verity"—was first unfolded in all its splendor to God's people in 1888. Day-to-day right-doing by faith in Christ's enabling power was not understood at that time, and many today still believe that righteousness (right-doing) by faith is possible only when Christ comes.

The New Theology in effect teaches that Christ does not enter into, or take possession of, and transform our hearts in this life until He comes the second time in glory.

The beliefs, practices, and teachings of the New Theology were prophesied by the "faithful and true witness" to be the problem of His remnant people. Laodiceans think they are clothed with Christ's righteousness, but sadly they have only the filthy rags of their own righteousness. They fail to understand that Christ's righteousness is only for those with a heart transformed by an indwelling Christ. Laodiceans have failed to understand the scripture "Christ in you the hope of glory." They keep Christ out of their hearts, and thus their hearts are untransformed.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:20. Laodiceans have not opened the door of their hearts to Christ. Laodiceans have not experienced the sanctifying (sin-overcoming) power of Christ in their lives. "The message to the Laodicean church is applicable to our condition. How plainly is pictured the position of those who think they have all the truth, who take pride in their knowledge of the Word of God, while its sanctifying power has not been felt in their lives!" Review and Herald, vol. 2, 320

The New Theology has its roots in the unconverted and untransformed heart. The heart not ruled by Christ is ruled by self. Self much prefers the "sin and confess, sin and confess" form of righteousness to the "death of self and Christ reigns in the heart" form. Utterly worthless is the character of the unregenerated heart where self bears sway.

Self much prefers the "sin and confess, sin and confess" form of righteousness to the "death of self and Christ reigns in the heart" form

"Christ gives man no encouragement to think that He will accept a patchwork character, made up mostly of self, with a little of Christ. This is the condition of the Laodicean church. At first there seems to be some of self and some of Christ. But soon it is all of self and none of Christ. The root of selfishness is revealed. It continues to grow, striking its roots deeper and deeper, till its branches are covered with objectionable fruit. Christ looks with pitying tenderness on all who have combination characters. Those with such a character have a connection with Christ so frail that it is utterly worthless." Letter 105, 1893; italics supplied

But we say, "We are fulfilling Christ's commission to carry the gospel to the whole world. We are doing the Lord's work."

"For years the Lord has had a controversy with His people because they have followed their own judgment and have not relied on divine wisdom. Let the workers take heed lest they get in the Lord's way, hindering the advancement of His work, thinking that their wisdom is sufficient for the successful planning and carrying forward of the work." Testimonies, vol. 8, 186

It is well recognized that much of our work in the areas of medical and educational institutions, and also in other
areas, is directly contrary to the Spirit of Prophecy counsel. From the beginning of our movement we have wanted to keep self (human ideas and plans) in control of what we refer to as the Lord’s work. For decades our committees and boards have willfully directed our work contrary to His expressed will. When we as church and institutional administrators disobey Christ, we are usurping Christ’s position as head of the church. Missionary work, based on man’s wisdom and plan, even though carried on with great zeal, is naught in the sight of God. “You may manifest great zeal in missionary effort, and yet because it is corrupted with selfishness, and tastes strongly of self, it is naught in the sight of God.” The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, 961

Supreme excellence, if achieved other than by following God’s directions, is found wanting. “A work may apparently bear the features of supreme excellence, but it is not good in God’s sight unless it is performed with an earnest desire to do His will and fulfill His purpose. If God is not recognized as the author and end of our actions, they are weighed in the balances of the sanctuary and found wanting.” Testimonies, vol. 7, 120; italics supplied

Institutions operated according to man’s plans, contrary to Christ’s plans, are of no more value than those of the world. “Our health institutions are of value in the Lord’s estimation only when they work, but without Christ within.

Paul tried to awaken the early Laodiceans to comprehend that the hope of glory is based on having Christ in the heart and in the life

He is allowed to preside in their management. If His plans and devisings are regarded as inferior to plans of men, He looks upon these institutions as of no more value than the institutions established and conducted by worldlings.” Medical Ministry, 164; italics supplied. Thus work, however praiseworthy in the eyes of man, unless performed according to God’s express will, is not the Lord’s work, but man’s.

“Perilous times are before us. Everyone who has a knowledge of the truth should awake and place himself, body, soul, and spirit, under the discipline of God. The enemy is on our track. We must be wide awake, on our guard against him. We must put on the whole armor of God. We must follow the directions given through the Spirit of Prophecy. We must love and obey the truth for this time. This will save us from accepting strong delusions. God has spoken to us through His Word. He has spoken to us through the testimonies to the church and through the books that have helped to make plain our present duty and position that we should now occupy. The warnings that have been given, line upon line, precept upon precept, should be heeded. If we disregard them, what excuse can we offer?” Testimonies, vol. 8, 298; italics supplied

Unfortunately the heart where self reigns wants to do things its way, and not the Lord’s way. Where self is in control, human plans and ideas will replace and brush aside even the word of the Lord in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

Our chronic disobedience, rebellion, and insubordination to God’s directives have served as fertile ground for the false version of righteousness by faith consisting of “sin and confess, sin and confess” till Jesus comes. The New Theology is merely expressing in theological terms that which we as a people have been and are doing. We are living and doing what we say is the Lord’s work, but without Christ within.

Paul wrote an epistle to the church at Laodicea (see Colossians 4:16), which unfortunately has been lost. He requested, however, that the epistle to the Colossians be read also to the Laodiceans. Paul was led of the Holy Spirit to share this letter and message with both churches. This message to Laodicea preceded that of Revelation, chapter three, by perhaps 36 years.

Paul’s concern for both groups was that they would acknowledge and be enriched by an understanding of the mystery of God. Colossians 2:1-3. He defines this mystery of God in Colossians 1:27:

“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” He tries to awaken these early Laodiceans to comprehend that the hope of glory is based on having Christ in the heart and in the life. The primary emphasis of this message to Laodicea is how Christ within affects one’s daily life. He repeatedly points out the effects of Christ’s transforming power within. He clearly points out that the gospel brings present victory over sin.

“Being fruitful in every good work . . . strengthened with all might according to his glorious power . . . who hath delivered us from the power of darkness . . . to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.” Colossians 1:10-11

“Put off the old man . . . put on the new man . . . stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” Colossians 3:9-10; 4:12

These messages to ancient Laodicea by Paul and the True Witness have indeed pointed out the great need of Christ’s final church. If we will let our eyes be opened we will see that we have let self control our lives and work. We have followed the direction of our own ways and plans contrary to those of Christ. We have kept Christ out of the heart of our lives and out of the heart of His work. We have permitted Satan’s last deception to make great inroads among us. “The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. ‘Where there is no vision, the people perish’ (Proverbs 29:18). Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God’s remnant people in the true testimony.” Selected Messages, book 2, 78

By not surrendering our hearts to Christ we have accepted to a great extent the concept that full death to sin is not possible until Christ comes the second time rather than death to sin occurring at the time of the new birth—at baptism.

“As you arose from the watery grave at the time of your baptism, you preferred to be dead, and declared that your life was changed—hid with Christ in God. You claimed to be dead to sin, and cleansed from your hereditary and cultivated traits of evil. In going forward in

Continued on 27
Amenable to God

While respecting authority and laboring in accordance with wisely laid plans, every worker is amenable to the Great Teacher for the proper exercise of his God-given judgment and of his right to look to the God of heaven for wisdom and guidance. God is Commander and Ruler over all. We have a personal Saviour, and we are not to exchange His word for the word of any man. In the Scriptures the Lord has given instruction for every worker. The words of the Master Worker should be diligently studied; for they are spirit and life. Laborers who are striving to work in harmony with this instruction are under the leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and need not always, before they make any advance move, first ask permission of someone else. No precise lines are to be laid down. Let the Holy Spirit direct the workers. As they keep looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of their faith, the gifts of grace will increase by wise use.

God desires that we shall come into right relation with Him. He desires that every voice shall be sanctified. He wants all there is of us—soul, body, and spirit—to be fully sanctified to do His will. It is time that we begin to know that we are fastened to the Lord Jesus Christ by a living, working faith; it is time for us to lay hold of the help proffered by the Spirit of God, and let our words reveal that we are under divine control. Let us believe in God, and trust in Him; and we shall see His mighty power working among us.

In 1895 I wrote to my brethren in the ministry, as follows: "I must speak to my brethren nigh and afar off. I cannot hold my peace. They are not working on correct principles. Those who stand in responsible positions must not feel that their position of importance makes them men of infallible judgment.

"All the works of men are under the Lord’s jurisdiction. It will be altogether safe for men to consider that there is knowledge with the Most High. Those who trust in God and His wisdom, and not in their own, are walking in safe paths. They will never feel that they are authorized to muzzle even the ox that treads out the grain; and how offensive it is for men to control the human agent who is in partnership with God, and whom the Lord Jesus has invited: ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’ ‘We are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.’ Matthew 11:28-29; 1 Corinthians 3:9"

"The Lord has not placed any one of His human agencies under the dictation and control of those who are themselves but erring mortals. He has not placed upon men the power to say, You shall do this, and you shall not do that. . . .

"No man is a proper judge of another man’s duty. Man is responsible to God; and as finite, erring men take into their hands the jurisdiction of their fellow men, as if the Lord commissioned them to lift up and cast down, all Heaven is filled with indignation. There are strange principles being established in regard to the control of the minds and works of men, by human judges, as though these finite men were gods. . . .

"Organizations, institutions, unless kept by the power of God, will work under Satan’s dictation to bring men under the control of men; and fraud and guile will bear the semblance of zeal for truth, and for the advancement of the kingdom of God. . . .

"God will not vindicate any device whereby man shall in the slightest degree rule or oppress his fellow men. The only hope for fallen man is to look to Jesus, and receive Him as the only Saviour. As soon
as man begins to make an iron rule for other men, as soon as he begins to harness up and drive men according to his own mind, he dishonors God, and imperils his own soul and the souls of his brethren. Sinful man can find hope and righteousness only in God; and no human being is righteous any longer than he has faith in God and maintains a vital connection with Him. A flower of the field must have its root in the soul; it must have air, dew, showers, and sunshine. It will flourish only as it receives these advantages, and all are from God. So with men. We receive from God that which ministers to the life of the soul. We are warned not to trust in man, nor to make flesh our arm.”

The foregoing was printed in Special Testimonies to Ministers and Workers, No. 9.

In 1903, I wrote to the president of a conference:

“By means of one agency, Christ Jesus, God has mysteriously linked all men together. To every man He has assigned some special line of service; and we should be quick to comprehend that we are to guard against leaving the work given us in order that we may interfere with other human agencies who are doing a work not precisely the same as our own. To no man has been assigned the work of interfering with the work of one of his fellow laborers, trying to take it in hand himself; for he would so handle it that he would spoil it. To one God gives a work different from the work that He gives another.

“Let us all remember that we are not dealing with ideal men, but with real men of God’s appointment, men precisely like ourselves. No man has been made a master, to rule the mind and conscience of a fellow being. Let us be very careful how we deal with God’s blood-bought heritage.

“No man has been appointed the work of being a ruler over his fellow men. Every man is to bear his own burden. He may speak words of encouragement, faith, and hope to his fellow workers; he may help them to bear their special burdens by suggesting to them improved methods of labor; but in no case is he to discourage and enfeeble them, lest the enemy shall obtain an advantage over their minds—an advantage that in time would react upon himself.

“By the cords of tender love and sympathy the Lord linked all men to Himself. Of us He says, Ye ‘are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.’ This relationship we should recognize. If we are bound up with Christ, we shall constantly manifest Christlike sympathy and forbearance toward those who are striving with all their God-given ability to bear their burdens, even as we endeavor to bear our appointed burdens.

“In our several callings there is to be a mutual dependence on one another for assistance. A spirit of authority is not to be exercised, even by the president of a conference; for position does not change a man into a creature that cannot err. Every laborer entrusted with the management of a conference is to work as Christ worked, wearing His yoke and learning of Him His meekness and lowliness. A conference president’s spirit and demeanor in word and in deed reveal whether he realizes his weakness and places his dependence on God, or whether he thinks that his position of influence has given him superior wisdom. If he loves and fears God, if he realizes the value of souls, if he appreciates every jot of the help that the Lord has qualified a brother worker to render, he will be able to bind heart to heart by the love that Christ revealed during His ministry. He will speak words of comfort to the sick and the sorrowing.

“If he does not cultivate a masterly manner, but bears in mind always that One is His Master, even Christ, he can counsel the inexperienced, encouraging them to be God’s helping hand.

“The feeble hands are not to be deterred from doing something for the Master. Those whose knees are weak are not to be caused to stumble. God desires us to encourage those whose hands are weak, to grasp more firmly the hand of Christ, and to work hopefully. Every hand should be outstretched to help the hand that is doing something for the Master. The time may come when the hands that have upheld the feeble hands of another may, in turn, be upheld by the hands to whom they ministered. God has so ordered matters that no man is absolutely independent of his fellow men.”

Testimonies to Ministers, 492-496
Sanitarium, California, January 16, 1907

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As a people, we have been reproved by God for doing so little. How important, then, that we guard carefully against everything that might dishearten or weaken the influence of one soul who is doing a work that God would have done. There are victories to be gained if we present a united front and individually seek the Lord for strength and guidance.

Testimonies to Ministers, 505

March 1989  Our Firm Foundation  13
A Word to Laodicea

Dear Laodicea:

You have occupied your place on the world scene for well over 120 years. The stirring message of our Lord’s return “in our day” has been heard by four generations, but the Bridegroom has not yet come to claim His bride! Many of your hearers have become discouraged and listless, others have filed out in disappointment and disbelief, a great number have passed on to their rest.

Are you aware of the fact that the enemy is zeroing in—above any other people—on you? (cf. Matthew 24:24.) He zeroed in on the Jewish nation—and successfully so—at the time of Christ’s first advent. He is zeroing in on the remnant church as they are waiting for His second advent. Will he be as successful as he was with the Jews? Remember, deception is the most deadly of the arrows he carries in his quiver, and prophecy warns (cf. Matthew 24:24 and Revelation 3:17) that it is this very arrow which he will aim at you, the very elect.

Prophecy does not accuse you of slackness or indulgence, nor of the want of doctrinal knowledge, or of lack of administrative and executive skills. In all of these branches you excel and are admired even by the world. Your proficiency in these branches has made you rich and has increased your goods. However, prophecy serves you notice with regard to your lukewarm attitude toward the One who is pleading on your doorstep for admission, urging you to robe yourself with His precious robe of righteousness.

Prophecy laments your scant attention to the counsel of the True Witness, on which your destiny hangs. You are a busy community—yes, too busy! You pile activity on activity, but you are tempted to make activity and the reaching of man-set goals and standards of “achievement” your god and to rest complacently and self-congratulatorily in the sunshine of those idols! Hustle and bustle have usurped the place of a quiet hour with your Saviour who longs to become better acquainted with you. Activity tempts you to neglect the cultivation of your spiritual vineyard. While you gain in girth, expanse and popularity you are losing in depth and in spiritual meaning. You are flirting with the standards of the world around you. You covet its approval and are pleased when its great men smile at you.

Music is made up of three parts: melody, rhythm and accompaniment. All three are essential, but are not equal in importance. The melody should have the most prominent part and should not be overshadowed by the rhythm or the accompaniment. The evangelization of the world by means of extensive preaching, teaching and printed propaganda, and the expenditure of large sums of money for campaigns, buildings, equipment, travel, etc—vital though all these are—do not, in and of themselves, fulfill the principal commission entrusted to the remnant church. These are not the melody. At the most, they are the accompaniment.

The melody which is to ring forth, sketchily at first, but ever more clearly, is the song of victory over sin, the song of Moses and the Lamb, soaring higher and higher, closer and ever closer to the heavenly Pattern, further and further away from the world, to the climactic bar of your composition.

Henry Baasch (1883-1981) was the first president of the Columbia-Venezuela Union, and at 85 years of age became one of the first retirees given assignment under the Adventist Volunteer Service Corp program.
height of a “full and final display” of His grace—in vessels of clay, but divested of all earthliness and testified unto by the declaration of the angel: “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12. For the first time this testimony will be said of a whole community of saints.

The messenger of the Lord gives us this picture:

“While I was praying at the family altar, the Holy Ghost fell upon me, and I seemed to be rising higher and higher, far above the dark world. I turned to look for the Advent people in the world, but could not find them, when a voice said to me, ‘Look again, and look a little higher.’ At this I raised my eyes, and saw a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were traveling to the city, which was at the farther end of the path.”

*Early Writings*, 14

The legitimate way of adding souls to the kingdom is pointed out in the following passages:

“Herein is My Father glorified,” said Jesus, “that ye bear much fruit...” Yet the Saviour does not bid the disciples labor to bear fruit. He tells them to abide in Him. If ye abide in Me,” He says, “and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

The life of Christ in you produces the same fruits as in Him. Living in Christ, adhering to Christ, supported by Christ, you draw from Christ, you bear fruit after the similitude of Christ.”

*The Desire of Ages*, 677

“Christ’s followers have no need to try to shine. If they will behold constantly the life of Christ, they will be changed in mind and heart into the same image. Then they will shine without any superficial attempt.” *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, 251

“...But Jesus did not bid the disciples, ‘Strive to make your light shine!’ He said, ‘Let it shine.’ If Christ is dwelling in the heart, it is impossible to conceal the light of His presence. If those who profess to be followers of Christ are not the light of the world, it is because the vital power has left them; if they have no light to give, it is because they have no connection with the Source of light.”

*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, 41

In view of these statements, the question of correctly evaluating the accomplishment of all missionary endeavors deserves serious study. The popular method of expressing results in terms of numbers baptized, expansions added, pages of literature distributed and sums of money collected may justly be questioned. It is freely conceded that these items are impressive! Figures and numbers are always impressive. They are fascinating, adding glamour to the performance. Moreover, they are readily absorbed by the average mind. They also provide a convenient rule for measuring results and defining merits. Nevertheless, the scent of earthiness and earthiness clings to them heavily. Let Laodicea be warned! At one time David fell victim to the magic influence of numbers (cf. 1 Chronicles 21:1)—that Satan-inspired sport which so skilfully leads to pride and self-complacency, which so trickishly substitutes quantity for quality, mediocrity for true merit, and pomp for paucity. The charm exerted by numbers, size and quantity, if allowed to prevail, will fill Laodicea’s pews with "illegitimate children" and swell her ranks with a mixed multitude which, as of old, could bring her march to a standstill at another “Kadesh-barnea.” God forbid that such a thing should happen!

Let Laodicea ponder her way! Let her pause and take inventory, let her consider and define where she has strayed from the Pattern in her multiple activities: ministerial, educational, medical, social, etcetera. Let her frankly confess her shortcomings, plead for forgiveness and then chart her future course in harmony with the divine counsel. Let her shun the subtle art of rationalizing, which makes evil appear good and transgression a necessity, trying to "update" what is eternally fresh and young—ever the head and never the tail.

Unless Laodicea will submit to a candid self-examination and to an uncompromising self-discipline, there will descend upon her a tempest that will sift and shake her ranks and sweep to one side the whole of her household, with its elaborate furnishings and costly equipment, clearing the stage for the Lord Himself to take hold of the reins (cf. Testimonies to Ministers, 300; Testimonies, vol. 5, 80; Romans 9:28) with an army of "unidentified" ones whose names and pictures may not be found in any register, or church paper, or book, nor diffused from any desk or platform. Nevertheless, they are God’s “hidden firmament,” the unknown "Elijahs" which He holds in reserve for that day and for that occasion to reflect His blazing glory which will light up the whole earth in a last attempt to save souls from a world doomed to perish.

Let Laodicea open the door, let her admit her divine Lover, adorn herself with the bridal attire which He so anxiously and eagerly offers her; let her sit down with her great Friend and sup with Him and allow Him to take her to His heavenly home, there to occupy a seat by His side on the throne of the universe! Can any desire or ambition surpass such experience? Can any expectation outshine such excellence? “Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for His children. Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached.” *Education*, 18...
The Laodicean Church

The MESSAGE to the church of the Laodiceans is a startling denunciation, and is applicable to the people of God at the present time.

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot: so then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Revelation 3:14-17

The Lord here shows us that the message to be borne to His people by ministers whom He has called to warn the people, is not a peace-and-safety message. It is not merely theoretical, but practical in every particular. The people of God are represented in the message to the Laodiceans in a position of carnal security. They are at ease, believing themselves in an exalted condition of spiritual attainments.

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

What greater deception can come upon human minds than a confidence that they are right, when they are all wrong? The message of the True Witness finds the people of God in a sad deception, yet honest in that deception. They know not that their condition is deplorable in the sight of God. While those addressed are flattering themselves that they are in an exalted spiritual condition, the message of the True Witness breaks their security by the startling denunciation of their true situation of spiritual blindness, poverty, and wretchedness. The testimony, so cutting and severe, cannot be a mistake; for it is the True Witness who speaks, and His testimony must be correct.

It is difficult for those who feel secure in their attainments, who are believing themselves to be rich in spiritual knowledge, to receive the message which declares that they are deceived and in need of every spiritual grace. The unsanctified heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

God leads His people on, step by step. The Christian life is a constant battle, and a march. There is no rest from the warfare. It is by constant, unceasing effort that we maintain the victory over the temptations of Satan. We are, as a people, triumphing in the clearness and strength of the truth. We are fully sustained in our positions by an overwhelming amount of plain scriptural testimony. But we are very much wanting in Bible humility, patience, faith, love, self-denial, watchfulness, and a spirit of sacrifice. We need to cultivate Bible holiness. Sin prevails among the people of God. The plain message of rebuke to the Laodiceans is not received. Many cling to their doubts and their darling sins, while they are in so great a deception as to talk and feel that they are in need of nothing. They think the testimony of the Spirit of God in reproof is uncalled for, or that it does not mean them. Such are in the greatest need of the grace of God and spiritual discernment, that they may discover their deficiency in spiritual knowledge. They lack almost every essential qualification necessary to perfect Christian character. They have not a practical knowledge of Bible truth, which leads to lowliness of life, and a conformity of their will to the will of Christ. They are not living in obedience to all God's requirements.

It is not enough to merely profess to believe the truth. All the soldiers of the cross of Christ virtually obligate themselves to enter a crusade against the ad
versary of souls, to condemn wrong, and sustain righteousness. But the message of the True Witness reveals the fact that a terrible deception is upon our people, which makes it necessary to come to them with warnings, to break their spiritual slumber, and arouse them to decided action.

This message of the True Witness has not accomplished the design of God. The people slumber on in their sins. They continue to declare themselves “rich, and having need of nothing.” Many inquire, Why are all these reproofs given? Why do the testimonies continually charge us with backsliding and grievous sins? We love the truth. We are prospering. We are in no need of these testimonies of warning and reproof. But let those murmurers see their hearts, and compare their lives with the practical teachings of the Bible; let them humble their souls before God; let the grace of God illuminate the darkness, and the scales will fall from their eyes, and they will sense their true spiritual poverty and wretchedness. They will feel the necessity of buying gold, which is pure faith and love; while raiment, which is a spotless character, made pure in the blood of their dear Redeemer, and eyesalve, which is the grace of God, and will give clear discernment of spiritual things, and detect sin. These attainments are more precious than the gold of Ophir.

I am very sure that the greatest reason why the people of God are now found in this state of spiritual blindness is that they will not receive correction. Many have despised the reproofs and warnings given them. The True Witness condemns the lukewarm condition of the people of God, which gives Satan great power over them in this waiting, watching time. The selfish, and proud, and lovers of sin, are ever assailed with doubts. Satan has ability to suggest doubts and devise objections to the pointed testimony that God sends, and many think it a virtue and mark of intelligence in them to be unbelieving, and questioning, and quibbling. Those who desire to doubt will have plenty of room. God does not propose to remove all occasion for unbelief. He gives evidence, which must be carefully investigated with a humble mind and teachable spirit. All should decide from the weight of evidence.

Eternal life is of infinite value, and will cost us all that we have. It is evident that we do not place a proper estimate upon eternal things. Everything worth possessing, even in this world, must be secured by effort, and sometimes by most painful sacrifice. And this is merely for a perishable treasure. Shall we be less willing to endure conflict and toil, and to make earnest efforts and great sacrifices for the infinite treasure, which passes all estimate in value, and the duration of life which will measure with the Infinite? Can Heaven cost us too much? Faith and love are golden treasures, elements that are greatly wanting among God’s people.

Faith in the soon coming of Christ is waning. “My Lord delayeth His coming” is said not only in the heart, but also expressed in words, and most decidedly in works. Stupidity in this watching time is sealing the senses of God’s people as to the signs of the times.

The terrible iniquity abounding calls for the greatest diligence, and for the living testimony, to keep sin out of the church. Faith has been decreasing to a fearful degree. Faith can only increase by exercise.

In the first rise of the third angel’s message, those who engaged in the work of God had something to venture. They had sacrifices to make. They started this work in poverty, and suffered the greatest deprivations and reproach. They which call for the exercise of faith. They do not cultivate practical self-denial, and cherish a spirit of sacrifice. Some are becoming proud and lifted up, and have no real burden of the work upon them. The True Witness speaks to these ministers, “Be zealous, therefore, and repent.” These ministers are some of them so lifted up in pride that they are really a hindrance and a curse to the precious cause of God. They do not exert an influence which is saving upon others. There is need of these men being thoroughly converted to God themselves, and sanctified by the truths they present to others.

Very many feel impatient and jealous because they are frequently disturbed with warnings and reproofs which keep their sins before them. Says the True Witness, “I know thy works.” The motives, the purposes, and the unbelief, suspicions, and jealousies may be hid from men, but not from Christ. The True Witness comes as a counselor: “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous,

Those who heed the testimony of warning, and zealously go about the work of separating their sins from them, will be opening the door of their hearts that the dear Saviour may come in

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Ministers who are preaching present truth should not neglect the solemn message to the Laodiceans. The testimony of the True Witness is not a smooth message. The Lord does not say to them, You are about right; you have borne chastisement and reproof that you never deserved; you have been discouraged unnecessarily by severity; you are not guilty of the wrongs and sins of which you have been reproved.

The True Witness declares that when you suppose you are really in a good condition of prosperity you are in need of everything. It is not enough for ministers to present theoretical subjects. They need to study the practical lessons Christ gave His disciples, and make a close application of the same to their own souls and to the people. Because Christ bears this rebuking testimony, shall we suppose that He is destitute of tender love to His people? Oh, no! He who died to redeem man from death, loves with a divine love, He rebukes those He loves, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” But many will not receive the message Heaven in mercy sends them. They cannot endure to be told of their wrongs, and of their neglect of duty, of their selfishness, their pride, and love of the world.

The servants of the Lord should bear a plain testimony. They should cry aloud and spare not, and show the people their transgressions, and the house of Israel their sins. But there is a class who will not receive the message of reproof, and they raise their hands to shield those whom God would reprove and correct. They will ever be found sympathizing with those whom God would make to feel their true poverty.

The word of the Lord spoken through His servants is received by many with questionings and fears. And many will defer their obedience to the warnings and reproofs given, waiting till every shadow of uncertainty is removed from their minds. The unbelief that demands perfect knowledge will never yield to the evidence God is pleased to give. God requires of His people faith that rests upon the weight of evidence, not perfect knowledge. The followers of Jesus Christ, those who accept of the light God sends them, must obey the voice of God speaking to them, when there are many other voices crying out against it. It requires discernment to distinguish the voice of God.

Those who will not act when the Lord calls upon them, waiting for more certain evidence and more favorable opportunities, will walk in darkness, for the light will be withdrawn. The evidence given one day, if rejected, may never be repeated.

Tempted souls, whose hearts have ever been at war with the faithful reproving of sin, would cry, Speak unto us smooth things. What disposition will these make of the message of the True Witness to the Laodiceans? There can be no deception here. This message must be borne to a lukewarm church by God’s servants. This message must arouse the people of God from their security and dangerous deception in regard to their real standing before God. This testimony, if received, will arouse to action, and lead to self-abasement, and confessions of sins. The True Witness says, “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot.” And again, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent.” Then comes the promise, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” Revelation 3:15, 19, 20-21

These wrongs and sins, which have brought the people of God in their state of wretchedness, blindness, and poverty, must be seen, and they arouse to zealous repentance, and a putting away of these sins which have brought them into such a deplorable condition of blindness and fearful deception. The pointed testimony must live in the church. And this alone will answer to the message to the Laodiceans. Wrongs must be reproved, sins must be called sins, and iniquity must be met promptly and decidedly, and put away from us as a people.

Those whom God has chosen for an important work have ever been received with distrust and suspicion. Anciently, when Elijah was sent with a message from God to the people, they did not heed the warning. They thought Elijah unnecessarily severe. He must, they thought, have lost his senses, that he would denounce them, the favored people of God, as sinners, and their crimes, so aggravating, that the judgments of God would awaken against them.

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Review and Herald, vol. 1, 131-133 (September 16, 1873)

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Line Upon Line Line Upon Line Line Upon Line

God does not ask us to do in our own strength the work before us. He has provided divine assistance for all the emergencies to which our human resources are unequal. He gives the Holy Spirit to help in every strait, to strengthen our hope and assurance, to illuminate our minds and purify our hearts. Testimonies, vol. 8, 19

True Christianity will always be aggressive, and wherever it exists it will arouse enmity. All who live a conscientious life, who bear testimony of the claims of God, of the evil of sin, of the judgment to come, will be called the disturbers of Israel. Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, 1013

We cannot overestimate the value of simple faith and unquestioning obedience. It is by following in the path of obedience in simple faith that the character obtains perfection. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, 1137
I want to thank you for all of the interesting, Spirit-filled articles over the past year. I have been blessed and encouraged by reading your magazine. I read it from cover to cover, and have never been disappointed by the "theology" in any of the articles.

The magazines are being used to help others see the errors of the New Theology. I distribute each copy to others, and rarely get them back from the same person I loaned it to.
—SK, Tennessee

This is a special gift because an article in Our Firm Foundation helped me with the Sabbath. I had to make some decisions (I am already a Seventh-day Adventist Christian) about my job, and the article helped to finalize my decision. The story is too long to restate here, but I praise God for receiving the magazine three days before I had to speak with my boss.

God worked everything out. Praise the Lord!
—NR, New Hampshire

I started going back to church because of your magazine and my husband is planning to start again, not because he has read any of your magazines but because I have started.

Please pray for my family. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood."
—I, California

In July I wrote and told you I did not have the money at that time, but I'd like to continue getting your paper. Now I can pay for my subscription and also to have it sent again to my daughter who has been out of the church for approximately 20 years. She enjoyed it so much she started going to church each Sabbath.

Praise God for good literature. My daughter is getting rebaptized. . . . Thanks again for continuing to send the magazine when I did not have the money to pay for it. May God bless you.
—GB, Ohio

I have been a Seventh-day Adventist for 39 years and a denominational employee for 29 years. But I have never been quite as excited as I have been since two copies of Our Firm Foundation came into my hands.

It has been wonderful to find that there is still a group within the church who hold to some of the old ideals that I have understood and enjoyed for years but do not hear much about anymore.

I have read, reread, marked, and enjoyed each page of the two copies of the journal and have found the articles very helpful.
—California

I am a Seventh-day Adventist Church pastor in Ghana. I have received one of your publications and now I am requesting you to send me 12 copies of Christ's Object Lessons, and 12 copies of The Ministry of Healing.

I conducted a campaign and 165 converts were won to the church. About 70 of them were Roman Catholic members. Now they want to know more about the seventh-day Sabbath, so I beg of you to help me.
—Pastor, Ghana

This is only one of many such requests. The opportunities to assist in grounding the many new members in third-world countries are great. If you wish to help, mark your gift for "Overseas."—EDITORS

I have a small testimony to share with you. I am married to a non-Adventist who was raised as a Catholic, and in the nearly sixteen years of our marriage has shown no interest whatsoever in attending church. I have been praying for him for nearly eight years now, especially during the last four years when he was fighting a severe drug-abuse problem. In August we attended the Hope International camp meeting with our two children. Since then he has missed only three Sabbaths at church, and has claimed day-by-day victory over his drug abuse. Praise God for camp meeting, and the presence of the Holy Spirit there!
—California

Letters from the Truth For Today Bible Correspondence School:

This lesson [on the investigative judgment] is one of the most serious lessons I've ever had. I have taken many Bible courses. This lesson shakes me.

Please pray that God will give me all the knowledge I desire to have from Him. Please pray for me and my family that, with God's help, we will do our very best to get rid of everything in our lives now and in the future that would jeopardize our relationship to God. Thank you.
—RH, Missouri

I received all the books you sent me and was glad to get them. I've finished reading the three books, The Desire of Ages, The Great Controversy, and Patriarchs and Prophets. These books explained to me what I've been searching for all my life. They explain things that were most difficult with such simplicity, and scripture to justify everything. I can't begin to explain how much I've enjoyed reading those books. I have begun to read them over, much more carefully this time.

We also have a pastor, Pastor Darryl Howard. One of the sisters that works along with Pastor Joe Crews recommended him. They come out every Sabbath. We are trying to get situated where we can have some baptizing pretty soon. Didn't mean to write a book, I know you are busy. I just wanted to thank you for the books and your prayers. Just one more thing, if it is possible I would appreciate a large-print Bible, that is if it doesn't cause too much difficulty.
—Prisoner, Georgia
THE GOSPEL of Jesus has never been popular. The gospels reveal that Jesus “came to His own, and [even] His own did not receive Him.” John 1:11.

Thus Jesus tells us to “enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Matthew 7:13-14

Although there has always been a mass of professors of religion, there have been but few who have been willing to be truly converted thereby, willing to be broken on the Rock and to crucify self.

Religion has never lacked popularity. Throughout history, most people had “religion,” and even been proud of it. But “the religion that is fashionable, that is popular in the world, is not the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus.” “The religion of Christ permits no compromise, no yielding to the influences of the world.” Review and Herald, vol. 2, 575

One of Satan’s goals in our church is to make religion fashionable; to lower the standards of truth so that our church may be filled with those who are professors of religion, but not truly converted.

“It has been the continual endeavor of the enemy to introduce into the church persons who asssent to much that is truth, but who are not converted. Professed Christians who are false to their trust are channels through whom Satan works. He can use unconverted church members to advance his own ideas and retard the work of God. Their influence is always on the side of wrong.” Notebook Leaflets, 21

The book of Revelation reveals that Satan has succeeded in diluting this church with professors of religion who are not converted. In prophecy, this church is pictured: “So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold...and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.” Revelation 3:16-17. But because of their profession, Laodiceans viewed themselves as being rich and having need of nothing.

No more fearful delusion can take a people captive, and no more accurate description could depict our church today. We are more intent on maintaining a good name than on living a godly life. We want to feel good about ourselves while maintaining our worldly lifestyle.

We want to be popular as are the churches of the world. Typical is our turning to non-Adventist church-growth experts to teach us how we can become popular and grow like the other churches. In the process, the offense of the cross has ceased. No longer is there persecution from without, only that which comes from within when someone raises his voice calling for reform.

And yet for all the endeavors at popularity, we are not growing, at least not in the Western countries. Why should this be? In all our efforts to learn the secrets of growth employed by the churches from which we as Seventh-day Adventists were called out, is it possible that we have missed something? We have become Laodicean relatively slowly—adopting the ways of the churches which compose mystical Babylon by default rather than by intent.

As Elijah said, “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.” 1 Kings 18:21, KJV. Let us choose to have a pleasing, popular religion, or accept the offense of the cross. And so, for those who want a pleasing and popular religion, not by default but by intent,

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here are three ways to have a pleasing religion like the world:

1) Preach Jesus But Do Not Require Perfect Obedience

Everyone has some besetting sin. From birth, Satan has been cultivating certain sins within each one of us. I remember in a baptismal class, as we were reading from the Bible about jewelry, one young woman spoke up and said: “If I have to take off my wedding ring to go to heaven, I can’t go!” She had been married just six months and had a new diamond wedding ring. When I visited with her in her home two days later, she had two non-Adventist ministers there helping her to see that a little jewelry was not wrong.

She came to the baptism, with all her jewelry on. She asked me to explain again the reasons why wearing it was wrong. We then went into the study and spent the next hour and a half reading again all the texts and discussing their meaning. Finally, with tears, she said, “I surrender!” From that moment on the Lord used her, and within a relatively short period of time she had brought several other people into the church.

But she had to overcome her besetting sin. Probably some evil angel had worked to develop this love in her from the time she was a little girl. Presents of jewelry had probably been given to her. Prideful comments had undoubtedly been made about wearing jewelry, and how good it made one look. Jewelry had become associated with femininity, sex appeal, marriage, wealth, success, and attractiveness.

How easy it would have been to have brought her into the church without counseling her about jewelry! And although she eventually made the decision to give it off, how many do not!

I remember another young woman who had three hundred pairs of earrings, several hundred pairs of shoes, and three mink coats. She was a personal acquaintance of some well-known movie stars. She came to every meeting and accepted every truth—but one. That, again, was wearing jewelry. Consequently she found a church that would accept her with her one besetting sin.

Some are lost when standards are held high. Jesus lost the rich young ruler. How much credit could he have been to the fledgling church! He had money, influence, and leadership. Moreover, he kept all the commandments, and even accepted Jesus openly. He came to Jesus in broad daylight and knelt down before him—more than Nicodemus did.

Judas’ keen perceptions immediately grasped what it would mean to their little group to have this respected leader in their company. If the young man needed any reforms, he felt these could come later.

“When Jesus presented to the rich young ruler the condition of discipleship, Judas was displeased. He thought that a mistake had been made. If such men as this ruler could be connected with the believers, they would help sustain Christ’s cause. If Judas were only received as a counselor, he thought, he could suggest many plans for the advantage of the little church.” The Desire of Ages, 719

If Jesus had listened to Judas, the small group of disciples would not have lost the rich young ruler, nor the crowd of 5,000 when “many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.” John 6:66. Jesus seemed to lose more disciples than He kept. Somehow He had never been taught the secrets of church growth. His standards were too high, in Judas’ estimation.

Numerically, Jesus could have had much more success, and we can, too, if we will just be content to preach more of the life, while one sin is being cherished, the more deceptive is the Christian experience. As long as one point is surrendered, all the preaching in the world will not avail. Judas was not converted by his association with Jesus.

“Even one wrong trait of character, one sinful desire, persistently cherished, will eventually neutralize all the power of the gospel. Every sinful indulgence strengthens the soul’s aversion to God.” Ibid., 34

Sin is like a cancer. Either it is completely eradicated, or it completely eradicates Christ. There are only two roads we can travel: one is the road of total victory, the other is the road of total defeat. All we have to do is take one step down, and the next one becomes easier. “At every advance step in the downward road, Satan has some special temptation to lead them [professed Christians] still further on the wrong track.” Testimonies, vol. 2, 287

But here is the problem: We do not know when we have been totally defeated. “When sin has hardened the moral perceptions, the wrongdoer does not discern the defects of his character.” Steps to Christ, 40. Sin blinds the perceptions. The Jewish leaders in Jesus’ day came under Satan’s complete con-

When Jesus presented to the rich young ruler the condition of discipleship, Judas was displeased. He thought that a mistake had been made

“Jesus,” and not concern ourselves with obedience. As long as a person will accept Jesus as his Saviour, and accept “most” of the standards of the church, surely the other points of godly living will come along as he sits in church Sabbath after Sabbath.

The only trouble is that as long as there is even one point not fully surrendered to the Lord, Satan has control of the life. Because conversion “requires an entire transformation, a renewing of our whole nature, we must yield ourselves wholly to Him. . . . We are not God’s children unless we are such entirely.” Steps to Christ, 43-44. The more control, but thought they were the guardians of the faith.

All Satan needs is for us to reject one standard. “The removal of one safeguard from the conscience, the failure to do the very thing that the Lord has marked out, one step in the path of wrong principle, often leads to an entire change of the life and action.” Mind, Character, and Personality, vol. 1, 320

And so, if we want to be popular like the other churches, just preach “Jesus.” Call it “Christ our righteousness.” Make the people active, happy Christians. But allow them to retain their one cherished sin.
2) Tell People to Wait for Jesus to Overcome Their Sins for Them

If the lie that perfect obedience is unnecessary doesn’t work, Satan has another scheme that is just as effective. If he cannot deceive us into thinking we can be saved while maintaining that one cherished sin, then this philosophy is sure to work. Preach Jesus. Preach perfect obedience. Preach sanctification. But tell the people that Jesus will do the perfecting for them. Teach them just to read the Bible and pray, and Jesus will do the rest.

This is a most deceptive, alluring philosophy. I remember talking with a leader in the church who was addicted to a certain caffeinated drink. She drank it all day long. She said she knew it was wrong, but could not quit. I asked her why she bought it. She said that she was waiting for God to take the sin away from her. She even suggested that it would be wrong for her to quit unless God took it away. She had imbibed this masterful deception.

It is true that we have no power to overcome sin in our own strength. But God has called us, with His power, to put it out of our lives. Jesus gives us the power, but we must do the overcoming.

“In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom

When Judas came to Jesus, he thought that if he just associated with Jesus, all his sinful traits would be washed away. How wrong he was!

“[Judas] felt in his own person the evidence of Christ’s power. . . . He loved the Great Teacher, and desired to be with Him. He felt a desire to be changed in character and life, and he hoped to experience this through connecting himself with Jesus. . . . [Christ] endowed him with power to heal the sick and to cast out devils. But Judas did not come to the point of surrendering himself fully to Christ. He did not give up his worldly ambition or his love of money.” The Desire of Ages, 717

Judas wanted to be changed. He thought that by associating with Jesus He would be changed. He heard the words of Jesus day after day, and talked with Him face to face. But because he himself did not give up his sins, his life was not changed as he hoped it would be. How many are going through a Judas experience today because of the Judas philosophy? They have accepted the idea of just spending time with Jesus and letting Him change the life apart from their own endeavors.

“Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. . . . Desires for goodness and holiness are right as far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Many

God calls upon men for the use of every talent He has lent them, the exercise of every power He has given; for man can never be saved in disobedience and indolence

he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expiusion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan’s control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God.” The Desire of Ages, 466

will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians. They do not come to the point of yielding the will to God. They do not now choose to be Christians.” Steps to Christ, 47-48

There is a work for man to do in overcoming sin that God will not do for Him. God gave Samson superhuman strength, but he had to exercise every ounce of energy he had to lift those gates off the city wall. He had no power to do it himself. But neither could he merely kneel beside those gates and wait for them to move. He had to exercise the power that God had given him. And we must also exert effort in the expulsion of sin from the soul.

“There must be an earnest effort to conquer through the grace freely given of God.” Review and Herald, vol. 5, 14

“The pleasing fable that all there is to do is to believe, has destroyed thousands and tens of thousands, because many have called that faith which is not faith, but simply a dogma. Man is an intelligent, accountable being; he is not to be carried as a passive burden by the Lord, but is to work in harmony with Christ. Man is to take up his appointed work in striving for glory, honor, and immortality. God calls upon men for the use of every talent He has lent them. He will not do the work, but He will give them the strength, will, and ability to do it.” Ibid., vol. 2, 381

“Divine help is to be combined with human effort, aspiration, and energy. But we cannot reach the battlements of heaven without climbing for ourselves. Not even divine power can lift one soul to heaven unless it is willing to put forth efforts in its own behalf.” Signs of the Times, vol. 1, 454-455

“God will work for His children, but not without their co-operation. They must have indomitable energy.” Review and Herald, vol. 2, 383

“God will never deliver those who will not strive to free themselves [from temptation].” Signs of the Times, vol. 1, 499

The counsel is clear. We must overcome as Jesus did, first by uniting our weakness to His strength, our human frailties to His divine omnipotence, our nature to His, and then, thus empowered, we must overcome sin by refusing to do evil and choosing to do right.

“If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” Romans 8:13

But this work requires the crucifixion of self, not pleasing to the natural heart. It will not make for a large, popular church. If we want to have a pleasing doctrine that will gain more adherents, preach victory through Jesus, call it “righteousness by faith,” but teach that Jesus will do the overcoming for us.

3) Lead People to Worship the System

In all ages, worshiping the system has worked effectively. Get people to transfer their allegiance from the Creator
to the created. In ages past men worshiped the works of creation in the sun, moon, and stars, all in the name of religion.

But in the New Testament era Satan has found something new—the church. Throughout the Dark Ages, the idol and opiate of mankind was the church. People looked to the church to interpret the Scriptures, to set guidelines for their daily lives, and to fulfill the vacuum existing in the heart of every man and woman. They worked and sacrificed for the church. God was their father, but the church became their mother, and their final allegiance was to their mother.

Do we have the same danger? In Laodicea Jesus is pictured as standing outside the door, while the church within continues to function as though it needs nothing. The church has replaced Jesus.

Do we need the church? Yes, just as we need the sun, moon, and stars. But the church must never take the place of God. There must never be a creed to take the place of the Bible. There must never be a system to take the place of personal obedience. There must never be an official interpretation to take the place of personal conviction. This concerned one of Ellen White’s great burdens for the church, especially following 1888.

“The Jewish nation were not brought suddenly into their condition of thought and practice. From generation to generation they were working on false theories, carrying out principles opposed to the truth, and combining with their religion thoughts and plans that were the product of human minds. Human inventions were made supreme. . . . Let no plans or methods be adopted in any of our institutions that will bind mind or talent under the control of human judgment. . . . The high-handed power that has been developed, as though position has made men gods, makes me afraid, and ought to cause fear. It is a curse wherever and by whomever it is exercised. . . . We are not to bargain away our stewardship.” Testimonies to Ministers, 359-361

Ellen White’s great fear following 1888 was that we would do as did the Jewish nation in putting the system where God should be. She therefore warned: “Battle Creek is not to be the center of God’s work. God alone can fill this place. When our people in the different places have their special convocations, teach them, for Christ’s sake and for their own soul’s sake, not to make flesh their arm. . . . To place men where God should be placed does not honor or glorify God. Is the president of the General Conference to be the god of the people? . . . When the Lord shall work upon human hearts and human intellects, principles and practices different from this will be set before the people. ‘Cease ye from man.’ The Lord has a controversy with His people over this matter. . . . Just as soon as man is placed where God should be, he loses his purity, his vigor, his confidence in God’s power.” Ibid., 375-376

“Cease ye from man.” The Lord has a controversy with His people over this matter. . . . Just as soon as man is placed where God should be, he loses his purity, his vigor, his confidence in God’s power. She counseled us to teach our people, in all their important convocations, not to put confidence in human leaders, but in God. “Our churches are weak because the members are educated to look to and depend upon human resources.” Ibid., 380. “For many years an education has been given to the people which places God second, and man first. The people have been taught that everything must be brought before the council of a few men in Battle Creek.” Ibid., 325. “Men have assumed authority, but the people should not depend upon poor, finite, erring men. . . . The Lord alone is to be exalted.” Ibid., 319-320

But it is easy to turn our power of thought over to a committee. And it is easy to work for something more tangible than God. Moreover, it seems so much more rewarding to work for man than for God. We can climb the system of human organization, but we cannot climb into prominence in God’s vineyard. He said, “Whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:27-28

Organizational worship and service is easier, more pleasing, and more rewarding to the carnal heart than doing all for the Master. It is particularly deceptive because God has ordained organization. God is not leading discordant elements into the kingdom, but a well-disciplined army. But when we give allegiance to the army instead of to the King, then organization becomes a curse instead of a blessing. Because of this problem, organization in the New Testament was kept very simple and unassuming. There was enough organization to propel the church into all the world, united by the cords of love for God and humbleness of service to mankind. All were servants of the One who had given His life for them. All were students of

A person might as well expect a harvest where he has never sown, or knowledge where he has never sought for it, as to expect to be saved in indolence. An idler and a sluggard will never make a success in breaking down pride and overcoming the power of temptation to sinful indulgences which keep him from his Saviour. Testimonies, vol. 4, 286

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Called to Preach

When I was about twelve years old, my father brought home a cute little puppy to replace our old faithful watchdog. As time passed, and our Bronx neighborhood became more and more crime filled, his importance as a watchdog grew.

One evening my brother noticed what he thought to be a shadow pass by the doorway in the back bedroom. We went to look and saw the back door of the house standing wide open. Someone had been in our house. This man had come right into our home without our knowing it, and our dog had not barked to warn us of the danger! What good was such a watchdog? Needless to say, that dog did not stay long but was replaced by a faithful watchdog.

In Isaiah 56, the Lord sent a strong message to the leaders in Israel. They had become complacent and "shepherds that cannot keep the sheep." Verse 11. Instead of sounding a warning to the nation of their spiritual danger, they said in their hearts, "Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." Verse 12. The God of heaven had these words to say about them:

"His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber." Verse 10; emphasis in all quotations supplied

How full of import are these words to the people of God today and the ministers the Lord has appointed to lead His people? The pen of inspiration has told us:

"The class who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension, nor mourn over the sins of others, will be left without the seal of God. The Lord commissions His messengers, the men with slaughtering weapons in their hands: '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. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.' Ezekiel 9:5-6. Here we see that the church—the Lord's sanctuary—was the first to feel the stroke of the wrath of God. The ancient men, those to whom God had given great light and who had stood as guardians of the spiritual interests of the people, had betrayed their trust. Thus 'peace and safety' is the cry from men who will never again lift up their voice like a trumpet to show God's people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins. These dumb dogs that would not bark are the ones who feel the just vengeance of an offended God." Testimonies, vol. 5, 211

One of the devil's greatest deceptions to the ministers and leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the New Theology concept that preaching Christ and Him crucified somehow means downplaying the law of God, and they stifle the voice of rebuke. As a result, spiritual declension is growing in the churches, and biblical and Spirit of Prophecy-supported standards and convictions are being ignored.

Surely all sermons must be Christ-centered, and all ministers would do well to heed the following counsel:

"In every discourse, whether it is doctrinal or not, we want that Jesus Christ should be presented distinctly, as John declared, 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.' " Evangelism, 299

"In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary," Ibid., 190

But this counsel does not mean that ministers become as Eli and fail to reprove sin:

"Eli was gentle, loving, and kind, and had a true interest in the service of God and the prosperity of His cause. He was a man who had power in prayer. He never rose up in rebellion against the words of God. But he was wanting; he did not have firmness of character to reprove sin and execute justice against the sinner so that God could depend upon him to keep Israel pure. . . . He did not add to his faith the courage and power to say No at the right time and in the right place. Sin is sin; righteousness is righteousness. The trumpet note of warning must be sounded. We are living in a fearfully wicked age. The worship of God will become corrupted unless there are wide-awake men at every post of duty. It is no time now for any to be absorbed in selfish ease. Not one of the words which God has spoken must be allowed to fall to the ground." Testimonies, vol. 4, 517

Not one word which God has spoken must be allowed to fall to the ground. The

Tony Cirigliano is a Seventh-day Adventist pastor currently shepherding two churches.
We are told that ministers are to "show by their manners, by their acts and words, and by their preaching and praying that they believe that Christ is at the door. Men and women are in the last hours of probation, and yet are careless and stupid, and ministers have no power to arouse them; they are asleep themselves. Sleeping preachers preaching to a sleeping people!" Testimonies, vol. 2, 337

Another vital area ministers need to give attention to is prophecy. The great prophecies are to be understood, not only by those outside the church, but also by our people, so that they can understand where the church is in history. After I had preached a message on the mark of the beast in one of our churches, a church member said to me, "I have been a member of the Adventist Church for ten years, and I have never heard a sermon like that." I was amazed. The message had aroused her to the importance of the truths we hold and had revived and excited her. What had she been hearing for those ten years? Many pastors never give sermons on prophecy, or they feel that it is the work of the public evangelists. Yet we are plainly told:

"Let us keep our souls in the love of God. The note of warning must be given. The truth must not languish upon our lips. We must rouse people to immediate preparation, for we little know what is before us." Evangelism, 217

"The trumpet must give a certain sound, for we are in the great day of the Lord's preparation." Letter 55, 1886, as found in ibid., 218

As goes the preacher, so go the people. There will be some in the church who will be offended by straight preaching, for the world-loving mind will always prefer to hear smooth things. The people in Isaiah's time said:

"Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." Isaiah 30:10

Ministers of God must not heed or cater to the desires of the carnal mind. Paul said to the people, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Acts 20:27. He spoke all the truth the church of his day needed to hear. The Lord said to Jeremiah:

"Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them." Jeremiah 1:17

If our people were half awake, if they realized the nearness of the events portrayed in the Revelation, a reformation would be wrought in our churches, and many more would believe the message

"Let not the solemn scenes which prophecy has revealed be left untouched. If our people were half awake, if they realized the nearness of the events portrayed in the Revelation, a reformation would be wrought in our churches, and many more would believe the message." Testimonies to Ministers, 118

Who will sound the warning about the beast and his mark, about the false sabbath, about the image to the beast, about this country speaking like a dragon, about the need for Laodicea to wake up, about the work carried on in the sanctuary in heaven by our High Priest, about the need for the church to be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, if the ministers don't preach it?

The ministers are God's watchmen standing on the walls of Zion, looking for the enemy's approach. When they see the enemy coming they are to sound the alarm. The people of God are asleep. The enemy is fast approaching. Ministers are not to give up the watch now.

"Some who occupy the position of watchmen to warn the people of danger have given up their watch and recline at ease. They are unfaithful sentinels. They remain inactive, while their wily foe enters the fort and works successfully by their side to tear down what God has commanded to be built up. They see that Satan is deceiving the inexperienced and unsuspecting; yet they take it all quietly, as though they had no special interest, as
though these things did not concern them. They apprehend no special danger; they see no cause to raise an alarm. To them everything seems to be going well, and they see no necessity of raising the faithful trumpet notes of warning which they hear borne by the plain testimonies, to show the people their transgressions and the house of Israel their sins.” Testamenties, vol. 2, 440.

Paul’s instruction to Timothy was “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.” 2 Timothy 4:2

Ministers are to reprove and rebuke sin. They are to do it in season, and out of season, even when it is unpopular to do so. With hearts burning with the love of God and concern for His flock, with Calvary etched in the mind, the ministers of God are to call for revival, to call for confessing and forsaking of sin, to call for a life of holiness and total surrender to the will of God. Preach the Word! Give rebukes as Jesus did, with “tears in His voice,” (see The Desire of Ages, 353) but do it.

“Just as long as God has a church, He will have those who will cry aloud and spare not, who will be His instruments to reprove selfishness and sins, and will not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, whether men will hear or forbear. I saw that individuals would rise up against the plain testimonies. It does not suit their natural feelings. They would choose to have smooth things spoken unto them, and have peace cried in their ears. I view the church in a more dangerous condition than they ever have been. Experimental religion is known but by a few. The shaking must soon take place to purify the church.

“Preachers should have no scruples to preach the truth as it is found in God’s Word. Let the truth cut. I have been shown that why ministers have not more success is, they are afraid of hurting feelings, fearful of not being courteous, and they lower the standard of truth, and conceal if possible the peculiarity of our faith. I saw that God could not make such successful.” Spiritual Gifts, vol. 2, 284-285. The standards must not be lowered. All the counsel of God is to be preached, for Inspiration tells us that the church is in more danger than ever before. Ministers are to preach the Word. And from the Word ministers are to preach the principles so clearly given in the Spirit of Prophecy. Declare all the counsel of God. The shepherds are to declare unto the flock the dangers of these last days. Ministers, remind your flocks of the soon coming of the Lord. Tell them that “not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them.” Testamenties, vol. 5, 214. Tell them that “among those who are waiting for the coming of the Lord, meat eating will eventually be done away; flesh will cease to form a part of their diet.” Counsels on Diet and Foods, 380-381. In these days of moral lapse, when televi-

If you have found the Bread of life, then as one enriched beggar, tell the other beggars where they can get bread. Reproofs and warnings coming from a humble-hearted, forgiven sinner will not go unheeded.
Messages to Laodicea
continued from 11
the rite of baptism, you pledged yourselves before God to remain dead to sin.” The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, 908.
The belief that we need not, indeed cannot, overcome sin is self-fulfilling. It is certain that we will never accomplish something that we do not believe is possible.

We must first recognize, then repent of and turn away from the ways of living and the ways of working which are contrary to God’s directives. Then by faith in God and the counsels given through His prophet and by the enabling power of Christ within us, we must put into action the counsels of the Lord as to how to live and work for Him. This is a matter of eternal life or death for each of us.

“I am filled with sadness when I think of our condition as a people. The Lord has not closed heaven to us, but our own course of continual backsliding has separated us from God. Pride, covetousness, and love of the world have lived in the heart without fear of banishment or condemnation. Grievous and presumptuous sins have dwelt among us.” Testimonies, vol. 5, 217.

An awareness of her true condition should lead Laodicea in deep repentance to weep between the porch and the altar. The message of the True Witness offers no condemnation, and thus its stern rebuke and chastening may be discouraging to some. Discouragement, however, results only if the solution offered is unappreciated and unaccepted. “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.” Revelation 3:18.

Christ offers us a solution for every one of our deficiencies. “God rebukes His people for their sins, that He may humble them, and lead them to seek His face. As they reform, and His love revives in their hearts, His loving answers will come to their requests. He will strengthen them in reformatory action, lifting up for them a standard against the enemy. His rich blessing will rest upon them, and in bright rays they will reflect the light of heaven. Then a multitude not of their faith, seeing that God is with His people, will unite with them in serving the Redeemer.” Review and Herald, vol. 4, 386.

If our committees and boards will move to bring our institutions and methods of labor into harmony with God’s counsel, this action will confirm in the minds of laity that indeed obedience to God in this life is not only possible but it is also essential if we are to be saved at last.

An example by leadership of a surrender of self to the authority of Christ and an opening at the heart of His work to His direction could start a chain reaction of laity opening their hearts to Christ’s presence. Leadership cannot legislate, but it can lead Laodicea into an experience of surrender to the authority of Christ as Head of His church. That is the purpose of the messages to Laodicea.

“It [the message] is designed to arouse the people of God, to discover to them their backslidings, and to lead to zealous repentance, that they may be favored with the presence of Jesus, and be fitted for the loud cry of the third angel.” Testimonies vol. 1, 186.

The message to Laodicea is designed to awaken us to the absolute necessity of pulling our human plans, methods, and ways (self-righteousness) and by faith accepting and following Christ’s plans, methods, and ways (Christ’s righteousness) in our personal and corporate lives. Anything less is to fail to experience righteousness (right-doing) by the indwelling power of Christ. Anything less is to fail to experience and demonstrate to others true righteousness by faith.

Let not Laodicea despair! “There is a balm in Gilead,” Acceptance of the messages to Laodicea may be humiliating, it may be painful to human pride. It may be painful to have to admit that when we thought everything was all right it was really all wrong. But Christ “wounds only that He may heal, not cause to perish. The Lord lays upon no man a message that will discourage and dishearten the church. He reproves, He rebukes, He chastens; but it is only that He may restore and approve at last.” Testimonies to Ministers, 23.

Let not Laodicea be discouraged, for the promise to the overcomer is to sit with Christ on His throne. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.” Revelation 3:21.

The Lord lays upon no man a message that will discourage and dishearten the church. He reproves, He rebukes, He chastens; but it is only that He may restore and approve at last.

But only those who let Christ reign supreme on the throne of their lives will reign with Him on His throne, life without end. Let us accept these messages to Laodicea with joy and assurance that Christ’s kingdom cannot be far hence once He finds a contrite and submitted people. Let us gladly exchange our self-willed ways of working and living for Christ’s ways. Let us die to self, open the door to Christ and let Him come in and direct and guide His work and His people. Let Christ help us to put off the old man and put on the new. With Christ in our lives we will be living demonstrations of Christ’s power over sin. With Christ in our lives we will be able to fulfill Paul’s desire for the saints to make known among the Gentiles the mystery of the gospel “which is Christ in you the hope of glory.”

A repentant, surrendered, cleansed and Christ-filled Laodicea would soon receive the latter rain and give the loud cry. The work would be cut short in righteousness (right-doing) and Jesus would soon come. What an overpowering opportunity and responsibility for present-day Laodicea! To believe that Christ in us can indeed make of us His remnant people, His final generation! No higher calling has man yet received. Let us purpose in our individual lives and in our work for Christ that these messages to Laodicea will not have been in vain.

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The New Theology and the Heavenly Sanctuary

Further exploration of the sanctuary doctrine of the New Theology reveals the tragic poverty of its biblical foundations. Proponents deny every biblical principle of this great message.

1. There is a Literal Heavenly Sanctuary. As time has passed, the rejection of the sanctuary message by those wedded to the New Theology has become more apparent. Colin will never forget the first indications of this rejection. The year was 1962. He was dialoging with Dr. Desmond Ford. As the doctrine of the sanctuary message was discussed, Colin indicated that he believed in a literal sanctuary in heaven. Dr. Ford in surprise replied, “You don’t believe in a literal sanctuary in heaven, do you?” Colin responded, “I most certainly do.” In response to this affirmation, Dr. Ford offered a diversionary question. “Which is more important, the ministry or the geography?” This question has been asked many times since.

Although Colin was quite surprised at Dr. Ford’s position, he in no wise envisaged the way this “small” departure from truth was to eventually influence Dr. Ford’s whole sanctuary theology. At this point Dr. Ford strongly affirmed his belief in the heavenly sanctuary ministry of Jesus Christ and the truths related to the events of 1844. From this experience we learned more fully than ever that one departure from truth begins a journey the end of which leads to rejection of all truth. It is never safe to reject any portion of God’s Word.

Indisputably the Scriptures confirm the truth that there is a real sanctuary in heaven. Some have asked questions such as, “How can you put Christ into a box?” The implication of such a question is that it is impossible to confine God in a little sanctuary or temple. We agree God cannot be contained, not even in a gigantic sanctuary. It is important, however, to recognize the significant differences between the heavenly sanctuary and the earthly. There is no question that the heavenly sanctuary is not made with the same materials as was the earthly sanctuary. Animal skins which were used in the construction of the tabernacle on earth most certainly have no place in the heavenly counterpart. It is also essential to recognize that the heavenly sanctuary is of vast proportions. So vast indeed is it that billions of angels serve there.

“A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” Daniel 7:10

“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.” Revelation 5:11

Yet the earthly sanctuary was most assuredly a pattern of that heavenly sanctuary. “According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.” Exodus 25:9

“A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer ... who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.” Hebrews 8:2-3, 5, emphasis added

“And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his

Colin D. Standish and Russell R. Standish
temple the ark of his testament.” Revelation 11:19

These texts leave not a shadow of doubt that there is a real and actual sanctuary in heaven. The problem is that when we move one step away from revealed scriptural truth, we are in Satan’s territory. Although Colin did not foresee it, Dr. Ford’s denial of the reality of the heavenly sanctuary was the basis upon which today we have the denial of the ministry as well as of the geography of the heavenly sanctuary.

Dr. Ford sought to support his contention from the book of Hebrews:

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” Hebrews 9:24

It will be seen, however, that in no wise does this verse deny the existence of a heavenly sanctuary. Indeed, Hebrews 9:23 confirms its reality:

“...it was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.” Hebrews 9:23, emphasis added.

Paul here emphasizes the fact that “Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary, as was the one on earth, but that His ministry is now being fulfilled in the sanctuary created by God.

2. Hebrews Chapter 9 Supports the Seventh-day Adventist Sanctuary Concepts. There is no evidence that Christ entered the Most Holy Place upon His ascension. One of the key errors of the New Theology is the contention that immediately upon His ascension Christ began His Most Holy Place ministry in heaven. This assertion is almost exclusively predicated upon Paul’s statement in Hebrews 9:12. In the King James Version it reads as follows:

“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Hebrews 9:12

However, in some modern translations, such as the New International Version and the New King James Version, holy place is mistranslated most holy place.

“He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.” Hebrews 9:12, NIV

The question then remains, Is the translation ‘most holy place’ an accurate translation of the Greek? The answer is a resounding No.

The key to this problem lies in the understanding of the Greek word θρήμα. Grammatically, the definite article θρήμα admits of only one possibility; the construction here used is neuter plural, literally ‘holy places.’ This term of course embraces the sanctuary as a whole.

Many Bibles, including the King James Version, have translated this word variously—sanctuary, holy place, most holy place, and by other words which are synonyms of these three terms. In Hebrews 9:12, however, there is no logical nor contextual basis to translate θρήμα as ‘most holy place.’ In the only passage in the book of Hebrews in which Paul definitely refers to the Most Holy Place he does not use the form θρήμα, but θρήμα τού θού (literally, holy of holies).

“...and after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of all...” Hebrews 9:3, emphasis added

Thus when Paul wanted to specify the Most Holy Place he used this compound term, θρήμα τού θού. Therefore it would be logical that if Paul was again to refer to the Most Holy Place he would have used the same compound words; but he never does. The only valid translations of θρήμα in Hebrews would be ‘sanctuary’ or ‘holy places.’ Many translations consistently use sanctuary. Among these are the New English Bible and the Jerusalem Bible.

If the proponents of the New Theology were right in their claim that Christ began His ministry in the Most Holy Place in A.D. 31, then our understanding of the significance of the date 1844 would be a myth and the Seventh-day Adventist Church would have no reason for its existence. But Hebrews 9:12, when correctly translated, provides no basis whatsoever for the claims put forth in their theory. This passage is not even addressing the matter of Christ’s ministry in the Most Holy Place. It is rather addressing the overall ministry of the High Priest in heaven, comparing His ministry with that of the high priest on earth.

3. The Heavenly Sanctuary Is Polluted by Man’s Sins. Some proponents of the New Theology have strongly objected to the concept that has been taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which asserts that the heavenly sanctuary is polluted by man’s sins. In this argument they ask how it can be that a perfect heaven can be polluted by the sins of humanity. In so questioning they have sought to deny the reality of the investigative judgment and the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary as indicated in a study of Daniel 8:14. This argument is surprising, indicating little depth of scriptural understanding. Long before there was sin on this planet, or indeed this planet was created, there was pollution by sin in heaven. When Lucifer rebelled against God he and ultimately a third of the angels were cast out because they had polluted heaven by their sins. In a very real sense the entire universe has been polluted by sin, necessitating a plan of redemption of cosmic proportions.

Referring now to the heavenly sanctuary, Paul confirms that there is pollution in the heavenly sanctuary as a result of man’s sin:

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In a very real sense the entire universe has been polluted by sin, necessitating a plan of redemption of cosmic proportions.
Word that the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist message were theologically naïve. These pioneers, they assert, failed to realize that the word translated ‘cleansed’ in Daniel 8:14 is the Hebrew word nisdaq, whereas the Hebrew word used for ‘cleanse’ in Leviticus 16:30 is taheer. Obviously these are two entirely different words. Further, it has been pointed out that nisdaq has more commonly been translated as ‘restored,’ ‘justified,’ or ‘re-consecrated’ by modern translators. Therefore, it is argued, there is no justification for linking Daniel 8:14 with Leviticus 16:30. But this argument cannot stand up in the light of close investigation.

We must not forget that 800 or 900 years passed between the writing of the books of Leviticus and Daniel. One was written in the Sinai desert, the other in Babylon. We do not question the reasonableness of the modern translations of nisdaq. As noted, some translations have used words other than ‘cleansed’ or ‘purified.’ Nevertheless, it is a significant observation that the rabbis who translated the Septuagint used the Greek word for ‘cleansed’ in their translation, thus indicating their understanding of the meaning of nisdaq. The scholarship of these men cannot be ignored lightly.

Some proponents of the New Theology have defended their position by suggesting that the translators of the Septuagint were influenced by the desecration of the Jewish Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C., but there is no evidence to validate this conclusion. This is pure speculation conveniently proposed to support a false position. Unquestionably the Hebrew scholars of the second century B.C. equated nisdaq with ‘cleansed.’

An understanding of Hebrew poetry is most helpful in elucidating the use of nisdaq in Daniel 8:14. While the word nisdaq is not used elsewhere in Scripture, it is a derivative from the root word sadaq which occurs a number of times in the Old Testament. It is fascinating to discover that taheer is used in poetic parallelism with sadaq. Hebrew poetic structure repeats the same thought in different words. This form of parallelism is the central element of Hebrew poetry. Examples of this poetic form follow:

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” Psalm 32:1

“I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.” Psalm 32:5

“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye.” Psalm 32:8

“I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.” Psalm 34:1

“O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.” Psalm 34:3

None of these verses use sadaq or taheer. But four passages of poetry do. In each instance the Hebrew word from which the English word is translated is indicated in parenthesis:

“Shall mortal man be more just (sadaq) than God? shall a man be more pure (taheer) than his maker?” Job 4:17

“The righteous (sadaq) also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean (taheer) hands shall be stronger and stronger.” Job 17:9

“The fear of the Lord is clean (taheer), enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous (sadaq) altogether.” Psalm 19:9

“All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous (sadaq), and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean (taheer), and to the unclean.” Ecclesiastes 9:2

The fact that the word nisdaq was used by Daniel and taheer by Moses to express a similar meaning should not surprise us.

The pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church may have been theologically naive, but they certainly were not biblically naive. The test of investigation fully supports the linking of the cleansing of the Day of Atonement in the typical services with the antitypical cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary by Jesus Christ as outlined by Daniel.

5. The Year 1844 Has Great Biblical Significance. Much doubt has been cast by New Theology proponents upon the validity of the 2300-day prophecy. Some question the day-year principle, though it was clearly established in prophetic understanding long before the emergence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We do not here intend to go into this issue.

Second, some question the date 457 B.C. as the commencement of the 2300-day prophecy. But in the light of Scripture there cannot be another decree than the cumulative decrees of Darius, Cyrus and Artaxerxes. The prophet Ezra treats the three as a single decree:

The test of investigation fully supports the linking of the cleansing of the Day of Atonement in the typical services with the antitypical cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary by Jesus Christ as outlined by Daniel.
Whenever the daily sacrifices are referred to, however, the terms come in reverse order; they are called the morning and evening sacrifices:

"Behold, I build an house to the name of the Lord my God, to dedicate it to him, and to burn before him sweet incense, and for the continual shewbread, and for the burnt offerings morning and evening." 2 Chronicles 2:4, emphasis added

"To offer burnt offerings unto the Lord upon the altar of the burnt offering continually morning and evening, and to do according to all that is written in the law of the Lord, which he commanded Israel." 1 Chronicles 16:40, emphasis added

"He appointed also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, to wit, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of the Lord." 2 Chronicles 31:3, emphasis added

"And they set the altar upon his bases; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord, even burnt offerings morning and evening." Ezra 3:3, emphasis added

The 2300 evenings and mornings of Daniel 8:14 must therefore properly be translated 2300 days. In recent years a Seventh-day Adventist pastor successfully used this argument to convince Italian biblical scholars who were preparing a modern translation of the Bible.

7. The Cross With the Sanctuary Ministry of Christ Is the Center of Our Hope. Some opponents claim that Seventh-day Adventists put the sanctuary message ahead of Christ. Others have said that the sanctuary message diminishes the centrality to man's salvation of the cross of Christ. Neither of these arguments is biblical. Christ is the center of the sanctuary message. He is our heavenly High Priest. He is our Advocate, our Intercessor, our Mediator and our Judge.

Properly understood and presented, the centrality of Jesus and the salvation of the cross are beautifully enhanced and illuminated by the sanctuary message.

Certainly the sanctuary message does not minimize the focal point of the cross, for sacrifice is central to the sanctuary message, Christ as our Sacrifice and High Priest brings together in one great unity His salvation acts for us.

It may be true that at times, unwittingly, Seventh-day Adventists have been so burdened to present this crucial sanctuary message that they have not presented it in the context of the cross of Calvary or the centrality of Jesus Christ. It is impossible for this end-time message to be presented adequately or winningly without uplifting our blessed Saviour. The glorious concept that Christ is everything to us is central to an understanding of the sanctuary message.

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1 On October 27, 1979, Dr. Ford in an address to the Forum at Pacific Union College asserted that he had not believed the sanctuary message for 30 years.
2 For a fuller discussion, see Adventism Unveiled (Appendices A, B and C) by the same authors, published by Harold Publications.
3 For a fuller discussion, see Adventism Unveiled.

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