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Guest Editorial

"Following God, Not Man"

It is not surprising that from time to time faithful self-supporting ministries as well as individuals will not see eye to eye on every issue. This fact certainly was true of the apostles, who, though under the power of the Holy Spirit, nevertheless had some sharp disagreements. We can only imagine the heartache and the grief that the early Christians felt over the strife between Paul and Barnabas. In fact, so strong was their disagreement that Luke wrote, "And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God." Acts 15:39–40

While unquestionably this division was a victory for Satan, nevertheless, in the end God was able to use it to His glory, for so soon two strong teams witnessed to the gospel of Christ. Later Paul was able to say that Mark was profitable to him for the ministry. See 2 Timothy 4:11

Even more critical was the conflict between Paul and Peter, because the issue dealt with doctrinal issues of faith, a matter of salvation. In his own words Paul wrote, "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." Galatians 2:11. This confrontation between Paul and Peter was the result of a serious compromise on the part of Peter, but it is important to understand that even so, Peter was soon restored as a faithful servant of God. Yet the servant of the Lord was to write as follows:

"Even the best of men, if left to themselves, will make grave blunders. The more responsibilities placed upon the human agent, the higher his position to dictate and control, the more mischief he is sure to do in pervverting minds and hearts if he does not carefully follow the way of the Lord. At Antioch Peter failed in the principles of integrity. Paul had to withstand his subverting influence face to face. This is recorded that others may profit by it, and that the lesson may be a solemn warning to the men in high places, that they may not fail in integrity, but keep close to principle.

"After all the failures of Peter, after his fall and restoration, his long course of service, his intimate acquaintance with Christ, his knowledge of Christ's pure, straightforward practice of priciple; after all the instruction he had received, all the gifts and knowledge and great influence in preaching and teaching the Word, is it not strange that he should dissemble and evade the principles of the gospel, for fear of man, or in order to gain his esteem? Is it not strange that he should waver, and be two-sided in his position? May God give every man a sense of his own personal helplessness to steer his own vessel, straight and safely into the harbor. The grace of Christ is essential every day. His matchless grace alone can save our feet from falling." The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 6, 1108–1109

Peter and Paul did not always see matters eye to eye, which must have caused concern among the believers. It is not surprising then that Paul had to warn converts about following himself, following Peter, or following Apollos. See 1 Corinthians 3:4–6; 1:11–17. No doubt these groups represented people who had taken sides in issues; but if there is anything that the end-time generation of faithful saints must learn, it is to be careful about doing so. Both Paul and Peter were godly men, who had been chosen of the Lord to do a mighty work for Him. When doctrinal issues arose they were finally settled by a "thus saith the Lord."

Today, God is raising up men and women in the closing scenes of earth's history to do a work similar to that of Paul and Peter. It is Satan alone who wins the battle when the servants of the Lord are divided asunder. It is his earnest efforts to divide and conque. Just as it is important for faithful leaders

Continued on 21
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.—Errors

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Editors’ Note: Kenneth Hodges’ series entitled “Unveiling God’s Character” will continue next month.
Reagan, the fortieth President of the United States, had long before sensed the advantage of an alliance with the Papacy. With its vast intelligence arsenal, its global diplomatic network, and a worldwide following of 800,000,000 Catholics, a pact with the Papacy would have huge political potency, giving the United States a giant advantage over its archenemy, Marxist communism. Thus the President had an earnest agenda from the beginning of his administration. "One of his earliest goals as President, Reagan says, was to recognize the Vatican as a state 'and make them an ally.'" Ibid., 31. This goal was apparently central to fulfilling his political agenda of neutralizing the advancing forces of world communism, especially in Latin America, the back yard of the United States.

Pope John Paul II, having been raised in Poland, was well acquainted with the evils of communism. It was in Poland, the most Catholic of all the Eastern European nations, where he was carefully mentored by his superiors to confront and destabilize the Communist Party. Using the vast numbers of the Polish church, he was taught to manipulate party leaders through social unrest and then suggest that co-operation with the priests and the Vatican was the only way to restore the peace. See *The Keys of This Blood*, Malachi Martin

John Paul's vision, however, is immensely larger than the mere defeat of communism. Establishing a close relationship with the United States was crucial to his own agenda of becoming the primary political force in the "new world order." See Martin, ibid. Since the Gulf War, the United States is seen, (and criticized), as the policeman of world peace. This reputation makes America an excellent junior partner in the papal quest for world dominance. The United States, slightly defensive, and somewhat reliant on the Vatican for stable world opinion, is easily managed by papal handlers through the world press, to the fullest advantage and exploitation by the Vatican.

The book *The Great Controversy* presents a clear picture of the agenda of the Vatican in forging worldly alliances to gain religious objectives. "The Roman Church is far-reaching in her

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Hal Mayer serves on the staff of Harlaxt Institute, which is located in Rapidan, Virginia.
plans and modes of operation. She is employing every device to extend her influence and increase her power in reparation for a fierce and determined conflict to regain control of the world, to re-establish persecution, and to undo all that Protestantism has done. Catholicism is gaining ground upon every side." The Great Controversy, 565–566

Has the obsession of destabilizing the Marxist regime blinded the United States to the implications and dangers that accompany a papal alliance? As the alliance is daily cemented and hardened by ever-expanding co-operation and communication networks, the American administration seems to be overlooking or ignoring the historical consequences of 1,700 years of papal alliances with heads of state. If history has taught us anything about such alliances it is this fact: the Papacy is a dangerous ally.

If relationships should sour, could the United States extricate itself from the alliance? If American leaders one day awaken to find themselves at the mercy of Vatican diplomacy, which can as easily sway public opinion against the United States as in its favor, would they be in a position to unravel themselves from the entanglement, or would they be caught in the grip of a stranglehold from which there is no escape? Perhaps there is an even deeper question. Does this "feel good" relationship have such political comfort, that should negative side effects develop, such as pressure to conform to Catholic dogma, would the American administration be able or willing to see the danger and break the relationship, or would the American leaders overlook the side effects and sacrifice these interests for the "larger interest" of political advantage in worldly affairs?

Warning signs of pressure to conform to Catholic dogma are already apparent. Related to the Time report was a fascinating support article, entitled, "The U.S. and the Vatican on Birth Control," which offered an insight into this potential entanglement. "In response to concerns of the Vatican, the Reagan Administration agreed to alter its foreign-aid program to comply with the church's teachings on birth control. According to William Wilson, the President's first ambassador to the Vatican, the State Department reluctantly agreed to an outright ban on the use of any U.S. aid funds by either countries or international health organizations for the promotion of birth control or abortion. . . .

‘American policy was changed as a result of the Vatican’s not agreeing with our policy,’ Wilson explains. ‘American aid programs around the world did not meet the criteria the Vatican had for family planning. . . . In long discussions they (the U.S. Department of State) finally got the message. But it was a struggle. They finally selected different programs and abandoned others as a result of this intervention.’" Pio Cardinal Laghi, the former apostolic delegate to Washington, admits, though certainly understating the Vatican role, that "I might have touched on that in some of my discussions with [CIA director William] Casey. . . . Certainly, Casey already knew about our positions about that." Time, February 24, 1992, 35

Notice that American policy was revised as a result of the pressure to conform to papal teaching. For the moment, it is limited to dogma and doctrine that have a political impact. But it is not largely Catholic influence both directly and through ecumenical contacts with fundamentalist churches that has made abortion and birth control such a major issue in American politics? The Vatican is using the political fracas around moral issues such as abortion to pressure the United States Administration, while cementing relationships with a large number of fundamentalist Protestant churches. Which further dogmas will be imposed on United States policy once stimulated in political arenas through Vatican "intervention"? How can America resist the pressure to conform to other church teachings in terms of policy, such as freedom of religion and the separation of church and state?

"In those countries where Catholicism is not in the ascendancy, and the papists are taking a conciliatory course in order to gain influence, there is an increasing indifference concerning the doctrines that separate the reformed churches from the papal hierarchy; the opinion is gaining ground that, . . . a little concession on our part will bring us into a better understanding with Rome." The Great Controversy, 563. A little concession is creating a web that will ensnare the nations and the churches in the grip of Rome.

Already the separation of church and state is under attack. William Rehnquist, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, believes that this "wall of separation" is "a metaphor based on bad history, which must be explicitly and forthrightly abandoned" (dissent opinion in the Alabama "silent prayer" case). Removing that pillar of the American Bill of Rights removes the fundamental protection of the American people from undue priority influence of any single church, and opens the floodgates of opportunity for the Papacy (now the tacitly favored religion in America because of diplomatic recognition), to press its doctrinal agenda into the civil courtroom and the legislative halls of Congress and the States. Recent Supreme Court decisions, have been steadily reinterpreting the Bill of Rights in response to Catholic concepts (for example: majoritarianism—the concept that majority practices and beliefs will determine what is "normal" Americanism, and therefore protected by law, even at the cost of personal convictions and liberties guaranteed under the Constitution for minority religions).

Has the obsession of destabilizing the Marxist regime blinded the United States to the implications and dangers that accompany a papal alliance?

The Papacy has now developed an excessive and disproportionate influence in America. But the American Administration is overlooking the historical consequences of papal influence, and seems to have forgotten that "the opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith," (The Great
groups, are not aroused. She preaches a gospel of freedom to worship as one believes, but her venom is directed against those who proclaim her as the great religious whore who has committed fornication with the kings (heads of state) of the earth through church and state alliances. See Revelation 17:2. Contracts of this nature invariably lead to the loss of the rights of the people, primarily those who disagree with the Vatican. The day will likely come when the Vatican will require, through the use of civil means, all nations, languages and people, to follow her lead in religious dogma, especially in relation to worship. For the Bible says that all the world will be amazed at the Papacy and will worship the pope, or give him allegiance because they are unable to resist the force of his world power. See Revelation 13:1-4, Daniel 8:23-25. “Let the restraints now imposed by secular governments be removed and Rome be reinstated in her former power, and there would speedily be a revival of her tyranny and persecution.” The Great Controversy, 564. Given enough time, the Papacy will eventually assume a more potent and intolerant role, through world politics, against those whose religious agenda conflicts with her policies or dogma.

Presently, the church is carefully positioning itself so that it will be able to influence government legislation in its doctrinal favor. The Papacy is also trying, with great success, to establish an emotional climate that is hostile to anyone who is negative toward her or who seeks to convince others that the Papacy is all that the Bible declares her to be. In March of 1990, the San Francisco Chronicle ran an article about 30 Catholic bishops in Alta and Baja California and northwestern Mexico, who were very upset at the loss of parishioners to various “sects.” They accused Pentecostals, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Seventh-day Adventists of using unfair and coercive practices to persuade their parishioners to change churches. The coercive methods mentioned were “psychological and economic pressure,” “manipulation of historical and biblical data,” and “constant warnings that the end of the world was imminent.” The San Francisco Chronicle, March 9, 1990

With these accusations, it is easy to see that such a climate can be “arranged.” The boldness of the Papacy in pressing its agenda is evidence that it has been able to establish a large reservoir of public opinion in its favor. The Papacy has presented itself as having been maltreated and mistreated in public opinion, especially in “Protestant” nations, and thus has gained a strong public bias of sympathy in its favor. See The Great Controversy, 563. This tactic inevitably has placed the Papacy in a position to develop a powerful influence in government circles around the world.

In December of 1991, Mexico, a long-time antieclerical nation, removed all legal barriers to the recognition of religious institutions as legal entities. The Roman Catholic Church has the most to gain from this constitutional change made by the Mexican congress. Mexican president Carlos Salinas de Gortari, has been working diligently to bring reconciliation between the state and the church and his efforts are giving the church a free hand to openly influence the policies of state. Already the government is under pressure to determine which religious groups are really churches, and not merely “sects.” Likely, those considered legitimate will be those who are not offensive to Roman Catholicism. Those who will be outlawed, will likely be those whose mission is opposed to Catholic domination of politics, society and religious practices.

If the Papacy is given a greater political role such as she already has in America and much of the world, what will become of religious freedom? Presently there may seem to be little danger of the Catholic Church repeating the injustices
The enormous consequences of this alliance are worthy of notice. The last generation of mankind will surely face the "greatest historical confrontation humanity has gone through"
The Church in All Ages

And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days." Revelation 12:14, 6

The Church in the Wilderness is the connecting link between apostolic Christianity and God's people today.

There were Christian people in every country during this long period of history who possessed churches, colleges, mission stations, and theological schools; who followed closely and adhered steadfastly to the beliefs and practices delivered by the apostles to the saints; and who possessed and preserved the original Scriptures given to the church in the first century. These people constitute the Church in the Wilderness. This is a conception which is not generally held. The title, Church in the Wilderness, is taken from the Bible prophecy of Revelation 12 describing the woman who fled into the wilderness. The woman is the church. See Clarke, Commentary, on Revelation 12; also Jeremiah 3:14; Hosea 2:19; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 17. The title clearly shows that it was not the popular or predominant church. These faithful believers held high the banner of truth, and withstood the encroachments of apostasy. Their fortunes varied, for at times they possessed many churches, famous schools, and distant mission stations, while in other ages they suffered from poverty and dire persecution.

Some will ask, Should not we look to the church which for ages has been the favored of kings and nations to find the true church instead of looking to a people who for centuries were never the dominant church, and who many times were obscure? Let the prophet John answer this question: "The woman [church] fled into the wilderness." Revelation 12:6. In order to recognize the true church, it is imperative that we fix our eyes upon those Christian bodies which have largely been forgotten in the works of history.

Divine revelation teaches that the light which was to shine upon the last generation of men would be a continuation and enlargement of the light which shone upon the Church in the Wilderness throughout almost thirteen centuries.

The Church in the Wilderness did not arrive at the truth by opposition to prevailing dogmas and heresies. Its faith was not faith newly received. The religious beliefs of its members were an inheritance from the days of the apostles. To them men owe the preservation of the Bible. Contrary to almost universal belief, the Church in the Wilderness embraced the true missionary churches during the long night of the Dark Ages. It held aloft the torch of education while the rest of the world about it was falling into the darkness of ignorance and superstition. Its territory was not circumscribed. On the contrary, its influence penetrated into all parts of the known world.

The history of the Church in the Wilderness is a stirring revelation of consecrated, evangelical labor in continent-wide leadership for the salvation of the hopeless and benighted. It did not, as its rivals did, claim intellect; logic in doctrine; it did not attempt to enforce its views by political cruelty. It
severed all territorial and family ties which might have held it to the world and to the rapacious churches of em-

terns, thus successfully preserving its cretrual doctrines and its apostolic

organization.

Yet many have failed to note the true centers of Christian activity in the past. They realize altogether too little the meaning of the momentous events taking place today because they are ig-

norant of this historical background. The correct perspective of past history is as necessary to effective leadership as the appreciation of present values. Many have but slight knowledge of the mes-

sages of God for this generation, be-

cause they have been taught to gaze not upon the underlying, but upon the super-

ficial, origins of the past. The past which gave us democracy and religious liberty is the history which should be known and studied. We need the sacred Book to point the way to the true history.

The Church in the Wilderness, sur-

rounded by savage tribes and battling against barbaric darkness, has been painted by its enemies without its victo-

ries. Driven often by opposition to moun-

tain retreats, it was saved from the cor-

rupting influences of ecclesiastical and political power. In many parts of the world, all the way from Ireland in the west to China in the east, there were centers of truth. The leaders in these centers were united in their desire to remain in the faith, and to perpetuate from generation to generation the pure truths of the gospel handed down from the days of the apostles. Their records have been systematically destroyed. Gilly, *Waldensian Re-

searches*, 78. Remotehe and obscurity, how-

ever, could not entirely conceal these heroes, because the fires of their persecu-

tion have continued to light up the scenes of their sacrificing labors.

The importance of this subject can be seen by examining the extensive work of the church during this 1260-

year period in Great Britain, France, Italy, Syria, Assyria, Persia, India, Turkistan, China, the Philippines, and Japan. Many books could be written upon it. Yet in all the thousands of published volumes treating of the his-

tory during this period, how little is said concerning this topic so prominent in God's Book!

The ungarbled history of the true church leads to the realization that God's church of today is the successor of the Church in the Wilderness. The true church today unites the present to eternity even as the Church in the Wilder-

ness united the apostolic past to the present.

It was a glorious hour when the church came up out of the wilderness. She had done her work well; she had been faithful to her task. She emerged from the wilderness condition to lay the treasures of her hard-fought battles at the feet of the church of the last period. Luke 21:24. The contest had been long. It had not been a Thirty Years' War, or a Hundred Years' War, but a 1260-year struggle. It had been cruel for the Church in the Wilderness. Though she never had peace from battle, she always had peace in battle. The torture chamber, galley chains, burning at the stake, hard labor, and plebeian status had been forced upon her. Yet, as victor, had she not won liberty, enlightenment, and the right to worship God according to the dictates of conscience?

The tendency of modern writers is to reflect upon the erroneous idea, assiduously built up by the interested parties, that the Papacy is the connecting link between the church of the apostles and the Christianity of the present time. Even among Protestants and nonrel-

igious people there is much false rea-

soning. The following quotation will exemplify this. Says a modern writer: "Protestantism must never forget that its

faith was communicated through Catholicism. The Roman Church re-

mains the only link during many centu-

ries between the modern world and the early Christian enthusiasts." *Protestant Digest*, April-May, 1941, 62

The truth of the Bible, however, is that the Church in the Wilderness provided the connecting link between the apostolic church and our time. To her, we are indebted for the learning and the treasures of truth preserved throughout the Dark Ages. As to the transmission of the pure text of the Holy Bible, credit should not be given to the Papacy, which has placed tradition above the Bible, but to the faithful churches who adhered through years of darkness and superstition to the original apostolic writings and their uncorrupted translations.

For what purpose did Jesus permit the Church in the Wilderness to suffer during the 1260 years? Surely there is a reason. Was it not to seal with the testi-

mony of martyr's blood the permanent values in the Christian religion? Did not these centuries of severe testing help to substantiate what books constituted the genuine collection of the Bible, and to disclose the counterfeit writings? In ful-

filling its remarkable destiny as the guardian of the treasures of truth, the noble children of this church fought and bled and marched, and turned and fought and bled again during 1260 years.

It is in a very significant setting that this matter is presented. The twelfth chapter of the Revelation reveals the complete history of the true church under three phases. Employing the well-known figure of a woman to represent His church, God sets forth three periods of His church upon earth from the first to the second coming of Christ. Depicting the apostolic church, the woman wears upon her head a crown of twelve stars. In time of tribulation she fled into the wilderness. The final portrayal in Rev-

elation 12 reveals the remnant church.

The correct perspective of past history is as necessary to effective leadership as the appreciation of present values.

Stupendous and unprecedented are the scenes through which the remnant church must pass. The remnant church will occupy a position such as was never before occupied by God's people. Her message will embrace all the messages of the past and bring them to final consum-

mation. She will fix her eyes upon the soon return of Christ as the next event in this stupendous program. Of her, amid the vast scenes of Christ's return, the Revela-

tor writes: "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12. While those
who walk in the broad way are losing their awareness of things eternal, God's final church will be alert to things not seen. She will endure, like Moses, by seeing Him who is invisible. She will take time to follow after holiness. These believers will behold the momentous events leading up to, and constituting the battle of Armaged-

The true church today unites the present to eternity even as the Church in the Wilderness united the apostolic past to the present.

den. Of the steps preparatory to this catastrophe the Revelator says: "The nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth." Revelation 11:18.

Paganism is symbolized in the book of Revelation by the great red dragon. The war which paganism made upon the early church was bitter; and the long, cruel persecutions carried on by the beast, that medieval union of church and state which succeeded to the power of paganism in the European nations, was still more bitter. But the church of the last days must endure the wrath and persecutions of the image to the beast, which is the final colossal union of the church and state, or the healing of the deadly wound of the beast. Revelation 13. These terms are used because God uses them. And so offensive to the Eternal is the stand of the image to the beast, into whose vast apostasy flow all the deceptions of the dragon and the beast, that God proclaims to mankind in advance a special warning: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation." "I looked, and beheld a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle." Revelation 14:9, 10, 14. This message proclaimed by the remnant church will take away blindness from those who are willing to see.

The most dreadful language ever used in the Scriptures is that which foretells the visitation of the seven last plagues, the last divine indignation, the untempered wrath of God: "I saw another sign in heaven, great and mar-

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Order and Organization

Our God is a God of order. Everything connected with heaven is in perfect order; subjection and thorough discipline mark the movements of the angelic host.

The Jewish Economy

During the days of Moses, the government of Israel was characterized by the most thorough organization, wonderful alike for its completeness and its simplicity. The order so strikingly displayed in the perfection and arrangement of all God's created works was manifest in the Hebrew economy. God was the center of authority and government, the sovereign of Israel. Moses stood as their visible leader, by God's appointment, to administer the laws in His name. From the elders of the tribes a council of seventy was afterward chosen to assist Moses in the general affairs of the nation. Next came the priests, who consulted the Lord in the sanctuary. Chiefs, or princes, ruled over the tribes. Under these were "captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens"; and, lastly, officers who might be employed for special duties.

Reorganization at the Beginning of Solomon's Reign

In planning for the administration of the affairs of the kingdom, after David abdicated in favor of Solomon, the aged king and his son and their counselors regarded it as essential that everything be done with regularity, propriety, fidelity, and dispatch. So far as possible, they followed the system of organization given Israel soon after the deliverance from Egypt. The Levites were assigned the work connected with the temple service, including the ministry of song and instrumental music, and the keeping of the treasures.

The men capable of bearing arms and of serving the king were divided into twelve courses of twenty-four thousand each. Over every course was a captain. "The general of the king's army was Joab." "The courses . . . came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year." Thus every group of twenty-four thousand served the king one month during each year.

David appointed Jonathan, his uncle, as "a counselor, a wise man, and a scribe"; Ahithophel also was "the king's counselor. . . . And after Ahithophel was Johoiada . . . and Abiathar." Hushai was "the king's friend." By his prudent example, the aged king taught Solomon that "in the multitude of counselors there is safety."

The thoroughness and completeness of the organization perfected at the beginning of Solomon's reign; the comprehensiveness of the plans for bringing the largest number possible of all the people into active service; the wide distribution of responsibility, so that the service of God and of the king should not be unduly burdensome to any individual or class—these are lessons which all may study with profit, and which the leaders of the Christian church should understand and follow.

This picture of a great and mighty nation living in simplicity and comfort in rural homes, every person rendering willing and unsalaried service to God and the king for a portion of each year, is one from which we may gather many helpful suggestions.

Order in the Christian Church

There was order in the church when Christ was upon the earth, and after His departure, order was strictly observed among His apostles. And now in these last days, while God is bringing His
children into the unity of the faith, there is more real need of order than ever before; for, as the Lord unites His people, Satan and his evil angels are very busy to undo this unity and to destroy it.

It is Satan's studied effort to lead professed Christians just as far from heaven's arrangement as he can; therefore he sometimes deceives even the professed people of God, and makes them believe that order and discipline are enemies to spirituality; that the only safety for them is to let each pursue his own course. But if we see no necessity for harmonious action, and are disorderly, undisciplined, and disorganized in our course of action, angels who are thoroughly organized and move in perfect order, can not work for us successfully. They turn away in grief; for they are not authorized to bless confusion, distraction, and disorganization.

All who desire the co-operation of the heavenly messengers, must work in union with them. Those who have the union from on high, will in all their efforts encourage order, discipline, and unity of action, and then the angels of God can co-operate with them. But never, never will these heavenly messengers place their indorsement upon irregularity, disorganization, and disorder. All such evils are the result of Satan's studied effort to weaken our forces, to destroy courage, and to prevent successful action. God desires that His work shall be done with system and exactness, in order that He may place upon it the seal of His approval.

The Result of Organized Effort

It is nearly half a century since order and organization were established among us as a people. I was one of the number who had an experience in laboring for their establishment. I know of the difficulties that had to be met, the evils that organization was designed to correct, and I have watched its influence in connection with the growth of the cause. At an early stage in the work, God gave us special light upon this point; and this light, together with the lessons that experience has taught us, should be carefully considered.

From the first our work was aggressive. Our numbers were few, and mostly from the poorer classes. Our views were almost unknown to the world. We had no houses of worship, but few publications, and very limited facilities for carrying forward our work. The sheep were scattered in the highways and byways, in cities, in towns, in forests. The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus was our message.

"Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh shall glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Our numbers gradually increased. The seed that was sown was watered of God, and He gave the increase. At first we assembled for worship, and presented the truth to those who would come to hear, in private houses, in large kitchens, in barns, in groves, and in schoolhouses; but it was not long before we were able to build humble houses of worship. As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of denominations under the call of the second angel's message to come out of Babylon, opposed organization, and many Seventh-day Adventists were fearful that church organization would bring us under condemnation. We sought the Lord with earnest prayer that we might understand His will, and light was given to us by His Spirit, that there must be order and thorough discipline in the church—that organization was essential. System and order are manifest in all the works of God throughout the universe. Order is the law of heaven, and it should be the law among God's people on the earth.

We had a hard struggle in establishing organization. Notwithstanding that the Lord gave Testimony after Testimony upon this point, the opposition was strong, and it had to be met again and again. But we knew that the Lord God of Israel was leading us, and guiding us by His providence. We engaged in the work of organization, and marked prosperity attended this advance movement.

As the development of the work called us to engage in new enterprises, we were prepared to enter upon them. The Lord directed our minds to the importance of educational work. We saw the need of schools, that our children might receive instruction free from the errors of false philosophy, that their

God desires that His work shall be done with system and exactness, in order that He may place upon it the seal of His approval
Captain of our salvation. God has blessed our united efforts. The truth has spread and flourished. Institutions have multiplied. The mustard seed has grown to a great tree. The system of organization has proved a grand success. Systematic benevolence was entered into according to the Bible plan. The body has been “compacted by that which every joint supplieth.” As we have advanced, propositions and resolutions that were not at all essential, and that would never have been presented if the sons and daughters of God had been walking carefully and prayerfully before Him. The fewer rules and regulations that we can have, the better will be the effect in the end. When they are made, let them be carefully considered, and, if wise, let it be seen that they mean something, and

ture. It has been built up by His direction, through much sacrifice and conflict. Let none of our brethren be so deceived as to attempt to tear it down, for you will thus bring in a condition of things that you do not dream of. In the name of the Lord, I declare to you that it is to stand, strengthened, established, and sealed. At God’s command, “Go forward,” we advanced when the difficulties to be surmounted made the advance seem impossible. We know how much it has cost to work out God’s plans in the past, which has made us as a people what we are. Then let every one be exceedingly careful not to unsettle minds in regard to those things that God has ordained for our prosperity and success in advancing His cause.
The work is soon to close. The members of the church militant who have proved faithful will become the church triumphant. In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what God has wrought, I am filled with astonishment and with confidence in Christ as Leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.

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our system of organization has still proved effectual.

In some parts of the work, it is true, the machinery has been made too complicated; especially has this been the case in former years in the tract and missionary work; the multiplication of rules and regulations made it needlessly burdensome. An effort has been made to simplify the work, so as to avoid all needless labor and perplexity.
The business of our conference session has sometimes been burdened with are not to become a dead letter. Do not, however, encumber any branch of the work with unnecessary, burdensome restrictions and inventions of men. In this period of the world’s history, with the vast work that is before us, we need to observe the greatest simplicity, and the work will be stronger for its simplicity.

Let none entertain the thought, however, that we can dispense with organization. It has cost us much study, and many prayers for wisdom that we know God has answered, to erect this structure.

Review and Herald, vol. 5, 175–176 (October 12, 1905)

Spalding and Magan’s
Unpublished Testimonies

This book is a union of the private collections of five men who were prominent leaders and pioneers in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and who received numerous personal and general testimonies from the Lord through Ellen G. White regarding many areas of labor.

In this 500-page volume, you will encounter a wealth of the Lord’s counsels on a broad range of subjects. Stirring, straight messages are presented regarding education, finance, church government, the home, health, prophecy, and other topics. These messages contain what is probably the largest collection of guidance as to how the Lord wants us as individuals and as a church to relate to the self-supporting work.

This is actually the first time this Spirit of Prophecy collection has been typeset in an unabridged, easy-to-read edition. Previous editions have been photocopies of typewritten manuscripts. This convenient-sized volume (5" x 8") is currently available in a high-quality paperback binding.

You may order the Spalding and Magan Collection from Hope International for a suggested donation of $10 plus 15% for postage and handling.
In our previous article we have seen how Christ formed the early Christian church into a visible, organized society of believers with varying talents and positions of responsibility and authority. Just as there are commanding angels in heaven with the responsibility of communicating God's will to the heavenly forces, just so Christ has established levels of order and authority for the promulgation of His will upon earth.

In our previous study we learned that there were two ways of being placed in positions of leadership in the Christian church. Local elders and deacons were chosen by their church members, then ordained to their position by the ordained ministers. Christ first called and ordained the ministers. Through their faithful service to Christ in word and practice new ministers were to be perceived and chosen as faithful men by the ordained ministry. They were then to be formally ordained by the visible church, thus authorizing them to baptize and to raise up churches in the name and the fellowship of the visible, organized, worldwide church of Christ. Differences of doctrine and practice were settled by councils made up of representatives chosen by the organized ministry and by the local churches. Such a council, including representatives of Christ's worldwide followers, acting in harmony with His revealed will, was His highest voice of authority on earth. This system of organization and authority in the apostolic church, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, carried the gospel to the then-known world in one generation.

When the fullness of time prophesied in Daniel 8:14 was completed and the once thriving Millerite movement was reduced to a little flock of fewer than one hundred souls (see A Word to the Little Flock, foreword) Christ again raised up a movement to function with the same system of gospel order and authority, and with the same opportunity of carrying the gospel to the whole world in one generation, as did His church of the first century. The organized churches rejected the Millerite message of the impending second coming of Christ. They placed human creeds and authority before a "Thus saith the Lord." They showed their disdain for present truth by disfellowshipping those who held to the eternal importance of the date October 22, 1844. In the years following the Great Disappointment those who kept pace with present truth were reluctant to enter into any new organization for fear that it also would place human wisdom and authority between the believer and their leader Christ.

J. N. Loughborough describes the lack of organization and its results among Adventists around 1850. "As a body they were opposed to any form of church organization. No church records were kept, not even a list of members. If a person was sincere in his faith, and was baptized, his name was considered enrolled in the "Lamb's book of life"; it being held that that "was record enough." . . . No mention was made of needing church officers, and no ordination of any kind took place, except that of one preacher, who, in 1851, urged that according to the New Testament plan,
those going forth to preach and baptize should be ordained. To some of the leading ministers he mentioned and urged his own ordination. They reluctantly consented to it, but instead of its being a solemn and impressive ceremony before the body of believers, the ministers waited until the congregation had left, when one of the ministers offered a dry, formal prayer. There was no laying on of hands, and no charge was given.

"Neither had that people any system of raising money for the support of their work. If any one felt disposed to give to the ministry, he gave to the minister direct. If special fancy was taken to a particular minister, he received many gifts. Another might be just as efficient, perhaps more consecrated, but if retiring in his manner and diffident about pleading his own needs, he might be left to largely support himself by manual labor." The Church, Its Organization, Order and Discipline by J.N. Loughborough, 89-90

The doctrinal confusion existing among early Adventists is described by Ellen White in her discussion of meetings held in Volney, New York, in August 1848. "Our first conference was at Volney in Bro. Arnold's barn. There were about thirty-five present, all that could be collected in that part of the State. There were hardy two agreed. Each was strenuous for his views, declaring that they were according to the Bible. All were anxious for an opportunity to advance their sentiments, or to preach to us. They were told that we had not come so great a distance to hear them, but had come to teach them the truth. Bro. Arnold held that the 1,000 years of Revelation 20 were in the past; and that the 144,000 were those raised at Christ's resurrection. And as we had the emblem of our dying Lord before us, and was about to commemorate His sufferings, Bro. A. arose and said he had no faith in what we were about to do; that the Sacrament was a continuation of the Passover, to be observed but once a year." Spiritual Gifts, vol. 2, 97-98

Christ revealed to Ellen White in a vision the solution to the confusion among His followers. "I saw that this door at which the enemy comes in to perplex and trouble the flock can be shut. I inquired of the angel how it could be closed. He said, 'The church must fly to God's Word and become established upon gospel order, which has been overlooked and neglected.' This is indispensable necessary in order to bring the church into the unity of the faith." Early Writings, 100

The importance of gospel order was expressed in the following words: "The Lord has shown that gospel order has been too much feared and neglected. Formality should be shunned; but, in so doing, order should not be neglected. There is order in heaven. There was order in the church when Christ was upon the earth, and after His departure order was strictly observed among His apostles. And now in these last days, while God is bringing His children into the unity of the faith, there is more real need of order than ever before; for, as God unites His children, Satan and his evil angels are very busy to prevent this unity and to destroy it." Ibid., 97

The full acceptance of gospel order by the early Adventist believers was slow. During a general conference at Battle Creek, Michigan, held from September 28 through October 1, 1860, it was voted to legally organize the publishing work in order to be able to legally hold church property. A name was required, and the name Seventh-day Adventist was chosen. On May 3, 1861, the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association was organized. See Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White: The Early Elmhaven Years, 421-422; J. N. Loughborough, op. cit. 112-113

It was also in 1860 that in the states where the message was established yearly state-wide conferences were held "for tuition and also a state conference constitution were adopted. These constitutions defined the numerical basis for delegate representation in the conferences and in the General Conference. Ibid., 135

During the years following 1863 additional associations were formed to foster special lines of work. The International Sabbath School Association, the International Tract Society, the National Religious Liberty Association, the Foreign Mission Board and the International Missionary and Benevolent Association were all formed, not as departments of the General Conference, but as separate legal entities with separate financial systems. As the work continued to expand there was resultant confusion. Workers were sent to the world fields by the last two of the above-named associations, as well as by the General Conference. See Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White: The Early Elmhaven Years, 71, 73

By 1901 the membership had grown from 3,500 in 1861 (Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White: The Early Years, 485) to 75,000 (Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White: The Early Elmhaven Years, 70). Over the years the General Conference Executive Committee had grown to thirteen members. Only four of this group, however, resided in Battle Creek, and thus general meetings of the entire group were uncommon. The four

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counsel and to plan for the work of the ministry," Loughborough, op. cit., 116. The first state to be legally organized as a conference was Michigan on October 6, 1861. Its officers consisted of a chairman, a secretary and an executive committee of three. Ibid., 124. In September of 1862 the Michigan Conference held its first annual session in which seventeen organized churches were voted to be taken into the conference. Ibid., p. 134. On May 20, 1863, the General Conference was held, which for the first time had delegates who bore credentials from their respective states. Six states were thus represented. On May 21, a general conference consti-
If men will walk humbly before God, and remain willing to be instructed by the Testimonies of His Spirit, they will never find anything wrong in the old system of organization.


At the 1903 General Conference the committee on plans and constitution submitted a proposed change to the constitution making the leading officer of the General Conference to be a president to be elected by the delegates rather than a chairman elected by the Executive Committee. This recommendation sparked a minority report by three members of the committee on plans and constitution, who recommended that the highest officer remain with the title of Chairman of the Executive Committee. These dual recommendations triggered a prolonged debate on the convention floor. See General Conference Bulletin, 1903, 145–173

The real issue was probably best summed up in the following words by G. I. Butler: “The difficulty in all these things, I believe, is in regard to the principles being put in practice by the men that are placed in office. If they are the servants of God, if their hearts are fully submitted to Him, if they have enough of that beautiful and important grace of humility, which is the foundation of every grace, and have the fear of God before, if they have sufficient respect for the Testimonies of the Spirit of influence of the Spirit of God. But if they will not live up to the light that God gives them, if they will go right contrary to this light, and follow their own erring judgment, I believe there will be trouble under any system of organization.” General Conference Bulletin, 1903, 163

There were amendments made to the constitution, but the majority proposal of the highest officer having the title of president remained and the amended constitution was adopted by a vote of eighty-five to twenty. General Conference Bulletin, 1903, 173. This controverted issue has remained controversial to this time. For those who believe that the General Conference should not have a president, it would be well to study the references cited to clarify the issue for themselves.

Although present at both of the General Conference sessions of 1901 and 1903, Ellen White was amazingly silent on this issue of a president for the General Conference. At both sessions a statement of hers made in 1896 was referred to as though she was against the president position. “It is not wise to choose one man as president of the General Conference.” Letter 24, 1896

However, a fuller context reveals the opposite. “It is not wise to choose one man as president of the General Conference. The
work of the General Conference has extended, and some things have been made unnecessarily complicated. A want of discretion has been shown. There should be a division of the field, or some other plan should be devised to change the present order of things. The president of the General Conference should have the privilege of deciding who shall stand by his side as counselors. Testimonies to Ministers, 342. It is presently believed that the positions of General Conference vice-president and the dividing up of the world field into Divisions and Union Conferences fulfill this counsel from the Lord.

The servant of the Lord confirms further that the position of General Conference president versus chairman of the General Conference Executive Committee is not the issue with the following words, "We had a hard struggle in establishing organization. Notwithstanding that the Lord gave testimony after testimony upon this point, the opposition was strong, and it had to be met again and again. But we knew that the Lord God of Israel was leading us, and guiding by His providence. We engaged in the work of organization, and marked prosperity attended this advance movement. As the development of the work called upon us to engage in new enterprises, we were prepared to enter upon them. . . . "God has blessed our united efforts. The truth has spread and flourished. Institutions have multiplied. The mustard seed has grown to a great tree. The system of organization has proved a grand success. . . ."

"Let none entertain the thought, however, that we can dispense with organization. It has cost us much study and many prayers for wisdom that we know God has answered, to erect this structure. It has been built up by His direction, through much sacrifice and conflict. Let none of our brethren be so deceived as to attempt to tear it down, for you will thus bring in a condition of things that you do not dream of. In the name of the Lord I declare to you that it is to stand, strengthened, established, and settled." Manuscript Releases, vol. 1, 157-158

These paragraphs written in 1892 reveal their real significance by spanning the events of the 1901-1903 controversy. We encounter them newly written into a larger article for the Review and Herald of October 12, 1905. See this issue of Our Firm Foundation, pages 11-13. Thus the system of church organization has proved a "grand success."

At least one of those—A. T. Jones—who promoted the minority report at the 1903 General Conference session was involved in the work of the Battle Creek Sanitarium and became involved with Dr. John Harvey Kellogg in the separation of the Sanitarium and even eventually themselves from the Seventh-day Adventist organization. Our understanding of the issues regarding church organization and authority can have widespread and long-lasting consequences. In future articles we will explore the purposes of organization and authority in God's remnant church. This topic will bring us face to face with the real issues of 1901-1903 and even those of our day.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

My wife and I just received some materials in the mail that we had ordered from you and we have certainly been blessed by what we have read so far. It is so refreshing to hear our historic Adventist message presented so plainly and simply. We know that the Lord is certainly behind it. Thank you so much for making this material available and we are certainly looking forward to studying and reading more as we go along.

There is no doubt in our minds that Jesus' coming is very, very soon and that there are so many people that need to hear this message. There are many even in our own Adventist Church who are asleep. Will you please pray with us that the Lord will give us the courage to speak out in defense of our historic Adventist faith? We know that we will meet with opposition, but Christ told us that that would happen to all those who would stand for truth.

—RH, Illinois

As a token of appreciation for your journal, which I have read for several years, and for the work you are doing, I enclose my check in the amount of $100.00 to be used in the mailing cost of Our Firm Foundation to those who have not been receiving the magazine.

—CB, Tennessee

We praise the Lord for the donations that are coming in to help send approximately 8,000 copies of Our Firm Foundation each month to Seventh-day Adventists who have not yet received it. Please continue your support.—EDITORS

I have been a reader of your paper for about a year. I appreciate the various articles of the writers, especially their use of the Spirit of Prophecy. So many of our ministers do not quote the messages of the Lord. I am a retired, active minister but I find so many in our churches do not want to hear the good old-fashioned message. I am referred to as an old traditional preacher by some, and I guess I will always be one.

The one big question I have today is why do our ministers and leaders need to go to worldly colleges to get a Masters in religion? Just recently a young minister from Romania spoke in our church and told us he is going to college here in Nashville to get his degree in theology. I say wake up, Adventists, Satan has you in his clutches.

I may sound like a critic or fanatic, but I am not; I am concerned. Since I retired 13 years ago I have seen a decided change in our churches. Of course I know these are the last days, and we have been told by the Lord it would happen. Nevertheless we need to cry out, sound an alarm before it is too late!

—Pastor
Two Gospels Within the Church

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” 1 Peter 3:15

Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus is coming very soon. Prophecy is rapidly fulfilling. Daniel 11 is almost completely fulfilled. The king of the north (the Papacy) is coming more and more into a dominant position within the world. Soviet communism (atheism) has fallen. Chinese communism will fall soon. Satan is moving about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. We are his targets. Jesus has won the war, but Satan seeks for more casualties. Where do you stand today? Can you give a reason from the Bible why you believe as you do?

There are two gospels within the Seventh-day Adventist Church today. One says that you will continue to sin until Jesus comes. The other says you can overcome all sin through His power.

One says that Jesus is our Substitute but not our Example. The other says Jesus is both our Substitute and our Example. One says perfection is impossible. The other says Bible perfection (living up to all the light you have) is a must. Do you understand why there are these differences? Which way do you believe? Do you know why? Can you support your position biblically and lovingly?

We must be spending more time with our precious Saviour in prayer and Bible study (including the Spirit of Prophecy) on a daily basis. Those with the wrong gospel will be lost. We must be praying for them persistently. We must be able to show them in a gentle and respectful way where and why they are wrong.

The underlying basic differences result from two different understandings of what sin is. The evangelical world in general and some Seventh-day Adventists believe in what is termed by some as “original sin.” In other words, sin is part of our nature; we are guilty by birth rather than by choice. There is guilt in our evil desires, even when resisted by the will.

Under this view, Jesus cannot have the same nature as we have, for He would be guilty by birth. If He were like us, He would have been a sinning nature, already a sinner. We cannot overcome, for sin is part of our nature, and we will retain our nature until Jesus comes. We cannot become perfect because it is impossible to follow all the light we have with a sinning nature. The sanctuary, the investigative judgment, the three angels’ messages become insignificant. Everything is completed at the cross, for justification, or covering of our sinning nature, is all that counts. Sanctification becomes a growth process that never leads to total overcoming. If we follow this view, we will be lost.

The historic Seventh-day Adventist view is that sin is a choice. We do not have to sin. Sin is not the way man is,

Clark Floyd
but the way man chooses. The mind must consent to temptation before it becomes guilty. Because of our sinful human nature, there is a bent toward sin, but this bent can be successfully resisted by the reborn Christian through the power of Jesus working in and through the life.

Under this view Jesus could be, and in fact was, born with the same sinful flesh that we have. He never sinned, because He made right choices through the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through Him. He was like Adam after the Fall. Since He was born with the same sinful (not sinning) flesh that we have, He is our Example, and we, too, can overcome through His power working in us. We are not guilty by birth. This view is based on both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

Let us examine the Scriptures for a “Thus saith the Lord.” 1 John 3:4 gives us the definition of sin: “Sin is the transgression of the law.” Ellen White consistently says that this is the only definition of sin. Sin thus becomes an action rather than a part of our nature. Then in James 4:17 the Bible says, “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

Sin comes by knowledge which brings choice, and is not by nature.

In Romans 7:7-9, Paul says, “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.”

The law has always existed from eternity to eternity. But guilt is not accounted to those who ignorantly transgress it. Once they know about the law, they are responsible for what the law contains. Knowledge is the key. In Romans 7, quoted above, guilt did not come until knowledge of the law came. Guilt is not inherited; it is based on knowledge. But willful ignorance is no excuse.

The same understanding is found in John 15:22, 24: “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. ... If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.” Knowledge is again the key. Many other scriptures could be used to demonstrate this point. For example see also Matthew 11:20-24; John 9:41.

In Ezekiel 18:2-4, the prophet says, “What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?” Apparently the people were trying to indicate by this proverb that the children would suffer the consequences of the parents' sin—that they had inherent guilt. But notice in the next verses the Lord rebukes them for this understanding.

“As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

And then in verse 20, the decisive point is given: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.”

Ellen White in Testimonies, vol. 1, 116 states: “If light come, and that light is set aside or rejected, then comes condemnation and the frown of God; but before the light comes, there is no sin, for there is no light for them to reject.”

She points out in Counsels on Health, 81, that a tobacco user who uses it in ignorance is not guilty, although he will suffer the consequences of the tobacco he uses. But once he understands the light on tobacco use, he becomes guilty for using it.

“None will be condemned for not heeding light and knowledge that they never had.” The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 5, 1145.

“It is inevitable that children should suffer from the consequences of parental wrongdoing, but they are not punished for the parents’ guilt, except as they participate in their sins. ... By inheritance and example the sons become partners of the father’s sin. Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy, are transmitted as a legacy from father to son, to the third and fourth generation.” Patriarchs and Prophets, 306.

Sin that results in guilt is by choice and requires knowledge.

Once there is a correct understanding of the nature of sin, then it is possible for Jesus to have been born with the same nature with which each of us is born—a sinful human nature. We are not automatically guilty because of our birth. We are guilty by choice. From the dawn of reason, Jesus made right choices through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus never sinned, and He is our Example. We can gain courage by knowing that Jesus, by complete submission to the Holy Spirit, never gave in to temptation.

Scripture readily supports the fact that Jesus was born with our sinful human flesh—like Adam after the Fall. In Philippians 2:7, Paul, referring to Jesus, says that He “was made in the likeness of men.” Paul then uses the same Greek word for likeness in Romans 8:3, “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.”

In Hebrews, Paul again asserts Christ’s relationship, not to Adam before the Fall, but to Abraham, a man with the same sinful flesh as you and I. “For verily 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...
hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” Hebrews 2:16–18. See also Hebrews 4:15

In 1 John 4:2–3, John has an interesting statement: “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereby ye have heard that are many more scriptures telling us we must be overcomers. We must have victory in our lives.

“Abundant grace has been provided that the believing soul may be kept free from sin; for all heaven, with its limitless resources, has been placed at our command.” Selected Messages, book 1, 394. “Christ is willing to take possession of the soul believer to receive all things that pertain to life and godliness. God calls upon us to reach the standard of perfection and places before us the example of Christ’s character. In His humanity, perfected by a life of constant resistance of evil, the Saviour showed that through co-operation with Divinity, human beings may in this life attain to perfection of character. This is God’s assurance to us that we, too, may obtain complete victory.” The Acts of the Apostles, 531

Brothers and sisters, do not let someone with smooth speech steal your eternal life from you. Do not be foiled by being called a legalist, or by someone saying to you, “Oh, you think you are perfect.” Tell them that you will never claim perfection, but you know you can have complete victory over sin, and can live up to all the light you have, only through a daily surrender to Jesus Christ, knowing that in Him nothing is impossible. Then make that surrender to Him every day.

“The victory is not won without much earnest prayer, without the humbling of self at every step. Our will is not to be forced into co-operation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted. . . . The will must be placed on the side of God’s will. You are not able, of yourself, to bring your purposes and desires and inclinations into submission to the will of God; but if you are ‘willing to be made willing,’ God will accomplish the work for you, even ‘casting down imaginations.’” Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, 142

My prayer is that all of you who read this article will purport in your heart to follow Jesus all the way, seeking through His power to allow Him to be not only Saviour but also Lord of your life. Trust in Him, knowing that there is not anything too hard for God, even taking a sinful human being like yourself and making you an overcomer. See Jeremiah 32:17, 27

And remember, “Every position of our faith will be searched into, and if we are not thorough Bible students, established, strengthened, settled, the wisdom of the world’s great men will be too much for us.” Selected Messages, book 2, 386

The Bible so clearly indicates that man can be a complete overcomer through the power of Jesus Christ working in the life that it often amazes me that we have sincere Seventh-day Adventists who teach and believe otherwise

it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” Anyone who seeks to tell us that Jesus Christ has a different nature from ours, leading us into the delusion that we cannot overcome through Christ’s power, is not being led by the Spirit of God. Jesus is our Example.

“He assumed human nature, with its infirmities, its liabilities, its temptations. . . . He exercised in His own behalf no power which man cannot exercise. As man He met temptation, and overcame in the strength given Him of God. He gives us an example of perfect obedience.” Selected Messages, book 3, 132; see also The Desire of Ages, 664

The Bible so clearly indicates that man can be a complete overcomer through the power of Jesus Christ working in the life that it often amazes me that we have sincere Seventh-day Adventists who teach and believe otherwise. The rewards as given to each of the seven churches of Revelation are to the overcomer. In Jude 24 we are told that Jesus is able to keep us from falling and then present us faultless with exceeding joy.

Then in 1 John 3:9, the Bible says, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.” Well-meaning, but misled, theologians will do all they can to say that which is not really what this verse says. Why? So that they may convince us that we will keep on sinning until Jesus comes. And many of us will do so because we believe them, although there temple, if we will only let Him. He is represented as knocking at the door of our hearts for admission, but Jesus never forces Himself upon us; He will come in only as an invited guest. . . . In order to let Jesus into our hearts, we must stop sinning. The only definition for sin that we have in the Bible is that it is the transgression of the law. The law is far-reaching in its claims, and we must bring our hearts into harmony with it.” Signs of the Times, vol. 2, 363

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” 1 Peter 2:21–22. “Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. So it may be with us.” The Desire of Ages, 123. “Humanity combined with divinity does not commit sin.” The Ministry of Healing, 180

And finally the question is asked, “Can you be perfect in Christ?” Of course, for Matthew 5:48 says, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Ellen White quotes this verse as it reads in the King James Bible, not as some “scholars” say it should read, and then states: “This command is a promise.” The Desire of Ages, 311; see also Hebrews 13:20–21; 1 Peter 5:10

“None need fail of attaining, in his sphere, to perfection of Christian character. By the sacrifice of Christ, provision has been made for the
Guest Editorial
Continued from 2

to do everything not to be divided apart, it is important for those who are not in leadership roles to resist the temptation to follow any man. The following of men is a most dangerous course that will lead ultimately to eternal loss.

At the time of the Reformation we find that, while the Reformers unwaveringly identified the Roman Catholic Church as the antichrist, often they agreed on little else. The stern conflicts existing among them are well known. The famous conflict between Martin Luther and Zwingli is a tragic chapter in the history of the Reformation. We cannot forget the angry words exchanged between these two great men over the issue of the communion. As Luther held strongly to the belief that the bread was the body of Christ, Zwingli was rightly adamant that the bread represented (but was not) the body of Christ. So sharp was the contention between these men that when, at the age of forty-seven, Zwingli was struck down in battle against the papist forces from the Canton of Zurich, Luther was said to have rejoiced, saying it was the judgment of God upon Zwingli.

When he persisted in doctrinal error Zwingli himself showed a terrible intolerance and cruelty. On one occasion his hostility to the Anabaptists was so great that he commanded that a whole company of the Anabaptists be taken to the river in front of his church and there the soldiers were to “baptize” them completely. Many faithful Anabaptists were drowned that day. It is hard for us today to understand such cruelty among men whom God had called for such an important work. But history attests to the numerous errors of the Reformers.

Because of his insistence upon the union of church and state, John Calvin was prone to burn at the stake those he considered heretics.

In the early Seventh-day Adventist Church the conflicts were fierce, to the point that the servant of the Lord on a number of occasions had to rebuke some of the best-known leaders for the deep contentions that they were allowing to fester in the church. Not immune to her rebukes was her own husband, James, who like so many of the other leaders, was guilty of contending over the issues. His contentions concerning prophetic interpretations with men such as Uriah Smith are well known to anyone who has read the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. See Arthur White, Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years, 96

Why is it that leaders of reformation so often have difficulty understanding one another, maintaining unity, and agreeing? Why do differences between reformers become so sharp? One of the reasons may lie in the fact that to be a leader of reformation men and women must have deep and strong convictions. No one who is vacillating or weak or uncertain will ever become a leader in reformation. Therefore with the deep and burdensome convictions that leaders secured only by the compromise of truth and righteousness, then let there be difference, and even war.” The Great Controversy, 45

This statement brings us to the present reformation that the Lord is bringing to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Those who have set themselves to see the progress of reform in God’s remnant church, need to be able to discern between what is a salvation issue and what is not a salvation issue. Salvation issues include such truths as the Sabbath, the sanctuary message, righteousness by faith, the state of

We are the end-time generation. Our very witness to the ministry of Jesus in the world is predicated upon the true unity of His people

Colin D. Standish,
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
His Grace Is Sufficient

Is My Co-operation Efficient?

This simple statement of truth, and the question being asked in the title of this article, are having a very profound effect upon my practical Christian experience. This thought of God's grace and my co-operation is not new. Rather, it is a deeper and more practical application of how it works in my personal life and that of my family. You will notice that the word co-operation is hyphenated throughout the article. This special emphasis is intended to remind us that we work along with the operations of Heaven, co-working with the divine agencies operating for our salvation.

It began to unfold one day as I was installing our new hydroelectric power system. Since this project was important and outside my skills, I found myself praying for more grace so that I would not make needless mistakes. I prayed, "Father, You know that this is not something I'm used to doing. I need Your grace so that I won't make any mistakes." It was then that the strong reply came to me from our tender heavenly Father: "My grace is sufficient; will your co-operation be efficient?" This thought or impression was so clear and simple that I was stunned at the glimpse of what was possible. Yes, God's grace was sufficient for me; it always had been and would be. It was not more of His grace I needed; it was more efficient use of the grace by co-operating with Him.

Then I began to ask the Lord how I could co-operate with Him in this situation. The thought came to me to take a few minutes to write down everything that I would need for this part of the hydroelectric project, to carefully think through each step of the process; then He would direct my thoughts and I would write down the tools and parts in the order needed to successfully complete the task. I was excited as I began to realize, as never before, what it meant to co-operate or be a co-worker with heavenly agencies.

The Lord was helping me to see that by taking a few minutes of thoughtful planning, even though in my personality I did not want to "waste" the time, I would spare myself needless mistakes, extra trips running for parts and tools, and most important, to recognize and understand the words of Christ, "I can of mine own self do nothing." John 5:30

You may be a person naturally gifted with strong abilities to plan, organize and efficiently execute a project, but have you ever found yourself so intensely absorbed and involved that if someone or something interrupts your plans and progress, you react in irritation and frustration? While one person departs from Christ through lack of organization and resulting frustration, another just as surely separates from Christ through overintensity and self-sufficiency. How often have we prayed for God's will to be done, and then by our unwillingness to co-operate with His will, departs from Christ and ended in failure?

While it is true that we need grace to deliver us from trials we create for ourselves, God wants to also deliver us from continuing to create those needless situations of frustration. Let me illustrate the thought.

Have you ever heard someone describe God's miraculous deliverance in keeping his car running on fumes when he should have run out of gas miles ago? It is right to be thankful to God in such an experience, and undoubtedly a rare situation similar to this may occur; but the real question is how often are we creating these situations by our lack of preparation, lack of thoroughness or by habits of slothfulness? Right here our minds may want to recall some of these situations and self may want to be justified, but this attitude is not important. What is important is to realize that God is calling us to begin co-operating with Him. He wants us to consult Him in all of our plans and duties of life, not only for His divine permission, but also for His methods and efficiency in carrying out those plans and duties.

Tom Waters lives in Polebridge, Montana, and has dedicated his life full time to reaching people with the practical gospel.
entreats us to become faithful stewards of our time, our money, our marriage relation, our families, and all the resources of His blessing.

Friends, His grace is sufficient for us, but to make this grace our own, we have a part to act. The apostle Paul says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Philippians 2:12-13

In commenting on Paul's words, Ellen White states: "Herein is revealed the outworking of the divine principle of co-operation, without which no true success can be attained. Human effort avails nothing without divine power; and without human endeavor, divine effort is with many of no avail. To make God's grace our own, we must act our part. His grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never as a substitute for our effort." Prophets and Kings, 468-469

Do we want true success in our Christian lives, in our businesses and in our homes? Are we willing to begin co-operating and acting our part in this divine formula? It is vital that we recognize the operation of grace in our practical life so that we can efficiently act our part to co-operate with the grace abundantly offered.

God's grace works through the "still, small voice" guiding us, instructing us, warning us of temptation and enabling us to do all His biddings. This co-operation involves all aspects of our lives from our thoughts to our actions. When someone has misrepresented me and the thought comes into my mind how unfair the statement was, God calls to me, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Philippians 2:5. Am I willing to co-operate with Him and give Him my thoughts and accept His thoughts of forgiveness and love toward that person? At those times when I would like to speak an irritated word to my wife or child, the Lord brings to my mind "A soft answer turneth away wrath." Proverbs 15:1. "Are you willing to co-operate with Me that I may give you the words that will bring healing to their souls?" He asks. When there are several things to do that seem pressing, am I willing to co-operate with the Mighty Counselor and ask, "What is Your will for me right now?" and then do it in His power?

You see, "Christ is ever sending messages to those who will listen for His voice." The Ministry of Healing, 509. As we are willing to listen and co-operate with His guidance, we understand more practically the sufficiency of His grace, that it is made perfect in weakness, my weakness. See 2 Corinthians 12:9. This co-operation is responding "Yes" to all His biddings, aware that we can do His will only as we remain connected with the enabling power of His grace.

God's part in this simple equation has never been lacking, but without my co-operation on a practical, not just a theoretical, basis, the equation is not complete. This co-operation begins with the first decision of my day. If my heavenly Father wants to meet with me at 5 a.m., will I co-operate? Or if He awakens me at 4 a.m., am I willing to say, "Yes, Lord"? My co-operation will depend on at least two things: Was I temperate and co-operative in going to bed the night before, and will I act from principle, not feeling, when He calls? If I will co-operate here, in the first decision of the day, I will be much more inclined to co-operate throughout the day.

God longs to have us co-operate with His grace for those who are nearest us within our own families. We may not know of the burdens or temptations that our spouse may be under—but God knows—and He invites you and me to co-operate with Him in uplifting and encouraging the faith of the one we have vowed to love and cherish.

It is imperative that we know whether or not we are co-operating with God's grace in light of the effect it is having on our own spiritual welfare and that of our own families.

I remember one morning as I was spending time in prayer and studying God's Word, the thought was impressed on me that I should ask my wife to take a walk and see how things were with her. I began to reason that I really needed more time with the Lord, but I quickly recognized that I needed to co-operate with the promptings of the Spirit even though the thought did not necessarily seem reasonable to me at the moment. I then went to my wife and asked her to go for a walk with me. As we walked, I told her of my earlier thoughts and asked her setting aside scheduled time just for our wives, time just to talk, without being in a rush or under pressure. Where will we get this time? Here we demonstrate our love for our wives, as they see us setting aside the newspapers, the television, magazines, hobbies, or whatever consumes our time, because we want to care for and nurture them. Now we begin to understand what is meant by "Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it." Ephesians 5:25, emphasis supplied. As our wives see us co-operating with
God by faithfully taking up the work of "priest" and "houseband" in the home circle, they are encouraged to heed the counsel "Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands as unto the Lord." Ephesians 5:22

As my wife saw me making decisions in my business, social and personal life for her sake and our family, she was encouraged in a practical way to listen to and obey the "still, small voice" and co-operate with God in the use of her time, the education of the children, the family finances, and many other areas of her life personally and in the family.

Does this co-operation cost something? Yes! Frequent collisions with self and selfish habits. To truly co-operate with the divine agencies of heaven is to be at war with the adversary of our souls. In this warfare with self and Satan, wearying as it is, will be found the only true rest for the soul. Co-operating efficiently with God's grace will bring true success in business and in our personal Christian walk, and will develop families whose lives bear "the greatest evidence of the power of Christianity that can be presented to the world." The Adventist Home, 32

God will have a people who know His voice, follow His will and so fully co-operate with His grace that the world will know that His grace is sufficient. As they behold the character of Christ reproduced in you and me, as they see the practical, life-changing power of the gospel in our families, in the way we do business and how we manage all our resources, they will be encouraged to believe that they too can enter fully into the life "hid with Christ in God." Colossians 3:3

Is this your experience today? Do you want this experience? Dear friend, go to God on your knees, admitting your failures, asking Him to show His will for you personally and to put within you a willingness to co-operate with Him. Covenant to be sensitive to His leadings, and quick to obey His promptings. Your life will take on new meaning and a growing commitment to co-operate with His grace.

What an opportunity we have! Will we pass by so great a salvation that God is providing through grace? Let us be reminded continually: His grace is sufficient! Is my co-operation efficient? 

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Heathen Plots Against Nehemiah

SANBALLAT, Tobiah, and their confederates, dared not openly make war upon the Jews; but with increasing malice they continued their secret efforts to perplex, injure, and discourage them. The wall about Jerusalem was rapidly approaching completion. When it should be finished, and its gates set up, these enemies of Israel could not hope to force an entrance into the city. Therefore they were the more eager and determined in their efforts to stop the work without delay. At last they devised a plan to draw Nehemiah from his station, and kill or imprison him while they had him in their power.

Pretending to desire a compromise of the opposing parties, they proposed a conference with Nehemiah, and invited him to meet them in a village on the plain of Ono. But the Spirit of God, enlightening the mind of his servant, enabled him to discern their real purpose. Says Nehemiah, "I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it and come down to you?" Nehemiah 6:3. But these emissaries of Satan were persistent. Four times they sent messages of like import, but received the same answer.

Finding this plan unsuccessful, they then had resort to a more dangerous stratagem. Sanballat sent to Nehemiah a messenger bearing an open letter wherein was written: "It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together." Verses 6–7. Had the reports mentioned been actually circulated, there would have been cause for apprehension; for they would soon have been carried to the ears of the king, whom a slight suspicion might provoke to the severest measures. But Nehemiah was convinced that the letter was wholly false, written to arouse his fears, and draw him into some snare prepared by his enemies. This conclusion was strengthened by the fact that the letter was sent open, evidently that the contents might be read by the people, and thus intimidate them also.

He therefore promptly returned the answer, "There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart." Verse 8. He is not ignorant of Satan's devices, and he feels assured that all these attempts are made for the purpose of weakening the hands of the builders, that their work may not be accomplished. He turns to the Source of strength, with the prayer, "Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands." Verse 9

Satan had been defeated again and again; and now with deeper malice and greater cunning, he proceeded to devise a still more subtle and dangerous snare for the servant of God. Sanballat and his companions were moved to hire men, professing to be friends of Nehemiah, to give him evil counsel as the word of the Lord. The principal person engaged in this nefarious work was one Shemaiah, who had previously been held in good repute by Nehemiah. This man shut himself up in a chamber near the sanctuary, as if fearing that his life was in danger, and thither Nehemiah went to consult with him as one who was especially favored of God. The temple was at this time protected by walls and gates, while the gates of the city were not yet set up. This deceiver therefore professed great concern for Nehemiah's safety, and counseled him to seek shelter in the
temple: “Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee.” Verse 10. The hero’s fearless answer was, “Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.” Verse 11

Had Nehemiah followed that treacherous counsel, he would have sacrificed his reputation for courage, and faith in God, and would have appeared cowardly and contemptible. The alarm would have spread among the people, each would have sought his own safety, and the city would have been left unprotected, to fall a prey to their enemies. That one unwise move would have been a virtual surrender of all that had been gained.

Nehemiah was not long in penetrating the true character and object of his counselor; “And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me.” Verses 12–13

In view of the important work that Nehemiah had undertaken, together with the integrity of his character, and the confidence in God which he professed to feel, it would be highly inconsistent for him to hide himself as though in fear. The preservation of life itself would not be a sufficient excuse for such a course. The infamous counsel given him was seconded by more than one man of high reputation, who, while professing to be his friend, was secretly in league with his enemies. Women also, while pretending to have received great light from God, basely sold themselves to serve the cause of the heathen. Nehemiah prays that God will mark their evil designs, and reward them according to their deeds.

Despite all the plots of enemies, open and secret, the work of building went steadily forward, the wall rose to the proper height, and in about two months after Nehemiah’s arrival at Jerusalem, the holy city was girded round with its defenses; and the builders could walk upon its walls, and look forth upon their astonished adversaries. Says Nehemiah, “When all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.” Verse 16

Yet the striking evidence that the hand of the Lord was with Nehemiah was not sufficient to restrain discontent, rebellion, and treachery. “In those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. For there were many in Judah sworn unto him because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah.” Verses 17–18. Here are seen the evil results of intermarriage with idolaters. In this union, Satan had gained the victory. A family of Judah had connected themselves with the enemies of God, and the relation had proved a snare to the people. Many others also united in marriage with the heathen. These, like the mixed multitude that came up with Israel from Egypt, were a source of constant trouble. They were not wholehearted in the service of God. When His work demanded a sacrifice, they were ready to violate their own solemn oaths of co-operation and support. All this had tended to weaken and discourage those who sought to build up the cause of God.

Some had been foremost in plotting mischief against the Jews, and endeavoring by every possible means to cause their ruin, now professed great desire to be on friendly terms with them. Some of the nobles of Judah who had become entangled in idolatrous marriages, had held traitorous correspondence with Tobiah, and had taken oaths to serve him. They now presumed to represent this agent of Satan as a man of ability, wisdom, and foresight, and urged that an alliance with him would be highly advantageous to the Jews. At the same time they betrayed to him Nehemiah’s plans and movements. Thus the work of God was laid open to his enemies, and opportunity was given in the hands of those who use all their knowledge to hinder the work of God and injure His people. Thus these men of two minds and two purposes pretend to serve God, and then go over to the enemy and serve him, as best suits their inclination.

Every device which the prince of darkness can suggest, will be employed to induce God’s servants to form a compromise with the agents of Satan

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Every device which the prince of darkness can suggest, will be employed to induce God’s servants to form a compromise with the agents of Satan.
great work, so that I cannot come down." Verse 3. We have no time to seek the favor of the world, or even to defend ourselves from their misrepresentation and calumny. We have no time to lose in self-vindication. We should keep steadily at our work, and let that refute the falsehoods which malice may coin to our injury. Slanders will be multiplied if we stop to answer them. Should we allow our enemies to gain our friendship and sympathy, and thereby allure us from our post of duty; should we by any unguarded act, expose the cause of God to reproach, and thus weaken the hands of the workers, we should bring upon our characters a stain not easily removed, and place a serious obstacle in the way of our own future usefulness.

Those temptations are most dangerous which come from the professed servants of God, and from our friends. When persons who are uniting with the world, yet claiming great piety and love, counsel the faithful workers for God to be less zealous and more conservative, our answer must be an appeal to the Word of God. When they plead for union with those who have been our deter-
dined opposers, we should fear and shun them as decidedly as did Nehemiah. Those who would lead away from the old landmarks to form a connection with the ungodly, cannot be sent of Heaven. Whatever may have been their former position, their present course tends to unsettle the faith of God’s people.

Such counselors are prompted by Satan. They are time-servers. The testi-
monies, reproofs, and warnings of God’s servants are unpalatable to them, being a reproof to their worldly, pleasure-loving propensities. We should shun this class as resolutely as did Nehemiah.

When plied with the arguments and suggestions of such advisers, it would be well for us each to inquire, “Should I, who am a Christian, a child of God; one called to be the light of the world, a preacher of righteousness; who have so often expressed my confidence in the truth and the way in which the Lord has led us, should I unite my influence with those who bitterly oppose the work of God? Should I, a steward of the mysteries of God, open to His worst enemies the counsels of His people? Would not such a course embolden the wicked in their opposition to the truth of God and to His covenant-keeping people? Would not such a concession prevent me from opening my lips in exhortation, warning, or entreaty, in my own family or in the church of God? If Paul or Peter were placed in similar circumstances, would he thus betray a sacred trust? Would not even men of the world despise me? Would they not scorn to be diverted from their lifework by difficulties or perils?”

Satan will work by any and every means which he can employ to dis-
courage the active servants of God. If the shepherd can be beguiled from his duty, then the way is clear for wolves to scatter and devour the sheep.

Every success of the truth discourages the enemies of God; and they are sometimes forced to acknowledge that it is His work, while they hate it the more on that very account. False brethren will continue to increase. Those to whom God has sent warnings and reproofs, but who, rejecting the Heaven-sent message, give heed to the counsel of His enemies, are the severest trial to His faithful servants. “They that forsake the law praise the wicked.” Proverbs 28:4

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Vol. 7, No. 10 Our Firm Foundation 27
True Dress Reform

Do I know how to live in Christ and manifest a Christlike spirit in all circumstances? Do I know how to surrender to God's will when my will is crossed? Or do I place too much effort and talk in the externals; "What shall I wear?" "Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Matthew 6:31–33

The weightier matter is "Am I clothed in Christ?" See Testimonies, vol. 5, 513–516. Do I daily "put on Christ," enthroning Him on my heart's will, so that His divine power can change, subdue and save me from serving self inwardly? This yielding must be learned in order for Christ to adorn me with the essential

undergarments of Christlike faith and virtue. These are the foundations of our Christian life in Christ. See 2 Peter 1:5. Putting them into practice in one's life the specific order, prepares the Christian to receive the fuller dress, Christ's outer garment. His robe of righteousness, which represents being changed in character and temperament from selfishness and self-serving to serving God and holiness. These character traits, and more, must be a daily reality working deeply, effectually in my Christian experience and walk, redeeming me now from all selfishness, be it irritation toward my spouse or child, or an un-Christlike dress style. Securing this robe of righteousness requires our greatest efforts in the Christian walk. This putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ needs to be the dress we secure, without fail, and it must be done daily. Then we must also gain the experience of how to wear it continually, lest we be naked of the indwelling Christ before the whole world.

Let us consider the spiritual lessons that can be learned from true dress reform.

Modesty

Modesty is being so pliable in God's hands that when God's will and my self-will are at variance, I will say "No" to by saying "Yes" to God's will and bending all my energies to do it, by God's grace, no matter how crucifying to self it may be. I will lay aside any favorite article of clothing in order to remain clothed in Christ. But where do I get such firmness, decisiveness and self-control as this? By spending those morning hours faithfully, regularly, at Jesus' feet, by communing with God and by doing His will. He can then clothe me with His divine nature, replacing my garments of selfishness.

We must co-operate in this process of putting on Christ, the same as a little child must co-operate with his parents in order to get properly dressed in the morning. In reality we are just as dependent on Christ's helping us with right doing for the day as this little child is in putting on his physical clothes properly. You will notice God always works from the inside out. Inward heart modesty (yielding) precedes true outward, lasting modesty. We must learn to yield our wills to God; then we will be willing to yield our outer dress to

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His control, too. Then we will have heavenly modesty, and we will do Christ’s will not only in dress but in all we do, say, think today.

Fig Leaves

If true modesty is the very life of Christ replacing my nakedness of unrighteousness, as I choose to lay self aside and to receive Christ’s will, strength, wisdom, selflessness, purity, and obedience, then what is the counterfeit to this clothing of Christ? Fig leaves, of course. Man-made clothing of fig leaves are the arguments or excuses for disobedience. See The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 1, 1084. They lay the blame on others or circumstances, excusing my disobedience and thereby denying my nakedness. They are the clothing of self. What a contrast! Did not Adam and Eve use a substitute to cover their nakedness and deny or excuse their disobedience? When they sinned (disobeyed), their lives were then in self, independent of Christ and His robe of light.

When we live our way, or wear the clothes we like without consulting God, for fear He may say No to us, we are not even in Christ but in self, are we not? Do we not want God to clothe us with His beauty of holiness rather than to retain the dangerous, pretentious fig leaves of self’s devisings? See The Desire of Ages, 581–584. We need then to bend every energy and choose to be “in Christ” and to co-operate with God in helping us to change our garments of self for the garments of Christ.

“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning... But let it be the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” 1 Peter 3:3-4

Practically speaking, our fig leaves could be “I don’t want to” change my dress style or “I can’t” for whatever reason. These thoughts merely represent our present feelings or tastes in this matter, irrespective of knowing God’s will for us. If we set our will to follow Christ’s way, we can call upon our Saviour to save us from our resistive, independent feelings and tastes. We will experience a change in our dress style, and Christ will put us that new heart, that new desire to dress for His honor and glory. We are then preparing for the full robe of Christ’s righteousness as we step closer to the full surrender of everything in our lives to His Lordship.

I recall when God called me to a higher level of modesty in my dress. First, He put in me a strong desire to dress more like a lady. Then God began revealing clothes that needed to be put away. He wanted me to cleanse away my shorts, my short skirts, my V-necks, my tighter clothing, my favorite two-piece bathing suit, and later other inappropriate, figure-revealing articles. My conscience inside was in a war with conflicting likes and dislikes, conflicting emotions; one to put them away and another to cling to those favorite articles of clothing. What a struggle at times ensued with self! God graciously gave me some time and space to make a free-will decision. God does not force. He began also to teach me why these clothes were not modest for a child or a woman professing godliness. God presented them to me as being a stumbling block to both men and women about me. These clothes were encouraging others to retain that style and were debaseing to all. In women it can stir up jealousy and/or envy. In men it can stir up baser passions, and I was to be sensitive and to avoid dressing in that way. He would put this sensitivity in me and change my taste if I let Him. I was no longer to be an instrument to attract attention or thoughts away from God to the earthly or sensual. Was I willing to lay self aside? God even gave sufficient evidences of how these particular clothes were debaseing. God made me aware of the truth He was teaching me whenever I wore that controversial blouse or pants. In a relatively short time I yielded to right, convinced that God’s way was best for me and others. And God then clothed the inner me with divine contentedness and peace. Christ has the power to change us, as we co-operate with Him.

Do we not want God to clothe us with His beauty of holiness rather than to retain the dangerous, pretentious fig leaves of self’s devisings?

Proper Dress Characterized

“No one precise style has been given me as the exact rule to guide all in their dress.” The old health reform dress in its exact pattern was no longer urged, but there was every uniform testimony borne by Mrs. White regarding the fundamental principles that should guide the Christian in this matter. “Let our sisters dress plainly, as many do, having the dress of good material, durable, modest, appropriate for this age, and let not the dress question fill the mind.” Testimonies, vol. 1, 718; see also My Life Today, 145

“Christians should not take pains to make themselves a guizing stock by dressing differently from the world. But if, when following out their convictions of duty in respect to dressing modestly and healthfully, they find themselves out of fashion, they should not change their dress in order to be like the world; but they should manifest a noble independence and moral courage to be right, if all the world differ from them. If the world introduce a modest, convenient, and healthful mode of dress, which is in accordance with the Bible, it will not change our relation to God or to the world to adopt such a style of dress. Christians should follow Christ and make their dress conform to God’s Word. They should shun extremes. They should humbly pursue a straightforward course, irrespective of applause or of censure, and should cling to the right because of its own merits.” Testimonies, vol. 1, 458

As we seek to know God’s will through personal study and prayer, God will be right there to guide the sincere in heart to find the answer. For example, God desires to keep us balanced even in the length of our dresses. We read, “My
My outward dress will not be showy, with pride or display. Rather it will reflect Christ through modesty, cleanliness, neatness, orderliness, tastefulness and simplicity, all in accordance with the revealed light given in the Bible.

Rather it will reflect Christ through modesty, cleanliness, neatness, orderliness, tastefulness and simplicity, all in accordance with the revealed light given in the Bible. I am accountable for the light I know or could have known. I will seek God's will to rule my life, which includes my tastes in clothing. And God promises to change my wrong tastes as I submit and yield to His will and grace to work in me. Choosing to follow God requires being grounded in His Word and not traditions, customs or the fashions of the day.

Pants and Women

Deuteronomy 22:5 says, "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God." This plain truth is easy to understand. But when I discarded my slacks and pants to wear simple dresses and skirts to be the lady God called me to be, much animosity and agitation were aroused in some of my Christian sisters who were close to me. Yet I was not pushing or even encouraging others to do the same, just quietly following God myself. In fact, several counseled me with arguments and excuses why this verse no longer applies today. Yet in my mind God kept impressing upon me, "I am the same yesterday, today and forever." I sought the Lord's will in prayer and further study. In doing so I was impressed in prayer and confirmed in studies that my course was God's will for me and I was to follow God in this "Thus saith the Lord" and not to follow man or man's reasonings.

I read Testimonies, vol. 1, 421: "There is an increasing tendency to have women in their dress and appearance as near like the other sex as possible, and to fashion their dress very much like that of men, but God pronounces it abomination." Let us rather be women "adorned in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety." 1 Timothy 2:9. It still applies to us today. We then must ask ourselves, Are these slacks or form-fitting dress pants, God's will for women, or for me? Or what about the sloppy, baggy pants; are they depicting neatness, orderliness and purity?

Surely some will ask, Is there no place for slacks? My response is, let us give each other room to grow in Christ. I encourage my sisters to seek counsel from God rather than man, and to go study with a heart willing to learn, not excusing self or condemning that sister who does not hold the same perspective as ours. Go to see what God would have you to do.

Instead of condemning or entering into needless controversy with one another let us bring each other before the throne of grace for Christ to work in each of our hearts and lives today. Should a sister feel there is a place in her wardrobe for modest, nonbaggy, nonform-fitting slacks for those occasional activities—horseback riding, climbing ladders and perhaps a few others—can we not let that sister have the religious liberty to follow her conscience before God? Surely we must.

Let us realize, "To many the externals are the sum total of religion, and yet it will be evidenced that the heart has not that genuine courtesy which alone is of value with God." Testimonies to Ministers, 196. Let it be said of us that our externals give true evidence of the indwelling Christ.

Fashion

"How many of them, when not in fashion, would be declared immodest; how many would be pronounced inappropriate for a refined, God-fearing, self-respecting woman." The Ministry of Healing, 290; see also Testimonies, vol. 4, 647 and Review and Herald, vol. 5, 89-90

Dear friends, we are not addressing just the obvious issues of bosom-baring, shape-accentuating, short-skirt fashions, all too commonly seen in the dress of professed Christians today. Let us look a little closer. Can not this style stir up men's baser passions just as much as the former mentioned styles? Satan's cunning must be seen for what it truly is, for he uses fashion successfully to crucify Christ's character and to destroy us.

As we look even closer into this issue, not spending much time pouring through many catalogs, sales or not, that come into our homes, or walking the malls looking for just the right color of shoes to match a new color just added to our bulging closets? Is this not equally a shameful use of our time and means? Has Christ directed us to use our time and means in this manner?

Do you see Satan's purposes and intentions here? He has obviously taken the world captive. God's people need to be warned; fashion is ever keeping our time and means occupied or consumed. Its ever changingness encourages us to gather unto ourselves far beyond our true needs. Let us choose to live according to principle and no longer to fashion. Let us repent and say in all honesty, "Lord, forgive me; I now see it clearly. By grace I want my closet to reflect Christ from this day forward. Show me the errors of my ways and teach me to trust and follow You. I choose to put on Christ, and let You rule over me as my Lord and Saviour of the inner me first, but also the outer me that it may reflect You by grace."

With a repentance and commitment like this, our closets will represent "divine" self-denial effectually working in us. What might that closet look like? I see a few favorite choice colors that co-ordinate well. Careful planning and close differentiating between wants and needs are characterized in this wardrobe for each season. I see a few work blouses, a few dress blouses and everyday blouses, a modest number of skirts to meet the varying needs of life and a few well-chosen dresses, again to meet...
true needs and not wants. Self-denial is characterized. You will find that even this simple, modest wardrobe will take three or more years to wear out. Amazing, is it not? You know Americans do not wear out their clothes today; it is more customary to just grow tired of them, for there are too many. How much simpler life can be, do you see? I have wasted time wearily gathering unto myself the excessive contents of my closet. What a burden it was! And you know, I was never really satisfied with more. We could even live in a smaller home and live well on a smaller income if we continued with this principle. Once this modest wardrobe is established, the only shopping necessary is to replace an article of clothing now and then when it wears out. How simple this is! Simplify, simplify, simplify—what a blessing in conforming to God's ways!

In redeeming this time, I can now spend more time with my Lord and Saviour in His Word, prayer and contemplation of how He can redeem me. This wise use of my time transforms my heart from self-serving to godliness. Now God dresses the inner and the outer me with Christ, and His meek and quiet spirit will be evident to all, that I have met with Jesus today. "God is the author of all beauty, and only as we conform to His ideal shall we approach the standard of true beauty." The Ministry of Healing, 292. With Christ indwelling, we are beautiful in thought, word, deed and dress. Thank you, Lord, for freeing me from the drudgery of fashion. Oh, what love!

Clothing That Breathes

How important are the fibers of my clothing in my Christian walk? There are some real physical advantages to wearing clothing fibers that breathe. Let us realize cotton is only one of several fibers that do breathe. And breathing is important. But how much more essential and vital for the life and health of our body, mind, and especially our soul, is the indwelling Christ! How much more important it is to learn of connecting with Christ so that our souls can breathe Heaven's life-giving atmosphere of grace! Without this essential, continual abiding of Christ in us, we have no life, no breath to walk the walk of right living. How much more essential it is than the issue of wearing only cotton!

Christ has gained for me His robe of righteousness, made of heavenly fibers, with not one thread of human devisings. He has also gained entrance to heaven and will bring me in with Him, if I yield self and let Him clothe me. This robe is mine, if I learn to co-operate in implicit obedience and learn how to put on Christ fully. In this covering there can be no man-made fiber of selfishness. Here we must examine ourselves closely, and these selfish fibers must be given up and Christ's fibers of doing right replace them. Let not cotton consume our time, means and thought. But rather let Christ be the center of these things.

I entreat you to follow Christ, and not man, in order to determine what changes God is calling you to make today, in what fibers of clothing you put on your external bodies, or any aspect of dressing for Jesus. This decision must come between God, His Word and you in the secret chambers of your prayer life. But I strongly admonish you without delay to seek to let Christ live in you, which is the weightier matter and will lead you in your search of true heavenly outward adorning. If this inward adorning is missing or neglected, all outward dress is vanity and not pleasing to God. God wants our whole hearts. We need Christ to dwell in us, to influence and redeem our inner selves first, in order for us to be enabled to put on the externals—the modest, life-giving robe of right doing. Our characters are our robes, and they must be examined daily, whether every fiber of our lives are of God or of self. This concern is indeed the weightier matter of the law. It must be done, and not the other matters left undone. I caution you to follow God and not man, custom or tradition in this vital issue. What fibers or ways of my Christian walk need to be replaced by the fibers or ways of Heaven's order? Does irritation rule over me in my dealings with my spouse, children or friends? These fibers or ways of selfishness can and must be replaced by Christ's new nature in wisdom, love and self-control. This real question must be asked regarding what fibers I shall wear.

Dear friends, consider that this inner beauty, rest, and peace, which God longs to put in us, is purchased with our time, communion with God, and the right action of our wills. This full heart-surrender requires both hearing and doing. Since it requires more time than we realize, let us commence immediately to "redeem the time, for the days are evil." It is the best investment of our time and means for now and eternity. Let us put on Christ in our inner self, that Christ's beauty may be manifested in truth to all around us by what we wear, what we say, and what we do. In this way we proclaim a risen Saviour in our lives. To God be this glory, for He hath redeemed us from the pit and drudgery of fashion and custom. God has left the choice with us.

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