Simplicity in Dress

Music in Worship

Address to the Church

Apostasy

The Spirit of Prophecy

Our Nearest Kinsman

Resistance Unto Death, see page 4
DEAR friends in the faith: Over the nearly forty years of my ministry I have had some of our people ask the question about the sin against the Holy Ghost—Yes, the unpardonable sin.

Some of our people who have backslidden into the world and have corrupted their lives in immorality, drugs, and alcohol have asked the question: Have I gone too far? Have I committed the unpardonable sin? I have been able to answer quickly, No, your concern for your soul is proof that the Spirit of God is still working in your heart. But what does constitute this sin that cannot be forgiven? Our prophet Ellen White deals with this very important question.

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

And so the open sinner who still feels his great need for repentance, and restoration to God’s favor, stands in a more favorable position than the Seventh-day Adventist Christian who is faithful in church attendance and tithe-paying, but feels his good lifestyle, vegetarian diet, his sincerity, and good works are enough to carry him through to the kingdom.

The Pharisee prayed: I am glad I am not a sinner like this publican; the publican prayed, Have mercy on me, a sinner. God heard the prayer of the publican but the words of the Pharisee were lost and unheard by our heavenly Father. Another statement by the prophet will help us to understand the standard of righteousness that will count us as sons and daughters of God.

"God’s ideal for His children is higher that the highest human thought can reach. ‘Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.’ Matthew 5:48. This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning.

“The tempter’s agency is not to be accounted an excuse for one wrong act. Satan is jubilant when he hears the professed followers of Christ making excuses for their deformity of character. It is these excuses that lead to sin. There is no excuse for sinning. A holy temper, a Christlike life, is accessible to every repenting, believing child of God." The Desire of Ages, 311

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

Ellen White refers to the Jewish nation and the unpardonable sin. "In rejecting Christ the Jewish people committed the unpardonable sin; and by refusing the invitation of mercy, we may commit the same error. We offer insult to the Prince of life, and put Him to shame before the synagogue of Satan and before the heavenly universe when we refuse to listen to His delegated messengers, and instead listen to the agents of Satan, who would draw the soul away from Christ. So long as one does this, he can find no hope or pardon, and he will finally lose all desire to be reconciled to God." The Desire of Ages, 324–325

The Jewish church leaders were calling darkness light, and light darkness; truth became error to their understanding, and they carried the people with them in their destruction. What tragedy! Only those who are seeking after righteousness will prove worthy of the seal of God. "I also saw that many do not realize what they must be in order to live in the sight of the Lord without a high priest in the sanctuary through the time of trouble. Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully.

“I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of ‘refreshing’ and the ‘latter rain’ to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! They had neglected the needful preparation; therefore they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of a holy God." Early Writings, 71

Probation has been closing for many since the days of Cain. The antediluvians had closed the door of their probation when the rains came, and they were outside the ark of safety. Esau closed the door of his probation. Hebrews says he sought it with tears, but it was too late. The Jewish nation with its leaders closed its door, and in 1844 those who, after hearing the message, stayed in the Babylonian churches or those who returned to those churches after the Great Disappointment, closed their door of salvation.

"I am still a believer in the shut-door theory, but not in the sense in which we at first employed the term or in which it is employed by my opponents.

"There was a shut door in Noah’s day. There was at that time a withdrawal of the Spirit of God from the sinful race that perished in the waters of the Flood. God Himself gave the shut-door message to Noah: ‘My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.’ Genesis 6:3

Continued on 12
It is the mission of Hope International and the editors of *Our Firm Foundation* to clearly present Christ and His truth. The days that yet remain of this world are few, and what we do we must do quickly. We must boldly proclaim the historic truths of Adventism that place us on so firm a foundation in the midst of this troubled world.—*Editors*

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**Moving?**

If you are moving to a new location, or if your address is changing for any other reason, please remember to let us know. A simple postcard with both old and new addresses is sufficient and will ensure that your copies of *Our Firm Foundation* will continue to come right to your door. Prompt notice is especially important for subscriptions in the United States, since the post office will not forward materials mailed bulk rate.
Resistance Unto Death

RECENTLY (July 1991), I had the privilege of visiting the Desert Museum, a Protestant memorial, founded in 1910, in the house acquired by the Historical Society of French Protestantism, where the French Protestant leader, Pierre Laporte, surnamed Roland, was born. The museum is located in the hamlet of Mas Soubeyran in Southern France. Quite a collection of artifacts recalling the resistance of the French Huguenots to religious persecution and their stand for religious liberty is housed within the walls of this museum.

Many of God's people today do not remember, or were never informed in regard to, the heritage they have received in being able to worship God in a manner of their own choosing. Millions of martyrs have given their lives that we might have the religious liberty we experience today in many countries.

As with all Protestant history, French Protestantism had its roots in the Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli Reformation of the sixteenth century, the movement which forced half of Western Christianity out of the confines of the Roman Catholic Church.

Upon entering the museum, one notices immediately a large painting by Labouchere, depicting Martin Luther before the emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms in 1521, reaffirming the pressing necessity of Christian freedom and faithfulness to the gospel.

French Protestantism progressed rapidly at first, but was soon almost halted by hostility from the king of France, the Catholic Church, the religious wars, and especially the Saint Bartholomew massacre on that fatal night of August 24, 1572. It was soon driven into the wilderness regions of France, reminding us of the prophecy in Revelation of the pure church as represented by the woman forced into the wilderness. See Revelation 12:6. The wilderness, of course, was one of the strongholds of God's true church during the 1260 years of papal domination from 538 to 1798. The Waldenses found refuge in the wilderness. God has had His people who throughout history have been willing to stand for His Word no matter the consequences—people who are willing to resist the attacks of the evil one, even unto death.

The right of religious liberty is a Bible principle. Religion is the duty we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it. Liberty is the state of being exempt from the domination of others, or from restricting circumstances. Religious liberty is therefore man's exemption from the domination of others, or from restricting circumstances, his freedom to make choices and decide his conduct for himself spontaneously and voluntarily in his duty to His Creator and in the manner of discharging that duty.

The biblical principles of religious liberty are shown in God's dealings with His people, and with those with whom they came into contact throughout Bible history.

The early Israelites, after their settlement in the Promised Land, continued to be disobedient to God's directions for their lives, and in accordance with the curses for disobedience foretold in Deuteronomy 28:15–16, were to be scattered and taken into captivity by Babylon. The prophet Jeremiah prophesied concerning the Babylonian rule that was to come: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say unto your masters; I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it
seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him." Jeremiah 27:4–7

Thus God made Nebuchadnezzar an absolute ruler over the Isrealites, including Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all." Daniel 2:37–38

And notice what Paul says in regard to this rulership: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Romans 13:1–2

God says in Proverbs 8:15, "By me kings reign" and in Titus 3:1, "Be subject to principalities." The Bible is clear about the subservance we owe to the powers that be in the country in which we live.

So what about religious liberty? How may we recognize the authority that God has given to government and still retain the right of freedom of worship?

Chapter 3 of Daniel provides an answer. The king to whom God had given all authority sought to exercise that authority in the area of religion. He sought to control the manner and object of his people's worship. A great image was set before the people on the plain of Dura, and an order to worship was given: "It is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up." Daniel 3:4–5

However, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the three Jewish captives, refused to follow the king's order and said, "We will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Daniel 3:18. Then the God of heaven, who gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom and authority, made it very clear by His personal appearance to deliver the three Hebrew youths from the flames of the fiery furnace, that the authority given did not extend to the area of worship.

The principle is established without question: No man, whether king or potentate, has power when it comes to the area of the moral conscience of man. Religious liberty is an inherent right of man that is inalienable, undeniable. This principle is extended and reinforced in Daniel, chapter 6, once again in regard to man-made law that is in opposition to the right of freedom to worship God according to one's conscience.

Daniel, because of his honesty and willingness to be subject to the rulership of the Medes and Persians, was placed in a position of leadership in the kingdom. This honor created jealousy among the other leaders. He was too honest for their "good." In order to rid themselves of Daniel they tricked the king, Darius, into entering a law concerning worship in the statutes of the Medes and Persians: "Whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions." Daniel 6:7

Continuing his daily worship of the God of heaven in opposition to this law, Daniel soon came under its punitive provisions in spite of the desire on the part of the king to find a way out. Daniel was thrown into a den of lions to be devoured. But man's extremity is God's opportunity, and deliverance was sent by God in the form of an angel to close the mouths of the lions. Again God overruled when it came to worship. The law of rulers could not stand above the right of conscience of the person.

But where does a man stand when there is a conflict between the conscience and the system of worship within the church as sought to be enforced by the church, or by the church and state combined?

Again we must turn to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy for our answer. What does God say?

As our Lord walked the earth for three and one-half years, He gave us His example for our own Christian walk. Where He could be in harmony with God's church for that day, He was. But when the leadership of the church was in conflict with the principles of heaven, Jesus had to follow the principles of heaven and deny the right of the church and its leadership to control His conscience.

Jesus' ministry was an independent ministry for that day in that it was not conducted under the auspices of the leadership of the church. As He was teaching one day, some of the church leaders challenged His right to do so. "And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, 'By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?' Jesus gave the answers by asking them a question: 'The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?' " Matthew 21:23, 25

Does the authority to preach, baptize and carry on a ministry come from God or does it come from men? The implications are that true authority comes first from Heaven, and man should be very careful that he does not step in the way of heavenly authority.

The Lord also laid down principles in regard to a man's conscience in the area of religion and the state.

In Luke 20:22, Jesus was asked, "Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar or no?" Jesus answered, immortalizing the principle, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's." Luke 20:25

Certain of these principles were reinforced in the ministries of Peter and John near the time of Pentecost.

Neither Peter nor John was preaching with the blessings of the leaders of God's church (remember it wasn't until A.D. 34 that the probation of the Jews as the chosen people of God came to an end). They were giving the straight testimony of "Present Truth" for their day—the story of Jesus, the everlasting gospel. (See Acts, chapter 3.) In fact, Peter actually points out the heresy the leadership had been involved in, the crucifixion of Jesus; this accusation did not win for Peter the favor of these men.

In Acts 4 we are told that the leadership, grieved at the straight testimony being preached to the people, laid hands on Peter and John and held them until the next day. The leadership then questioned their authority to preach. See verses 1–7

"And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts 4:18–20

In Acts 5:18, the leadership is so upset with their preaching that Peter and John are thrown into jail. God there puts His stamp of approval on that which they are doing, although it is in contra-
dition to the authority of the church leadership. “The angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.” Ellen White, in commenting on this verse in The Acts of the Apostles, page 80, says: “This command was directly contrary to the order given by the Jewish rulers; but did the apostles say, We cannot do this until we have consulted the magistrates and receive permission from them? No, God had said, ‘Go,’ and they obeyed.”

In chapter 5, the leadership remains upset over the preaching continuing against their orders, “saying, Did not we command you that ye should not teach in this name? . . . Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.” Verses 28–29

And the apostles continued their preaching “in the temple, and in every house.” Acts 5:42

Later the state entered the picture as Herod sought to please the religious leaders by actually seeking to put Peter to death and thus quiet his preaching. God again showed that neither the authority of the church, nor the authority of the state, takes precedence over the personal relationship between a man and his God. The angel of the Lord released Peter from Herod’s jail in defiance of Herod’s authority. See Acts, chapter 12

In regard to liberty of conscience in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ellen White had to give strong counsel in her day: “I am unable to put away the anxious thoughts that fill my mind in regard to the work of God. I feel that to weep would be a relief. I am sure that a work must be done for those in positions of trust in Battle Creek. They will never be safe, trustworthy men until they are laborers together with God. The question often comes to me, ‘Has God chosen these men to devise and plan and execute in behalf of His work, when they have not a vital connection with Him?’ The men God chooses to bear burdens in His work are to sit at the feet of Jesus, and learn from Him how to repress their un-Christian desires and inclinations. God has not given men power to interfere between a human being and his conscience.

“The question of religious liberty needs to be clearly comprehended by our people in more ways than one. With outstretched arms men are seeking to steady the ark, and the anger of the Lord is kindled against them because they think that their position entitles them to say what the Lord’s servants shall do and what they shall not do. They think themselves competent to decide what shall be brought before God’s people, and what shall be repressed. The Lord inquires of them, ‘Who has required this at your hand? Who has given you the burden of being conscience for My people? By what Spirit are you guided and controlled when you seek to restrict their liberty? I have not chosen you as I chose Moses—as men through whom I can communicate divine instruction to My people. I have not placed the lines of control in your hands. The responsibility that rested on Moses—of voicing the words of God to the people—has never been delegated to you.’” Manuscript Release 1335

Men have a tendency to want to control the consciences and teachings of other men. It is one thing to warn of apostate teachings. It is quite another to forbid the teachings of others or to interfere with their right of religious liberty. Even Jesus’ own disciples had to learn this lesson.

In Mark 9:38 the disciple John speaks about forbidding others to preach in the name of Jesus; notice what Jesus answers in verse 39: “Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me.”

And notice also in the Old Testament when Joshua sought to curtail the religious experience of others. A young man reported to Moses that certain men were prophesying in camp without the permission of leadership. “And Joshua . . . answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them?”

Numbers 11:27–29

Brothers and sisters, we are living in the last times. We must have a vital link with Jesus Christ, and that comes only by a day-by-day walk with Him and continual time spent in prayer and His Word as found in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. We need to constantly stand not only for our own rights of freedom in regard to issues of religion but also for the rights of all men, that choices may be made for or against following God as only God would have them made, without compulsion.

Ellen White tells us: “The banner of truth and religious liberty held aloft by the founders of the gospel church and by God’s witnesses during the centuries that have passed since then, has, in this last conflict, been committed to our hands. The responsibility for this great gift rests with those whom God has blessed with a...
Simplicity in Dress

Fashion rules the world. She is a tyrannical mistress, often compelling her devotees to the greatest inconvenience and discomfort. Fashion taxes without reason and collects without mercy. She has a fascinating power, and stands ready to criticize and ridicule the poor, if they do not follow in her wake at any cost, even at the sacrifice of life itself. Satan triumphs that his devices succeed so well, and Death laughs at the health-destroying folly and blind zeal of the worshipers at Fashion’s shrine.

Not a few of our people are backsliding. They are imitating the fashions of the world. Their spirituality is dying. Step by step they are approaching world-loving. Selfishness and pride are taking possession of them, and the love of God finds little room in their hearts. Some who were once zealous reformers are now indifferent. Sisters who were once plain in dress are now conforming to fashion. God expects his commandment-keeping people to be distinct from worldlings, but in many instances the line of demarcation is hardly discernible.

As I have seen those of our faith becoming worldly, my heart has been saddened. Some of those who profess to believe that they have the last message of mercy to give to the world, follow the fashions as far as they think their profession of faith will allow them to do. And their influence leads others astray. Their lack of Christlikeness is apparent to all. The Lord is dishonored by their conformity to the fashions of this degenerate age. Outward display is contradictory to our profession of faith. I entreat my sisters to guard against the tendency to dress in accordance with the demands of fashion.

Many of the mother’s burdens are the result of her effort to keep pace with the fashions of the day. Terrible is the effect of these fashions on the physical, mental, and moral health. Lacking the courage to stand firm for the right, women allow the current of popular feeling to draw them on in their wake. Much precious time is devoted to needless stitching and ruffling, to add to the outward adorning. Children are robbed of the time that should be devoted to gaining for them the beauty of holiness—the inward adorning, which, in the sight of God, is of great price.

In order to follow fashion, many of our youth incur expenses that are out of proportion to their condition in life. Children of poor parents endeavor to dress as do those who are wealthy. Parents tax their purses and their God-given time and strength in making and remodeling clothing to satisfy their children’s vanity. If our sisters who have an abundance of means would regulate their expenditures by their responsibility to God, as wise stewards of the means entrusted to them; their example would do much to stay this evil now existing among us. Souls whom they might have helped by letting their light shine in good works, are strengthened in unbelief by their inconsistent course.

Mothers cannot be slaves to fashion and at the same time exert a sanctifying influence in the home. Too often professedly Christian mothers sacrifice principle to their desire to follow the multitude who make fashion their god. Conscience protests, but they are not brave enough to take a decided stand against the wrong.

Many of our sisters willingly bear the unnecessary burden of conformity to worldly dress. Attempting to follow the fashions, their burdens are greatly increased, yet they willingly bear the yoke, because they worship the goddess of fashion.

It is not only the privilege, but the duty of every one to increase daily in the knowledge of God and the truth. Satan’s object is gained if he can invent something that will so attract the mind that God will be forgotten, and he uses fashion with great success to do this. He knows that women who constantly have a feverish desire to follow the fashions, have benumbed their moral sensibilities, and do not realize their real spiritual condition. Worldly minded, they are without God, without hope. They take no time to pray, or to search the Scriptures in order that they may understand the truth, and teach it to their children.

When I have seen Christian women leading out in temperance campaigns, presenting to liquor inebriates a pledge to abstain from all intoxicating drinks, I have thought that it would also be well for them to present to every Christian woman a pledge to abstain from all needless display and extravagance in dress. By dressing simply, thus saving time and means, Christian women can do much to help the temperance cause. The means thus saved will clothe the destitute, feed the hungry, and will help to close the door against liquor drinking. Those who are simple in dress have time to visit the afflicted, and to pray with and for them. On all Christians rests a solemn duty to economize, that they may be better able to help those in need.

We do not discourage neatness in dress. Correct taste is not to be despised nor condemned. Our faith, if carried out, will lead us to be so plain in dress, and zealos of good works, that we shall be marked as peculiar. But when we lose taste for order and neatness in dress, we virtually leave the truth; for the truth never degrades, but elevates. When believers are neglectful of their dress, and are coarse and rough in their manners, their influence hurts the truth.

"We are," said the inspired apostle, "made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." 1 Corinthians 4:9. All heaven is marking the daily influence that the professed followers of Christ exert upon the world. My sisters, your dress is telling either in favor of Christ and the sacred truth or in favor of the world. Which is it? Remember that we must all answer to God for the influence we exert.

Simplicity of dress will make a sensible woman appear to the best advantage. We judge of a person’s character by the style of dress worn. A modest, godly woman will dress modestly. A refined taste, a cultivated mind, will be revealed in the choice of a simple, appropriate attire. The young women who break away from the slavery of fashion will be ornaments to society. The one who is simple and unpretending in her dress and in her manners shows that she understands that a true woman is characterized by moral worth. How charming, how interesting, is simplicity in dress, which in comeliness can be compared with the flowers of the field!

Review and Herald, vol. 5, 89-90; (November 17, 1904)
The subject of Christian music generates incredible discussion, especially in the climate of concern about the Celebration movement in Adventism. Great efforts are made by some to claim that all styles of music are acceptable as a medium for worship enhancement, and do not affect the listener or participant other than by the associations attached to the music. That is, “dance” music is acceptable, so long as it is not associated with the bars and nightclubs, but with religious words it is suitable for Christian worship. Music is popularly considered as amoral, only as a matter of taste, or palate. Some even suggest that music is like a dialect. Today’s youth, it is asserted, have a broader selection of styles to choose from than previous generations. While this statement may be true, it is not the truth about music.

Actually the Celebration format would be boring to many people if music was not involved. Music is the glue which holds the charismatic experience together. The upbeat sounds of syncopated hymnody characterize the music style. Although the words speak purity, holiness, love and God, they are linked with the same styles of music that are found in the bars and the night clubs and other worldly venues. But now those sounds are acceptable for personal and corporate Christian worship, because the words seem good. Now dance sounds are baptized for Christian ears.

With no viable criteria by which to explain why some music may have an inherently harmful effect on the spiritual maturity of the soul, most Seventh-day Adventists leave it to the musicians to determine what is acceptable. When dance music is played or sung in church, many members have a nonspecific, uncomfortable feeling about it. Many would even identify the beat as the primary offender, but lacking an explanation of why there is too much beat, or why it is harmful to the soul, they are afraid to address the issue with their pastor, elders, and especially the musicians. Many fear being accused as critical or judgmental. The subject is dropped and the feelings are suppressed. The next time the sound is heard it is not so offensive. The listeners become familiar and comfortable with the new sound. Eventually, the old saying applies: “What we once abhorred, then tolerated, we now embrace.”

Over the last 20 years or so, Adventism has been slowly desensitized to the dance sound with gospel words to the point where our musical palate has developed a liking and even a desire for this sound. Some are captivated by it. Yet the indulgence is at the expense of personal and corporate spiritual worship maturity. Many Adventists now actually enjoy the superficial, sentimental, emotion-oriented worship experience. It is more comfortable to the Laodicean. This surface experience, however, has left many with a hunger for something more meaningful, something more reverent, something more appropriate. It has also created a great desire for a simple explanation of the morality of music and clear, unbiased, inspiration-oriented guidelines for music choices.

The Word of God gives general guidelines for standards, but little by way of specifics for music. Yet contained within Inspired Writ, are the principles from which effective principles can be drawn. “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Romans 12:2. God wants to be glorified in our minds. He wants possession and control of

Hal Mayer

Hay Meyer, assistant to the president of Hartford Institute, conducts practical seminars on music standards.
them. Anything that enters the mind is to be in harmony with His mind. Notice verse one: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." God also wants to possess our bodies. He wants to use them to glorify Him. Anything that dishonors God in the body or mind is sin against God.

Character, we are told, is made up of our thoughts and feelings.2 Music (any kind of music) has an effect upon the mind and the body. Music especially affects us emotionally. Research has found that we perceive and interpret music at the emotional level first.3 Before the intellect is involved, the emotions have interacted with the music. It is therefore important that we choose music very carefully, before we listen or perform.

Music is an important bonding element. Our emotions bond us to concepts, ideas, philosophies and to each other. Music enhances this bonding because it first affects us emotionally. This is why we have a special item at the beginning of each night of a crusade, to soften the hearts of the people for the truth to be presented and to help with the emotional bonding. But Satan, the ex-choir director of heaven, has developed music that bonds us to him and turns the mind and body away from God into rebellion. He created certain rhythms and sounds that unnaturally affect the emotions and the body to support our rebellious philosophy.

For example, music that is strongly rhythmic or that uses intense harmonies has an unnaturally elevating effect on the emotions. One researcher described it as self-hypnosis.4 Actually, dance music whether it be jazz, rhythm and blues, country western, swing, easy listening, or one of the forms of rock, has a single common denominator—the syncopated rhythm. This rhythm has an intoxicating effect upon the mind.5 It makes the participant or listener feel good, and creates an escape mechanism from problems much as does alcohol or a mild drug such as marijuana. The emotions are quickly surrendered to this sound and the deeper intellect is “disengaged.” This unnatural elevation, researchers have discovered, reduces our resistance to temptation.6 Store managers have discovered that dance music played on the PA system, actually motivates people to buy more than they intended. The mind actually becomes mildly hypnotized.7 When we are in this state, we cannot reason clearly. Satan tempts us and we fall into sin.

The problem arises when Christian words are linked with the syncopated dance sounds. Most Adventists have little awareness that the sensual dance sounds of the bars and nightclubs have a similar sentimental effect in church. While it may not be as blatant, it nevertheless affects the emotions and body in much the same way. Speaking of youth and music, Ellen White comments that “Satan knows what organs to excite to animate, engross, and charm the mind, so that Christ is not desired.”8 Emphasis supplied in quotations except as noted. Music affects the thalamus and the hypothalamus which control the production of many hormones in the body, including sex hormones. Dance sounds strengthen sensual drives when the music is heard, regardless of the words. Satan has tried to develop music that will infatuate the Christian mind with the sentimental, superficial and, worst of all, the sensual. Dabbling with dance music creates a taste for more and more until cheap music is desired and an emotion-orientated religion is preferred.

Another aspect of music should arrest our attention. The most natural response to music is physical motion. All music urges motion. Some styles of music, especially strongly rhythmic styles (like march or dance music) urge motion more strongly than other styles. But the physical motion changes with the rhythmic pattern. March music, such as that played by a marching band dictates a motion that draws attention to the extremities of the body (the arms and the legs). There is nothing inherently wrong with that motion. However, if a dance tune is played, suddenly the scene changes and the natural movement is entirely different. Now the attention of the observer is drawn to the torso of the body, especially the hips. The back and forth or swaying motion is an expressly sensual movement. The natural movement is not something that the participant chooses, it is determined by the rhythm. Satan has designed his music to reflect sensuality. The words are not the only factors to consider. In fact, in secular (especially pop) music, the sensual words are designed to be used with sensual sounds that naturally dictate sensual movement, and create feelings of sentimentality and ultimately sensuality.

A duplicity develops when the dance sounds are combined with gospel words. The feelings of sentimentality remain, and so does the sensual movement, though often more controlled. But the intellectual component encourages holiness, righteousness and godliness. This double standard sets up a distance between intellectual beliefs and behavior, which suggests that the two do not need to match in the Christian experience. Satan obviously gains a decided advantage. In addition, a dependence on emotional stimuli for a sense of unity with God develops, thus creating a dependence on feeling rather than the Word of God for spiritual security.

Syncopation, for practical purposes, is defined as a rhythmic emphasis upon the weak beat in the measure, or the “off beat.” Typically, pupils are taught how

Satan, the ex-choir director of heaven, has developed music that bonds us to him and turns the mind and body away from God into rebellion

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God’s prophet, Ellen White, saw the forthcoming trends in music. She writes; “No one who has an indwelling Saviour will dishonor Him before others by producing strains from a musical instrument which call the mind from God and heaven to light and trifling things.”

She pointed out that “Satan has no objection to music if he can make that a channel through which to gain access to the minds of the youth.” In this and other statements Ellen White is speaking directly to the church in the Testimonies, not to the world. She is urging us to be especially careful, for Satan will use deceptive practices with music to gain access to our minds, and especially the minds of youth.

Another statement exposes Satan’s method with music in creating an unnatural emotional state. “One was seated at the instrument of music, and such songs were poured forth as made the watching angels weep. There was mirth . . . abundance of enthusiasm, and a kind of inspiration; but the joy was such as Satan only is able to create. This is an enthusiasm and infatuation of which all who love God will be ashamed. It prepares the participants for unholy thought and action.” This bombshell statement clearly reflects the morality of music. It also clearly implies that one can feel that he is under the inspiration of God when in reality he is under the inspiration of the enemy of souls—through music. Lastly, this statement plainly states the relationship between unholy music and behavior, emphasizing as does science, that certain kinds of music, the sensual kinds especially, directly prepare the participants for thoughts and behavior outside the boundaries of Christian practice.

Certainly, the most significant statement from the pen of inspiration regarding music comes from Selected Messages. Many who argue in favor of using dance music in church, and even some who superficially understand the issues, notice that she speaks only of the music itself as played on instruments, not the words. Notice also that she clearly states the morality of the music by saying there is some music that dishonors God and is therefore sinful. For “no one who has an indwelling Saviour” will use that kind of music.

This is an invention of Satan to cover up his ingenious methods for making of none effect the pure, sincere, elevating, ennobling, sanctifying truth for this time.

Annual Council Action on Music, 1972, Partial Text

Music is one of God’s great gifts to man and is one of the most important elements in a spiritual program. It is an avenue of communication with God, and “is one of the most effective means of impressing the heart with spiritual truth.” Education, 168. Dealing as it does with matters of eternal consequence, music is of the utmost importance. It is essential that its tremendous power be kept clearly in mind. It has the power to uplift or degrade; it can be used in the service of good or evil. “It has power to subdue rude and uncultivated natures; power to quicken thought and to awaken sympathy, to promote harmony of action, and to banish the gloom and foreboding that destroy courage and weaken effort.” Ibid., 167-168

Those, therefore, who select music for the distinctive purposes of this church must exercise a high degree of discrimination in its choice and in its use. In their endeavors to meet these ideals, more than human wisdom is needed. Turning then to revelation for guidance, we find the following general principles are revealed:

The music should
1. Bring glory to God and assist us in acceptably worshiping Him. 1 Corinthians 10:31
2. Enoble, uplift, and purify the Christian’s thought. Philippians 4:8; Patriarchs and Prophets, 594
3. Effectively influence the Christian in the development of Christ’s character in his life and in that of others. Manuscript 57, 1906
4. Have a text which is in harmony with the scriptural teachings of the church. Review and Herald, June 6, 1912
5. Reveal a compatibility between the message conveyed by the words and the music, avoiding a mixture of the sacred and the profane. Review and Herald, November 30, 1900
6. Shun theatricality and proudful display. Evangelism, 137
7. Give precedence to the message of the text, which should not be overshadowed by accompanying musical elements. Gospel Workers, 357-358
8. Maintain a judicious balance of the emotional, intellectual and spiritual elements. Review and Herald, November 14, 1899
9. Never compromise high principles of dignity and excellence in efforts to reach the people just where they are. Testimonies, vol. 9, 143; Evangelism, 137
10. Be appropriate for the occasion, the setting and the audience for which it is intended. Evangelism, 507-508

There is much that is spiritually uplifting and religiously valid in the music of the various cultural and ethnic groups; however, the musical tastes and practices of all should conform to the universal value of Christlike character, and all should strive for oneness in the spirit and purpose of the gospel which calls for unity rather than uniformity. Care must be exercised.
have tried to discredit this statement by suggesting that the statement was written about the strange physical phenomena exhibited by the participants in the Indiana camp meeting to which it is referring. And thus it cannot be used to address modern dance music. The statement speaks of a "bedlam of noise" to take place in worship services, especially at camp meetings just before the close of probation.

The Muncie, Indiana, camp meeting was characterized by wild demonstrations of physical activity with shouting, prostration on the floor and other bizarre contortions. The suggestion is made that this statement must not be used in relation to today's music because of these strange actions. To do so is to take the Selected Messages statement out of context, it is claimed. Is it possible that Satan would use a different context, different circumstances, and even different theology as the setting for the music? Why wouldn't he be willing to combine his music with different false doctrines today? Is he bound to use exactly the same milieu of circumstances? Certainly not.

Most people know of the famous statement, but have never read the background context. Elder and Mrs. Haskell were participants at the camp meeting. Mrs. Haskell wrote to Sara McEnterfer and gave a description of not only the activities, but also of the music used. Sara showed the letter to Ellen White, and she wrote an inspired response to Mrs. Haskell. Mrs. Haskell's letter said of the music: "We have a big drum, two tambourines, a big bass fiddle, two small fiddles, a flute and two cornets, and an organ, and a few voices. They have Garden of Spices as the songbook and play dance tunes to sacred words." Notice that dance tunes were combined with gospel words, just as they are today.

Ellen White goes on to say, "The Holy Spirit never reveals itself in such methods, in such a bedlam of noise. This is an invention of Satan to cover up his ingenious methods for making of none effect the pure, sincere, elevating, ennobling, sanctifying truth for this time. Better never have the worship of God blended with music than to use musical instruments to do the work which last January was represented to me would be brought into our camp meetings. The truth for this time needs nothing of this kind in its work of converting souls. A bedlam of noise shocks the senses and perverts that which if conducted aright might be a blessing. The powers of satanic agencies blend with the din and that worldly values in music which fail to express the high ideals of the Christian faith be avoided.

The above principles will serve as effective guidelines in the choice and use of music for the varied needs of the church. Certain musical forms, such as jazz, rock, and their related hybrid forms, are considered by the church as incompatible with these principles. ...

Young people tend to identify closely with the music of the contemporary youth culture. The desire to reach these youth where they are with the gospel of Christ sometimes leads to the use of certain questionable musical idioms. In all these idioms, the element which brings the most problems is rhythm, or "the beat."

Of all the musical elements, rhythm evokes the strongest physical response. Satan's greatest successes have often come through his appeal to the physical nature. Showing keen awareness of the dangers involved in this approach to youth, Ellen G. White said, "They have a keen ear for music, and Satan knows what organs to excite to animate, engross, and charm the minds so that Christ is not desired. The spiritual longings of the soul for divine knowledge, for a growth in grace, are wanting." Testimonies, vol. 1, 497. This is a strong indictment of the way in which music may be put to a use that is in direct opposition to God's plan. The previously mentioned jazz, rock, and related hybrid forms are well known for creating this sensuous response in masses of people. ...

In addition to the problem of rhythm, other factors affect the spiritual qualities of the music:

Vocal Treatment—The raucous style common to rock, the suggestive, sentimental, breathy, crooning style of the nightclub performer, and other distortions of the human voice should be avoided.

Harmonic Treatment—Music should be avoided that is saturated with the seventh, ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords as well as other lush sonorities. These chords, when used with restraint, produce beauty, but when used to excess distract from the true spiritual quality of the text. ...

In preparing and presenting music for religious functions, school administrators and teachers should work with the students in a way that will uphold the musical standards of the church. ...

Musical presentations in Seventh-day Adventist educational institutions should conform to the standards of the church. This applies to local talent as well as to visiting artists, ensembles and music on entertainment films. ...

The Christian will not sing songs that are incompatible with the ideals of truth, honesty and purity. He will avoid elements that give the appearance of making evil desirable or goodness appear trivial. He will try to avoid compositions containing trite phrasing, poor poetry, nonsense, sentimentality, or frivolity which lead away from the counsel and teachings found in Scripture and in the Spirit of Prophecy.

He will consider music such as blues, jazz, the rock idiom, and similar forms as inimical to the development of Christian character, because it opens the mind to impure thoughts and leads to unholy behavior. Such music has a distinct relationship to the permissiveness of contemporary society. The distortion of rhythm, melody, and harmony as employed by these styles and their excessive amplification dulls the sensibilities and eventually destroys the appreciation for that which is good and holy.
noise, to have a carnival, and this is termed the Holy Spirit’s working... No encouragement should be given to this kind of worship.”

It is clear from this statement that a major concern of the prophet was the music: “dance tunes to sacred words.” This is exactly the description of the greater part of popular modern gospel music. It doesn’t matter whether it is jazz, country, easy listening, soft rock or other variations of the dance idioms. Combined with sacred words, these tunes are decidedly an invention of Satan and harmful to the soul. In this setting, they are even more deceptive, and once the sentimental emotions are flowing, it is difficult to convince the participant that he is in error.

The Adventist Church actually had a voted set of guidelines about the use of music that is superbly written and comprehensive enough to meet the counsel of Inspired Writ (see shaded box for partial text). It is one of the clearest and most decisive stands that could ever be enunciated. But sadly, it is largely ignored; it has not been revised. There seem to be quite a few churches, schools and other institutions that are determined to go in another direction than the General Conference.

We hope sincere Adventist Christians will take heed to the Inspired Writ and apply music principles to their personal and corporate worship life that will lead them to a mature Christian experience, ready to meet the Lord with the last generation of God’s people. We need music committees for churches and schools, et cetera, that clearly understand the principles of music and inspired counsel. As individuals, we need to do all we can to encourage, urge and plead that our people adhere to inspiration. Most important, we must pray as never before for the Lord to move through His Spirit upon individuals and groups, to take a stand for right in this crucial area.

One of the sad reasons that Israel was sent into captivity according to Ezekiel was that the leaders failed to show the difference between the sacred and the profane. “Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.” Ezekiel 22:26. Today we are doing the same thing with music. The distinction is not generally being made, and like Eve in the garden of Eden, we eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. What a tragedy! Let us resolve to live a deeper, more mature experience.

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Editorial

Continued from 2

“We have to reach the unbelieving Jews of that generation, ‘Your house is left unto you desolate.’ Matthew 23:38.

“Looking down the stream of time to the last days, the same infinite power proclaimed through John: ‘These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.’ Revelation 3:7.

“I was shown in vision, and I still believe, that there was a shut door in 1844. All who saw the light of the first and second angels’ messages and rejected that light, were left in darkness. And those who accepted it and received the Holy Spirit which attended the proclamation of the message from heaven, and who afterward renounced their faith and pronounced their experience a delusion, thereby rejected the Spirit of God, and it no longer pleased with them.

“Those who did not see the light, had not the guilt of its rejection. It was only the class who had despised the light from heaven that the Spirit of God could not reach. And this class included, as I have stated, both those who refused to accept the message when it was presented to them, and also those who, having received it, afterward renounced their faith.” Selected Messages, book 1, 63–64.

“Now in this crisis the world is facing its final hour, and some Adventists are questioning the validity of the three angels’ messages and the sanctuary message. They view Ellen White in the role of a nice little old lady of the nineteenth century, whose writings are now outdated. And they are attempting to convince our churches that the Pentecostal and Evangelical churches have a better program than what God has outlined for us in the Spirit of Prophecy. They are calling darkness light and light darkness and truth becomes error. The door of salvation will close for them if they continue to pursue this destructive course. Jesus said many are called but few are chosen.

Ellen White wrote that the majority will reject us and join themselves to the enemy. See Testimonies, vol. 5, 136; vol. 8, 41. As Jesus said, only a few will survive this final test of purity and holiness. See ibid., vol. 5, 10, 50; vol. 1, 608–609.

May God help us now, that He will inspire our leaders and pastors to bring our people back to the great waymarks of our pioneers. That we will now experience that great revival and reformation so greatly needed for this final hour is my prayer.

Ron Spear—EDITOR
I personally thank you for your care in preparing your articles. They truly show the love you have for the church and the people. Your job is not an easy one, but someone has to show us what is taking place all around us. My wife and I shall pray for your continued efforts and your success in bringing food to God's people.

—DB, Texas

I just wanted to thank you for the last issue of Our Firm Foundation. I read it from cover to cover. It is the best. The articles were good and inspiring. Thank you again and please keep printing the truth. We all need it in these days we are living in. Many others had the same response to your September issue as I did. Our prayers are with you.

—SF, Tennessee

I am so happy to receive the magazines. They have helped me along this Christian journey more than you will ever know. I am so grateful to you, and thanks very much. Please continue to send them.

—ML, Georgia

Someone gave me this address about two years ago, along with a subscription price for your materials. Will you please let me know if you are still in existence and what you are about. I am a seeker after truth.

—CH, Illinois

Do you have family or friends who have not yet heard of Our Firm Foundation? We would be happy to send them a sample copy if you send us their names and addresses.—EDITORS

Thank you for continuing to send me the special-edition issues of Our Firm Foundation. These editions have convinced me to renew my subscription to the magazine. I let my original subscription lapse as I felt there was simply too much of Ellen White and not enough substantive Bible study. I do wish that there was more of the in-depth Bible-based study articles of the type that the early Review and Herald articles had. However, your articles do provide food for thought and are filled with the same truths that our pioneers followed.

—WS, California

As an elderly Seventh-day Adventist no longer active in regular employment, it is certain that I have less access to the usual “grapevine” of denominational information, and it is sometimes disturbing to learn of digressions in teaching the third angel’s message that “pop up” from time to time, both near home and farther away from centers of church activity and expected doctrinal leadership. We know they will occur in varying forms and differing fields, and that means we need to be ever alert to Present Truth at this time.

As a third-generation church member and long-time teacher, I find it necessary to be alert and up-to-date on church activity as well as “weak spots” that show up frequently, because I want to remain loyal to the “traditional” Adventism that I learned in the home of an SDA minister and conference administrator, . . . because I recognize it as the truth for this time. We know many false teachings will be brought forward, and it continues to be fully necessary to be aware of new movements, differences of doctrine or other hurtful things that abound and grow rapidly and may “deceive many.” Long ago I recognized that “progress may bring change, but not all change is progress.” . . .

As I’ve read Our Firm Foundation, it has been revealed as being just that, and strengthening to the faith of the person that reads and follows as we should.

—DH, California

I am praying for you and your ministry. I thank God for you and the light you make available to us through the magazine Our Firm Foundation. I always look forward to getting it each month, and I read it over and over.

—JM, Colorado

I received a booklet a few days ago entitled The Final Work. I am trying to read it, though my eyesight is nearly gone. It is the best I’ve read for some time. You have the best reading matter coming from your place of any I know of. It really is spiritual and such a help to any one wanting to grow spiritually.

I find so much help for myself from all these good things. God surely is using your place to shine with the brightest lights. I’m soon 90 years old, but I love every thing I read from there . . . Soon Jesus will come. Oh, how good that will be for those who are ready!

—MG, Washington

Keep up the good work. Stay very close to the Blueprint. Fidelity to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy will guide us home.

I have been in this message about 98 years. We are nearing home—"Just over the mountain . . ." God is going to take a people home soon, if we are faithful.

—CW, California

It is interesting to note how Nehemiah dealt with apostasy. He never rebuked the church for withholding their tithes and offerings. As so soon as the Tobiah and Elishahs were thrown out of the temple the monies flowed freely into the church treasury.

—RH, Oklahoma

I hope “Elijah Smith” will reconsider and allow Our Firm Foundation to print the last half of his article, “Baby Boomers, Celebration Churches, and Moral Leadership.”

This is an article that can be used effectively, I believe, in speaking to people who are leaning toward the lassiness of church standards which is found in the Celebration churches as well as in other areas of our changing attitudes. In combating this New Age movement, we need all the help we can get.

—VT, Illinois
CHRIST, the true witness, addresses the church at Ephesus, saying, “I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” What effect have these words had upon the church? Have the professed people of God understood the import of the words, “I will come unto thee quickly [when you are at ease, careless, filled with spiritual negligence], and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Revelation 2:4-5. When warnings come no more to the people of God, when tender admonitions from the Spirit of God are silent, when the candle of heavenly illumination shines no longer upon their pathway, they will be left to kindle their own fire, and to walk in the sparks of their own kindling.

Many sermons are preached that are Christless as was the offerings of Cain, and heavenly intelligences look with amazement and sorrow upon the self-tainted, worthless offering. Could men realize how their services are regarded by Heaven, they would humble themselves before God. Many workers have educated themselves as debaters and critics; but have they the example of Christ for dealing with souls in this way?—No, and unless this class of workers shall humble their hearts before God, they cannot sit with Christ upon His throne. Only those who have the spirit of a little child will enter into the kingdom of heaven. Should Christ come to our world as He came at His first advent, many who imagine themselves to be children of God, would criticize Him. Those who think they are keen, smart men, who are wise in their own conceit, need to know Jesus and Him crucified. They need to understand the power of His grace. All our hope is founded and sustained by Christ; then when our ministers fall on the Rock and are broken, they will say, “More of Christ and less of theories.”

Oh, how few know the day of their visitation! How few, even among those who claim to believe in present truth, understand the signs of the times, or what they are to experience before the end. We are under divine forbearance today; but how long will the angels of God continue to hold the winds, that they shall not blow? We are convinced that among the people of God there is blindness of mind and hardness of heart, although God has manifested inexpressible mercy toward us. How few there are who are truly humble, devoted, God-fearing servants in the cause of Christ, whose hearts are full of gratitude and thanksgiving because they are called to act a part in the work of God, being colaborers with Jesus Christ, partakers with Christ of His sufferings! How few there are who can say from the heart, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

Today there are few who are heartily serving God. The most of those who compose our congregations are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. They come and go like the door upon its hinges. For years they have complacently listened to the most solemn, soul-stirring truths, but they have not practiced them. They are less and less sensible of the preciousness and value of truth, because they neglect the practice of those things which are pleasing in the sight of God. The stirring testimonies of reproof and warning do not arouse them.
The sweetest melodies that come from God through human lips—justification by faith, and the righteousness of Christ—do not bring forth from them a response of love and gratitude. Though the heavenly merchantman displays before them the richest jewels of faith and love, though His voice invites them to buy of Him "gold tried in the fire," and "white raiment that they may be clothed," and "eyesalve that they may see," they steel their hearts against Him, and fail to exchange their lukewarmness for love and zeal; but fold their hands in complacency, make a profession, but deny the power of true godliness. If they continue in this state, God will reject them with abhorrence. To praise the world and God at the same time, is in no way acceptable to God. Awake, awake, before it is eternally too late.

Brethren and sisters who have long claimed to believe the truth, I would ask you, Have your practices been in harmony with your light, with your privileges, with the opportunities granted of Heaven? This is a serious question. Why is it there is so little faith, so little spiritual power? Why are there so few who bear the yoke and carry the burden of Christ? Why do persons have to be urged to take up their work for the Master? Why are there so few who can unveil the mysteries of redemption? Why is it that the imputed righteousness of Christ does not shine through His professed followers as a light to the world?

The people of God are called "the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." Matthew 5:14. "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." Psalm 87:3. "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved." Psalm 46:5. The Sun of Righteousness has risen upon the church, and it is the duty of the church to shine. Those who are connected with Christ will grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, to the full stature of men and women. It is the privilege of every soul to make advancement. No one is to be an idler in the vineyard. If all who claim to believe the truth had made the most of their opportunities and ability to learn all that they were privileged to learn, they would have become strong in Christ. No matter what may have been their occupation, if farmers, mechanics, teachers, or pastors, if they had wholly consecrated themselves to God, they would have been efficient agents to work for the heavenly Master. They would have fulfilled the injunction of the apostle: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Ephesians 6:10-13

If Christ is not abiding in the soul, another spirit rules and controls; but Christ, the precious Saviour, is to be the Christian's all in all. Every holy thought, every pure desire, every godlike purpose is from Him who is the light, the truth, and the way. Christ is to live in His representatives by the spirit of truth. Jesus said, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." The events of the future will be discerned by prophecy, and will be understood. "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." John 16:13–15. Christ is to live in the human instrument. Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20

The privileges, the blessings of the child of God are represented by the apostle in the following language: "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." Colossians 1:27. When we realize that our hope of glory is Christ, that we are complete in Him, we shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The apostle further says that he ceased not to pray "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." Ephesians 1:17–20

Oh, if we as a people had improved our opportunities to gain a knowledge of the Word, to obtain a vital experience in the things of God, we would have fulfilled the word, "Ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life." Philippians 2:15–16. We can impart only that which we first receive. Those who are united to the church should be living, working agents to impart light to those who are in darkness. They should declare the truth of God, revealing His love and faithfulness. When men use their powers as God directs them to, their talents will increase, their ability will enlarge, and they will have heavenly wisdom in seeking to save those who are lost. But while the church members are listless, and neglectful of their God-given responsibility, how can they expect to receive the treasure of heaven to impart to others? When professed Christians feel no burden to enlighten the minds of those who
are in darkness; when they fail to make use of the rich grace of Christ, and cease to impart the knowledge they have received, they become selfish, narrow, bigoted, and their capacity to receive more and more heavenly illumination decreases rather than increases. They become less discerning, lose their appreciation of the richness of the heavenly endowment, and failing to value it themselves, they fail to present it to others. It is only as God sees His professed people eager to be laborers together with Him, that He can impart to them light and grace; for then they will make every interest secondary to the interest of His work and cause. With such workers the heavenly intelligences will co-operate. Jesus says, “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me.” It is the union of the Holy Spirit and the testimony of the living witness that is to warn the world. The worker for God is the agent through which the heavenly communication is given, and the Holy Spirit gives divine authority to the word of truth.

What more can I say than I have said to impress upon our churches, and especially upon the church at Battle Creek, the eternal loss they are liable to in not arousing and putting to use the executive ability that God has given them? If the members of the churches would but put to work the powers of mind that they have, in well-directed efforts, in well-matured plans, they might do a hundredfold more for Christ than they are now doing. If they went forth with earnest prayer, with meekness and lowliness of heart, seeking personally to impart to others the knowledge of salvation, the message might reach the inhabitants of the earth. How many more messages of reproof and warning must the Lord send to His chosen people before they will obey? I tell you in the name of the Lord Jesus, who gave His life for the life of the world, that as a people we are behind our privileges and opportunities. What rich feasts have been provided for the people of Battle Creek! What opportunities have been given them! The people have been convinced that they should be laborers together with God, but have they been converted to the idea? The dangers of their course, the duties required at their hands, have all been presented; earnest appeals have been made to their understanding and to their conscience, and light has been given them so that they are without excuse. They can have no cloak for their sinful neglect, but the Lord does not urge men and women to the work by presenting to them flattering inducements. They can work for Him only as they work willingly, giving hearty co-operation.

The truth for this time has been presented from the holy oracles, and has been witnessed by the power of the Holy Spirit. It has been clearly shown that in the righteousness of Christ is our only hope of gaining access to the Father. How simple, how plain has the way of life been made to those who have a disposition to walk therein! Would greater evidence, more powerful manifestations, break down the barriers that have been interposed between the truth and the soul?—No. I have been shown that sufficient evidence has been given. Those who reject the evidence already presented would not be convinced by more abundant proof. They are like the Jews to whom Christ said, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” Luke 16:31. The greatest miracles performed before them would not sweep away their caviling and unbelief. They have sown stubbornness, and it has borne fruit according to the design of Satan. Unless the transforming grace of Christ cleanses and purifies the soul, they will go on from darkness to greater darkness.

If we would see light in God’s light, we must abide in Christ. The soul must receive strength and nourishment from the living Vine. The apostle says, “Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” 2 Corinthians 13:5. But stubbornness effectually bars the way to the entrance of the Spirit of God. Stubbornness does not profit; it is the fruit of selfishness, and the only cure for it is to cut it up from the heart by the roots. Often the outward manifestation of selfishness is done away with for a time, but its hateful fruit will again appear as do the leaves of a tree that has been cut down, but whose root remains. If a fiber of selfishness is left, it will spring forth again, and bear a harvest after its kind.

The Spirit of God cannot work effectually in any heart where pride and self-esteem exist. But without the aid of the Spirit of God the soul cannot be renewed, a new heart cannot be created within. The Lord is at work seeking to purify His people, and this great work is retarded by unbelief and stubbornness. Many think that had they lived in Christ’s day, they would have been among His believing followers; but if all the miracles of Christ were presented before those whose hearts are not sub-

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With warnings and entreaties, the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness illuminated the mind; but many refused the compassion of a loving Saviour, and would not permit their hearts to break and melt under the beams of His love. They refused the message of mercy, refused to do what God required in the way that God required, and their offerings were as devoid of merit as were the offerings of Cain; for they mingled not with them the virtue of the blood of a crucified and risen Saviour.

It is beyond the power of man to please God apart from Christ. We may make resolutions and promises, but the carnal heart overpowers all our good intentions. We may control our outward conduct, but we cannot change the heart. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, and yet the sinner will brace himself in pride, and set up his will against the will of God. Though Christ is working upon human hearts, men utterly annul the work the Lord would do. If they resist, question, and cavil, they will hypocrisy, they hated the Prince of life because He laid bare their evil ways. In our day greater light and greater evidence is given. We have also their example, the warnings and reproofs that were presented to them, and our sin and its retribution will be the greater, if we refuse to walk in the light. Many say, “If I had only lived in the days of Christ, I would not have wrested His words, or falsely interpreted His instruction. I would not have rejected and crucified Him as did the Jews”; but that will be proved by the way in which you deal with His message and His messengers today. The Lord is testing the people of today as much as He tested the Jews in their day. When He sends His messages of mercy, the light of His truth, He is sending the spirit of truth to you, and if you accept the message, you accept of Jesus. Those who declare that if they had lived in the days of Christ, they would not do as did the rejectors of His mercy, will today be tested. Those who live in this day are not accountable for the deeds of those who crucified the Son of God; but if with been done unto Himself. His sympathy with His people is without a parallel. He will not simply remain a spectator, indifferent to what His people may suffer, but identifies Himself with their interests and sorrows. If His people are wronged, maltreated, treated with contempt, their sufferings are registered in the books of heaven as done unto Him.

He says, “Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” But now the irrevocable sentence must be passed, “Your house is left unto you desolate.” Matthew 23:34-38. Past opportunities, privileges, and blessings rise up before Him. He could see Jerusalem as she might have been—holiness unto the Lord. For ages Judah had been the repository of sacred truth. Here the knowledge of Jehovah had been cherished and preserved, when God had not been acknowledged among the nations, and His worship was lost in the earth. The streets of Jerusalem had been trodden by angel feet, and its very soil had been sacred to God. From its temple prayer and praise had ascended to God. From its altar the bleeding sacrifice had testified to human guilt, pointing to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. The Lord had sent them messages of warning and reproof, of consolation and promise, by His prophets, rising up early and sending them, but they had beaten one and stoned another, and it could not be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. Finally God had sent His Son, and from the highest bough to the lowest He had searched for fruit, and had found none. For their sakes He had clothed His divinity with humanity, made Himself of no reputation, fled before the feet of His accusers and haters, and yet carried a rebellious people upon His heart. He had done all that could be done, but they turned from Him, demand-

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Place themselves in a position where it will not be easy to yield to the persuasion of the Spirit of God. There is a bewitching power that holds them under deception; for the father of lies works with the unsanctified heart. Over these deceived souls the cry is raised, Oh, that thou hadst known “in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace.” And shall the irrevocable sentence be passed, “But now they are hid from thine eyes”? Luke 19:42

There is less excuse in our day for stubbornness and unbelief than there was for the Jews in the days of Christ. They did not have before them the example of a nation that had suffered retribution for their unbelief and disobedience. But we have before us the history of the chosen people of God, who separated themselves from Him, and rejected the Prince of life. Though they could not convict Him of sin, though they could not fail to see their own all the light that shone upon His ancient people, delineated before us, we travel over the same ground, cherish the same spirit, refuse to receive reproof and warning, then our guilt will be greatly augmented, and the condemnation that fell upon them will fall upon us, only it will be as much greater as our light is greater in this age than was their light in their age.

Jesus identifies His interest with His chosen and tried people. He represents Himself as personally affected with all that concerns them. He reproved the errors and actions of the Jews with the ignant sensibility of one who felt Himself personally misrepresented, accused, and dishonored. Every wrong done to His followers, or to the weakest of humanity, is regarded by Him with intense interest. After presenting His relation to His people in various lights, He finally declares that in the great day He will judge of every action as if it had
ing still more evidence. His life was one continual miracle, but they knew it not, and demanded that He should show them a miracle. But in the face of their utter rejection of His love, their unbelief in His mission and divinity, when He knew that the representative men of the nation were plotting for His destruction, He wept over the city of His love. His prophetic eye read the history of the past, and the woe and the guilt of the future, and His heart was breaking with agony because the people of God knew not the time of their visitation. Hell moved by a power from beneath, that the guilty inhabitants of Jerusalem might carry out the will of the prince of darkness. Stirred with enmity they would yield themselves to the control of the malignant foe, and make the Prince of life their victim. Clouds of wrath were gathering over the doomed city; for they called down upon themselves judgment, crying, “His blood be on us and upon our children.” Matthew 27:25. That blood by virtue of which the repentant sinner might be forgiven—that blood by which a guilty world might be saved, by which the Jewish nation might be saved and purified, which was paid a ransom for the sins of the world, was to them the final guilt in the cup of their iniquity. Jesus knew that His chosen people were to put Him, the Prince of life and glory, to an ignominious death. He knew what was to be their doom. With prophetic glance He saw the Roman legions, He heard the tramp of armies, saw the city encompassed and in flames, and the temple a smoking ruin. The miseries of the people whom He longed to save, rose up before Him. He beholds their guilt and agony, but they are as unrelenting as was Satan in his rebellion against God.

The heart of Jesus was pierced with agony, and from His pale lips came forth the words, “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.” In their blind unbelief they would not know the Prince of life; if they had known Him, they would not have crucified Him.

In the Jewish nation we behold a chosen nation divorced from God because of unbelief. Jesus, the lover of humanity, was called upon to pronounce sentence against the people for whom He had lived and labored, but from whom He had borne insult, mockery, and rejection. He had borne everything from them, He had done all that was possible that He might save them from ruin. He knew the history of sin. He had watched its unfoldings from the beginning. He had seen the heavenly angels bewitched by its evil power until they were led to sympathize and to join with Satan in his rebellion against God. He had passed through the terrible scenes when there was war in heaven, when Satan had been expelled from the abode of bliss, and before His vision was all the consequences of sin. Oh, if He could but do one act of mercy by which they might be led to abandon their rebellion, and come to Him that He might save; but He had exhausted the resources of infinite love. The last arrow had been drawn from His quiver; He could do no more. The salvation of the Jews would have been the joy of Christ, the rejoicing of the angels, but they would not. No man will be saved against his will.

Will those who profess to believe the truth listen to the words of Jesus? He has said, “I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly.” John 10:10. “I am the bread of life.” John 6:35. “I am the good Shepherd. . . . And I lay down my life for the sheep.” John 10:14–15. Will those who are called by His name believe that the children of God are very precious in His sight? Let us consider what the Lord has done for us. Shall not the love manifested toward us be appreciated, shall it not be permitted to melt our hearts, to humble our pride to the dust? Such was the breadth and length and height and depth of the Saviour’s love, that He willingly laid aside His honor, His high command in heaven, and clothed His divinity with humanity, in order that He might become man’s substitute and surety.

“He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” Hebrews 2:16–18

Under the mighty impulse of His love, He took our place in the universe, and invited the ruler of all things to treat Him as representative of the human family. He identified Himself with our interests, bore His breast for the stroke of death, took man’s guilt and its penalty, and offered in man’s behalf a complete sacrifice to God. By virtue of this atonement, He has power to offer to

Shall not the love manifested toward us be appreciated, shall it not be permitted to melt our hearts, to humble our pride to the dust?
sweep away all the evidences that God has given to balance the mind in regard to the truth?

With the history of the children of Israel before us, let us take heed, and not be found committing the same sins, following in the same way of unbelief and rebellion.

“Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.” Hebrews 3:7–14

“But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.” 1 Corinthians 10:5–15

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**Bulletin Board**

**1992 Camp Meetings**

For those who need to make plans for this coming summer, we are announcing August 12–16 for the Hope International camp meeting at Eatonville, Washington. Since other camp meetings are being arranged across the country, be sure to look for more information in upcoming issues of Our Firm Foundation and in our newsletters.

**Donation Receipts**

We wish to remind our donors that we are now consolidating all donations received during the month and sending one receipt, some time after the first of the following month. We expect this change in procedure to result in a significant savings in postage and other costs. Thank you for your patience with the delay.

**Truth For Today Bulk Mailing**

We praise the Lord for the many correspondence Bible studies which have been a result of the mailing of over 500,000 Truth For Today magazines, sponsored by many individuals and churches. If you or your church would like to sponsor a mailing in your area, just fill in a copy of the form below and send it to us along with your donation. You may obtain the number of people on each route from your Post Office. Please note that the suggested donation is 22¢ per address (up 2¢ due to recent postage increases). This increase applies to mailings covering the entire area served by one Zip code.

If you wish to have Truth For Today or Health For Today mailed to specific names and addresses, we suggest a donation of 40¢ per address.

**Publication List**

We have recently mailed a new Hope International Publication List to all our regular subscribers. If you have not received one, please let us know. It contains all the 1991 camp meeting tapes along with several new books and tapes.

**Clarification**

We would like to clarify to our readers that there is no connection between the Voice of Hope (which has printed a newsletter entitled The Voice of Hope International), located in Umatilla, Florida, and Hope International in Eatonville, Washington. We regret the confusion which has resulted from this situation.

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Review and Herald, vol. 3, 35–40 (April 4, 11, 18, 1893)
ALMOST every Seventh-day Adventist believes that we are now living in the last days. We do not know the day or the hour, but we can know the time is near. The evidence in the world tells us that Jesus must come soon or there will not be anything left to come for. The "peace and safety" cry is sounding now throughout our world and even from our own pulpits. See 1 Thessalonians 5:3. The walls of communism have fallen and the ferocious Russian Bear is acting like a lamb, begging the world to feed her hungry people. The pope is considered by Protestants as a great evangelist, and the healing of the deadly wound will soon be complete—it waits now for an international crisis to bring in a universal Sunday law. Surely the last movements are now gaining momentum.

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

"The agencies of evil are combining their forces and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones.

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

In this final crisis hour, what will be the condition of God's remnant church? Listen to these words of Inspiration: "When the law of God is made void the church will be sifted by fiery trials, and a larger proportion than we now anticipate, will give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. Instead of being strengthened when brought into strait places, many prove that they are not living branches of the True Vine; they bore no fruit, and the husbandman taketh them away.

"But when the world makes void the law of God, what will be the effect upon the truly obedient and righteous? Will they be carried away by the strong current of evil? Because so many rank themselves under the banner of the prince of darkness, will God's commandment-keeping people swerve from their allegiance? Never! Not one who is abiding in Christ will fail or fall. His followers will bow in obedience to a higher authority than that of any earthly potentate. While the contempt placed upon God's commandments leads many to suppress the truth and show less reverence for it, the faithful ones will with greater earnestness hold aloft its distinguishing truths. We are not left to our own direction. In all our ways we should acknowledge God, and He will direct our paths. We should consult His Word with humble hearts, ask His counsel, and give up our will to His. We can do nothing without God." Selected Messages book 2, 368–369

The faithful and obedient will not fail or fall—Praise God!

But now let us define Apostasy. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and
doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.” 1 Timothy 4:1-2. Apostasy is a departing from the faith, and many will give heed to the doctrines of the devil to believe a lie that they might be damned.

The word “apostasy” comes from the Greek word ἀποστασία, or “a falling away.” This means that there will be in the church those who are not in agreement with the faith—truth as believed and as preached by the apostles and also the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Those who continue in the Laodicean condition will continue to associate themselves with the true believers. They have their names on the church books, but they are not really with the obedient saints in practice and lifestyle. They stand aloof from the practice of the true faith as it is in Jesus. When persecution arises they will choose the easy, popular side.

Apostasy is insubordination to God’s orders, His plans.

“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 worldlyliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord’s professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.

“We may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years, as did the children of Israel; but for Christ’s sake, His people should not add sin to sin by charging God with the consequence of their own wrong course of action.” Evangelism, 696

Yes, apostasy is in our beloved church, and God is calling the Caleb, His faithful watchmen, to meet the crisis, to cry aloud and spare not, to show God’s people their transgressions. There is a falling away from the old standards of righteousness laid down by Christ and the apostles and the pioneers of our church. Those who live godly in Christ Jesus will now suffer persecution. See 2 Timothy 3:12

“Thousands who profess to be Christians give heed to lying spirits. Everywhere the spirit of darkness in the garb of religion will confront you.

“If all that appears to be divine life were such in reality; if all who profess to present the truth to the world were preaching for the truth and not against it, and if they were men of God guided by His Spirit—then might we see something cheering amid the prevailing moral darkness. But the spirit of antichrist is prevailing to such an extent as never before. Well may we exclaim: ‘Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fall from among the children of men.’ Psalm 12:1. I know that many think far too favorably of the present time. These easy-loving souls will be engulfed in the general ruin. Yet we do not despair. We have been inclined to think that there are no faithful ministers there can be no true Christians, but this is not the case. God has promised that where the shepherds are not true He will take charge of the flock Himself. God has never made the flock wholly dependent upon human instruments. But the days of purification of the church are hastening on. God will have a people pure and true. In the mighty sifting soon to take place we shall be better able to measure the strength of Israel. The signs reveal that the time is near when the Lord will manifest that His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor.

We are also told that the sanctuary message would be ridiculed and it would be said by some of our leaders and pastors that “there is no sanctuary”

“Every wind of doctrine will be blowing. Those who have rendered supreme homage to ‘science falsely so called’ will not be the leaders then. Those who have trusted to intellect, genius, or talent will not then stand at the head of rank and file. They did not keep pace with the light. Those who have proved themselves unfaithful will not then be entrusted with the flock. In the last solemn work few great men will be engaged. They are self-sufficient, independent of God, and He cannot use them. The Lord has faithful servants, who in the shaking, testing time will be disclosed to view. There are precious ones now hidden who have not bowed to the knee to Baal. They have not had the light which has been shining in a concentrated blaze upon you. But it may be under a rough and uninviting exterior the pure brightness of a genuine Christian character will be revealed. In the daytime we look toward heaven but do not see the stars. They are there, fixed in the firmament, but the eye cannot distinguish them. In the night we behold their genuine luster.

“The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. The contest is between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. In this time the gold will be separated from the dross in the church. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy will then go out in darkness. Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat. All who assume the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ’s righteousness, will appear in the shame of their own nakedness.” Testimonies, vol. 5, 79-81

The Spirit of Prophecy

The Spirit was restored to God’s remnant church from its inception, to be the guide, so that the Seventh-day Adventist Church would not follow in the apostasy and rebellion of the early (Catholic) church. But we are told that the very last deception will be to make of none effect the Spirit of Prophecy. See Selected Messages, book 1, 48; Testimonies, vol. 5, 671-680

Satan has effectively brought this prophecy to pass. We are also told that the sanctuary message would be ridiculed and it would be said by some of our leaders and pastors that “there is no sanctuary.” See Evangelism, 224-225
Pillars Will Be Attacked

"Those who have a hold of the truth theoretically, with their finger tips as it were, who have not brought its principles into the inner sanctuary of the soul, but have kept the vital truth in the outer court, will see nothing sacred in the past history of this people which has made them what they are, and has established them as earnest, determined missionary workers in the world.

Ministers must arouse and manifest a life, zeal, and devotion to which they have for quite a length of time been almost strangers because they have failed to walk with God.

"The truth for this time is precious, but those whose hearts have not been broken by falling on the rock Christ Jesus, will not see and understand what is truth. They will accept that which pleases their ideas, and will begin to manufacture another foundation than that which is laid. They will flatter their own vanity and esteem, thinking that they are capable of removing the pillars to rest until Christ is formed within, the hope of glory. Self will die; pride will be expelled from the soul, and they will have the meekness and gentleness of Christ." Selected Messages, book 2, 388–389

The apostasy will increase until the coming of the Lord.

"One thing it is certain is soon to be realized, the great apostasy, which is developing and increasing and waxing stronger, and will continue to do so until the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout. We are to hold fast the first principles of our denominational faith, and go forward from strength to increased faith. Ever we are to keep the faith that has been substantiated by the Holy Spirit of God from the earlier events of our experience until the present time. We need now larger breadth, and deeper, more earnest, unwavering faith in the leadings of the Holy Spirit. If we needed the manifest proof of the Holy Spirit's power to confirm truth in the beginning, after the passing of the time, we need today all the evidence in the confirmation of the truth, when souls are departing from the faith and giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. There must not be any languishing of soul now." Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 7, 57

"Few can see the meaning of the present apostasy. But the Lord has lifted the curtain, and has shown me its meaning, and the result that it will have if allowed to continue. We must now lift our voices in warning." Ibid., 37

Apostasies Will Increase

"Confederacies will increase in number and power as we draw nearer to the end of time. These confederacies will create opposing influences to the

Ellen White spoke of the doctrines of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg which sought to "undermine the foundation pillars of our faith" as the alpha of apostasy. She said, "the omega would follow in a little while, and I trembled for our people." Selected Messages, book 1, 197, 203. Is the omega here? This book provides some thought-provoking answers to this question.

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truth, forming new parties of professed believers who will act out their own delusive theories. The apostasy will increase. "Some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1). Men and women have confe...read more... 

The three angels' messages must be understood and experienced to survive the great shaking that will result in separating the faithful and obedient Seventh-day Adventists from the disobe...read more... 

"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...read more... 

What Must We Do? 

The doctrines must be plainly understood. The men accepted to preach the truth must be anchored; then their vessel will hold against storm and tempest, because the anchor holds them firmly. The deceptions will increase, and we are to call rebellion by its right name. We are to stand with the whole armor on. In this conflict we do not meet men only, but principalities and powers. We wrestle not against flesh and blood. Let Ephesians 6:10-18 be read carefully and impressively in our churches." Ibid. 

"Those who apostatize are voicing the words of the dragon. We have to meet the satanic agencies who went to make war with the saints. "The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 12:17. Those who apostatize leave the true and faithful people of God, and fraternize with those who represent Barabbas. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Matthew 7:20." Ibid., 395 

God will have a pure church and a pure ministry who will give the loud cry. 

"I saw that before the work of God can make any decided progress, the ministers must be converted. When converted they will place less estimate upon wages and far more value upon...read more... 

"The spirit of Christ will be revealed in all who are born of God. Strife and contention cannot arise among those who are controlled by His Spirit. "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." Isaiah 52:11. The church will rarely take a higher stand than is taken by...read more... 

The ministers must be converted before they can strengthen their brethren. They should not preach themselves, but Christ and His righteousness. A reformation is needed among the people, but it should first begin its purifying work with the ministers. They are watchmen upon the walls of Zion, to sound the note of warning to the careless, the unsuspecting; also to portray the fate of the hypocrite in Zion, It seemed to me that some of the ministers had forgotten that Satan was yet alive, as persevering, earnest, and arifual as ever; that he was still seeking to allure souls from the path of righteousness." Ibid., 469 

"The spirit of Christ will be revealed in all who are born of God. Strife and contention cannot arise among those who are controlled by His Spirit. "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." Isaiah 52:11. The church will rarely take a higher stand than is taken by her ministers. We need a converted ministry and a converted people. Shepherds who watch for souls as they that must give account will lead the flock on in paths of peace and holiness. Their success in this work will be in proportion to their own growth in grace and knowledge of the truth. When the teachers are sanctified, soul, body, and spirit, they can impress upon the people the importance of such sanctification." Ibid., vol. 5, 227 

"Until Christ shall appear in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, men will become perverse in spirit and turn from the truth to fables. The church will yet see troublous times. She will prophesy in sackcloth. But although she must meet heresies and persecution, although she must battle with the infidel and the apostate, yet by the help of God she is bruising the head of Satan. The Lord will have a people as true as steel, and with faith as firm as the granite rock. They are to be His witnesses in the world, His instrumentali...read more...
self-righteousness and arrayed in the righteousness of Christ. The remnant that purify their souls by obeying the truth gather strength from the trying process, exhibiting the beauty of holiness amid the surrounding apostasy.” Selected Messages, book 2, 380

“The great issue so near at hand will weed out those whom God has not appointed and He will have a pure, true, sanctified ministry prepared for the latter rain.” Ibid., book 3, 385

God will finish His work and cut it short in righteousness by the preaching of the third angel’s message. See Romans 9:2

“Those who engage in the solemn work of bearing the third angel’s message must move out decidedly, and in the Spirit and power of God fearlessly preach the truth and let it cut. They should elevate the standard of truth and urge the people to come up to it. It has too frequently been lowered to meet the people in their condition of darkness and sin. It is the pointed testimony that will bring them up to decide. A peaceful testimony will not do this. The people have the privilege of listening to this kind of teaching from popular pulpits; but those servants to whom God has entrusted the solemn, fearful message which is to bring out and fit up a people for the coming of Christ should bear a plain, pointed testimony. Our truth is as much more solemn than that of nominal professors, as the heavens are higher than the earth.” Testimonies, vol. 1, 248–249

“God will carry on His work through wholly consecrated workmen. If His ministers fail of representing Christ, He will turn to others, many of whom have not been prepared for the work by a regular course of study, and will put a message into their lips, even the last message of warning. He will call men from their various employments, and at His bidding they will go forth to proclaim present truth.” Review and Herald, vol. 4, 472

The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat

because God is not in their midst to bless. Internal corruption will bring the denunciations of God upon this people as it did upon Jerusalem. Oh, let pleading voices, let earnest prayer be heard, that those who preach to others shall not themselves be castaways. My brethren, we know not what is before us, and our only safety is in following the Light of the world.” Selected Messages, book 2, 378–379

B

Because of God’s great love and His promise that He is not willing that any should perish, some today are indicating that God does not kill. Some have concluded that eventually everyone will receive eternal life. In this book Elder Ron Spear has presented an answer to this question, based on the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, our only safe guidebooks.

Copies of this timely booklet are available for a suggested donation of 75¢ each plus 15% for postage ($1.50 minimum) from Hope International, P.O. Box 940, Eatonville, WA 98328.
I have been instructed to use those discourses of yours printed in the General Conference Bulletins of . . . 1897, which contain strong arguments regarding the validity of the Testimonies, and which substantiate the gift of prophecy among us. I was shown that many would be helped by these articles, and especially those newly come to the faith who have not been made acquainted with our history as a people. It will be a blessing to you to read again these arguments, which were of the Holy Spirit’s framing.” Manuscript Releases, vol. 9, 278

I suppose there is no one in this room who does not think but that he truly believes in the Spirit of Prophecy; that is, that the Spirit of Prophecy belongs to the church—to this message as is manifested through Sister White, and that these things are believed, professedly believed at least, so far as the idea and the Scriptures that prove that such things are a part of this work. But that is not where the trouble lies, for we are in trouble now. If we do not know it, we are much worse off than if we were in trouble and did know it. And more than that, the cause of God, as well as you and I, are in such trouble that we are in danger day by day of incurring the wrath of God because we are where we are. The Lord tells us that more than once, and He tells us how we got there, and He tells us how to get out of it. And the only thing I know how to tell you here, is to study the Spirit of Prophecy, and get out of it what you need.

That is only one of the statements . . . made. In knowing these statements, and having known them for some time, I would have been glad to stay at home and go on with the work there, because there is so much to be done and so many involved. God calls for many changes among the men who have formed committees, boards, councils, et cetera, and these men who compose these committees, boards, and councils are the very ones assembled here upon whom it will fall to make the changes. Now, how shall these men make the changes in which they themselves are involved, unless they themselves are changed first? The only way to have the change wrought is to have the men changed. All who will do so God will work through, and all who will not do so—what will become of them? That is why I say we are in trouble today. When the Lord tells us what trouble we are in, He tells us how we got there and how to get out of it. It all comes through disregarding the Testimonies. Then when we get into trouble by disregarding the Testimonies, and the Testimonies tell us just how to get out of that trouble, and we follow the testimony that leads us out, then we shall be straight on the Testimonies.

I have nothing to get off onto you, for I am in it with the rest of you. The Lord says that the cause is in trouble, and I am part of the cause: I belong with it, my life is wrapped up in it, and so is yours; it is everything to us. Then when the cause is in trouble, you and I are in
trouble. It may be that you personally had no definite connection with the steps that brought the cause into trouble; yet we, being a part of the cause, and the cause itself being our life, are in trouble all the same because the cause is. But God tells us what to do to get out of it.

I do not want to give you man's counsel, but the Lord's. It may be that we shall see men's names, and if so I shall not dodge it. If a name should be left out and not read, and we know who it is, it does not follow that an attack is made upon that brother. Suppose that I commit a wrong, and the Lord tells me of it in a testimony. When that testimony comes to me, I turn my back upon the wrong, and you may use it all you want to, and it will not be against me; for I am not in it if I have turned from it by acknowledging it, and acting accordingly.

As a real matter of fact, it is a question whether anybody finds right down in his own heart a belief of the Testimonies until he gets one or two or three, and he has accepted all, and then he will be pretty well satisfied that he believes the Testimonies, and not till he has had some such experience. I will begin and end with the Word. Here is something that tells us what to do when we come to such places as this: "If the Lord is in the midst of your councils, beholding your order and love and fear, and your trembling at His Word, then you are prepared to do His work unselfishly." The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, 1394

Here we are in council. Though we be different in character, if we are molded by the same spirit of Christ, we are one. Then the church can rise as clear as the sun at midday, and go forth as terrible as an army with banners.

God has been shut away from His work, from the management of His work in general, in state work, councils, in boards, in churches, et cetera. We have had false gods, because the people have put men, and men have allowed themselves to be put between God and the work. God is going to work in His cause anyhow, and if you will not get out of His way and let Him work His own way, the wrath of God will fall upon those who are in the way. Men keep themselves, and allow themselves to be kept, in places that they should have been out of long ago. If we will get out of His way, and let Him work, He will work with a gentle hand. We do not want a whip of cords. We would better be surprised a little now, than become greatly surprised after awhile; and in love be reproved, than to go on not knowing these things, and be made to flee from the temple as they did that day, or to be altogether surprised when we cannot help it.

So if the Lord is in the midst of your councils, beholding your order and your fear, and your trembling at His Word, then you are prepared to do His work; and He will not be in partnership with any unjust transactions.

Again I read: "Man's way is to devise and scheme; God implants a principle." Testimonies to Ministers, 420-421. And where God has implanted a principle, our life and actions together are simply an expression of that principle. And if God's principle is not there, then the principle of the devil is there. "Circumstances cannot work reforms. Christianity proposes a reformation in the heart. What Christ works within will be worked out under the dictation of a converted intellect. The plan of beginning outside and trying to work inward has always failed and always will fail." Counselling on Diet and Foods, 35

I cannot apply a testimony to anybody else than myself, for it must be applied at the heart, and work from within. God will then apply it wherever I go. And it is the same with all of us in the testimony that comes to any, in any meeting or council or General Conference meeting. The president cannot apply all over the field a testimony given to him. He must accept it in his soul, and surrender to it body, soul, and spirit; and then Jesus Christ will apply the testimony everywhere he, the president, goes. It is a living thing in him, and then if he goes forward, that testimony is applied by the Lord wherever he may be. But men have tried to apply the Testimonies to other people without having the testimony a living thing in themselves. Over and over again that has been tried, and that is where the trouble is. If the testimony is not accepted by him body, soul, and spirit, so that the principle which is in it is a living thing in him, it matters not how much he may read that testimony and apply it to other people, his own influence will be against the testimony which he is applying. For if it is not lived in his life, and all that he says and does, it is destroyed by his actions. And that is what has brought about the conditions that exist now. "God's way is to give man something he has not." We are to take the thing that we have not, that God gives us, and that will make us a power in the Lord. "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." 2 Corinthians 2:14. When that principle is there, wherever we go God is talking; He is speaking. He is making known the knowledge of Himself by us in every place. It may be a business transaction; that makes no difference. Everything we do will remind them of God after we are gone, so He makes manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place.

"God's way is to make man something that he is not"; to make me something that I am not. Then when a testimony comes to me telling me that I am not right, that testimony is to make me what I am not—to make me right. I cannot stand where I am and apply it; but when I apply it, I shall be what I was not, and everywhere I go God can make Himself manifest.

"Man's way is to get an easy place, and indulge appetite and selfish ambition. God's way is to work in power. He gives the grace if the sick man realizes that he needs it. Man is too often satisfied to treat himself according to the methods of quackery, and then vindicate the manner of his working as right." God's way is different. We are all sick men, and if we could realize it God would give the cure necessary. Man prefers quackery, and thinks his manner of work is right; but God purposes to purify the soul. "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." John 7:38. This is the kingdom of God within him. "Day by day men are revealing whether the kingdom of God is within them. If Christ rules in their hearts they are gaining strength of principle, power, ability to stand as faithful sentinels, true reformers; for there can be no reformation unless there is a thorough co-operation with Jesus Christ. Through the grace of Christ men are to use their God-given faculties to reform themselves. By this self-denying action, which the Lord of heaven looks upon with approval, they gain victories over their own hereditary and cultivated tendencies; then, like Daniel, they make impressions upon others that will never be effaced. The influence will be carried to all parts of the earth."

This is the witness that I referred to a minute ago. When you receive a testi-
mony and take it into your heart and life, that makes you something you were not, and then it is the kingdom of God within you, and the witness will be carried to all parts of the earth. Maybe you will never go out of your State. Then how can it ever be? Where you go and where I go, God is making impressions on the heart that will never be effaced, and by them making yet other impressions, and so on. One may harden himself against it, but it will go there just the same; and when that impression is made by you, he will know that it is from the Lord. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection, but they also said that they took knowledge of the disciples that they had been with Jesus and learned of Him after His death. In their hearts they knew that He had risen. The fact was there, but they were not converted by it. That is the principle that is in the Bible. From a testimony written in 1896 I read: "Many of the men who have acted as counsellors in board and council meetings need to be weeded out." The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, 1608-1609. Notice, it says many. There are not very many altogether, so that when many of them are weeded out, many cannot be left. "Other men should take their places, for their voice is not the voice of God. Their plans and devisings are not after the order of God. The same men have been kept in office as directors of boards until under their own management and their own opinions, common fire is used in the place of sacred fire of God's own kindling. These men are no more called Israel, but supplanters." Ibid., 1609. Supplanters instead of Israel! In what worse trouble could we be?

Again, from a testimony written in 1894: "Changes should have been made long ago. God would have the church roll away her reproach." Here are the words: "The same men are not to compose your boards year by year; changes should have been made long ago. God would have the church roll away her reproach; but as long as men, who have felt fully competent to work without accepting counsel of God, are kept in office year by year, this cannot be done. This state of things is leavening every branch of the work, because men do not feel their need of the guidance of the Holy Spirit." Ibid., 1292

What shall be done? Is the Lord going to have a chance to work now? Shall He be allowed to bring about the needed changes? This testimony is not to be applied by our taking hold of this work and going about abruptly to make the changes. My heart must be right before I can take part in any change; the thing to do is to surrender ourselves to God, and then let Him work through us. We do not care who the men are if God is there.

We are not to begin here to look about now to see what candidates we can raise up, that we can favor and work into positions that are held now by others; for then, though they would be out of the places, we would be in the places, and the Lord would be as far off as before. The trouble is now that the Lord has been left out. Now, if we would work ourselves into their places, the Lord would be left out still, and the cause would be worse off than before. But that is not what is wanted. There is to be no politics here; but if politics is in us, it will be here, and will show itself here. If indeed a man does have politics in him, the best place for him to spend it is out in the open world, amongst those who are politicians and nothing else, for that is all he is; and if he does not spend it there he will spend it in the church, and only spread mischief and devilry there. And of course it is better that such work as that should be open in the world than in the church. So that is not what we are here for. We are here to find God, and open our hearts that He may occupy the place from center to circumference, in every thought and word and deed; and God is not a politician; He is God. What we are to do is to seek God with all the heart, so that God shall do all that is to be done; and He will do it if we let Him. Give God a chance. Those who are in the way are to get out of the way, and the rest of us are to keep out of the way. Then God can have the place that belongs to Him.

Next there is cited for us here the story of Nicodemus and Christ. Nicodemus was a ruler in Israel, and it says that "Nicodemus sought an interview with Jesus at night, saying, 'Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou dost, except God be with him.' All this was true, as far as it went; but what said Jesus? He 'answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Here was a man in a high position of trust, a man who was looked up to as one educated in Jewish customs, one whose mind was stored with wisdom. He was indeed in possession of talents of no ordinary character. He would not go to Jesus by day, for this would make him a subject of remark; it would be too humil-
The book of Ruth portrays a classical story illustrating God's plan of redemption. Though humanly speaking the future may seem obscure and we may feel sometimes full of hopelessness and despair, the hand of the Lord is not short that it cannot save to the uttermost when we take hold of His mercy and grace through the arm of faith.

In the Scriptures there are at least two important reasons for the book of Ruth:
1. To inform us about the immediate ancestors of King David, an ancestor of the Messiah. See Romans 1:3
2. To describe how a pagan woman became a believer in Jehovah and became part of God's people.

One of the key words used in the book of Ruth is kinsman. See Ruth 3:9; 3:12; 4:6, 14. This word in Hebrew is go’el, which is very rich in soteriological meaning, carrying also the following concepts: to redeem, to free, to release, to deliver, to ransom. The main idea is to buy back. See Leviticus 25:48–49. It is most often translated redeemer as in Isaiah 43:14; 63:16; Job 19:25.

In this article we shall consider three basic theological meanings of the word “go’el,” which will help us understand God's character. These three applications are

1. Soteriological (related to the doctrine of salvation as effected by Christ).
2. Christological (dealing with the study of Christ's person, qualities and nature).
3. Eschatological (referring to the events of the last days).

1. Soteriological Application

In the Old Testament people who had sold themselves as slaves could be redeemed by their nearest kinsman. “And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger’s family: after that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him.” Leviticus 25:47–48. In the spiritual realm, mankind has always experienced various forms of slavery. The majority are slaves to bad habits, negative feelings, degrading thoughts, vainglory, and the seeking of human honor, power and control.

The Scriptures clearly teach us that “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.” 1 John 3:8. And “of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.” 2 Peter 2:19. Furthermore, “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?” Romans 6:16

But praise God that “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John 3:8. Certainly He did so. The apostle Peter tells us: “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” 1 Peter 1:18–19

God can deliver us from any bondage of sin, from physical and spiritual danger and He can also keep us under the shadow of the Almighty, when we have been rejected by others. See Isaiah 43:1, 14. “ Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.” Isaiah 63:16. If you feel rejected by your own brethren and family members, because you are standing firmly in behalf of God and His truth as it is in Jesus, do not feel abandoned by God and heaven. Do your brethren refuse to recognize you as part of the spiritual Israel because you refuse to lower the standards...
of God's Word, or because you do not recognize any Lordship but that of Jesus Christ? He is standing beside you, just as He did with Joshua. His message for you is "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Joshua 1:9. One may wonder why He does bestow upon us, fallen and unworthy beings, such loving-kindness and forbearance. Simply stated, we are precious in His sight. Isaiah 49:8; Psalm 72:14. "We were brought into existence because we were needed." Signs of the Times, vol. 4, 287

We can see then that the Lord is willing to forgive us, and also to redeem us from evil and destruction. See Psalm 103:3-4; Genesis 48:16.

And though it is true that God sends His grace to redeem us, nevertheless we may not continue breaking His law and disregarding His will and counsels. See Romans 6:1-2. In contrast, when we are redeemed, the Lord sets before us, not a spacious road of worldly pleasure and human passion leading to destruction, but "an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfarers, men, though fools, shall not err therein. . . . The redeemed shall walk there." Isaiah 35:8-9. Emphasis supplied. Or as another translation renders it: "No evil-hearted men may walk upon it. God will walk there with you; even the most stupid cannot miss the way." The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments: An Improved Edition (American Baptist Publication Society). See also Isaiah 62:11-12

2. Christological Application

There is another theological application presented in the human nature of Christ when He was incarnated. See Hebrews 2:11-18. Here the apostle Paul portrays our Redeemer as one made like unto His brethren, thus becoming one with us. He became our "kinsman," "redeemer," and "elder brother." The Spirit of Prophecy says:

A. "He is our elder Brother, compassed with human infirmities, and in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Manuscript Release 1238, 8; emphasis supplied

"When Adam's sin plunged the race into hopeless misery, God might have cut Himself loose from fallen beings. . . . But He did not do this. Instead of banishing them from His presence, He came still nearer to the fallen race. He gave His Son to become bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. . . . In all the afflictions of humanity He was afflicted." Australasian Record, June 1, 1900; emphasis supplied

"Christ declared . . . no single principle of human nature will I violate." Manuscript Releases, vol. 5, 114

Romans 1:3 says, "concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh." B. Our pioneers also understood the relevance of Christ's incarnation in the likeness of sinful flesh. And what does it mean to us? Here are some examples:

An Adventist writer, L. A. Wilcox, made the following statements regarding Christ's ancestry and heredity: "Let us look for a moment at this [Christ's] pedigree. There was Jacob the supplanter; and Judah, whose children were born of an impure woman; there was Rahab, the harlot of Jericho; there was Ruth, once the pagan woman of Moab; there was David, whose son and heir was begotten by a woman whose husband he murdered in order that he might have his wife; there was Rehoboam, Abijah, Ahaziah, Jehoram, Amon, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, of whom uniformly it is recorded that they 'did evil in the sight of the Lord'; there was Ahaz, the leader of

strength, in mental power, and in moral worth, and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of humanity at its worst. Only thus could He rescue man from the lowest depths of his degradation. . . .

"It is good to know that. He, the Son of God, became the Son of man, that I, a son of man, might become a son of God. He became as I am that I might become as He is. He partook of my human nature that I might partake of His divine nature. In every temptation that assails, it is strength to know that just such a temptation in all of its overwhelming form attacked Him—attacked Him where, by heredity, He was weakest—attacked Him in unexpected times and ways; and that, with equal tendencies toward evil, in spite of bad blood and inherited meanness, by the same power to which I have access, He conquered. He won for me. He offers me His victory for my own—a free gift. And so in all these things I am more than conqueror through Him that loved me. Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound." Signs of the Times, March 22, 1927, quoted in Ralph Larson, The Word Was Made Flesh, 166-167

This theological thinking is not limited to a few. A modern Adventist authority and researcher points out that our church has held for over 100 years that when Christ came to redeem us, (as a loving Kinsman), He took in His incarnation our fallen human nature.

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It is good to know that. He, the Son of God, became the Son of man, that I, a son of man, might become a son of God

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apostasy; and the wicked and cruel Manasseh, who caused his sons to pass through the fire. Yes, Jesus came of a line of sinners.

"And I am glad for that. For it helps me to understand how He can be 'touched with the feeling' of all my infirmities. He came where I was. He stood in my place. In His veins was the incubus of a tainted heredity like a caged lion ever seeking to break forth and destroy. For four thousand years the race had been deteriorating in physical

The Sabbath School Quarterly, which is reviewed by a group of brethren representing different parts of the world field, made the following statement in 1913, and before the changes in the 1950s regarding our historical understanding of Christ's nature: "Christ was, therefore, of the royal line through His mother. But He was more than this; He was the same flesh as the seed of David, in and through which for generations had flowed the blood of sinful humanity: Solomon, and Rehoboam, and Ahaz, and
Manasseh, and Amon, and Jeconiah, and others. The Son of God took this same flesh in order that He might meet temptation for us, and overcome with divine power every trial we must meet. Christ is our Brother in the flesh, our Saviour from sin.” Adult Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, First Quarter, 1913, quoted in ibid, 152-153; emphasis supplied.

The point is clear. We can see in these thought-provoking and inspiring statements the following truth:

"The Lord has shown us this in that He did not conceal His own ancestry from us. We may have mourned over our inheritance: we have mourned the fact that we inherited evil tendencies, sinful natures, we have almost despaired, because we could not break with these inherited evils, nor resist these tendencies to sin; we could not do it ourselves, and often we have been ashamed of them, and of course, we may be ashamed of sin. Men like to conceal the fault of their ancestors, and if there be a blot anywhere in the family, that does not appear when the family record is written. Jesus Christ was 'born of the seed of David, according to the flesh,' and in the seed of David was Manasseh, who filled Jerusalem with innocent blood from one end to the other. In that line was Judah the adulterer, and the child born of incest, and likewise the harlot Rahab. All of that class who were set forth as the ancestors of Christ show that Jesus was not ashamed to call sinful men His brethren; but He said to the Father, 'I will declare thy name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation; I will sing praise to thee.' Emphasis supplied.

"Thus we see that no matter what our inheritance may have been by nature, the Spirit of God has such power over the flesh that it can utterly reverse all this, and make us partakers of the divine nature, giving us freedom from the corruption that is in the world through lust; and so God manifests His power through us. But day by day must the fight be kept up. Never can we relax our vigilance. ... It is only by continually recognizing the fact that all life and power come from Him, and that all His mercies are given to us, that we may keep His life. We must not be presumptuous. We never can get so much of the life of God that we can dispense with it, and live by ourselves alone. Now and in all eternity do we live only by the faith of the Son of God." E. J. Waggoner, General Conference Bulletin 1901, 408

3. Eschatological Application

So far we have seen the loving, merciful, and compassionate side of God's character in the word go'el. However, there is another meaning essential to give a balance to this study. It has to do with justice, vindication and the restoration of God's government, His laws and the mistreatment of His people. This term also means avenger. Numbers 35:12, 19; Deuteronomy 19:6. The New Testament refers to Christ as an "avenger." See 1 Thessalonians 4:6. And finally, the apostle John portrays Him, eschatologically, in the book of Revelation as the avenger of the saints' blood.

If God allows us to go through this experience, ... may our prayer now and always be: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Job 19:25-26

But before we study John's statements, let us consider the following facts: The avenger of blood in the Old Testament was "a person (usually the nearest blood relative or next heir of one who had been murdered) who assumed the responsibility of punishing the murderer. The Hebrew word translated 'avenger' (KJV frequently 'revenuer') is go'el, which has the basic meaning of 'redeemer.' When coupled with 'blood' it has the idea of redeeming the guilt of the murderer by putting to death the murderer." Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary, 95

It is important to understand that the "avenger of blood" or "revenuer" was merely a guiltless executioner who repaid a murder in kind. "The nearest akin had a right to avenge the death of his relation by slaying the murderer; for the original law enacted that whosoever sheds man's blood, by man should his blood be shed, (Genesis 9:6), and none was judged so proper to execute this law as the man who was nearest akin to the deceased. As many rash executions of this law might take place, from the very nature of the thing, it was deemed necessary to qualify its claims, and prevent injustice; and the cities of refuge were judged proper for this purpose. Nor do we ever read that they were ever found inefficient, or that they were ever abused." Clarke's Commentary, vol. 1, 730. Emphasis in the original.

As we draw near the end of this controversy between good and evil, Christ and Satan, the remnant and the threefold union that makes the spiritual Babylon, we shall see that some saints will lose their lives because they refuse to receive Babylon's mark upon their foreheads or in their hands. See Revelation 20:4, 18:24. If God allows us to go through this experience, which is a great honor in His sight, may our prayer now and always be: "For I know that my redeemer [go'el] liveth, and that he shall..."
the possibility of violating the sixth commandment? Is it limited only to the physical realm? or does the spirit of the law have another implication in this commandment? Let us consider this inspired statement:

"All acts of injustice that tend to shorten life; the spirit of hatred and revenge, or the indulgence of any passion that leads to injurious acts toward others, or causes us even to wish them harm [this may be mental, emotional, social or spiritual harm] (for 'whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer'); a selfish neglect of caring for the needy or suffering; all self-indulgence or unnecessary deprivation or excessive labor that tends to injure health—all these are, to a greater or less degree, violations of the six commandment." Patriarchs and Prophets, 308

"The spirit of hatred and revenge originated with Satan, and it led him to put to death the Son of God. Whoever cherishes malice or unkindness is cherishing the same spirit, and its fruit will be unto death. In the revengeful thought the evil deed lies enfolded, as the plant in the seed. . . . In the gift of His Son for our redemption, God has shown how high a value He places upon every human soul, and He gives to no man liberty to speak contemptuously of another. We shall see faults and weaknesses in those about us, but God claims every soul as His property—His by creation, and doubly His as purchased by the precious blood of Christ. All were created in His image, and even the most degraded are to be treated with respect and tenderness. God will hold us accountable for even a word spoken in contempt of one soul for whom Christ laid down His life. . . ."

"His example is for us. When we are brought in conflict with the enemies of Christ, we should say nothing in a spirit of retaliation or that would bear even the appearance of a railing accusation. He who stands as a mouthpiece for God should not utter words which even the Majesty of heaven would not use when contending with Satan. We are to leave with God the work of judging and condemning." Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, 56–58

All these inspired statements tell us much about Christ's becoming our supreme example in all facets of our lives and as pointed out in this article, He is also our eternal safety and salvation. And finally, He will vindicate God's saints sooner than we think.

God eagerly desires to be fully reflected in His people and to give the greatest manifestation of His divine love and righteous character that the world has ever seen. He has already given us a perfect example in Christ Jesus. There is a balance we must always keep, the balance of being loving, but firm, in the execution of justice. For this we will need divine guidance, and the Lord is ready to lead us. May God help us to take hold of our nearest Kinisman and elder Brother, and to become also partakers of His divine nature before it is too late. This delay we must never risk. May the peace of God be with you.

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The Spirit of Prophecy

Continued from 27

greater assurance: 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' Nicodemus said unto him, 'How can these things be?'

"Some gleams of truth were penetrating the ruler's mind. Christ's words filled him with awe, and led to the inquiry, 'How can these things be?' With deep earnestness Jesus answered, 'Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?' His words convey to Nicodemus the lesson that, instead of feeling irritated over the plain words of truth, and indulging irony, he should have a far more humble opinion of himself, because of his spiritual ignorance. Yet the words of Christ were spoken with such solemn dignity, and both look and tone expressed such earnest love to him, that he was not offended as he realized his humiliating position.

"Surely one entrusted with the religious interests of the people could not be ignorant of truth so important for them to understand as the condition of entrance into the kingdom of heaven. 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee,' continued Jesus, 'we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?'

"This lesson to Nicodemus I present as highly applicable to those who are today in responsible positions as rulers in Israel, and whose voices are often heard in council giving evidence of the same spirit that Nicodemus possessed." Testimonies to Ministers, 367–369. Who will listen and let the same words have the same effect upon their hearts and lives today? Nicodemus was converted as a result.

These words were spoken to the presidents of conferences, elders of churches, and those occupying official positions in our institutions. You know whether you are a president of a conference. It speaks to you; it says, You must be born again. You know whether you are an elder of a church. It speaks to you; it says, You must be born again. You know whether you are occupying an official position in any of our institutions. It speaks to you; it says, You must be born again. It says, You must be converted. It does not say that you never were converted; even though we have been converted, the time is such that God calls for a more thorough conversion, a deeper consecration than ever you or I have known before. It is nothing to you or to me that we were converted five, ten, or fifteen years ago, if we are not converted now, today. And today He says if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. Today, while it is called today, He says to you and to me, You must be born again; you must be converted; and except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. And there is the blessed promise, A new heart will I give unto you. Thank the Lord! Let us seek the Lord with such heart, with such earnestness as never before, that He may use us as never before; and then He will roll away the reproach from His church, and she will rise to go forth unhampered, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. That is what the Lord wants of you and me today. Shall He have it? [4]

The 1897 General Conference Daily Bulletin, 2–6
Over the last few months there has been a veritable flurry of published works regarding the subjects the storehouse, tithe, and stewardship. There have been supportive ministry booklets and personal open letters. There has been an article in the September 1991 issue of this magazine and a supplement to the *Adventist Review* of November 7, 1991. All of these contain personal understandings of the Lord's instructions in these areas.

If you desire to know all that God has said regarding tithe, send for *All About Tithe*. It is a 376-page comprehensive compilation of every scripture verse and Spirit of Prophecy paragraph that refers to tithe, without comments by the compiler. It is organized to be conveniently used as a devotional book. Why not purpose during the next few months to let the Lord, through Ellen White, share with you the "real truth" about the sacred tithe and how and where it is to be used? Copies of this timely volume may be ordered from Hope International for a suggested donation of only US$8 per copy plus 15% for postage and handling ($1.50 minimum).

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