The Maginot Line of Adventism
Man's Responses to Apostasy
My Last Will and Testament on the Subject of Education
Crisis: God's Solutions

Christ Is God, see page 4
As it was in the days of Noah and Lot, so shall it be in the time of our Lord’s return. Let us refresh our memory by reading the words of our Lord. “They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.” Luke 17:27-30

In Noah’s day the world was corrupt and filled with violence. There were murders of every grade. Men were giants physically and mentally, and they had used their giant intellect in pursuits of selfishness, covetousness, and immorality until righteousness was about to be extinguished from the face of the earth. God was forced to take the matter in hand. Our prophet summarizes the history of that age in these prophetic words:

“The sin of the antediluvians was in perverting that which in itself was lawful. They corrupted God’s gifts by using them to minister to their selfish desires. The indulgence of appetite and base passion made their imaginations altogether corrupt. The antediluvians were slaves of Satan, led and controlled by him.” The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 1, 1090

“Before the destruction of the old world by a flood, there were talented men, men who possessed skill and knowledge. But they became corrupt in their imagina-
tion, because they left God out of their plans and councils. They were wise to do what God had never told them to do, wise to do evil. The Lord saw that this example would be deleterious to those who should afterwards be born, and He took the matter in hand. For one hundred twenty years He sent them warnings through His servant Noah. But they used the probation so graciously granted them in ridiculing Noah. They caricatured him and criticized him. They laughed at him for his peculiar earnestness and intense feeling in regard to the judgments which He declared God would surely fulfill. They talked of science and of the laws controlling nature. Then they held a carnival over the words of Noah, calling him a crazy fanatic. God’s patience was exhausted. He said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.’” Ibid.

The warning was given for 120 years that God would destroy the world by flood for its wickedness. Noah faithfully gave the warning both to the world and to the church. And he was maltreated by both. They made sport of His words, mocked and ridiculed the building of the ark. They considered him a fanatic.

Many believed Noah and aided him in the building of the ark. Some who were faithful to the message died before the flood; others grew careless and indifferent to the warnings and perished in the flood. See The Story of Redemption, 62–71. And so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Lord.

Yes, the same violence, the same corruption and immorality will again fill the earth as it did then. And we must confess that now it is the same as, or worse than, the days of Noah. The cities of the world and even the smaller towns are almost now overcome with violence, drugs, immorality, and gang wars. Murders of every grade. No one is now safe. Wars are breaking out all over the world. Famines and pestilence and disease are destroying millions. The AIDS disease is God’s curse on the immoral; but tragically the innocent also suffer.

World leaders are powerless to stop the onrushing torrent of evil and to find solutions to the world’s mad rush to oblivion. But Jesus tells us that the world will be caught up in the same immorality that was the cause of the destruction of Sodom in Lot’s day.

Let us not forget that Sodom and the cities of the plains were very small in comparison to the cities of the world today. San Francisco is considered the homosexual capital of the world. Gay parades are attended by 300,000 to 500,000 people. So-called Christian churches are ordaining gay pastors and now we have a president of the United States who is insisting that we legalize homosexuality in the military. He is determined to ignore the millions of fundamental Christians to satisfy the demands of the gay community.

The days of Noah and Lot are now here. Eternity rests on the horizon of our immoral world. The Sunday laws, the little time of trouble, and the close of our probation may soon become reality.

God will again be forced to intervene. The destruction of this world is now inevitable. The messenger of the Lord describes it in these prophetic words: “Men and women living in these cities are rapidly becoming more and more entangled in their business relations. They are acting wildly in the erection of buildings whose towers reach high into the heavens. Their minds are filled with schemes and ambitious devisings. ’I am bidden to declare the message that cities full of transgression, and sinful in the extreme, will be destroyed by earthquakes, by fire, by flood. All the world will be warned that there is a God who will display His authority as God. His unseen agencies will cause destruction, devastation, and death. All the accumulated riches will be as nothingness.” Evangelism, 27

These awful scenes of destruction are now a warning to Seventh-day Adventists of the reality of the fast-approaching day of God’s wrath. The angel said “Get ready, get ready, get ready!” See Early Writings, 64, 66.

May God help us now to prepare.

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

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Invitation to Writers

We are accepting article-length (2300-3600 words) manuscripts for possible publication in Our Firm Foundation. We cannot give consideration to longer submissions. Whenever possible, we ask that manuscripts be submitted either on 3½- or 5½-inch floppy disk in IBM ASCII format or neatly typed, using double-spacing. If you desire notice of a decision in regard to your article, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Address all correspondence to Editors, Our Firm Foundation, P.O. Box 940, Eatonville, WA 98328.
Christ Is God

VARIOUS groups throughout Bible history have sought to treat Christ as less than divine—a created or derived being. Now there are even some among Seventh-day Adventists, or former Seventh-day Adventists, who are speaking against the existence of a Trinity. For some of these persons their antitrinitarian stance is the major thrust of their outreach to others.

Ellen White has stated, “God means that testing truth shall be brought to the front and become a subject of examination and discussion, even if it is through the contempt placed upon it. The minds of the people must be agitated. Every controversy, every reproach, every slander will be God’s means of provoking inquiry and awakening minds that otherwise would slumber.” Testimonies, vol. 5, 453

That there are three Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is part of the fundamental doctrinal beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But many of us have assumed the veracity of this fundamental belief without studying it as fully as we should. We thus become open to the subtlety of those sharp minds which speak against the existence of a Trinity. God in His great love allows us to be challenged, that our study and understanding will be deeper and be based on a “Thus saith the Lord.” “God will arouse His people; if other means fail, heresies will come in among them, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat.” Ibid., 707

One God

A very central scripture of the fundamental Jewish belief is the “Shema”—the statement of the Torah in Deuteronomy 6:4. “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.” In the Hebrew of the Old Testament, two different Hebrew terms are used that are translated in the English as “one.” “Yachad” is found in Genesis 22:2, 12, 16, “thine only son.” The meaning conveyed by “Yachad” is “the one and only.” Thus “Yachad” gives an exclusiveness to the term “one”—one by itself, none other. “Echad” is found in Genesis 2:24, speaking of a married man and woman as “one flesh,” but being inclusive of two persons. This definition is a “unity” of one. More than one is included, but because of the sameness or united aspect, they are considered as one. Again “echad” is found in Exodus 24:3, “All the people answered with ONE voice.” This is the unity one, as many are found within the one.

“Echad,” the unity one, is found in the “Shema” (Deuteronomy 6:4), “one Lord.” Therefore the way of the Trinity is opened to fit within the idea of one God, and this plurality of persons within the one-God concept is reinforced by other scripture. Genesis 1:26 for instance reads, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” Elohim, the Hebrew plural of God, is the generic term used for God throughout Genesis 1, as well as in many other places in the Old Testament. In Genesis 15:2 the word “Adonai,” the plural form of the Hebrew, is used for Lord. “And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?” The singular of this same word is found in Genesis 18:12, referring to man, “Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, after I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord [Abram] being old also?” The one God is very clearly a plural God within a unity-God form.

In Matthew, the third chapter, verses 13–17 describe Jesus at the Jordan River for His baptism. The Holy Spirit very
clearly and separately, “like a dove,”
descends from heaven and lights upon Him. Then a voice from heaven, from
the Father, speaks, “This is my beloved
Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew 28:19 counsels us to baptize
“in the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Ghost.” Ellen White
speaks of the triune God in Evangelism,
614–615, “There are three living persons
of the heavenly trio.” “The Father is all
the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and is invisible to mortal sight. The Son is all the
fullness of the Godhead manifested.”
The Comforter that Christ promised to
send after He ascended to heaven, is the
Spirit in all the fullness of the Godhead,
making manifest the power of divine
grace to all who receive and believe in
Christ as a personal Saviour.”

While at Avondale School, Ellen
White spoke to the students concerning
this third person of the Godhead, “We
need to realize that the Holy Spirit, who
is as much a person as God is a person, is
walking through these grounds.” Ibid.,
616. “The prince of the power of evil can
only be held in check by the power of
God in the third person of the Godhead,
the Holy Spirit.” Ibid., 617

The Divinity of Christ

“In Christ is life, original, unbor-
rowed, underived. ‘He that hath the Son
hath life.’ 1 John 5:12. . . . “The divin-
ity of Christ is the believer’s assurance
of eternal life.” The Desire of Ages, 530.
Therefore Satan, the one who desires to
steal away our eternal life, will seek in
every way he can to convince us that
Jesus is not God equal with the Father.

But the Scripture, as well as the
Spirit of Prophecy, is clear that Jesus is
God. Ellen White in Testimonies to Min-
isters, 253, counsels Seventh-day Ad-
ventists to give the Lord an opportunity
to “give the people a fair chance to know
that we are believers in Christ, that we
do believe in the divinity of Christ and in
His pre-existence.”

Jesus, Himself, in John 5:23 points out
“all men should honour the Son, even as
they honour the Father.” Jehovah’s Wit-
nesses and those Seventh-day Adventists
who reduce the position of the Son to a
lesser position than that of the Father,
actually dishonor the Father, for Jesus
goes on to say, “He that honoureth not the
Son honoureth not the Father which hath
sent him.” He then connects eternal life
with the right understanding of the words
He has just spoken in regard to the Father
and the Son.

John 5:18 says that the Jews sought to
kill Jesus because through His statements
He had made “himself equal with God.”
And the Jews became more upset with
Jesus because He claimed to be the great I
AM (John 8:51–59), the Jehovah or Yaweh
of the Old Testament. They sought to stone
Him for this claim. The Jews again tried to
stone Jesus (John 10:31) when He stated, “I
and my Father are one.” Verse 30. They
said they were doing so because they saw
Him as a man, while He was claiming to be
God. Verse 33. Jesus in the next verses
adds to His claim of being God.

brought up with Him.” Signs of the
Times, vol. 4, 142

According to Isaiah 9:6, Christ is our
everlasting Father. Ellen White also says,
“Jesus is not only our Shepherd; He is our
everlasting Father.” The Desire of Ages,
483. “By His humanity, Christ touched
humanity; by His divinity, He lays hold
upon the throne of God. . . . It was Christ
who from the bush on Mount Horeb
spoke to Moses saying, ‘I AM THAT I
AM. . . . Thus shalt thou say unto the
children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto
you.’ Exodus 3:14. This was the pledge of
Israel’s deliverance. So when He came in
the likeness of men,’ He declared Himself

It is the “Son of man” whose name shall be
called, “Wonderful Counselor, The mighty
God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of
peace”

Jesus did hold back, however, His
divinity while upon this earth, appearing in
His humanity and allowing the Father’s
divinity to work through Him that He might
be an example for us, showing what could
be accomplished when divinity is com-
bined with humanity. See John 8:28. For
instance, Ellen White tells us that “Human-
ity combined with divinity does not com-
mitt sin.” The Ministry of Healing, 180

There are many statements in the
Spirit of Prophecy which reinforce the
divinity of Christ. “The Lord Jesus Christ,
the divine Son of God, existed from
eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the
Father. He was the surpassing glory of
heaven. He was the commander of the
heavenly intelligences, and the adoring
homage of the angels was received by
Him as His right. This was no robbery of
God.” Review and Herald, vol. 5, 227

Speaking of the Father and Son,
Sister White says, “They are one in
purpose, in mind, in character, but not in
person. It is thus that God and Christ are
one.” The Ministry of Healing, 422

“In speaking of His preexistence,
Christ carries the mind back through
dateless ages. He assures us that there
never was a time when He was not in
close fellowship with the eternal God.
He to whose voice the Jews were then
listening had been with God as one

the 1 AM. The child of Bethlehem, the
meek and lowly Saviour is God ‘manifest
in the flesh.’ 1 Timothy 3:16. And to us He
says ‘I AM the good Shepherd,’ ‘I AM the
living Bread,’ ‘I AM the Way, the Truth,
and the Life.’ . . . ‘I AM the assurance of
every promise.’ ‘I AM; be not afraid.’
‘God with us’ is the surety of our deliver-
ance. . . . It is the ‘Son of man’ whose
name shall be called, ‘Wonderful Coun-
selor, The mighty God, The everlasting
Father, The Prince of peace.’ Isaiah 9:6. The
I AM is the Daysman between God and
humanity, laying His hand upon
both.” The Desire of Ages, 24–25

“The hand that sustains the worlds in
space, the hand that holds in their
orderly arrangement and tireless activity
all things throughout the universe of
God, is the hand that was nailed to the
cross for us.” Education, 132

Remember, brothers and sisters, “the
divinity of Christ is the believer’s as-
surance of eternal life.” The Desire of
Ages, 530. Do not let Satan, through the
deceit of a silver tongue, steal that as-
surance from you by lowering the position
of our beloved Saviour in your sight.

Handling Difficult Statements

Often Satan’s subtility is brought to
bear upon the Christian believer through
the misuse of statements found in the Bible. Some of those statements used to undercut the divinity of Christ are analyzed in the following paragraphs.

In John 3:16 Jesus is referred to as the "only begotten Son." Therefore if Jesus is begotten, He has a beginning. This concept was the view of Arius. But let us look at this word, "begotten." The Greek word from which begotten is translated in the King James Bible is "monogenes." In the New Testament this word is used nine times—five times in regard to Christ, four times to others. It is applied to Jesus in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; and 1 John 4:9. It is applied to others in Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; and Hebrews 11:17.

Now, in order to analyze this word we go to a Greek dictionary. "Monogenes" means "one of a kind." The Greek-English Lexicon by Lidell-Scott says: "the only member of a gender or a kind, single." Moultan-Milligan states: "one of a kind, only, unique," not "only begotten," which would be "monogennos."

In the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Greek word "monogenes" is used three times and translated from the Hebrew word YACHID, meaning "one and only one." Two of the places where it is found are Psalm 22:20 (see margin in King James Version), "my only one"; and Psalm 35:17 (see margin in King James Version) "only one."

Thus this term "monogenes" should be translated as "one of a kind," "unique," or "only one," not "only begotten." In the non-Christ passages where "monogenes" occurs in Luke 7:12 it is translated in the King James Version as "only" without the term "begotten." And in Luke 8:42 the King James again uses "only," meaning "one of a kind." In Luke 9:38, the King James translates "monogenes" as "only," "single one" or "unique."

However, in Hebrews 11:17, the King James refers to Isaac as the "only begotten" son of Abraham. But, Isaac was not even the first son of Abraham, let alone the only begotten son. The word really means "unique" or "one of a kind," the only one of the promise.

When the authors in the New Testament have used monogenes, they have used it to show that a particular human is unique, very beloved to the heart of someone. Jesus is one of a kind, only one, unique one—the Yachid one.

In Colossians 1:15 is another difficult phrase, "the firstborn over all creation." The problem here cannot be attributed to a bad translation. The question arises, If Christ was "firstborn," then He must have been born, and how can He be everlasting?

The Greek term used is "prototokos" and is used in the New Testament seven times in referring to Jesus. Two of the passages refer to His birth from Mary and therefore are no problem. See Matthew 1:25 and Luke 2:7. The other five create more of a theological problem: Romans 8:29, "firstborn among many brothers"; Colossians 1:15, "firstborn of all creation"; Colossians 1:18, "firstborn among the dead"; Hebrews 1:5, "firstborn into the world"; and Revelation 1:5, "firstborn from the dead."

In analyzing this term, we must understand how it was used in Bible times. The basic Jewish social structure was built around the son who was firstborn. The firstborn son had privileges that applied only to him. He had authority over the younger sons. He took the place of the father if the father died. He was also to be the priest of the family.

Isaac was thought of as Abraham's firstborn because he was the son of promise, on whom all the privileges would be bestowed. He was not physically the firstborn son of Abraham.

Contrary to custom, not Esau, but Jacob received all the privileges of the firstborn. This bestowal again was not in accord with the physical order of birth. Jacob then had 12 sons, but his firstborn, Reuben, lost the dignity of that position because he slept with his father's wife. The sovereignty of the firstborn went to Judah, while the priesthood went to the Levites. The Messiah reunited the sovereignty with the priesthood. Christ is both Priest and King. Since he could not be born of both, He was born of Judah.

This Jewish background is important when we look at the phrases speaking of Jesus as firstborn. The term "prototokos," or firstborn, in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, is used 130 times, 74 of which appear in the Pentateuch. In the majority of the usages, it applies to an actual physical birth of a human or an animal being lower in status in a family, but there are exceptions.

In Psalm 89:20–27, David is spoken of as "my firstborn" referring to him as the highest of all kings. 1 Samuel 16:10–12, states that David was not Jesse's firstborn, but in fact was the youngest. The chronological sequence of the physical birth was not important, for firstborn refers here to status.

In Exodus 4:22 Israel is called "my firstborn," but in reality Israel, or Jacob, was born after Esau. See Genesis 25:25–26 and Genesis 32:28. In Jeremiah 31:9 Ephraim is referred to as "my firstborn" while in reality Manasseh was the firstborn. Genesis 41:50–52

The passages referring to Jesus as the firstborn, with the exception of those referring to His physical birth, are showing that Jesus is unique in some way. He is one of a kind. He had the rights and privileges usually associated with the firstborn of a Jewish family. The whole Creation should look upon Him as the only one of a kind. Others rose from the dead before Him, Moses and Lazarus for instance. But He was unique among those who arose from the dead.

We look at these phrases from a Western mindset rather than the way we should—from that of a Jew.

In Hebrews 1:5 is the phrase, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." Not only does this verse say that He was begotten but also gives a definite time, "this day." What do we do with this? The Greek is "gegenneka" meaning "I have begotten." This expression is found in Psalm 2:7 (Septuagint); Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5 and Hebrews 5:5 in the context of the high priesthood of Christ. The statements in the New Testament are quotations from Psalm 2:7.

Then in order to analyze this word, we go first to Psalm 2:7 to read the whole
context, and find that it is a coronation psalm. The weakest moment in rule occurs when a king replaces a previous king. At this point people will try to break away from the rulership, if they are going to. But this psalm claims that God is in control of the coronation, that God is setting up His king. Since the king is an adult, it cannot refer to his physical birth.

This psalm refers to that day when the king is placed within his office. It states that he has now entered into a unique relationship with God (representative of God).

In 2 Samuel 7:14, God speaks through Nathan the prophet to David about Solomon saying, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son." How would the Jewish mind see this relationship?

Solomon Frechot's commentary of the Old Testament on Psalms, states that the phrase under study is used in a symbolic sense. In like manner, the passage in Psalm 2:7 referring to "thou art my Son; this day I have begotten thee," means that on the day of enthronement, the king became the servant of God. The Son was "begotten."

In Hebrews 1:5 the phrase is used in the same way to refer, not to the birth of Jesus, but to His enthronement. The Hebrew mind would understand. Paul uses the same phrase in Acts 13:33 to refer to the resurrection of Christ. As in baptism where the new birth is symbolized by the resurrection from the watery grave, so the resurrection of Jesus is like a new birth; Jesus is "begotten" that day.

Jesus is divine. He is the great I AM of the Old Testament. He is the everlasting Father. He is our Saviour as well as our Lord, and on our understanding and partaking of His divinity rests our eternal life. Satan will seek to take Christ's divinity away, as he has sought to say that the law has been done away, or that we cannot keep the law. He will attack in whatever way he feels he can to undermine our eternal life. Do not let him steal away your right to the tree of life, which comes only through a right relationship built on a right understanding of Jesus Christ.

1 "Arius (A.D. 250-336) denied the eternity and absolute deity of Christ, and made Him the first and highest of created beings."—"Christology," Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, 250

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"ISSUES:"
Confusion or Solutions

It is sad but true—tension exists between the leaders of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventist and certain Independent Ministries, including Hope International. Many of God's people are burdened and confused concerning the reasons for this tension, and the question is frequently asked, "Are there no solutions?"

We at Hope International sincerely believe that the "solution" to the present crisis can be found in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, yet it will require a death to self, and a full-hearted commitment to follow, not Hope International or Our Firm Foundation, but "the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Revelation 14:4

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April 1993 Our Firm Foundation 7
THE MAGINOT LINE OF ADVENTISM, PART 2

One of the most serious problems in defining legalism occurs because of misunderstanding over what the Bible means when it says we are not saved by works. Bible students throughout the ages have wrestled with what seem to be contradictions on this point, especially between some of Paul's statements and those in the Epistle of James. Martin Luther went so far as to maintain that the book of James should have been left out of the Bible.

Luther also overlooked Philippians 2:12-13: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” Notice this passage does not say that we work in response to a completed salvation. Rather, it says we work out the process of salvation in conjunction with God's work within us. Commenting on these verses, Ellen White states: “Divine agencies are combining with the human in reshaping the character according to the perfect pattern, and man is to work out that which God works in.”

The need to be careful here, of course. We dare not describe the forsaking of sin as though it were an act of appeasing God, or some pointless self-abasement on our part. Heathen religion is full of such ritual, little of which ever touches the heart. The abandonment of sin is a condition of receiving forgiveness only because known sin of any kind is a mortal threat to the work of grace. It is not a question of earning God's favor; it is a question of permitting God's power to take full control. In any case, Ellen White is in total harmony with Scripture when she writes, “No man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ's righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place.”

Kevin Paulson, an avid student of Scripture as it relates to current events, writes from Redlands, California.
At the bottom line, Paul’s statement in Philippians 2:12–13 bears a striking resemblance to the passage so despised by Luther in the Epistle of James: “You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.” James 2:24

Jesus told two kinds of parables. Some emphasize God’s initiative—a sheep and a coin which cannot possibly contribute anything to their own redemption. Others emphasize man’s response—selling all of one’s possessions to buy a field with a hidden treasure or a pearl of great price. There is no contradiction here, just different points emphasized. In commenting on the parable of the pearl, Ellen White writes:

“In the parable the pearl is not represented as a gift. The merchantman bought it at the price of all that he had. Many question the meaning of this, since Christ is represented in the Scriptures as a gift. He is a gift, but only to those who give themselves, soul, body, and spirit, to Him without reserve. We are to give ourselves to Christ, to live a life of willing obedience to all His requirements.”

How, then, do we harmonize these passages with other statements (see Romans 3:20, 28; Ephesians 2:8–9) which declare that salvation is not by works? I believe the answer lies in the use by Paul and James of three Old Testament illustrations, each from the life of Abraham.

We speak here of the birth of Ishmael, the birth of Isaac, and Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac. Paul states that the birth of Ishmael by Hagar was according to the flesh, while the birth of Isaac by Sarah was according to the promise. See Galatians 4:23. God had promised Abraham that he would have an heir, and that his descendants would be numerous as the stars of heaven. See Genesis 15:5. But Abraham, prefiguring legalists in every age, chose to devise his own way of carrying out God’s plan. God wished to illustrate, through the birth of the promised heir, man’s total reliance on Heaven’s power in the faith relationship that brings salvation. But the birth of Ishmael through Hagar required no such miracle, for Hagar was fully fertile and capable of childbearing. By contrast, Sarah was not. Hence the birth of Isaac required just such a miracle.

But one point is often forgotten here. Abraham had a role to perform in the conception of Isaac just as he did in the conception of Ishmael. Isaac was not virgin-born, as Jesus was. The book of Hebrews speaks of Christ taking on “the seed of Abraham,” Hebrews 2:16, KJV. The Greek word for seed is spermatos, which refers to Abraham’s physical substance. Obviously, the same physical act which resulted in the birth of one son was essential to the birth of the other. The difference was that one required no faith, while the other did. One was an act performed independently of God; the other was performed by His direction and through His power.

Abraham’s faith in the conception of Isaac was even more graphically illustrated in his willingness to sacrifice the son of promise on the summit of Mount Moriah at God’s command. Thus James asks, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar?” James 2:21

Obviously, we are dealing here with two different kinds of works. One kind is motivated by self, the other is motivated and empowered by God. The first involves human power by itself, the second involves the cooperation of the human with the divine. The first kind will save no one, for it is powerless to remove sin completely from the life. The second kind is the means by which biblical salvation is accomplished.

When we discuss what it means to be saved by faith or by works, we need to ask the all-important question: What is salvation? Too many people think of salvation simply as a ticket to heaven. But the Bible offers a much broader picture. The first reference to salvation in the New Testament declares, “You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21. Does the process of saving man from sin involve human effort as well as divine initiative, sanctification as well as justification? According to Scripture, the answer is an emphatic Yes (1 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 6:12; Philippians 2:12–13; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 12:4; James 4:7; 1 John 3:3). On the basis of these passages we are forced to conclude that human effort, empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit, is an integral part of the salvation process. Since being ultimately saved from sin is what biblical salvation is all about, it follows that being saved and being sinless are one and the same thing. The same Ellen White who says we cannot say we are sinless, also says we cannot say we are saved. She makes this connection most clearly in the following statement:

If we are disobedient, our characters are out of harmony with God’s moral rule of government, and it is stating a falsehood to say, “I am saved.”

“If we are disobedient, our characters are out of harmony with God’s moral rule of government, and it is stating a falsehood to say, ‘I am saved.’ No one is saved who is a transgressor of the law of God, which is the foundation of His government in heaven and in earth.”

The process of being saved from sin will, of course, be completed before Jesus comes (2 Peter 3:11–14; 1 John 3:3). But only then, when the voice of God turns the captivity of His people and the accolade is thundered from the sky, “They came! They came! holy, harmless, and undefiled,” will such claims be safe on the lips of God’s saints. Only God knows the depths of every heart; thus it is He alone who can pronounce the human soul free from sin.

Some will recall certain inspired statements which speak of salvation as occurring in the past tense. Titus 3:5 does speak of how “He saved us,” in terms of a deed already done. Ellen White declares that the perishing sinner, looking to Calvary, may say, “I need not remain a moment longer unsaved.” The difference between these passages and those cited above is the difference between salvation from known sin, which the believer can be aware of, and salvation from all sin, a process whose completion time is known only to God.
Ellen White makes this distinction in her use of the passage in Colossians 2:10: "Ye are complete in him" (KJV). In one passage she writes, "Every soul may say: ... He clothes me with His righteousness, which answers all the demands of the law. I am complete in Him who brings in everlasting righteousness."12 Yet in another passage she states, "It is our lifework to be reaching forward to the perfection of Christian character, striving constantly for con-

formity to God's will. Day by day we are to press upward, ever upward, until of us it can be said, 'Ye are complete in him.' Colossians 2:10."13 These statements are not at all in conflict. They simply describe two different processes—one whose completion time the believer can know, the other whose completion time is known only to God, since He alone knows the secrets of the heart. When an evangelical Christian asks a Seventh-day Adventist, "Are you saved?" the most biblically faithful answer we can give is, "I am in the process of being saved."

What, then, is the basis of our assurance? The fact that God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). He wants me in heaven more than I want to be there. The legalist thinks of God as the military drill instructor who vows to "use every means necessary, fair and unfair," to wash his cads out of the program. The God who seeks our salvation is not at all like this. He pursues untiringly the wayward hearts of men, yearning desperately for us to stop and permit His power to work itself upon us. Speaking of God's stubborn love, the prophet writes, "The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus; a knowledge of the plan of salvation will lead him to the foot of the cross in repentance for his sins, which have caused the sufferings of God's dear Son."14

At the same time, the Scriptures promise no assurance which transcends the practical choices of our daily lives. Neither Scripture nor Ellen White makes any distinction between choosing Christ and choosing obedience. A cursory glance, the momentary loss of temper, the frequent lapse into gossip, whispering. But the prophet declares, "However great the pressure brought to bear upon the soul, transgression is our own act."15 Every action we take is our responsibility, and in every decision relative to the counsel of God, a decision is thereby made for or against God. However, the opportunity for repentance will always exist for the heart not sufficiently hardened against it, for the Lord desperately seeks our repentance. When probation closes, God will have granted sufficient light and grace to either convert or fully harden every heart. I frankly have little patience with these "assurance" illustrations which speak, for example, of a man nailing shingles on a roof who accidentally strikes his thumb and utters a curse word, then tumbls over with a heart attack and dies, whereupon the audience is solemnly assured that such a one will be saved, so long as the "trend of his life" was in the right direction. Illustrations like these are truly an exercise in presumption. In the first place, only God knows the final thoughts of the heart at such a moment. And most of all, neither history nor circumstance ever takes God by surprise. No one ever dies by accident, with believers thus requiring some celestial "insurance policy" to cover them in case of such an accident. While tragedy and death are never part of God's ideal, He remains in full command of all such events. At the very least, when someone dies, it is by virtue of God's permission. And the decision regarding the salvation or damnation of such a one is God's province, and His alone. I for one am willing to trust His fairness, and to base my assurance thereupon.

"But," someone asks, "does the Bible not say that we may know that we have eternal life?" Indeed it does. See 1 John 5:13. But eternal life, as spoken of in the writings of John the apostle, is a reference to the new-birth experience, not a finished salvation. As the apostle concludes the very chapter where the above verse is found, this point is clarified: "We are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." 1 John 5:20. Jesus made a similar statement in the gospel of John: "And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." John 17:3. Ellen White says the same thing: "It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal."16 Thus, to say that one has eternal life, as explained in these passages, is not the same as saying that one's salvation is done and completed. When Scripture speaks of salvation and being saved, we find very different language. In the words of Jesus, "He who endures to the end will be saved." Matthew 24:13

Recently I attended a series of meetings in which a gentleman spoke of his years as a missionary in Africa and how young people from the evangelical churches were supposedly better able than Adventists to face persecution because they, unlike the Adventists, possessed full assurance of salvation. This brother needs to read The Great Controversy again. Speaking of the saints who endure the time of Jacob's trouble, we read, "If they [the saints] could have the assurance of pardon they would not shrink from torture or death; but should they prove unworthy, and lose their lives because of their own defects of character, then God's holy name would be reproached."17 The word "if" makes it clear that the saints at this time will not have full assurance any more than Jesus did in Gethsemane or on the cross, where He cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Matthew 27:46. This absence of certainty will test the faith of the faithful like never before.
in history and thus make all the more splendid their ultimate triumph. The contemporary Adventist obsession with assurance, borrowed largely from Protestant evangelicals, represents a gross betrayal of the spirit of Adventism and a detraction from the future glory she will offer her Lord.

An interesting point is that neither Scripture nor Ellen White speaks of obedience as the fruit of a salvation already finished. Ellen White in particular speaks of obedience as the fruit of faith, but not of a completed salvation. She writes, "We do not earn salvation by our obedience; for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith."18 "Righteousness is right doing, and it is by their deeds that all will be judged. Our characters are revealed by what we do. The works show whether the faith is genuine."19 Notice she does not say the works show whether salvation is genuine. Salvation must be worked out through the process of sanctified obedience. It is correct to say that salvation is by faith alone, if by this we mean faith as opposed to all actions or ideas of the unconverted heart. The Bible says, "Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." Romans 14:23. Thus only works produced by faith can be part of the salvation process. Many willingly endorse the statement that we are saved by a faith that works, but they maintain that faith provides us with salvation before it ever starts working. But faith is never present unless it is working. The distinction made by Geoffrey Paxton and his evangelical Adventist sympathizers between "passive" and "active" righteousness20 is unknown to the pages of Inspiration. Biblical faith and the righteousness it brings, graphically illustrated in Hebrews 11, are always active.

"All Things Come of Thee"

Many believe with total sincerity that if man performs an active part in the salvation process, with or without divine aid, he can therefore take some of the credit for the final outcome. But this belief is incorrect. And the reason involves perhaps the most fundamental principle of righteousness by faith as taught in the Scriptures.

Jesus articulated a basic principle of social justice when He said to His disciples, "The labourer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7, KJV). The Old Testament indicates just how seriously God takes this principle, for it says that when God draws near to His people in judgment, He will bear witness "against those who oppress the hireling in his wages" (Malachi 3:5), and lists such oppressors alongside sorcerers and adulterers. Modern industrial strife and the consequent rise of labor unions offer grim evidence of the betrayal of this principle in human society.

But in the book of Romans, Paul speaks of salvation, not as deserved wages, but as a gift: "Now to one who works, his wages are not reckoned as a gift but as his due. And to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness" (Romans 4:4–5). Does this passage mean, in contrast to the others we have read, that salvation is attained without active human involvement? Or is a far deeper principle the issue here?

I believe David expressed the deepest truth of righteousness by faith in his final address as king of Israel. In his gratitude to God he prayed, "All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee" (1 Chronicles 29:14, KJV).

Given that the Old Testament and New Testament both "recognize ... the necessity of a balanced life."21 Contemporary Adventism has conditioned itself to believe that legalism of the pharisaic brand will be the church’s principal danger at the close of time.

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Given the sun, the clouds, the showers of rain, to cause vegetation to flourish. As God's employed servants you gathered in His harvest to use what your wants required in an economical way and hold the balance for the call of God. You can say with David, 'For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.' 1 Chronicles 29:14. So the satisfaction of creation merit cannot be in returning to the Lord His own, for it was always His own property to be used as He in His providence should direct. . . .

"Now not a soul can give God anything that is not already His. Bear this in mind: 'All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.' 1 Chronicles 29:14. This must be kept before the people wherever we go—that we possess nothing, can offer nothing in value, in work, in faith, which we have not first received of God and upon which He can lay His hand any time and say, They are Mine—gifts and blessings and endowments I entrusted to you, not to enrich yourself, but for wise improvement to benefit the world.

"The creation belongs to God. The Lord could, by neglecting man, stop his
This passage says it all. The impossibility of creature merit does not mean that man is denied any participatory role in salvation beyond passive belief. Neither this nor any other inspired statement teaches that. The absence of creature merit simply means that man can take no credit for his role in the process, because nothing he possesses at any time is his own. His co-operative effort is as much a gift of God as the power bestowed at conversion and ever after. As with the payment of tithes and offerings, he can only return to God what was His in the first place. This is the reason salvation cannot be earned. The process of earning requires two independent parties with independent resources, the one exchanging something of his for something belonging to the other. An employee gives to his employer time and effort, while in turn the employer gives the employee monetary pay. With man and God such an arrangement can never be, for everything in man’s stewardship—self-discipline, backbone, talent, means—was God’s to begin with. None need fear that stressing an active human role in salvation is going to give cause for boasting so long as this principle is understood.

Four Points

To summarize our discussion, four points stand out:

1. Contemporary Adventism has conditioned itself to believe that legalism of the pharisaic brand will be the church’s principal danger at the close of time. Books, articles, sermons, and classroom lectures have fortified this thought in the minds of Adventism’s current generation, much as the French fortified the Alsace-Lorraine frontier with the Maginot Line. But neither inspiration nor the evidence of current trends sustains this assumption. The overwhelming evidence of both makes clear that laxity, worldliness, and self-indulgence, not a pharisaic obsession with lawkeeping, will characterize the church at the end of time.

2. Neither John the Baptist, Jesus, nor Paul condemned the legalists of their day for emphasizing the law too much. Jesus never told the Pharisees that though they were experts on law and obedience, what they really needed were love and grace. However much contemporary Adventism may be fond of such distinctions, they are not found in the Bible. If anything, the rebukes leveled by these three make it clear that those addressed focused on the law too little rather than too much. As we saw earlier, John the Baptist challenged his audience to bring forth the fruits of repentance, and spoke of how trees not bearing good fruit will be thrown into the fire (Matthew 3:8,10). Jesus, of course, made a similar statement four chapters later, and spoke of good fruit representing obedience to His Father’s will. Matthew 7:19, 21. He later rebuked the scribes and the Pharisees for boasting “the weightier matters of the law” (Matthew 23:23), while Paul and James later instructed the church on the necessity of being doers, not simply hearers, of God’s Word. Romans 2:13; James 1:22.

3. The apparent conflict between certain Bible texts over whether good works form a part of the salvation process is resolved when we understand that two different kinds of works are in focus—the self-motivated works of the unconverted heart and the sanctified works of the transformed heart. The former can have no part in human salvation, for whatever is not of faith is sin. Romans 14:23. The latter, by contrast, form an integral part of the saving process. Philippians 2:12-13; James 2:24. The difference here is best illustrated by Abraham’s relationship with Hagar on the one hand, and his relationship with Sarah and his sacrifice of Isaac on the other. In all three events Abraham played an active role. But in the former case his actions were motivated by self; in the latter two they were motivated, directed, and empowered by God.

4. None need fear that an active human role in salvation will produce boasting so long as it is recognized that the power man possesses from birth is as much a gift of God as the power granted in the new birth. David’s declaration must ever be borne in mind. “For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.” I Chronicles 29:14, KJV. Man’s co-operative role in salvation is like the payment of tithes and offerings—returning to God what was His in the first place. It is God who makes possible the very air in our nostrils and the movement of our limbs. Ellen White speaks of how the cross of Christ is reflected in every water spring and stamped on every loaf of bread. Thus, for man to claim credit or merit for activity which God alone makes possible each moment is to indulge in the profoundest absurdity.

We now begin to understand just how wide of the mark the popular Adventist “righteousness by faith” movement has strayed in its definition of legalism. Rather than focus on the motive for obedience, which is the core of the issue, they have concluded that obedience itself should be de-emphasized in favor of a largely ambiguous emphasis on the love and grace of Jesus. In doing so, they have missed the point entirely. Ellen White complained that the church in her time had “preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa.” In the very next sentence she offers the solution, “We must preach Christ in the law.” The popular “righteousness by faith” movement in contemporary Adventism has failed to do this. They have reasoned instead that the solution is to preach Christ as distinct from the law, and then to let the law take care of itself. The assumption has been that to present a loving, non-threatening Jesus, apart from the clarity of the law and the doctrines, will somehow at a future time develop an automatic interest in the law.

The apparent conflict . . . is resolved when we understand that two different kinds of works are in focus—the self-motivated works of the unconverted heart and the sanctified works of the transformed heart.
and the doctrines. It has not happened. Indeed, just the opposite has happened. The de-emphasis of our distinctive doctrines and standards has eventually led to their denial. Perhaps the effort to distinguish Christ from the law and the doctrines has been made by sincere people, desirous of uplifting Jesus and revamping misplaced priority. But it has nevertheless laid the foundation for the greatest apostasy in Adventist history.

One other point deserves mention in this context. While fanaticism is who reprove their sins as “self-appointed.” No human being has the right to say another is self-appointed. Only God, who judges the heart, is aware of such things.

Returning once more to our original illustration, it seems that the Germans failed to learn the lesson they themselves inflicted on the French by circumventing the Maginot Line. Four years later, as the Allied liberation of western Europe drew near, the German High Command convinced itself that to observe a bride getting ready for a wedding without a considerable amount of work and preparation being required. At the same time, however exhausting, confusing, and even frustrating those preparations can be, I have never met a bride who did not radiate profound joy through it all. Such will be the experience of God’s people as they prepare for translation. In the words of the modern prophet:

“Where there is not only a belief in God’s Word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith—faith that works by love and purifies the soul

often a twin sister of legalism, as in the case of the Pharisees, the two are not always one and the same. Fanaticism is the pursuit of an extreme lifestyle in one or more areas of life. Such a person may indeed be misguided and in need of correction, but to call such a one a legalist is to question the motives of the heart. No human being has the right to do this. Legalism is not a question of what we do; it is a question of why we do it. No one but God has the right to call someone a legalist, since He alone knows the secrets of the heart.

This observation calls to mind a most fascinating irony. Conservative Adventists today are being accused of judgmentalism because they dare to call heresy and sin by their right names. In return many of their fellow church members have criticized them as legalists. If such persons only understood the biblical definition of legalism, they would understand that they themselves are guilty of judgmentalism, because to call someone a legalist is to impugn the motives of the heart. Pointing out right from wrong on the basis of God’s written counsel is not judging, but fruit-inspecting. Matthew 7:16–20. But to call someone a legalist is to claim that his words and actions are motivated by self. This judgmentalism-in-reverse is best illustrated by those who audaciously describe those the main Allied assault would come in the Pas-de-Calais, fifty miles up the coast from Normandy. Through fake troop concentrations, dummy landing craft, and simulated radio traffic, the Allies caused Field Marshals Rommel and Rundstedt to divert the major part of their forces from the intended landing site. Had the Germans not been thus fooled, the Anglo-American invasion would probably have failed. The French coast had been fortified by the Germans with far more ingenuity than the Maginot Line had ever been. But by foolishly believing that the Allied attack would likely occur at one place, the Normandy coast was left seriously vulnerable. The lessons of the Maginot Line were forgotten. In the words of Barbara Tuchmann, “The irony of history is inexorable.”24 I fear this fact is true in sacred history as well.

Perhaps the best way to conclude any discussion of legalism and grace is with Revelation 19:7–8: “Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted to her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.” Not only is the fine linen worn by God’s people here equated with righteous deeds, but their preparation is also compared to that of a bride making herself ready for a wedding. I have yet

Where there is not only a belief in God’s Word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith—faith that works by love and purifies the soul.

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THE Seventh-day Adventist Church is Christ's chosen remnant movement. Because of her tendency to put man's opinion and wisdom ahead of a "Thus saith the Lord" in the operation of the branches of the Lord's work, and also because of her neglect of duty in defining what God says in doctrinal issues, Christ is resorting to supportive ministries as repairers of the breach in His expressed will.

Disobedience to Christ is insubordination, and a turning back from following Christ's directives is apostasy. What are God's plans for our responses as individuals to the ongoing deepening lukewarm condition of God's visible church? How are we to relate to church organization and authority that are persistent in insubordination to many of the Lord's directives?

Ancient Israel had largely been operating the Lord's program according to their own wisdom for hundreds of years. Repeatedly the Lord had sent them messengers to reprove their ways and redirect their feet into the paths of the Lord's counsels. Over the centuries the ten northern tribes had especially been stiff-necked in following their own ways, and the Lord had found it necessary in 722 B.C. to give them and their lands over to the possession of the surrounding heathen. But the Lord had continued to work with the remaining two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, to use them to carry out His will upon the earth. King Josiah, during his reign (639–608 B.C.) had been a faithful undershepherd in leading the nation in obedience to the Lord's directives (see "The Role of Leadership in Revival and Reformation." Our Firm Foundation, December 1991). This revival however had been short-lived. Because of Judah's persistent pattern of refusing to live and work in harmony with His instructions, the Lord sent Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. to capture Jerusalem and to punish His chosen people with seventy years of exile.

Daniel had been in the first group of captives taken to Babylon. If at any time there had been reason to doubt that the Jews were God's chosen people to be used of Him to be His visible church on earth it was then. If there was ever a time when it seemed that there was nothing to be gained by living up to the health and spiritual standards of the Lord it was there in the courts of Babylon. Daniel was one of few who purposed in their hearts that regardless of the failures of others they would live in full harmony with the Lord's will for their personal lives and in their witness for Him. Even though all others might turn from the Lord, Daniel was determined to honor God. By this means God would be able in part to work out His will for Israel as witnesses for Him. In other words, Daniel did what he could in his own life to make up for the failures of others. Like Daniel, we must draw warmth from the coldness of others. When our brethren are ignoring the Lord's counsels, we must purpose to stand alone if need be in making "Thus saith the Lord" the rule in all things.

"There are many among professing Christians today who would decide that Daniel was too particular, and would pronounce him narrow and bigoted... Those who reason thus will find in the day of judgment that they turned from God's express requirements and set up their own opinion as a standard of right and wrong. They will find that what seemed to them unimportant was not so regarded of God. His requirements should be sacredly obeyed. Those who accept and obey one of His precepts because it is convenient to do so, while they reject another because its observance would require a sacrifice, lower the standard of right and by their example lead others to lightly regard the holy law of God. 'Thus saith the Lord' is to be our rule in all things." The Sanctified Life, 19–20
To stand for truth when champions are few and to take courage from the cowardice of others is to be our test.

"Already the judgments of God are abroad in the land, as seen in storms, in floods, in tempests, in earthquakes, in perils by land and by sea. The great I AM is speaking to those who make void His law. When God's wrath is poured out upon the earth, who will then be able to stand? Now is the time for God's people to show themselves true to principle. When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage the most unflinching. To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason." Review and Herald, vol. 2, 105

Daniel set us another example in what we personally are to do when God's visible church turns back from following Christ and His directives. He searched the Scriptures and prophecies regarding God's plan for His chosen, but outward, people. Daniel accepted the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah that, contrary to all outward appearances, God was still going to work through His chosen people to fulfill His will. It was prophesied that there was to be a revival, reformation and restoration of His visible church. There was not to be the formation of a new organization. See Prophets and Kings, 552–553. Even though it appeared that God had forsaken His rebellious chosen people, Daniel never ceased to pray for their restoration to the path of obedience and the carrying out of God's original plan to reveal Himself to the world through them. Although there is no record of Daniel ever disobeying the Lord, he identified himself with his disobedient nation and importuned God to honor His prophecies. He promised to heal them and restore them to His favor. See Sanctified Life, 46–49

We are told that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16. As did Daniel, we need to pray that God will heal and restore our people and our leadership to full-hearted obedience to Him. We need to claim the promise that with importunate, fervent prayer God can turn the thoughts and hearts of men to Him.

"Eager, earnest, importunate prayer is needed. There is efficiency in prayer. In answer to fervent prayer, God can turn the thoughts and hearts of men as He turns the waters of the sea." Review and Herald, vol. 4, 477

"One man, when the church in Scotland was making some resolutions to compromise the faith, to concede their staunch principles, was determined never to yield a jot or title. He went upon his knees before God and thus pleaded, 'Give me Scotland or I die.' His importunate prayer was heard. Oh, that the earnest prayer of faith may arise everywhere, Give me souls buried now in the rubbish of error, or I die! Bring them to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus." This Day with God, 163

We are told that the greatest victories to the church as well as to the individual are those gained in the audience chamber with God.

"The greatest victories to the Church or to the individual Christian are not those that are gained by talents or education, by wealth, or the favor of men; they are those victories that are gained in the audience chamber with God, when earnest, agonizing faith lays hold upon the mighty arm of power." Review and Herald, ibid., 371

Nehemiah was also zealous for the repentance, revival, reformation and restoration of God's visible church. He, as did Daniel, identified himself as a sinner with his people. "I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned." Nehemiah 1:6. He acknowledged to God that we "have not kept the commandments nor the statutes, nor the judgments which thou commandest by thy prophet" (Nehemiah 1:7) in how to live and work for thee. See Conflict and Courage, 269. In his importunate prayers for his people he, as did Daniel, won "to his side a power that can turn hearts as the rivers of waters are turned." Conflict and Courage, 262

As in days gone by, God is looking for men and women who, acknowledging their oneness with His lukewarm people, will persist in prayer for their repentance, revival and reformation. When there is persevering prayer of men and women who are obeying Him, the Lord is then able to do for His people that which He otherwise could not do.

Nehemiah extended his example for us further in that he followed up his petitions to God with doing everything His will required. He set an example for every Christian of how we are to be zealous for the work of God and in proving our own faithfulness.

God is looking for men and women who, acknowledging their oneness with His lukewarm people, will persist in prayer for their repentance, revival and reformation.
Although Israel had been in repeated and prolonged apostasy, neither Daniel nor Nehemiah was willing to leave or to consign God's chosen people to Babylon. Rather than giving a call to "come out of Israel" they persisted in calling their people out of Babylon. Recognizing that only God would know when an individual's or an organization's probation is closed, and thus only a prophet would be able to give such a message, their burden always remained to draw God's people into repentance, revival and reformation. Their heart-cry was always restoration.

There is crying need of earnest, faithful Nehemias and Ezras—men who will not shun to call sin by its right name, and who will not shrink from vindicating the honor of God

God is seeking for those who will not only work to warn the world but will also labor unceasingly for the purification of the church. "Shake off your spiritual lethargy. Work with all your might to save your own souls and the souls of others. It is no time now to cry, 'Peace and safety.' It is not silver-tongued orators that are needed to give this message. The truth in all its pointed severity must be spoken. Men of action are needed—men who will labor with earnest, ceaseless energy for the purifying of the church and the warning of the world." Testimonies, vol. 5, 187

Our message today is also not to label or consign God's Laodicean people to Babylon, but to call them to repentance, revival and reformation. Our heart-cry must always be restoration to obedience to Christ, the divine Leader.

"God is leading out a people. He has a chosen people, a church on the earth, whom He has made the depositaries of His law. He has committed to them sacred trust and eternal truth to be given to the world. He would reprove and correct them. The message to the Laodiceans is applicable to Seventh-day Adventists who have had great light and have not walked in the light. It is those who have made great profession, but have not kept in step with their Leader, that will be spewed out of His mouth unless they repent. The message to pronounce the Seventh-day Adventist Church Babylon, and call the people of God out of her, does not come from any heavenly messenger, or any human agent inspired by the Spirit of God." Selected Messages, book 2, 66

Not only did Nehemiah deal with the apostasy of God's people through importunate prayer and by setting a correct example, he also used the straight testimony to rebuke sin and arouse the people to return to the Lord. He called sin by its right name regardless of the rank or position of the offender. Like fluence goes very far to encourage others in transgression. And if, by their example, the faith of another is weakened, and moral and religious principle is broken down, the wrath of God will surely come upon those betrayers of their sacred trust.

"Severity to a few will often prove mercy to many. Yet we must be careful to manifest the spirit of Christ, and not our own hasty, impetuous disposition. We must rebuke sin, because we love God, and love the souls for whom Christ died." The Signs of the Times, vol. 1, 407; see Prophets and Kings, 675

Untiring vigilance must be the watchword of all who guard the interests of Christ's church. The Southern Watchman, July 12, 1904

In our endeavors to point out sin we must first and foremost seek a revelation of our own true condition before God. We ourselves must first be submitted to and molded by the Holy Spirit. To do otherwise is to manifest the spirit of Satan, the accuser of the brethren. See Christ's Object Lessons, 151. We must plead with God to help us to know that our motives and actions are indeed to reform and restore rather than to accuse and destroy. See ibid., 166. Once repentance and reformation have occurred we will not, as does the accuser of the brethren, continue to mention and rebuke our brethren for those sins repented of and forsaken and for the faults of the past. See Review and Herald, vol. 3, 521; Testimonies to Ministers, 39-40

If in the process of repentance, revival and reformation, God uses someone else to reveal faults and defects in ourselves we must be willing to listen to and to obey the Spirit's voice regardless of through whom it comes.

"The Holy Spirit flatters no man, neither does it work according to the devising of any man. Finite, sinful men are not to work the Holy Spirit. When it shall come as a reprover, through any human agent whom God shall choose, it is man's place to hear and obey its voice." The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, 1541

Moses is another example of a person with the true spirit of a reformer. He
was faithful in calling sin by its right name and of putting it out of the camp. See Exodus 32:19–28.

"In this our day, when many, even among those who claim to be numbered among God's people, are not fully decided as to the right course, the Lord is calling for men who will move steadfastly in the path that He has marked out, and with unshaken determination carry out His purposes. Those who occupy positions of responsibility should know what saith the Lord. Like Moses of old, they should stand unflinchingly for the right, stemming the current of evil. In the critical times in which we are living, men of determination are needed—men who will stand stiffly for the truth at all times and under all circumstances—men who, when they see that others are becoming untrue to principle, will lift their voice in warning against the danger of apostasy." Review and Herald, vol. 5, 496

Moses' intent was always, if at all possible, the restoration of the sinner. His spirit as a true reformer was tested and came forth as pure gold. We are all familiar with the forty days and forty nights Moses was in Mount Sinai just after God had spoken the Ten Commandments, and the children of Israel committed the great sin of worshipping the golden calf. Their sin, which forfeited God's favor and justice, called for their destruction. God proposed just such a punishment for His rebellious visible church. He would then make of Moses and his descendants, His chosen people—a mighty nation.

The natural man is selfish, and how readily we tend to put down others in order to lift ourselves up! How readily the natural man is in favor of making others look bad because in comparison it makes us look good! Even as reformers we are in danger of being motivated by selfishness. Do we ever feel or act satisfied at the news of deepening apostasy in our church, knowing that it tends to confirm our stand as reformers? Are we ever too ready to believe that the Lord is going to turn from His organized church and make a great nation of the independent ministers? Are we ever tempted to believe and to say that probation has closed for the church and its leaders, and that we are now free to turn our backs on working for the repentance, revival and reformation of Laodicea? Moses was tempted on these points by the direct word of the Lord. His response revealed that he was a reformer for unselfish reasons. His response revealed that his inmost purpose was not to point out the wrongness of the church in order to lift up self. Let us avoid judging the motives of others, but let us ask God to help us to know if our own motives are based on self. Moses paled with God not to destroy Israel, but to pardon and restore her. And if God would not forgive their sin, Moses requested that his name also be blotted out of the book of life. See Exodus 32, Deuteronomy 9:6–29. Moses has indeed set a high standard for all would-be reformers.

"As Moses interceded for Israel, his timidity was lost in his deep interest and love for those for whom he had, in the hands of God, been the means of doing so much. The Lord listened to his pleadings, and granted his unselfish prayer. God had proved His servant; He had tested his faithfulness and his love for that erring, ungrateful people, and nobly had Moses endured the trial. His interest in Israel sprang from no selfish motive. The prosperity of God's chosen people was dearer to him than personal honor, dearer than the privilege of becoming flock. But even when they do lead the flock, they are too often leading them into paths of lowered standards and into irreverent methods of church worship. They are too often feeding them with provender mixed with spiritually poisonous doctrines. Because of the conditions in some local churches, some feel compelled to protect themselves and their families from doctrinal error and lowered standards. Some are able to find another church accessible to them which can meet their needs. However, others are seemingly left without an acceptable church to attend. Some in speaking out against the entering apostasy meet resistance and varying degrees of persecution. Some are removed from their church offices. Some have their memberships frozen, or even taken away. Frequently such "discipline" is carried on contrary to the Church Manual, as well as to the principles of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. As far as we know no one has yet lost his life for protesting the increasing apostasy in Adventism, as did some who protested the golden-calf apostasy. But there is reason to wonder whether it could possibly come to that.

Are we ever too ready to believe that the Lord is going to turn from His organized church and make a great nation of the independent ministries?

"There were some who remained true to their covenant with God, but the greater part of the people joined in the apostasy. A few who ventured to denounce the proposed image making as idolatry, were set upon and roughly treated, and in the confusion and excitement they finally lost their lives." Patriarchs and Prophets, 319

Today we are confronted with great apostasy in the camp of modern Israel. In addition to chronic disobedience in how to operate the various branches of the Lord's work and the increasing pluralism of doctrinal beliefs, there is also a tendency on the part of the Adventist ministry to act as rulers in Israel. There is clearly today a tendency for them to exercise kingly power, rather than to serve as counselors, teachers and instructors. There is a tendency for the under-shepherds to drive rather than to lead the father of a mighty nation. God was pleased with his faithfulness, his simplicity of heart, and his integrity, and He committed to him, as a faithful shepherd, the great charge of leading Israel to the Promised Land." Patriarchs and Prophets, 319

Today, as in times past, some are being forced out of the synagogue of believers. Owing to these various circumstances, there is a temptation to believe that perhaps indeed God has rejected the organized body. With reason we are tempted to ask, "Could it be that now it is God's will for His supportive ministries not merely to supplement the work of the organized Adventist church but even to replace the persistently disobedient visible church?" Of a certainty
there is a temptation today to turn our backs upon the organized church, and to limit our fellowship, dialog and ministry to those in Adventism who agree with us, and then to spend our time and talents in outreach with the intent of enlarging our own group.

Could it be that by the present troubling conditions of modern Israel we are merely hearing the echoes of God’s testing words to Moses? “Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.” Exodus 32:10. Could it be that the apostasy which is causing fragmentations and divisions in the visible church is allowed of God not only to reveal the hearts of the unfaithful but to also reveal the hearts of the “reformers”? Could it be that present circumstances are permitted to help us to know our inner motives? It would be well for each of us to be certain that we like Moses are motivated to be reformers, not in order for us to become a great nation, but in order that God’s visible church may experience repentance, revival, reformation and restoration.

On the borders of Canaan twelve spies were sent to explore the Promised Land and to bring out a report of its virtues and the strength of its defenses. Ten of the spies emphasized how strongly it was defended and convinced the congregation of Israel that it was impossible for them to enter in and to inherit the goodly land. Caleb and Joshua acknowledged that there were giants in the land, but that since the Lord was on Israel’s side they indeed could enter in. The congregation purposed to stone Caleb and Joshua and to elect a leader other than Moses to lead them back to Egypt. See Numbers 13-14. Once again God tested and proved Moses as a true reformer.

’And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.’

“Moses was then tested and proved of God. Forsake Israel? Come out from among them, and leave them in their rebellion and sin?”—No, never.” Review and Herald, vol. 3, 85

When we are saying that the apostasy of the church and/or its leadership is so great that it is impossible for them to ever experience repentance, revival or restoration could it not be that we are echoing the discouraging report of the ten unfaithful spies? Could it be that when we say that probation is closed for Adventist leadership or for anyone else that we are echoing the cry that the “giants” are too great to be slain? Could it be that such reports today will have the same results as they did so many years ago—the loss of souls and even further delay in entering into the heavenly Canaan? Regardless of how serious the waywardness, the insubordination and the apostasy of God’s visible church may seem it would be well that

In our great concern for our condition as a people and for the failure of leadership to lead His people into full obedience to Christ’s directives let us not lose faith in Christ’s ultimate control as Head of His visible church. We are to cherish and cultivate the faith of the faithful of past generations. After we have done all that we can by His grace to free ourselves and His people from the apostasy of disobedience we are to wait for full deliverance in Christ’s appointed time and way.

“We must cherish and cultivate the faith of which prophets and apostles have
documented and we must stand fast in it.”

It would be well that when we like Moses are tested and proved by God to abandon Israel and to make of us “a great nation,” that our response will ever be as was his—“No, never” when we like Moses are tested and proved by God to abandon Israel and to make of us “a great nation,” that our response will ever be as was his—“No, never.” This is in spite of the fact that the “whole church” will never be revived. See Selected Messages, book 1, 122.

“Mark the whole tenor of this chapter, and learn the lesson it conveys to modern Israel. These things are written for our examples upon whom the ends of the world are come. We see the unbelieving, and the stout resistance of some who have had great light, and although evidence has been piled upon evidence, they have kept themselves in stubborn resistance. The Lord has sent messages of warning and entreaty, messages of reproof and rebuke, and they have not been in vain. But we have never had a message that the Lord would disorganize the church. We have never had the prophecy concerning Babylon applied to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, or been informed that the ‘loud cry’ consisted in calling God’s people to come out of her; for this is not God’s plan concerning Israel.

“In the example of Moses pleading for the children of Israel, is represented the position that we should take in regard to the people of God, however erring, or weak, or defective they may be.” Review and Herald, ibid., 85-86; emphasis supplied tested— the faith that lays hold on the promises of God, and waits for deliverance in His appointed time and way. The sure word of prophecy will meet its final fulfillment in the glorious Advent of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as King of kings and Lord of lords. The time of waiting may seem long; the soul may be oppressed by discouraging circumstances; many in whom confidence has been placed may fall by the way: but with the prophet who endeavored to encourage Judah in a time of unparalleled apostasy, let us confidently declare, ‘The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.’” Habakkuk 2:20. Let us ever hold in remembrance the cheering message, “The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. . . . The just shall live by his faith.” Habakkuk 2:3-4.” Ibid., vol. 6, 505

In future articles we will study how God intends His people as a church to relate to members in apostasy or itself in apostasy. We will then investigate what God is presently doing and will continue to do, which makes it totally unnecessary for supportive ministries to ever start a separate denominated church organization in contrast to the present visible church.

To be continued in the June issue.
I am subscribing to receive Our Firm Foundation. The magazines are informative, well-written, and contain vital information for us in these last days. When I can, I will send a donation.
—HW, Mississippi

We have enjoyed the articles presented in this year's magazine. We have been blessed in our personal relationship with Jesus.

We were disappointed with the Review article on “The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Certain Private Organizations.” Sincerely believe the Lord has raised you up to do for our people what our leaders have failed to do. Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”

Please send us the book Issues: Clarified.
—UB, California

Thank you for preaching the true testimony and using the Spirit of Prophecy and adhering to the historic Seventh-day Adventist theology. I am blessed by your articles.
—ET, California

A copy of the paperback book Issues: Clarified arrived in my mail last week in response to my order. Before even finishing the reading of the entire book I want to thank you for the clear and sensitive presentation of each point, for the manifestation of Christian integrity in the manner each challenge was met, and for demonstrating in your own work and words [that all] “Thus saith the Lord” is our guide and foundation rather than simply a profession of hollowmess. I have already phoned two friends long-distance recommending the book and I’ve typed several pages of quotations from it and included them in letters I’ve mailed.

Thank you for keeping the price so low, so reasonable that those of us without an excess of funds can afford to buy it.
—KS, Hawaii

Please keep up the good work and don’t be discouraged. Remember our test is to stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few. I believe champions for the Lord are becoming fewer and fewer. I greatly enjoy Our Firm Foundation. I can just see the love of God in the hearts of these people who write for Our Firm Foundation.
—RH, Virginia

I received the Issues tapes and have listened to all of them. I wish this information to go out to all those who received the insert in the Review. Many will never make an effort to find out if things published in that insert are true.

I believe we are living in the very last days of this earth’s history. How much we need to search our hearts to see if there be “any wicked thing in me.” I pray you will prosper in your work at Hope and that the word of Truth will reach many more souls for Jesus.
—BW, Washington

I have not taken the time to write you and let you know what a blessing your ministry has been to me. But with all the misrepresentations and falsehoods printed in the Review, I felt a deep obligation to write you. So many hearts have been saddened by the accusations made by so-called leaders. It is heartbreaking when we can no longer read “truth” in our literature. I don’t know who sent me Our Firm Foundation, but I would not be without it. It fills me to overflowing with the precious truth of our dear Saviour. I thank you from the very depth of my heart for your faithfulness in spreading God’s truth. I truly believe the North American Division action has harmmed themselves much more than they can yet realize. When we are walking with Christ, we can expect to be treated as He was, so I pray that you will stay close to God. You are in my prayers each day. It will not be long until the wheat will be separated from the tares. I pray that I will remain faithful to God and can share eternal life with all God’s faithful people.
—MB, Missouri

From Africa

Thank you very much for attending to my request with the heart of love. I received your parcel [of literature]. I delayed to reply to you because I wanted to go through my lovely magazines and come up with some few comments. Up to now, brethren, I do not know how I can express my joy, and I must confirm that I am astonished, and I must say that I will never remain the same. Please keep me informed through those spiritual printed pages. Please pray for me.

I still look forward to receive more information/magazines or booklets. May I now extend my request to you about how to enroll in your correspondence Bible course.
—SM, Zambia

I read your article in Our Firm Foundation, May 1990, entitled “God’s Plan for the Health Work,” which was quoting Counsels on Health, Evangelism, Health Reformer, Patriarchs and Prophets... This article opened my eyes. I was touched when I read “better for the work to go crippled than for workers who are not fully devoted to be employed.” I have repeated reading this article. Here in this country there are many people employed who are not converted. Also we are told that we have no right to read Our Firm Foundation, and I love to read this paper because it gives me spiritual food.

Another problem we have here, we don’t have Spirit of Prophecy books. I have The Ministry of Healing and Patriarchs and Prophets. In this town there is a group of 17 people who are reading Our Firm Foundation, although we are not approved by our pastor.

Can you supply all those books you quoted [in the above-mentioned article]? If we can get those books it will be a new day to me.
—TM, Tanzania

As many ministries who have sent literature to Africa can testify, there seems to be no end to the earnest requests for truth-filled literature. We praise the Lord for your recent donations (ear-marked “Overseas Literature”), one of which amounted to nearly $5,000. We depend on your continued support to fulfill as many requests as possible.—EDITORS
My Last Will and Testament on the Subject of Education, Part 4

If the Testimonies are unsafe to follow, just what is their use for this denomination? Testimonies, vol. 5, 81, says: “The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands, and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death.”

We recognize that the day is coming when we shall have to meet government requirements in many things. What shall we do at that time? Shall we yield, or rely upon the Lord to carry us through? We have had to meet army requirements. We have had to meet labor unions who interfere with the labor of our people in the cities. In each case adjustments have been made. Can the Lord not adjust our problems as well in our educational work? If we follow the Lord it may be we cannot get as large wages and put on as much style as now. But are these necessary? Before the end we shall have to depend upon the Lord fully. Why not begin to trust Him now, so that we can get used to it? We are told that we cannot learn to do that during the time of trouble. When we reach that time our bread and water are assured, not our cake and ice cream. Let us get used to the bread and water so that we can survive when the great stress comes.

I discussed some of these things with Clinton Lee following the Second World War. He is now president of the Korean Union, where he formerly had charge of the educational work. The government there had certain educational requirements which our people there refused to follow. However, in Japan, controlled by the same government, the people yielded and followed the government program. When the war broke out the government in Japan required the students there to worship at the heathen shrines because they followed the regular program; while in Korea the students were exempt, because they had no connection with the government. My experience is that the closer we follow the

This article, the last in a four-part series, was written many years ago by Walter E. Straw, now deceased. He was the head of the Theology Department at Emmanuel Missionary College and taught Bible for 14 years. He also served the Church as a Union Educational Secretary and as a missionary in Africa.

Walter E. Straw
government, the more they will require of us; and the farther we keep from them, the less they will expect.

In the Review of November 4, 1954, there is a statement from Arthur White, a grandson of Mrs. E. G. White. In it he says, "Mrs. White penned these words for the church a few years before her death 'Time and trial have not made void the instruction given.' Selected Messages, book 1, 41. The instruction that was given in the early days of the message is to be held as safe instruction to follow in these, its closing days. Those who are indifferent to this light and instruction must not expect to escape the snares we have been plainly told will cause the rejectors of light to stumble and fall, and be snared, and be taken."

We as a people claim that we are called to do a work similar to that of Elijah, Moses, and John the Baptist. In fact, we claim to be giving the John-the-Baptist message of preparing the people for the coming of the Lord. To prepare John for his work, it was understood that "the training of the rabbinical school would have unfitted him for his work." The Desire of Ages, 101. So "He [God] called him to the desert that he might learn of nature and nature's God. ... Here his surroundings were favorable to habits of simplicity and self-denial. Uninterrupted by the clamor of the world, he could here study the lessons of nature, of revelation, and of Providence. ... John found in the wilderness his school and his sanctuary. Like Moses in the mountains of Midian, he was shut in by God's presence, and surrounded by the evidences of His power." Ibid., 101–102

Again, in The Ministry of Healing, 474–475, we read, "The education he [Moses] received in Egypt ... was very thorough. ... He felt he was fully prepared for the work of delivering Israel from bondage. But God judged otherwise. ... In Egypt ... he had been accustomed to receiving praise and flattery. He had attracted the people to himself. He hoped to accomplish by his own powers the work of delivering Israel. Far different were the lessons he had to learn as God's representative. As he led his flocks through the wilds of the mountains and into the green pastures of the valleys, he learned faith and meekness, patience, humility, and self-forgetfulness. ... In this work Moses was drawn nearer the chief Shepherd. He became closely united to the Holy One of Israel. No longer did he plan to do a great work. He sought to do faithfully as unto God the work committed to his charge. He recognized the presence of God in his surroundings. ... He was overwhelmed with the sense of his incapacity to be a mouthpiece for God. But he accepted the work, putting his whole trust in the Lord."

I wonder if the education our young people now get in the universities is not a good deal like that which Moses received in Egypt. God could not use it then in His work of delivering Israel, nor in preparing John the Baptist for his work. Can He use it now in finishing His work in the earth where the greatest trials are to come when the devil makes his last stand? From my own experience in those godless and skeptical schools, I feel sure He cannot. There everything but trust in God is taught. There the whole idea of self-sufficiency for our problems is stressed. The capacity of the human mind to solve its problems is considered sufficient. I do not see how anyone can sit under that instruction for three or four years and not be influenced by it.

The facts are that many are seriously influenced by it and do not know it. I know whereof I speak, for I have been there. I give you an example of the effect of university training upon myself. When I was head of the Bible depart-

I have come to the conclusion after careful thought, meditation and prayer, that I must accept the Testimonies as a whole or not at all, the same as I do the Bible
message of mercy. As rapidly as possible they are to be prepared for labor, that success may crown their labors.” Testimonies, vol. 7, 27

How could that be accomplished with the present program in the organized work? A few years ago a man tried to do that, a very successful businessman of Ohio. He was a good lay-preacher, and came to Emmanuel Missionary College when I was there. He came to get some work in theology he thought would be helpful to make his labors more successful. He planned to spend his entire future in giving the message as a self-supporting laborer. When he got to the college the prescribed course was submitted to him which required his making up his high school work before he could enter college classes. He pleaded that he only wanted certain classes he thought would be helpful in his work. But the authorities would make no exceptions. He came to me with his troubles and wanted to know what to do. I allowed him to sit in my classes, contrary to the rules, or he would have gone home with nothing.

The college courses are outlined for those who expect to go through college and receive a degree. The conferences require it for their workers, and the college programs are directed in that way. Consequently if those words of the Testimonies are fulfilled it will have to be outside of the regular program of the denomination. It is argued that the world is becoming highly educated, so we must prepare our workers to meet an educated class. It is claimed that to meet the educated, our workers must be highly educated. How did John the Baptist meet the educated in his day? What degree was it that Peter, on the day of Pentecost, converted 3,000 souls in a day? What degree did he have?

How did John the Baptist meet the educated in his day? What degree was it that stirred all Judea and led them to repentance? How was it that Peter, on the day of Pentecost, converted 3,000 souls in a day? What degree did he have?

For forty years John was a humble and effective messenger. He did not have a college education, he was a simple man who lived in the wilderness. He was a self-made man, a man who did not rely on human judgment to tell him what to do. He did not rely on the success of his work, but he relied on the power of God. The power of God is the lesson of self-distrust; then they are prepared to have imparted to them the character of Christ.”

I think we all agree that education is beneficial to a worker if with it he can humble himself so that God can work through him. But the facts are that education often fills a man with self-sufficiency that is liable to cause him to depend upon his education for results rather than upon the power of God. Moses with his Egyptian degrees could not be used by God until he went into the wilderness for forty years like Moses, to get the worldly ideas out of us so God can come in by His Spirit and fill us with His power to finish the work, so we can go home to glory.

I trust no one will infer from what I have said that I have doubts as to whether the Adventist denomination

wilderness for forty years to get much of the stuff he had learned out of him, so God could fill him with His Spirit. We are told further, “The Lord can do nothing toward the recovery of man until, convinced of his own weakness, and stripped of all self-sufficiency, he yields himself to the control of God. Then he can receive the gift that God is waiting to bestow. From the soul that feels his need, nothing is withheld. He has unrestricted access to Him in whom all fullness dwells.” The Desire of Ages, 300

We recognize that an educated man like Paul may be humble and led by the Spirit of the Lord. We recognize also that a beautiful woman may be humble and a fine Christian. When either education or beauty becomes the goal, such as entering a beauty contest, or entering the scramble for degrees as the goal, the probability of either becoming humble or controlled by the Spirit is most unlikely. Consequently, so long as we place university degrees as the goal for the youth, just so long is the probability of their feeling self-distrustful and their need of relying upon the Lord unlikely; and just so long will worldly ways be in our school and self-sufficiency among our workers. Such goals will never prepare our people for the latter rain and the power of God’s people to finish His work in the world. The work of God will be finished by God’s power in the lives of His people; not by education, or was called of God to be His special people and give the present-day message to the world. I believe this denomination was called by God to do His special work and give His present-day message to the world just as verily as that God called Israel out of Egypt to be His special people and uphold the light of His truth to the world, or that God called Jesus and His disciples to do a special work and uphold His truth in their days. I believe the call of all of these rested upon the same principles, and all have the same authority back of them.

I also believe there was the same human element of weakness connected with each movement, and the same inclination to look to the world and to human judgment that necessitated a chosen messenger from the Lord through whom He could work to keep the movement on the right course. God used Moses and the latter prophets in Israel. He used Jesus and the disciples in the early church. And He used Mrs. E. G. White in the remnant church.

In each movement there was a tendency to watch what was going on in the world and rely upon human judgment rather than to humbly rely upon God’s chosen instrument. Israel objected to the way Moses led them. They complained about the route, the simple food, and were continually looking back to the things they did in Egypt, instead of relying upon the counsel of God’s mes-
senger. They felt sure that Moses was in error at Kadesh-barnea, and decided not to take his counsel further. They could see no way of conquering those giants in the land, and rebelled against Moses. They wanted to follow their own human judgment; and they never got into the Promised Land until they were willing to forget their human judgment and rely implicitly upon God’s chosen instrument to take them there. When they did that, God led them into the Promised Land at the most inopportune time, at the floodling of the Jordan, and caused the walls of Jericho to fall down and conquered those giants in the way. The same troubles followed them in Canaan when they relied upon human judgment and called for a king like the other nations, and whenever they did not rely upon the prophet God sent. “By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.” Hosea 12:13

The same was true when Jesus was here. The disciples never saw things as Jesus did. They had the viewpoint of their times and of their people and wanted to make Him king. They contended with one another for the highest place, and wanted to call down fire and burn up the people who opposed them. They watched for the opportune time when popular sentiment

The very first message that came to this people from the Lord regarding education told us that “Daily, systematic labor should constitute a part of the education of the youth,” (Testimonies, vol. 3, 159) and that vocations should be a part of the educational program. We were to get away from the system of the world. When the first college was established shortly after these words were given, what do we find? Five years classical Greek, and four years of Latin, and no vocations—just like the world. We were told that our college should be in the country where right principles could be carried out. Sister White went away and when she got back she found the college in the city of Battle Creek, because the brethren could not see how a college could prosper in the country. No other colleges were there.

After several years of struggle with the school, they were told to move the college to the country and put in vocations. They found a man willing to undertake the job and the college was moved to the country and vocational training started. But the brethren could see no sense in that program; so came to the conference prepared to get rid of the crazy chap who started it. Then Sister White came to that same crazy chap and urged him to go south and put his program into effect. Later, when she visited that school she said if the other schools would follow that program, that we as a people would be a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men, and the work would soon be finished. How many believed it then? And how many believe it now?—Mighty few.

We may be quite satisfied with the way things are going. We may say, “See the thousands that are being baptized each year.” That may be a good omen; and also it may be a bad one. The early church boasted of the number of their converts when they began to decline spiritually, and let down the bars to get more converts. This led to the great apostasy in those days. Paul said, “Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.” Romans 9:27.

God’s work will be finished, not by numbers, but by the power of God in His church. And this will come when we get into line, so that He can finish the work and cut it short in righteousness. If we believe God has a prophet, why should we not at least try to follow that prophet?

When our educational work lined up with the government in Japan, the students were forced to worship at the heathen shrine. Now since we have a man in that field leading out in the educational work trying to follow the instruction of the Testimonies, we have the following report in the Review and Herald of March 10, 1955, which says, “Three years or more ago most educational authorities were set against our small, family-type, multigrad classroom—like the American rural schools. But these humble buildings were necessary in order to get our schools started at all. This year, after having inspected several of our schools and having studied carefully the ‘Teachers Guide,’ which we printed last year, the Japanese Ministry of Education has now asked us to permit our schools to be designated as model rural schools for the nation and to let our plan of education be given publicity.”

In Education, 50, we read: “With us, as with Israel of old, success in education depends on fidelity in carrying out the Creator’s plan. Adherence to the principles of God’s Word will bring as great blessing to us as it would have brought to the Hebrew people.”

When we preach the message to people and they are fearful of losing their jobs and that they will not be able to support their families if they accept the truth, we usually urge them to have faith in God and trust Him to show the way and lead them through. Would not that be a good principle to apply in carrying out God’s work in the earth?

Some who hear this may think I am critical. Perhaps I am, but the only way I know whereby improvements can be made is for weaknesses to be pointed out and suggestions made for improvements. This principle is considered so important in the business world that rewards are offered to those who make suggestions about how improvements can be made. Further, if any organiza-

Adherence to the principles of God’s Word will bring as great blessing to us as it would have brought to the Hebrew people

was favorable to have Jesus take the throne. After He fed the 5,000 they concluded that then the sentiment was right and tried to take Him by force and make Him king. Their viewpoint was like their associates and those around them. They did not understand God’s plan for His work, so established their own in harmony with their times. But in spite of that, God did the best He could with them, and did not forsake them. But how much more could have been accomplished if they had let God carry out His own program for them!

How similar their experiences with that of Seventh-day Adventists today!
tion is not open for suggestions it must consider itself bordering on infallibility. That is why Rome does not improve and further develop. It knows all, and has become static. We as a people claim to be giving the John-the-Baptist message which was a critical message that pronounced woes upon the scribes and Pharisees for their sins. Ours is a critical message to warn the world of its errors and dangers. If it is a message to point out errors in others, surely we should not object to being warned of our own. If we saw a blind man going toward the road leading to the river where the bridge was out, it might be critical to warn him of his danger and urge him to take another road; but it certainly would be charitable.

I close with a few words from a message Sister White sent the Battle Creek Church and Elder Uriah Smith, then secretary of the General Conference, in the early days of the Battle Creek College when the problem we are now discussing was up. Elder Smith was backing President McClean in urging a classical program which was opposed by Professor Bell, who urged a practical program in harmony with the instruction given in the Testimonies. At that time Sister White wrote Elder Smith as follows: "I am pained to find you, my much-esteemed brother, involved in the matter on the wrong side with those whom I know God is not leading. . . . God has given us, as a people warnings, reproofs, and cautions, on the right hand and on the left, to lead us away from worldly customs and worldly policy." Testimonies, vol. 5, 45, 54

In this controversy the Battle Creek Church became involved and took sides. So Sister White asked Elder Smith to read the message she sent him to the church. This he did not do. So three months later she sent a message to the church in which she said, "I have been shown that the spirit of the world is fast leavening the church. You are following the same path as did ancient Israel. . . . I seldom weep, but now I find my eyes blinded with tears; they are falling upon my paper as I write. . . . The days are fast approaching when there will be great perplexity and confusion. Satan, clothed in angel robes, will deceive, if possible, the very elect. There will be gods many and lords many. Every wind of doctrine will be blowing. Those who have rendered supreme homage to 'science falsely so called' will not be the leaders then. Those who have trusted to intellect, genius, or talent will not then stand at the head of rank and file. They did not keep pace with the light. Those who have proved themselves unfaithful will not then be entrusted with the flock. In the last solemn work few great men will be engaged. They are self-sufficient, independent of God, and He cannot use them." Testimonies, vol. 5, 75-77, 80.
SHOCKING! Unbelievable! Fearful! Incredible! Frightening! Agonizing! Heartbreaking! Insidious! Diabolical! All these words and more fail to reflect the true universal impact of the utter apostasy that has swept through the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which God has chosen to take the end-time message of salvation to the world. No human language can describe the impact of the failure of each of us to fulfill our God-given calling.

If we had been faithful, the tragedies of this world could have ceased years ago as God’s people, being the generation to bring in everlasting righteousness, proclaimed the gospel to the world. We are on this planet, not because God wants us to be here, but because this church has failed to be what God has ordained it to be. No amount of rhetoric, no excuses, no explanations can avoid the clearest evidence, that to this time, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has failed God and has failed the world. There is not a facet of Seventh-day Adventism that is not in deep apostasy today.

The servant of the Lord said that the Omega of apostasy would be of a most startling nature. *Selected Messages*, book 1, 197. Even this warning could not have prepared us intellectually nor emotionally for the extent of that apostasy. It seems that nothing is left sacred today; our doctrines have been assaulted, our worship forms, our educational institutions, our book publications, our magazines, our medical work, our pastoral ministry, our evangelism, the practices of our life, interchurch relationships, and the very fabric of church membership.

There has never been a time when the need has been so urgent for deep repentance, reformation, and revival in our church. It must take place in the heart of every member, and it cannot happen until a re-establishment of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, God’s truth, which is at the very foundation of reformation. Without it, there cannot be reformation because “there is no sanctification aside from truth.” *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 432. Let us first look at the perfect message that God gave to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

**Truth**

Truth being the essence of God, Jesus said, “I am . . . the truth.” John 14:6. It is truth that sets God apart from Satan. God cannot lie. Titus 1:2. Satan is the father of lies. John 8:44. Even one small step away from the platform of truth places us on Satan’s territory, for truth is primary to the destiny of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Where have we gone wrong?

When a teen-ager, I constantly heard the certainty of the message. Nothing is more memorable than the oft-repeated words of New Zealand Evangelist George Burnside: “There is not a shadow of a doubt.” These pastors and evangelists believed the Seventh-day Adventist message with every neuron of their mind. They proclaimed it with every sinew of their body. Nor will I ever forget the riveting message of the late Australian evangelist and conference president, Pastor J.W. Kent, as he expounded 2 Peter 1:16–20: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star rise in your hearts.” Much more sure than even what Peter had seen and heard on the Mount of Transfiguration, is the abiding revelation of God in the written testimony of His faithful prophets.

We face an era today in our church where church administrators and pastors
are faced with two groups who hold opposing beliefs. To many of them it may seem virtuous to be uncertain, to be unsure, not to know. This uncertainty must end. It can end only as we preach the central pillars of the Advent faith with conviction and certainty and incorporate those principles into their lives. The importance of this certainty is revealed in Luke's gospel: "Forsomuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou has been instructed." Luke 1:1-4. How earnestly Luke sought to present the certainty of the faith to Theophilus, and how incumbent upon every minister of the gospel to present the certainty of the gospel today!

The words of Paul must penetrate our conscience, "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" 1 Corinthians 14:8. A preparation must be made for the final battle in the great controversy between Christ and Satan. It is a preparation of heart and soul and body. Christ preach a certain, authoritative message because He riveted His message on the Word. Thus the people cried out, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" John 7:15. After He had completed the sermon on the mount, we are told, "the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Matthew 7:28-29. That is the message that God's ministers must give today. Solomon understood this truth when he wrote "that I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?" Proverbs 22:21

Now is not a time to cater to pluralism or to preach philosophy; it is not a time to preach psychology; it is not a time to preach the speculations of men; it is a time to "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." 2 Timothy 4:2. These words challenged me as I was ordained to the gospel ministry, April 1971. By the grace of the Lord, I have tried always to remember the vow I took at that ordination service. It was not made to man; it was made to God. It is time for every minister of the gospel to contend for the faith. Jude 3. But all too often, as ministers we have failed to preach the Word. We have given the trumpet an uncertain sound. Thus, damnable heresies have come into our church. 2 Peter 2:1. Many have departed from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. 1 Timothy 4:1. Thus we have a liberal, evangelical-oriented movement within our ranks, creating a church within our church.

The words of Paul must penetrate our conscience, "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

I challenge my fellow ministers, if they do not know the certain message of the Advent faith, to take a leave of absence, and delve into the Word and into the Spirit of Prophecy to discover the Seventh-day Adventist truths. If we in the ministry cannot give a clear message, then most of the laity will fail, and we will be held accountable for their loss in the day of judgment. It is not good enough to say that we did not learn these truths in our college or seminary training. God will hold us responsible for the fact that His Word is available and that we have no excuse in this time of unprecedented enlightenment within the church. Neither can we hold leadership responsible. There are those high in ecclesiastical authority who will deny the truth. "No superiority of rank, dignity, or worldly wisdom, no position in sacred office, will preserve men from sacrificing principle when left to their own deceitful hearts. Those who have been regarded as worthy and righteous prove to be ringleaders in apostasy and examples in indifference and in the abuse of God's mercy. Their wicked course He will tolerate no longer, and in His wrath He deals with them without mercy.

"It is with reluctance that the Lord withdraws His presence from those who have been blessed with great light and who have felt the power of the Word in ministering to others. They were once His faithful servants, favored with His presence and guidance; but they departed from Him and led others into error, and therefore are brought under the divine displeasure" Testimonies, vol. 2, 212

Recently, in a semi-official way, a number of documents were put out which bespeak the uncertainty that many hold. Here is an example, "There are at least three views on the nature of Christ current in Adventist circles: (1) that at the incarnation Christ took the nature before Adam's fall; (2) that He took the nature of Adam after the fall; (3) that He took a nature that in certain respects was like Adam's before the fall, but in other respects was Adam's after the fall." (Tithe, Roger W. Coon, Adventist Review Insert, November 1991). This lack of clarity as to who is the Christ who died for us is showing a most critical indication of a church in which many have lost the true certainty of their faith.

Two other glaring examples of this fact are in the book Issues: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Certain Private Ministries and the Adventist Review Insert Issues. After quoting from a statement that I made in Our Firm Foundation magazine, June 1989, which read as follows: "The official Seventh-day Adventist statement of beliefs is couched in such a way that pivotal doctrines such as victorious Christian living, the nature of Christ, and the atonement are left sufficiently general that all but the most rabid New Theology teachers can give confident assent to them. Thus it is hard to take strong action against them," the writers of the Adventist Review Insert wrote, "but that is exactly the point. The united church in session has deliberately chosen to leave some points open because general agreement on specifics does not exist."
It is surely incredible that leaders would give assent to an acknowledgment that we do not have a biblical understanding of victorious Christian living (What has happened to 1 John 1:9; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Jude 24; 1 Peter 1:22–23; Revelation 22:11; 12:17; 14:12; 22:14; 19:8; Matthew 5:48; John 17:17; 2 Peter 1:4; Titus 2:11–14; and myriads of other texts?), the nature of Christ (What has happened to Romans 3:23), the nature of sin (What has happened to Romans 1:26), and sanctification (What has happened to Romans 6:1). We are sanctified by faith (Acts 26:18). We are justified by the death of Jesus (Romans 5:9), and we are sanctified by the same death. Ephesians 5:25–27; Hebrews 13:12; 10:10

I plead for our leaders to reverse these false statements and to give leadership that will bring certainty and faith to our laity. To the pastors I again reiterate, “Preach the Word.”

1:3; 8:3; 9:5; Philippians 2:7; Galatians 4:4–5; Hebrews 2:14–18; 4:15; 1 Peter 2:21–22); and Christ’s administration of His atonement in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary (Leviticus 4:20; 6:7; 7:7; 16:17; Hebrews 8:1–2; 9:11, 24), and other similar declarations of uncertainty found in the same book, page 109: “The real problem is that Hope International/Our Firm Foundation hold certain views on the human nature of Christ, the nature of sin, and sanctification. These issues have never been settled among Christians, much less among Seventh-day Adventists. They are not issues so essential to salvation that souls will be lost unless they are resolved. The problem that Hope International/Our Firm Foundation has created is that this independent ministry feels driven to charge the Seventh-day Adventist Church with being in a state of apostasy because it does not accept their views on these most theological issues.”

If our salvation depended on our own efforts, we could not be saved; but it depends on the One who is behind all the promises. Our grasp on Him may seem feeble, but His love is that of an elder brother; so long as we maintain our union with Him, no one can pluck us out of His hand.—That I May Know Him, 80
SATAN is the leader of every species of rebellion today, as he was the originator of rebellion in the courts of heaven. Standing next to Christ in power and glory, yet he coveted the honor that belonged to the Son. He desired to be equal with God. To carry out his purpose, he concealed his true designs from the angels, and worked deceptively to secure their allegiance and honor to himself. By sly insinuations, by which he made it appear that Christ had assumed the place that belonged to him, Lucifer sowed the seeds of doubt in the minds of many of the angels; and when he had won their support, he carried the matter to God, declaring that it was the sentiment of many of the heavenly beings that he should have the preference to Christ.

We shall not at this time follow the immediate results of Satan's rebellion and his expulsion from heaven, but let us consider how his deceptive work is being continued today among those who profess to be the loyal people of God. In the hearts of many church members there is being carried on today the same work of rebellion and disaffection, and the result is injury and weakness to the church. The artful foe has found a place in many hearts that should have no room for the selfish, ambitious principles that are being promulgated. For years the enemy has been seeking to bring false theories into the churches; and God alone can help us to meet his work successfully.

Satan sought to produce the same results among the people of Israel as they journeyed from Egypt to Canaan. God took Israel from the bondage of slavery, and under His own guidance brought them into the Promised Land. Moses, their visible leader, received instruction for them directly from God. But in spite of the wonderful evidences the people received that God was working in their behalf, they continually murmured and rebelled. God gave positive evidence that He ruled in the heavens; again and again rebellion was punished with death. Only two of those who as adults left Egypt, saw the Promised Land. The wanderings of the people were extended until the rest were buried in the wilderness.

Today Satan is using the same de- vising to introduce the same evils, and his efforts are followed by the same results that in the days of Israel laid so many in their graves. Let us study the record of how Israel, in the sight of the mount on which they had shortly before seen so wonderful a display of God's power, were led into idolatry. While Moses was in the mount with God, receiving the sacred oracles, the people, in Aaron's charge, were worshiping a golden calf, while their leading men proclaimed the sacrilegious message, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Exodus 32:8

"When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool; after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. "And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made procla-
mation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and have said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” Exodus 32:1–8

From this record we may learn how little dependence can be placed in men who trust in men, and do not make God their reliance. Those who are living in these last days are in the greatest danger of placing their confidence in men rather than in the true and living God. The Lord has given instruction that the history of the apostasy of Israel is now to be presented, because men who in the past have had great light have become self-sufficient, and are looking to men, trusting in human leaders, who are themselves practicing evil. Men who ought to stand as firm as a rock to principle are treading in the same path that the Israelites followed. “Some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” 1Timothy 4:1. This is the snare that has come into our ranks. There are wrongful sentiments that have to be met. There are men who are acting the part of Aaron at the very time when every soul should be working to seal the law among God’s disciples. They are building up the very things that God has specified should not be built up.

A great deal of time and labor and anxiety are required to counterwork the ingenuity of satanic agencies that are pressing their way among those who are ready to accept wrong philosophy, to cause confusion and division. Every jot of influence is needed to discern the great evils of Satan’s devisings, and to keep souls from being drawn into the net of the modern Aarons who are saying, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.”

Long before, the Lord could have told Moses what was taking place. He could have revealed that Aaron could not be depended upon. But for wise and holy purposes He permitted the evil to develop. He suffered this shameful representation to come to its height. Then when the leading men had done all that it was in their power to do, he sent Moses down to punish the transgressors. The Lord sees what is in the hearts of men. At times He permits evils to take place that He may prevent still greater evils that would appear unless He permitted the designs hidden in human hearts to work out.

Mark God’s words to Moses concerning this apostasy. They “have corrupted themselves,” He said: “they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them.” Every man is tempted when he is drawn aside by his own lusts.

The fact that Aaron had been blessed and honored so far above the people was what made his sin so heinous. It was Aaron, “the saint of the Lord,” that had made the idol and announced the feast. It was he who had been appointed spokesman for Moses, and concerning whom God Himself had testified, “I know that he can speak well,” who had failed to check the idolaters in their heaven-daring purpose. He by whom God had brought in bringing judgments both upon the Egyptians and upon their gods, had heard, unmove, the proclamation. “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” It was he who had been with Moses in the mount, and had there beheld the glory of the Lord, and who had seen that in the manifestation of that glory there was nothing of which an image could be made—it was he who had changed that glory into the similitude of an ox. He to whom God had committed the government of the people in the absence of Moses, was found sanctioning their rebellion. “The Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him.” Deuteronomy 9:20. But in answer to the earnest intercession of them to go to greater lengths in sin than had before entered their minds.

Of all the sins that God will punish, none are more grievous in His sight than those that encourage others to do evil. God would have His servants prove their loyalty by faithfully rebuking transgression, however painful the act may be. Those who are honored with a divine commission, are not to be weak, pliant timeservers. They are not to aim at self-exaltation, or to shun disagreeable duties, but are to perform God’s work with unswerving fidelity.

Only a few days had passed since the Hebrews made a solemn covenant with God to obey His voice. They had stood trembling with terror before the mount, listening to the words of the Lord, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox.” Psalm 106:19. How could greater ingratitude have been shown, or more daring insult offered, to Him who had revealed Himself to them as a tender Father and an all-powerful King?

Moses in the mount was warned of the apostasy in the camp, and was directed to return without delay, “Go, get thee down,” the Lord said; “for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted them-
The earnest cry, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," has saved many a soul. If there were far more urgent intercessions for perishing souls, there would be far more souls saved.

God declared that He would disown the people. He gave them their true character—a stiffnecked people, who would not respect His law or come under His rule. "Let me alone," He said to Moses, "that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation."

Moses was tested with the promise of great honor. The Lord would place him at the head of a great nation. Had Moses possessed a narrow, selfish spirit, how quickly he would have grasped such an offer. But he would not listen to the promise of preferment. He continued to plead for the erring people. His one great desire is that the glory of God shall be maintained. Above all else he longs for the salvation of this people for whom the Lord has worked so wondrously. Their remarkable experience in escaping from slavery, the flight from Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea—these are stamped on his mind as if graven in a rock, and he will not let Israel go.

Oh, the power of prayer! Moses fills his mouth with arguments that express his own faith in God; and the Lord, who is testing and trying him, is not angry with him because of his importunity. God had said, "Thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt." But in his prayer Moses denies this honor. In humble, but determined assurance, he turns the people back upon God. They are Thy people, he says. Thou art their God and Owner. Thou hast brought them forth out of the land of Egypt. I did only what Thou commandedst me. I was but Thine instrument, obeying the orders Thou gavest me. Thou, and Thou alone, couldst do this work. The eyes of all the nations are upon Israel, a people so strongly saved. Oh, do not permit the throne of Thy glory to be disgraced!

"Lord," he pleads, "why dost thou wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth. Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent [What an argument!] of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever." Exodus 32:11-13

As Moses interceded for Israel, his timidity was lost in his deep interest and love for those for whom he had, in the hands of God, been the means of doing much. The Lord listened to his pleadings, and granted his unselfish prayer. God had proved His servant, He had tested his faithfulness and his love for that erring, ungrateful people, and nobly had Moses endured the trial. His interest in Israel sprang from no selfish motives. The prosperity of God's chosen people was dearer to him than personal honor, dearer than the privilege of becoming the father of a mighty nation. God was pleased with his faithfulness, his simplicity of heart, and his integrity, and He committed to him, as a faithful shepherd, the great charge of leading Israel to the Promised Land.

The record shows that prayers of faith, though offered by frail human beings, have power with God. The earnest cry, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," (Genesis 32:26) has saved many a soul. If there were far more urgent intercessions for perishing souls, there would be far more souls saved. Of Christ it is written, "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him." Isaiah 59:16. He wondered that there was no man who would lay hold by faith on his fellow men, and save them with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garments spotted by the fleshes.

"He put on righteousness as a breastplate." Christ was not covering up the sins of the transgressor, but was making the most determined effort to bring the sinner to a sense of the sinfulness of sin. His own hatred of sin, his own integrity, brought salvation to the sinner. "He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompense. So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. And the redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever." Isaiah 59:17-21

"And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. "And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it

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the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.

"And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.

"And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" Exodus 32:15–21. The sin of idolatry is a fearful sin, and Aaron, as a magistrate, should have faithfully discharged his duty, instead of engaging with the people in sin. It was Moses who interceded with God to spare his life. Aaron was saved by the prayer of Moses. Aaron did repent, or the Lord would not have pardoned his transgression. He did not stand out in rebellion, but took his stand with Moses; and notwithstanding he had taken sides with the idolaters, he was saved.

All the people had the opportunity of demonstrating their repentance, and thus saving their lives. "Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him." Exodus 32:26. All were given the opportunity to be loyal to God. All who humbled themselves before Him, and placed themselves on His side, showing that they desired to obey Him, would be pardoned, while those who would not yield would condemn themselves as rebels. There would be no excuse for them. All were given the opportunity of repudiating their past idolatrous conduct, and of showing their determination to be true. But in the very presence of God many refused to repent. They were stubborn in their rebellion.

To the sons of Levi, who had taken their stand with him, Moses said, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day." Exodus 32:27–29

The Israelites had been guilty of treason, and that against a King who had loaded them with benefits, and whose authority they had voluntarily pledged themselves to obey. That the divine government might be maintained, justice must be visited upon the traitors. Yet even here God's mercy was displayed. While He maintained His law, He granted freedom of choice and opportunity for repentance for all. Only those were cut off who persisted in rebellion.

Love no less than justice demanded that for this sin judgment should be inflicted. God is the guardian as well as the sovereign of His people. He cuts off those who are determined upon rebellion, that they may not lead others to ruin. In sparing the life of Cain, God had demonstrated to the universe what would be the result of permitting sin to go unpunished. The influence exerted upon his descendants by his life and saving the many, He must punish the few. Furthermore, as the people had cast off their allegiance to God, they had forfeited the divine protection, and, deprived of their defense, the whole nation was exposed to the power of their enemies. Had not the evil been promptly put away, they would soon have fallen a prey to their numerous and powerful foes. It was necessary for the good of Israel, and was also a lesson to all succeeding generations, that crime should be promptly punished. And it was no less a mercy to the sinners themselves that they should be cut short in their evil course. Had their lives been spared, the same spirit that led them to rebel against God would have been manifested in hatred and strife among themselves, and they would have eventually destroyed one another. It was in love to the world, in love to Israel, and even to the transgressors, that crime was punished with swift and terrible severity.

In this our day, when many, even among those who claim to be numbered among God's people, are not fully decided as to the right course, the Lord is

God is the guardian as well as the sovereign of His people. He cuts off those who are determined upon rebellion, that they may not lead others to ruin.

calling for men who will move steadfastly in the path that He has marked out, and with unshaken determination carry out His purposes. Those who occupy positions of responsibility should know what saith the Lord. Like Moses of old, they should stand unflinchingly for the right, stem the current of evil. In the critical times in which we are living, men of determination are needed—men who will stand stiffly for the truth at all times and under all circumstances—men who, when they see that others are becoming untrue to principle, will lift their voice in warning against the danger of apostasy.

Review and Herald, vol. 5, 493–496 (February 4 and 11, 1909)
Presenting God’s Plan to Restore the Family

Does anyone doubt that the family is in crisis in the 1990s? But who knows what to do about it? Many people are attempting to provide sage advice, as better-marriage and child-management books proliferate, and as family-counseling centers do a thriving business.

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