Letters To A Futurist

See page 4
THE signs of the times are ominous. Satan has come down to the Seventh-day Adventist Church with great wrath, for he knows that he has a very short time until the close of probation.

He has focused his attack on those within the Seventh-day Adventist Church who are faithful and obedient to all truth. We are told of this time in 1 Timothy 4:1-2: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.” They will speak lies and present doctrines manufactured by Satan himself. They will not have a conscience sensitive to present truth.

We are told by our prophet that the special Laodicean message must be given to our church, the last church, at this time. “The message to the church of the Laodiceans is a startling denunciation, and is applicable to the people of God at the present time.” Testimonies, vol. 3, 252.

We are also told that this message will divide the church into two parties. The faithful, loyal, and obedient will then be distinguished from the disobedient. Yes, two parties are now developing in Adventism, and soon it will be clear who are obedient and who are disobedient to present truth.

“No one has a true message fixing the time when Christ is to come or not to come. Be assured that God gives no one authority to say that Christ delays His coming five years, ten years, or twenty years. ‘Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.’ Matthew 24:44. This is our message, the very message that the three angels flying in the midst of heaven are proclaiming. The work to be done now is that of sounding this last message of mercy to a fallen world. A new life is coming from heaven and taking possession of all God’s people. But divisions will come in the church. Two parties will be developed. The wheat and tares grow up together for the harvest.” Selected Messages, book 2, 113-114.

What is present truth? It is keeping the Sabbath holy, as portrayed in Isaiah 58:13-14. It is the three angels’ messages, the sanctuary message, the 2300 days. It is righteousness by faith in the true understanding of justification and sanctification, victory over sin now by the power of the Holy Spirit. This message is the true gospel.

“I saw that some minds are led away from present truth and a love of the Holy Bible by reading other exciting books; others are filled with perplexity and care for what they shall eat, drink, and wear. Some are looking too far for the coming of the Lord. Time has continued a few years longer than they expected; therefore they think it may continue a few years more, and in this way their minds are being led from present truth, out after the world. In these things I saw great danger; for if the mind is filled with other things, present truth is shut out, and there is no place in our foreheads for the seal of the living God. I saw that the time for Jesus to be in the Most Holy Place was nearly finished and that time can last but a very little longer. What leisure time we have should be spent in searching the Bible, which is to judge us in the last day.” Early Writings, 58.

“I saw the necessity of the messengers, especially watching and checking all fanaticism wherever they might see it rise. Satan is pressing in on every side, and unless we watch for him, and have our eyes open to his devices and snares, and have on the whole armor of God, the fiery darts of the wicked will hit us. There are many precious truths contained in the Word of God, but it is ‘present truth’ that the flock needs now. I have seen the danger of the messengers running off from the important points of present truth, to dwell upon subjects that are not calculated to unite the flock and sanctify the soul. Satan will here take every possible advantage to injure the cause.” Ibid., 63.

Every wind of doctrine is now blowing in the Adventist Church. This may be one of the greatest of all the signs of the end. “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.” 2 Timothy 4:3.

Time setting, false theories, reapplication of the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, jubilee theories—these are just a few forms of speculation, a very dangerous approach to take to the Scriptures or the Spirit of Prophecy. Speculation involves taking out of context statements by the prophet to make Ellen White agree with one’s own ideas. What tragedy will result!

The prophet warns: “Christ says that there will be those in the church who will present fables and suppositions, when God has given grand, elevating, ennobling truths which should ever be kept in the treasure house of the mind. When men pick up this theory and that theory, when they are curious to know something it is not necessary for them to know, God is not leading them. It is not His plan that His people shall present something which they have to suppose, which is not taught in the Word.” Selected Messages, book 1, 174.

“I would not feel that I could present these things, if the Lord had not given me this work to do. There are others besides yourself, and more than one or two, who like you think they have new light, and are all ready to present it to the people. But it would be pleasing to God for them to accept the light already given and walk in it, and base their faith upon the Scriptures, which sustain the positions held by the people of God for many years. The everlasting gospel is to be proclaimed by human agents. We are to sound the me.

Continued on 31
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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Hope International is a special ministry assisting in the God-given work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We believe this Remnant Church of Bible prophecy has been brought into existence by the calling of the Lord, and we look for its final triumph in purity at the second coming of Christ. That the church does not now perfectly reflect the will of our Lord is cause for sorrow, but not for discouragement. The Word of God stands pledged that all within her borders will be sifted and tried, and though the greater portion will fail the test, there will yet remain a remnant to honor the Lord by their obedience to all His commands. Therefore, Hope International urges upon all the duty of supporting the Seventh-day Adventist Church in every way possible, insofar as is consistent with the principles of the government of God and the leading of His Holy Spirit upon the heart.
Letters to a Futurist—Part 1

Among Seventh-day Adventists today, as well as many other professed Christians, there is a great thirst for an understanding of the prophecies of the Scriptures, especially those foretelling events which are yet future. While the desire to know what God has revealed for the future is wholesome, there exists the temptation to set aside past fulfillment of prophecy as dry and irrelevant and look for some current or future application. Thus many students of the Scriptures have unwittingly indulged in futurism, to one degree or another.

One such futurist was a John Bell, the subject of the following two testimonies, both written on November 8, 1896. Sister White wrote, “Some will take the truth applicable to their time, and place it in the future. Events in the train of prophecy that had their fulfillmer away in the past are made future, and thus by these theories the faith of some is undermined. . . . You are in danger of doing the same work.” He was in danger of teaching “theories that would bring confusion rather than genuine light.”

It is the hope of the editors of Our Firm Foundation that the reader may benefit from these testimonies as well as did Brother Bell: “John [Bell] has taken a splendid position on the testimony concerning his book. He has set aside his erroneous views altogether, and stands in the best position I have known him at all.”—A.G. Daniels. See Arthur White, The Australian Years, 274–275.—EDITORS

Testimony No. 1

I have not been able to sleep since half past one o’clock. I was bearing t’ Brother John Bell a message while the Lord had given me for him. The peculiar views he holds are a mixture of truth and error. If he had passed through the experience of God’s people as He has led them for the last forty years, he would be better prepared to make the correct application of Scripture.

The great waymarks of truth, showing us our bearings in prophetic history, are to be carefully guarded, lest they be torn down and replaced with theories that would bring confusion rather than genuine light. I have been cited to the very erroneous theories that have been presented over and over again. Those who advocated these theories presented Scripture quotations, but they misapplied and misinterpreted them. The theories supposed to be correct were incorrect, and yet many thought them the very theories to be brought before the people. The prophecies of Daniel and John are to be diligently studied.

There are those now living who, in studying the prophecies of Daniel and John, received great light from God as they passed over the ground where special prophecies were in process of fulfillmer in their order. They bore the message on time to the people. The truth shone out clearly as the sun at noonday. Historical events, showing the direct fulfillment of prophecy, were set before the people, and the prophecy was seen to be a figurative delineation of events leading down to the close of this earth’s history. The scenes connected with the working of the man of sin are the last features revealed in this earth’s history. The people now have a special message to give to the world, the third angel’s message. Those who, in their experience, have passed over the ground and acted a part in the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages, are not so liable to be led into false paths as are those who have not had an experimental knowledge of the people of God.

God’s people are to warn the world to prepare for the second appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is coming with power and great glory, when the cry of peace and safety is being sounded from every part of the Christian world, and the sleeping church and the world will be asking in scorn, “Where is the promise of His coming? . . . All things continue as they were from the beginning.” 2 Peter 3:4.
Christ was taken up into heaven in a cloud composed of living angels. The angels declared to the men of Galilee, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11. This is the great event to be contemplated and talked of. The declaration of the angels was that He should come in the same manner as He went up into heaven.

And the second appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is to be kept fresh before the minds of the people. Let all understand this. Jesus is coming again. The same Jesus that ascended into heaven, escorted by the heavenly host, is coming again. The same Jesus who has been our Advocate, our Friend at court, pleading the cases of all who accept Him as their Saviour, will come the second time to be admired in all them that believe.

There have been one and another who in studying their Bibles thought they discovered great light, and new theories, but these have not been correct. The Scripture is all true, but by misapplying the Scripture men arrive at wrong conclusions. We are engaged in a mighty conflict, and it will become more close and determined as we near the final struggle. We have a sleepless adversary, and he is constantly at work upon human minds that have not had a personal experience in the teachings of the people of God for the past fifty years. Some will take the truth applicable to their time, and place it in the future. Events in the train of prophecy that had their fulfillment away in the past are made future, and thus by these theories the faith of some is undermined.

From the light that the Lord has been pleased to give me, you are in danger of doing the same work, presenting before others truths which have had their place and done their special work for the time, in the history of the faith of the people of God. You recognize these facts in Bible history as true, but apply them to the future. They have their force still in their proper place, in the chain of events that have made us as a people what we are today, and as such they are to be presented to those who are in the darkness of error.

The true workers of Jesus Christ are to co-operate with their brethren who have had an experience in the work from the very rise of the third angel's message. These followed on step by step, receiving light and truth as they advanced, bearing one test after another, lifting the cross that lay directly in their pathway, and pressing on to know the Lord, whose goings forth are prepared as the morning. You and other of our brethren must accept the truth as God has given it to His students of prophecy, as they have been led by genuine, living experience, advancing point by point, tested, proved, and tried, until the truth is to them a reality. From their voices and pens the truth in bright, warm rays has gone to all parts of the world, and that which was to follow me." But the warnings came, "Go not ye after them. I have not sent them, but they ran." See Jeremiah 23:21.

The leadings of the Lord were marked, and most wonderful were His revelations of what is truth. Point after point was established by the Lord God of heaven. That which was truth then, is truth today.

The leadings of the Lord were marked, and most wonderful were His revelations of what is truth. Point after point was established by the Lord God of heaven. That which was truth then, is truth today.
mation, showing their order and the application of the prophecies that bring us to the third angel’s message. There cannot be a third without the first and second. These messages we are to give to the world in publications, in discourses, showing in the line of prophetic history the things that have been and the things that will be.

The book that was sealed was not the book of Revelation, but that portion of the prophecy of Daniel which related to the last days. The Scripture says, “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” Daniel 12:4. When the book was opened, the proclamation was made, “Time shall be no longer.” See Revelation 10:6. The book of Daniel is now unsealed, and the revelation made by Christ to John is to come to all the inhabitants of the earth. By the increase of knowledge a people is to be prepared to stand in the latter days.

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” Revelation 14:6–7.

This message, if heeded, will call the attention of every nation and kindred and tongue and people to a close examination of the Word, and to the true light in regard to the power that has changed the seventh-day Sabbath to a spurious sabbath. The only true God has been forsaken, His law has been discarded, His sacred Sabbath institution has been trampled in the dust by the man of sin. The fourth commandment, so plain and explicit, has been ignored. The Sabbath memorial, declaring who the living God is, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, has been torn down, and a spurious sabbath has been given to the world in its place. Thus a breach has been made in the law of God. A false sabbath could not be a true standard.

In the first angel’s message men are called upon to worship God, our Creator, who made the world and all things that are therein. They have paid homage to an institution of the Papacy, making of no effect the law of Jehovah, but there is to be an increase of knowledge on this subject.

The message proclaimed by the angel flying in the midst of heaven is the everlasting gospel, the same gospel that was declared in Eden when God said to the serpent, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Genesis 3:15. Here was the first promise of a Saviour who would stand on the field of battle to contest the power of Satan and prevail against him. Christ came to our world to represent the character of God as it is represented in His holy law; for His law is a transcript of His character. Christ was both the law and the gospel. The angel that proclaims the everlasting gospel proclaims the law of God; for the gospel of salvation brings men to obedience of the law, whereby their characters are formed after the divine similitude.

In the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah, the work of those who worship God, the Maker of the heavens and the earth, is specified: “They that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations.” Isaiah 58:12. God’s memorial, His seventh-day Sabbath, will be uplifted. “Thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath [no longer trample it under your feet], from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, . . . I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” Isaiah 58:12–14.

The history of the church and the world, the loyal and the disloyal, is here plainly revealed. The loyal under the proclamation of the third angel’s message have turned their feet into the way of God’s commandments, to respect, to honor, and glorify Him who created the heavens and the earth. The opposing forces have dishonored God by making a breach in His law, and when light from His Word has called attention to His holy commandments, revealing the breach made in the law by the papal authority, then, to get rid of conviction, men have tried to destroy the whole law. But could they destroy it? No; for all who will search the Scriptures for themselves will see that the law of God stands immutable, eternal, and His memorial, the Sabbath, will endure through eternal ages, pointing to the only true God in distinction from all false gods.

Satan has been persevering and urging in his efforts to prosecute the work he began in heaven, to change the law of God. He has succeeded in making the world believe the theory he presented in heaven before his fall, that the law of God was faulty and needed revising. A large part of the professed Christian church, by their attitude, if not by their words, show that they have accepted the same error. But if in one jot or title the law of God has been changed, Satan has gained on earth that which he could not gain in heaven. He has prepared his delusive snare, hoping to take captive the church and the world. But not all will be taken in the snare. A line of distinction is being drawn between the children of obedience and the children of disobedience, the loyal and true and the disloyal and untrue. Two great parties are developed, the worshipers of the beast and his image, and the worshipers of the true and living God.

The message of Revelation 14, proclaiming that the hour of God’s judgment is come, is given in the time of the end; and the angel of Revelation 10 is represented as having one foot on the sea and one foot on the land, showing that the message will be carried to distant lands, the ocean will be crossed, and the islands of the sea will hear the proclamation the last message of warning to our world.
And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer. Revelation 10:5-6. This message announces the end of the prophetic periods. The disappointment of those who expected to see our Lord in 1844 was indeed bitter to those who had so ardently looked for His appearing. It was in the Lord’s order that this disappointment should come, and that hearts should be revealed.

Not one cloud has fallen upon the church that God has not prepared for; not one opposing force has risen to counterwork the work of God but He has foreseen. All has taken place as He has predicted through His prophets. He has not left His church in darkness, forsaken, but has traced in prophetic declarations what would occur, and through His providence, acting in its appointed place in the world’s history, He has brought about that which His Holy Spirit inspired the prophets to foretell. All His purposes will be fulfilled and established. His law is linked with His throne, and satanic agencies combined with human agencies cannot destroy it. Truth is inspired and guarded by God; it will live, and will succeed, although it may appear at times to be overshadowed. The gospel of Christ is the law exemplified in character. The deceptions practiced against it, every device for vindicating falsehood, every error forged by satanic agencies, will eventually be eternally broken, and the triumph of truth will be like the appearing of the sun at noonday. The Sun of Righteousness shall shine forth with healing in His wings, and the whole earth shall be filled with His glory.

All that God has in prophetic history specified to be fulfilled in the past has been, and all that is yet to come in its order will be. Daniel, God’s prophet, stands in his place. John stands in his place. In the Revelation the Lion of the tribe of Judah has opened to the students of prophecy the book of Daniel, and thus is Daniel standing in his place. He bears his testimony, that which the Lord revealed to him in vision of the great and solemn events which we must know as we stand on the very threshold of their fulfillment.

In history and prophecy the Word of God portrays the long, continued conflict between truth and error. That conflict is yet in progress. Those things which have been, will be repeated. Old controversies will be revived, and new theories will be continually arising. But God’s people, who, in their belief and fulfillment of prophecy have acted a part in the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages, know where they stand. They have an experience that is more precious than fine gold. They are to stand firm as a rock, holding the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end.

A transforming power attended the proclamation of the first and second angels’ messages, as it attends the message of the third angel. Lasting convictions were made upon human minds. The power of the Holy Spirit was manifested. There was diligent study of the Scriptures, point by point. Almost entire nights were devoted to earnest searching of the Word. We searched for the truth as for hidden treasures. The Lord revealed Himself to us. Light was shed on the prophecies, and we knew that we received divine instruction.

This expresses something of the exercises we were passing through: “Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips. That thy trust may be in the Lord, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee. Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, 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 22:17-21.

After the Great Disappointment there were few who set themselves to seek the Word with all their heart. But some souls would not settle down in discouragement and deny that the Lord had led them. To these the truth was opened point by point, seeking after truth, were led step by step to communicate to the world that which had been communicated to them. The prophetic declarations were to be repeated, and the truth essential for salvation was to be made known. The work moved hard at first. Often the hearers rejected the message as unintelligible, and the conflict began in decided earnest, especially upon the Sabbath question. But the Lord manifested His presence. At times the veil which concealed His glory from our eyes was drawn aside. We beheld Him in the high and holy place.

The Lord will not lead minds now to set aside the truth that the Holy Spirit has moved upon His servants in the past to proclaim.


To be continued.
Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy ox, nor thy ass, nor any thing that is thine. Six days work shalt thou do: But in the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy ox, nor thy ass, nor any thing that is thine. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

"Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert of Midian, by the coast of Moab, over against Jericho. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush was burning with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. And he said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

Ellen White comments on this experience in these inspired words:

"It will baffle the keenest intellect to interpret the divine manifestation of the burning bush. It was not a dream; it was not a vision; it was a living reality—something that Moses saw with his eyes. He heard the voice of God calling to him out of the bush, and he covered his face, realizing that he stood in the immediate presence of God. God was conversing with humanity. Never could Moses describe the impression made upon his mind by the sight he then saw, and by the sound of the voice that spoke to him; but this impression was never effaced. Heaven came very near to him as, with reverent awe, he listened to the words, 'I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'

What wondrous condescension for God to leave the heavenly courts, and manifest Himself to Moses, talking with him face to face, 'as a man speaketh unto his friend.' "The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 1, 1099.

Moses bowed, covered his face and took off his shoes. He was in the presence of the Almighty God, the God who could speak and make a world, the God who could create man from the dust of the ground.

In the days of Israel, God spoke of the holiness of His people and their dwelling place. "For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; there-

**REVERENCE**

ONLY those who understand and practice true reverence for God will ever see the kingdom of God. This statement may be startling and extreme to some, but nevertheless it is true, for reverence is much more than just being quiet in church. Let us for a moment review Moses' experience in the wilderness of Midian, which would today be in the Arabian Desert. He was a shepherd. He was also an Israelite trained as an Egyptian general in Pharaoh's court, and possibly could have been the next Pharaoh to ascend the throne of Egypt. But, because of his self-righteous impatience, Moses killed an Egyptian, and forty years later he is herding his father-in-law's sheep in the wilderness. Exodus 3:1-6 and 14 tells of his dramatic experience at the burning bush:
fore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee." Deuteronomy 23:14. God was in their midst. He led them by day in the cloud and watched them by night in the pillar of fire. See 1 Corinthians 10:1-4.

Again, we review the experience of Joshua at Jericho. "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so." Joshua 5:13-15.

Some might say God does not deal in this way with His people in the twentieth century. True, there are no burning bushes today. But as we worship on Sabbath, when we invite God to be in our midst in His sanctuary, should we not manifest the same solemnity and reverence manifested by Moses at the burning bush? As a rule we begin our Sabbath schools and worship services with a prayer to invite the Holy Spirit to be present. Let us not forget that in so doing we have asked God to be present through His Spirit, that when the Holy Spirit is there, God is there, and the place of worship is made holy. "And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." Psalm 89:5-7.

But when church members are irreverent in conduct, or in music, then the Spirit is not in the assembly of His people. We understand that angels veil their faces at the name of Jehovah. How then should sinners conduct themselves when entering the sanctuary, or even when meeting around the family altar? "True reverence for God is inspired by a sense of His infinite greatness and a realization of His presence. With this sense of the Unseen, every heart should be deeply impressed. The hour and place of prayer are sacred, because God is there. And as reverence is manifested in attitude and demeanor, the feeling that inspires it will be deepened. 'Holy and reverend is his name,' the psalmist declares. Psalm 111:9. Angels, when they speak that name, veil their faces. With what reverence, then, should we, who are fallen and sinful, take it upon our lips!" Prophets and Kings, 48-49.

The irreverence of adults has taught our children to be irreverent in the house of God. In many churches before Sabbath school begins the sanctuary sounds like a beehive on a warm summer day. While serving in Africa, I was greatly impressed with the reverence of the people in the house of God. Even though it was often just a white-washed, mud-pole building, they entered and knelt and prayed. The old European missionaries had taught their true reverence, that God was there in their worship on the holy Sabbath.

Parents, by their solemn reverence for the house of God and at the family altar, will teach their children the same solemn, awe-filled reverence for Almighty God. Ellen White gives this inspired counsel regarding our deportment in God's house: "It is for this reason that the house or sanctuary dedicated to God should not be made a common place. Its sacredness should not be confused or mingled with the common everyday feelings or business life. There should be a solemn awe upon the worshipers as they enter the sanctuary, and they should leave behind all common worldly thoughts, for it is the place where God reveals His presence. It is as the audience chamber of the great and eternal God; therefore pride and passion, dissension and self-esteem, selfishness, and covetousness, which God pronounces idolatry, are inappropriate for such a place. "Parents, it is your duty to have your children in perfect subjection, having all their passions and evil tempers subdued. And if children are taken to meeting, they should be made to know and understand where they are—that they are not at home, but where God meets with His people. And they should be kept quiet and free from all play, and God will turn His face toward you, to meet with you and bless you.

"If order is observed in the assemblies of the saints, the truth will have better effect upon all that hear it. A solemnity which is so much needed will be encouraged, and there will be power in the truth to stir up the depths of the soul, and a deathlike stuper will not hang upon those who hear. Believers and unbelievers will be affected. It has seemed evident that in some places the ark of God was removed from the church, for the holy commandments have been violated and the strength of Israel has been weakened. "Your child should be taught to obey as the children of God obey Him. If this standard is maintained, a word from you will have some weight when your child is restless in the house of God. But if the children cannot be restrained, if the parents feel that the restraint is too much of an exaction, the child should be removed from the church at once; it should not be left to divert the minds of the hearers by talking or running about. God is dishonored by the loose way in which parents manage their children while at church.

"All should be taught to be neat, clean, and orderly in their dress, but not to indulge in that external adorning which is wholly inappropriate for the sanctuary. There should be no display of the apparel, for this encourages irreverence. ... All matters of dress should be strictly guarded, following closely the Bible rule. Fashion has been the goddess who has ruled the outside world, and she often insinuates herself into the church. The church should make the Word of God her standard, and parents should think intelligently upon this subject." Child Guidance, 543-544.

This inspired counsel from our great God, if followed, would assist in bringing about a resurgence of the Holy Spirit’s power. Yes, a long-looked-for revival and reformation is greatly needed in this crisis hour.

When there is reverence for the Almighty God there will then be true reverence for His holy Sabbath. Sabbathbreak-
Such is probably the greatest sin among the remnant people in this final hour. Very few are keeping the Sabbath according to Isaiah 58:13-14: “If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

“God is no less particular now in regard to His Sabbath than when He made this requirement of the children of Israel. His eye is upon all His people, and over all the works of their hands. He will not pass by unnoticed those who crowd upon His Sabbath, and employ time for their own use which belongs to Him. Some professed Sabbathkeepers will intrude upon the Sabbath in doing those things which should have been done previous to the Sabbath. Such may think that they gain a little time, but instead of being advantaged by robbing God of holy time, which He has reserved to Himself, they will lose. The Lord will afflict them for their transgression of the fourth commandment, and that time they thought to gain, by intruding upon the Sabbath, will prove to them a curse. God’s prospering hand withdrawn will cause a decrease in all of their possessions, instead of an increase. God will surely punish the transgressor. Although He may bear with him for a while, his punishment may come suddenly. Such do not always realize that judgments are from God. He is a jealous God, and requires heart service and perfect obedience to all His commandments.” Spiritual Gifts, vol. 3, 293.

Those who break the Sabbath by thought, word or deed are trampling upon God’s authority and showing contempt for the holy and sacred law of God.

“Those who reverence the commandments of Jehovah will, after light has been given them in reference to the fourth precept of the Decalogue, obey it without questioning the feasibility or convenience of such obedience. God made man in His own image and then gave him an example of observing the seventh day, which He sanctified and made holy. He designed that upon that day man should worship Him and engage in no secular pursuits. No one who disregards the fourth commandment, after being enlightened concerning the claims of the Sabbath, can be held guiltless in the sight of God….

“When your temporal circumstances seem to require attention, you violate the fourth commandment without compunction. You make the keeping of God’s law a matter of convenience, obeying or disobeying as your business or inclination indicates. This is not honoring the Sabbath as a sacred institution. You grieve the Spirit of God and dishonor your Redeemer by pursuing this reckless course.” Testimonies, vol. 4, 247-248.

Those who do not show reverence for the house of God and His holy Sabbath in this world will never be members of the heavenly kingdom. The worship of God in His sanctuary on His holy Sabbath should bring forth praise and thanksgiving for His goodness, for His protection, and for the multitude of blessings which He sends to the faithful Sabbathkeeper who reverently worships in His sanctuary on Sabbath.

Whether it be in a beautiful edifice of bricks, or in a white-washed, mud-pole church, in an office or even where two or three are gathered together in a home of poverty, God is with all who with awe reverence His holy name. These are the people who, with praises on their lips, will soon make up His church triumphant. They lift up expectant eyes, looking to that sacred moment, the return of their great God, King, and Redeemer. Then their voices will ring out, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him. We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” Isaiah 25:9.

They are the people who have learned reverence in this world; they are the ones who, throughout eternity, will with great awe and solemnity reverence God’s holy name.
We are in the final stages of the great controversy, the universal struggle between good and evil which will forever vindicate God's character and forever determine the members of His kingdom. The final movements will be rapid ones; during them every person will determine whether he will choose loyalty and obedience to God with eternal life, or loyalty and obedience to self or to other men, which is really obedience to Satan, resulting in eternal death.

Both God and Satan use people, both individually and in groups, to win converts to their kingdom. Satan’s followers who work to take over the world for him are referred to as the synagogue of Satan. Because of its pluralism and confusion of beliefs and practices, the synagogue of Satan is also called Babylon. All who do not demonstrate their loyalty to God by both word and action will eventually become members of Babylon and with her will be eternally destroyed.

Interpreting the parable of the wheat and the tares (see Matthew 13:24–30; 36–43) Christ said that the field represented the world, the good seed are the children of Christ’s kingdom, and the tares are the children of Satan. The developing plants of both the good and the bad seed will remain indistinguishable to human evaluation until they are separated by the angels at the end of the world. All of the wheat and the tares will be fully ripened when Christ leaves the heavenly sanctuary and closes human probation by declaring: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Revelation 22:11. See Testimonies, vol. 2, 290.

God will make evident the contrast between deception and truth, between perfected evil and perfected good, to bring the end-time wheat and tares to maturity.

In this final struggle of the great controversy, the message given by Christ’s end-time people is referred to as the three angels’ messages. See Revelation 14:6–12; Selected Messages, book 2, 387. These messages are the everlasting gospel which goes to everyone on earth. This everlasting gospel calls all men to serve the Creator of all things and to glorify Him by allowing His character (glory) to be reproduced in them. It calls all to come out of the confusion and error of Babylon in order to avoid receiving the mark of the beast and the destructive wrath of God. The final message of God’s faithful remnant church ends in Revelation 14:12, with a description of the remnant’s characteristics: “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”

Only those who are patient, only those who obey all of God’s commandments, only those who live and work with the same faith in divine leadership that Jesus had, are able to give the three angels’ messages in their fullness. Only those who trust all the divine instructions of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy enough to actually obey them through divine grace will be able to give the message to come out of Babylon into full obedience to Jesus Christ. Those who claim to be followers of Christ, but who do not trust Him enough to obey the law and the testimonies, will in the end separate from Christ’s end-time church, become part of Babylon, and receive of her plagues and destruction in the lake of fire.
God’s remnant Seventh-day Adventist Church is known as Laodicea, a people judged. The faithful and true witness describes her as being spiritually wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked of righteousness—right doing. Her spiritual ill health incapacitates her to effectively give the three angels’ messages, for she cannot share a message of full obedience to Christ, the Head of the church, when she herself is disobedient to Him. See ibid., book 2, 378.

To transform His lukewarm, disobedient, unsanctified, Laodicean church into the fully obedient, sanctified givers of the three angels’ messages, Christ purifies His church by shaking and sifting. The wheat and the tares in the smaller field—Christ’s church—are first ripened, their probation is closed (the wheat are sealed). The chaff leaves the church and joins Babylon. The wheat in the purified church then gives the three angels’ messages to the larger field of the entire world causing its still immature wheat and tares to ripen. See Early Writings, 271. The shaking and sifting of the world will climax only after Seventh-day Adventists are shaken, sifted, sealed and receive the latter rain empowering them to give the loud cry. See The Faith I Live By, 287.

Satan is constantly working to prevent the purification of God’s church. He brings tares into the church and uses the allures of the world to make the cross seem hard to bear for those attempting to follow Christ.

“The world is the instrument that sifts the church and tests the genuineness of its members. The world holds out inducements that, when accepted, place the believer where his life is not in harmony with his profession....

“If you go forward toward heaven, the world will rub hard against you. At every step you will have to urge your way against Satan and his evil angels, and against all who transgress God’s law. Earthly authorities will interpose. You will meet tribulations, bruising of the spirit, hard speeches, ridicule, persecutions. Men will require your conformity to laws and customs that would render you disloyal to God. Here is where God’s people find the cross in the way to life.” The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 6, 1102.

In previous articles, we have studied the first two phases of Christ’s shaking or purifying of His people. See “The Sifting of Adventism”—Phases 1 and 2, in Our Firm Foundation, July and August 1993. Phase 1 is God’s allowing the introduction of heresies into the church.

These heresies undermine the doctrinal beliefs of those who have not a love for the truth. Phase 2 is God’s raising up persons to give a pointed testimony regarding the heresies and insubordination in the church. This witness results in the rising up of some against that straight testimony. This phase helps to settle each professor follower of Christ into obedience or into disobedience to Christ’s directives found in the Bible and in the Spirit of Prophecy.

Phase 3 of the shaking of Adventism involves the separation of those who do not choose obedience to Christ in lifestyle and methods for carrying on His work, from the loyal and true who do choose to obey. The loyal and true will remain in the church and give the loud cry to the world. During this third phase Christ uses (allows) persecution and adversity to fully mature the wheat and the tares in His church and to purge out the chaff from His threshing floor.

“I was pointed to the providence of God among His people and was shown that every trial made by the refining, purifying process upon professed Christians proves some to be dross. The fine gold does not always appear. In every religious crisis some fall under temptation. The shaking of God blows away multitudes like dry leaves. Prosperity multiplies a mass of professors. Adversity purges them out of the church. As a class, their spirits are not steadfast with God. They go out from us because they are not of us; for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, many are offended.” Testimonies, vol. 4, 89.

It is the wheat that Satan attempts to sift out of Christ’s army. “Satan will not sift the chaff, because he gains nothing in this. He sifts the wheat. The devil will not try and tempt and persecute those whom he is sure of, because [they are] living in known transgression of the law of God. Those who have enlisted in the army of the Lord standing under the bloodstained banner of Prince Emmanuel, Satan will seek to harass and destroy. Christians will meet and have many and severe conflicts with the wily point of establishing by law a false Sabbath, and making it a test for all. This question will soon be before us. God’s Sabbath will be trampled under foot, and a false Sabbath will be exalted. In a Sunday law there is possibility for great suffering to those who observe the seventh day. The working out of Satan’s plans will bring persecution to the people of God.” Selected Messages, book 2, 375.

“A spurious Sabbath is presented to be legislated into power, compelling the observance of a Sabbath which God has not enjoined upon man. The persecutions of Protestants by Romanism, by which the religion of Jesus Christ was almost annihilated, will be more than rivaled, when Protestantism and popery are combined.” Ibid., book 3, 387.

When the enforcement of Sunday laws brings persecution, those who have believed specious reasoning will give further heed to doctrines of devils and will be clearly separated from the True Vine.

“In the absence of persecution, there have drifted into our ranks some who appear sound, and their Christianity unquestionable, but who, if persecution should arise, would go out from us. In the crisis, they would see force in specious reasoning that has had an influence on their minds. Satan has prepared various snares to meet varied minds. When the law of God is made void the church will be sifted by fiery trials, and a larger proportion than we now
anticipate, will give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. Instead of being strengthened when brought into strait places, many prove that they are not living "ranches of the True Vine; they bore no fruit, and the husbandman taketh them away." Ibid., 368.

Those who give lip service to the truth of the third angel's message, but are not sanctified through obedience to that truth, will join the opposition and become the bitterest enemies of the faithful. After the shaking it will be seen that a great proportion of Seventh-day Adventists, both great proportion of those who are supposed to be genuine will give heed to seducing spirits, and will turn traitors and betray sacred trusts. They will prove our very worst persecutors. . . .

"Those who apostatize in time of trial will bear false witness and betray their brethren, to secure their own safety. They will tell where their brethren are concealed, putting the wolves on their track. Christ has warned us of this, that we may not be surprised at the cruel, unnatural course pursued by friends and relatives." Maranatha, 197.

One act of disobedience weakens the power to see the sinfulness of the second act. One little disregard of a "Thus saith the Lord" is sufficient to stop the promised blessing of the Holy Spirit.

"An apostate church will unite with the powers of earth and hell to place upon the forehead or in the hand, the mark of the beast, and prevail upon the children of God to worship the beast and his image. They will seek to compel them to renounce their allegiance to God's law, and yield homage to the Papacy. Then will come the times which will try men's souls; for the confederacy of apostasy will demand that the loyal subjects of God shall renounce the law of Jehovah, and repudiate the truth of His Word. Then will the gold be separated from the dross, and it will be made apparent who are the godly, who are the loyal and true, and who are the disloyal, the dross and the tinsel. What clouds of chaff will then be borne away by the fan of God! Where now our eyes can discover only rich floors of wheat will be, will be chaff blown away with the fan of God. Every one who is not centered in Christ will fail to stand the test and ordeal of that day. While those who are clothed with Christ's righteousness will stand firm to truth and duty, those who have trusted in their own righteousness will be ranged under the black banner of the prince of darkness. Then it will be seen whether the choice is for Christ or Belial." Ibid., 204.

"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. . . .

"Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. The contest is between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. In this time the gold will be separated from the dross in the church. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy will then go out in darkness." Testimonies, vol. 5, 80–81.

"Those who make a profession while failing to obey cannot stand the storm of temptation. One act of disobedience weakens the power to see the sinfulness of the second act. One little disregard of a 'Thus saith the Lord' is sufficient to stop the promised blessing of the Holy Spirit. By disobedience the light once so precious becomes obscure." Manuscript Releases, vol. 1, 368–369.

Those who have more diligently sought the favor of man than the favor of God will, under persecution, find every possible excuse to continue in disobedience.

"The determination of Antichrist to carry out the rebellion he began in heaven will continue to work on the children of disobedience. Their envy and hatred against those who obey the fourth commandment will wax more and more bitter. . . .

"Every possible excuse for disobedience will be framed by men who choose, as many did in Christ's day, the favor of men rather than the favor of God." Selected Messages, book 3, 401.

Our final test will be to stand for truth when champions are few.

"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." Testimonies, vol. 5, 136.

When our brightest stars go out, when rich fields of wheat prove to be mere chaff, when the banner of truth is left to trail in the dust, then those abiding in Christ will hold aloft truth with greater earnestness.

"But when the world makes void the law of God, what will be the effect upon the truly obedient and righteous? Will they be carried away by the strong current of evil? Because so many rank themselves under the banner of the prince of darkness, will God's commandment-keeping
people swerve from their allegiance? Never! Not one who is abiding in Christ will fail or fall. His followers will bow in obedience to a higher authority than that of any earthly potentate. While the contempt placed upon God's commandments leads many to suppress the truth and show less reverence for it, the faithful ones will with greater earnestness hold aloft its distinguishing truths." Selected Messages, book 2, 368-369.

When man's laws bring God's laws into the most severe contempt, then Christ's true followers will gather warmth from coldness, courage from cowardice, loyalty from treason.

"When the law of God is most derided and brought into the most contempt, then it is time for every true follower of Christ, for those whose hearts have been given to God, and who are fixed to obey God, to stand unflinchingly for the faith once delivered to the saints. . . .

"All who will gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their defection, and loyalty from their treason, will triumph with the third angel's message." Review and Herald, June 8, 1897.

If we keep our eyes fixed upon Christ, we may look forward with joy to the finished product of the shaking yet before us.

"We cannot expect that everything will move along smoothly; for everything is to be shaken that can be shaken. God is testing and proving His people. Angels of God, intelligences of heaven, are watching the development of character, and weighing the moral worth of the professed followers of Christ. Look up, look above the whirl of daily occurrences, and fix your eyes upon Him who never changes and you will endure as seeing Him who is invisible. You may look forward with joy to the finishing of the mystery." Manuscript Releases, vol. 5, 11.

Only the doers of God's expressed will are able to stand through the trials ahead.

"They that will be doers of the Word are building securely, and the tempest and storm of persecution will not shake their foundation, because their souls are rooted to the eternal Rock." The Upward Look, 315.

"It is dangerous to be simply hearers of the Word and not doers. He that hears and obeys every word that proceeds from the lips of God, is building upon the rock. He that hears but does not bring the words of God into his life practice, builds on the sand, and will surely fall. Everything is to be shaken that can be shaken." Ellen G. White Pamphlets, No. 96, 43.

The deceptions of Satan will climax when he personates Christ. He is carefully laying his plans in an attempt to deceive even the very elect. Only those who have received the love of the truth and have been diligent students of the Bible will stand.

"Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive. By the Bible testimony these will detect the deceiver in his disguise. To all the testing time will come. By the sifting of temptation the genuine Christian will be revealed. Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His Word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible and the Bible only?" The Great Controversy, 625.

Many will be martyrs for the truth in the conflict ahead, but those who stand for truth are assured that temptations greater than they can bear will not be allowed to come upon them.

"The two armies will stand distinct and separate, and this distinction will be so marked that many who shall be convinced to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place. None but those who have been overcoming by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony will be found with the loyal and true, without spot or stain of sin, without guile in their mouths." Ibid., book 2, 380.

The smallest particle of chaff will not remain within, nor will the least particle of grain be left out, of the house of Israel in that day.

"The house of Israel is being sifted, even as corn is sifted in a sieve. The chaff must be removed, and it will require close work to separate the chaff from the kernels of grain. God's discerning eye will detect the smallest particle of chaff, and yet he will not cause to fall upon the ground the least kernel of grain." Review and Herald, November 26, 1861.

In the mighty sifting we will be better able to measure the strength of Israel.

"The days of purification of the church are hastening on apace. God will have a people pure and true. In the mighty sifting soon to take place, we shall be better able to measure the strength of Israel. The signs reveal that the time is near when the Lord will manifest that His fan is in His hand, and that He soon will thoroughly purge His floor." Review and Herald, January 11, 1887.

God's people must now be putting on Christ's robe of right doing if they are to stand in the day of trouble.

"The people must not be left to stumble their way along in darkness, not knowing what is before them, and unprepared for the great issues that are coming. There is a work to be done for this time in fitting a people to stand in the day of trouble, and all must act their part in this work. They must be clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and be so fortified by the truth that the delusions of Satan shall not be accepted by them as genuine.

We need to be preparing for the perils ahead by becoming familiar with, and living in harmony with, every word that proceeds from God.

“We are living in perilous times, and as we draw near the close of earth’s history, there will be no safety for those who do not become familiar with the Word of God. I would warn the disciples of Christ of the impending days of peril, and beseech you to prepare for the time of test and trial; for everything that can be shaken, will be shaken. Do we now obey the Word of God, and live by every word that proceedseth out of the mouth of God? Are we established and settled in the present truth? There is need of closely examining yourselves whether you are in the love of God; for except Christ be in you, you are reprobates. Self-deception is dangerous, and no one of us can afford to go on in delusion.” *The Youth’s Instructor*, May 18, 1893.

The apostasy of others should not discourage us. Our primary concern is not to be how we will stand in the time of trouble; rather we should be concerned with whether we are living and working in such a way that Christ can abide with us today.

“We are coming to a crisis, and I am in terror for our souls. Why is it that we find men leaving the faith? Are we in a position where we shall know what we believe, and shall not be shaken out? That souls leave the truth should not discourage us in the least, but only make us seek more earnestly for the blessing of God. It is not the education, or the talents, or the position of men, that is to save them. We are to be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. How do you stand before God today? The question is not, How will you stand in the day of trouble, or at some future time? but how is it with your soul today? Will you go to work today? We want a personal, individual experience today. Today, we want Christ abiding with us.” *Review and Herald*, April 9, 1889.

Even as we contemplate the fierce conflicts which will purify God’s church, we are to pray that God not delay the shaking.

“We expect fierce conflicts with the powers of darkness. We believe the shaking time has come. My cry is, Stay not Thy hand, O God. Let everything be shaken that can be. Let us know who is upon the sure foundation, who is on the Lord’s side.” *Ellen G. White Biography*, vol. 1, 441.

In our next article we will discuss the relationship that exists between Christ’s visible and invisible churches. Do two true churches really exist? If so, when will they become one? Is it important that we have clear answers to these questions? 

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**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

I would like to commend all of you for your “stick-to-it” attitude, in spite of the “barbs” being thrown at you! I especially enjoy and look forward to each of your publications. I hunger for good old-fashioned in-depth Bible studies, and your magazine gives me that satisfaction.

I am reading *Issues Clarified*. It is outstanding. Keep your faith strong, and stay on the right track as you are doing. Our Lord will set it all straight soon. I employ that old saying of a church pioneer, “Don’t stop to chase the dogs who are nipping at our heels.”

—BW, Florida

Praise our heavenly Father for *Our Firm Foundation*, which I have enjoyed reading since I first discovered an issue in our mailbox at my local church. I have never subscribed to the magazine, but each article has been enlightening and I have been truly blessed. Please continue to send me *Our Firm Foundation* as a regular subscriber and I will mail my subscription amount to you. Thank you for the special Waco edition.

—CH, Indiana

Thank you so much for the June 1993 issue. So many are bombarding us with the “separate” cry. We have been putting long hours in on study and prayer, and this issue helps us so much.

—GL, Mississippi

I have been receiving *Our Firm Foundation* since the first publication. I must admit that I only browsed through the pages every now and then. I believe I am one of the ones to whom you send complimentary copies from time to time, and this was the first time that I read the magazine, the June 1993 issue, from cover to cover in one sitting.

I want to let you know that I found that your insights and comments were just what I needed as I see the various changes going on in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I can see very vividly that there is a need to call sin by its right name and to stand firm to the foundational principles of the church. In my area there are many “man-made” problems that cause those who are faithful and loyal to the historic Seventh-day Adventist Church to be frowned upon as not being loyal to the pastor and his principles. It is sad to say that there are many who are standing by the pastor and his word rather than knowing for themselves a “Thus saith the Lord.” The desires of man have almost replaced the concepts of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and even the church manual.

After reading the June Issue, I am encouraged and realize that the time is now for all of us to do what we can to help our brothers and sisters to remain faithful to the founding principles of our faith. May God continue to bless your ministry and others who have a desire to awaken our members from their spiritual sleep before it is too late.

—MW, Virginia

Thank you for *Our Firm Foundation*. I read every word and cannot wait for the next issue. I pray for your ministry, as the evil one would like to destroy it. The word of truth will prevail with God’s sweet blessings. Please pray for me and my family.

—MC, Tennessee

Many readers will appreciate knowing that we pray for these prayer requests daily during our staff worship (8:00–9:00 A.M.). —EDITORS

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DRUGS, needles, pills, scalpels, hypnotherapy, acupuncture, abortion, Sabbathbreaking, diet compromise—what place, if any, should these have in God’s health-care program? The medical missionary work has its foundation in the teachings of Jesus Christ. He established the principles by which the medical work is to be accomplished. “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.” Matthew 4:23.

The medical missionary work of Jesus was predicated upon leading men and women to give the everlasting gospel. The healing ministry of Jesus went far beyond the physical restoration of those He blessed. It went into the deeper, fuller ministry of the restoration of the soul and the preparation of the healed one for the kingdom of heaven. After healing the impotent man of his long-standing disease, Jesus told him, “Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.” John 5:14. This message was exactly the same that God gave to the man troubled and borne down by sin. See John 8:11.

The indivisible work of giving the gospel with the health message is presented in the ordination commission of Christ to the disciples: “And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.” Luke 9:2. “And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.” Luke 9:6. When John the Baptist questioned the ministry of Christ, the response of Jesus was as follows: "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.” Matthew 11:4–5.

The medical missionary work continued with power after the day of Pentecost. The healing of a lame man, one of the best-known miracles shortly after the investment of the apostles with the Holy Spirit, was the avenue by which Peter and John found occasion to preach the gospel of Jesus. “Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have I give thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.” Acts 3:6. “And the lame man received his healing power from the feet; and when he had received his strength, he leaped up and walked.” Acts 3:8. As a result of this miracle, Peter and John had an opportunity to give a most powerful message recorded in Acts 3:12–26. Upon the divine pattern thus exemplified God established the medical missionary work in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Indeed, the health message is an integral part of the everlasting gospel, the second facet of which is to give glory to him. Revelation 14:7.

It is not by accident that God has given to the Seventh-day Adventist Church a health message unparalleled among all the other churches of Christendom. Because God has called this church to be the depository of His truth and to present the message of salvation to the world, He has given to its members this information regarding health. This body of knowledge is meant to form the right arm of the gospel. It is meant to be the opening wedge by means of which hearts are softened and minds turned to the One who cannot only restore them physically, but can also recreate them into the image of their Maker.

For a hundred and thirty years God has placed before the Seventh-day Adventist Church every facet of this health message. As a result of counsels from Him clinics and sanitariums began to be raised up all over the world early in our history. The primary purpose of these institutions was not to provide parallel, acute-care medicine for the ill, but rather to point men and women to God’s power to restore.

"The purpose of our health institutions is not first and foremost to be that of..."
instituted with the closing work of the gospel in the earth stand for the great principles of the gospel in all its fullness. Christ is the One to be revealed in all the institutions connected with the closing work, but none of them can do it so fully as the health institution where the sick and suffering come for relief and deliverance from both physical and spiritual ailments. Many of these need, like the paralytic of old, the forgiveness of sin the first thing, and they need to learn how to ‘go, and sin no more.” Medical Ministry, 27-28.

In His Word the principles of every facet of life, whether it be physical, emotional, social, intellectual, or spiritual, are to be found. It is God’s plan to turn the minds of men and women toward the One who not only restores their physical health, but also restores spiritual life in the soul of every submitted human being.

By means of the health message God ordained that men and women, often not normally responsive to the matchless claims of Christ, will yet find their hearts opened because of the restoration God has brought to their bodies. The health message is also an especially effective way of finding access to that class of society who generally feel self-sufficient, those who are from the wealthy and influential segments of society. And truly, over the years, many hearts have been opened to the gospel presentation because of tender, effective care from dedicated medical missionaries.

It is not that these sanitariums and clinics were to ignore acute-care medicine, but it was not to be their main emphasis. The primary emphasis was to be on preventive health care and on the restoration of health through the natural remedies that God has provided.

"There are many ways of practicing the healing art, but there is only one way that Heaven approves. God's remedies are the simple agencies of nature that will not tax or debilitate the system through their powerful properties. Pure air and water, cleanliness, a proper diet, purity of life, and a firm trust in God are remedies for the want of which thousands are dying; yet these remedies are going out of date because their skillful use requires work that the people do not appreciate. Fresh air, exercise, pure water, and clean, sweet premises are within the reach of all with but little expense; but drugs are expensive, both in the outlay of means and in the effect produced upon the system." Testimonies, vol. 5, 443.

Those in need were to be trained in dietary reform which would help energize their bodies, and develop a stronger immune system. They were to be trained in proper forms of exercise, in the use of water treatment, and encouraged to get sufficient sunlight, rest and fresh air to strengthen their bodies. Patients were to be educated in the proper principles of abstinence—moderation in the use of that which is healthful and total abstinence from that which is hurtful. Above all, they were to learn to put their whole trust in God and in His provisions for the fullest revitalizing of every human being.

But step by predictable step, as we have compromised in our health systems, seeking to pattern them after the acute-care emphasis of the secular institutions, we have lost much of the purpose for which our institutions exist. However, we find in them an emphasis upon striving for excellence as it is evaluated by those who do not know our health message. In many of our institutions, our hydrotherapy and massage units have long since disappeared. And in many, the primary purpose of leading men and women to God has been all but lost. We have thought it more important to develop institutions resembling those of the world than to follow the pattern that God has given. This decision has led to a number of serious consequences.

First, our hospitals do not have a full Adventist presence in them. Indeed, many of our hospitals employ a majority percentage of non-Seventh-day Adventist staff members. These employees bring their own concepts of medicine into our institutions, which has led to practices which surely are an abomination to God. Some of our hospitals are well-known for their permissive abortions. Others have chosen to use methods that come from paganism: acupuncture, hypnotherapy, and other eastern mystical practices. Surely the God of heaven is wholly dishonored by these practices.

"It is of the utmost importance that harmony exist in our institutions. Better for the work to go crippled than for workers who are not fully devoted to be employed. It is unconsecrated, unconverted men who have been spoiling the work of God. The Lord has no use whatever for men [or women] who are not wholly consecrated to His service." Medical Ministry, 207.

The servant of the Lord repeatedly said these sanitariums should be small and located in the country; however, many of them are today entrapped in urban and suburban areas. Also many of them have grown to be major hospitals offering only marginally different treatment options from those offered by worldly institutions. With the rapid increase in technology, our hospitals have felt compelled to purchase expensive pieces of equipment the costs of which have driven our health system into what many believe is irreversible debt. This debt may one day be responsible for bankrupting the whole of the Seventh-day Adventist Church organization. Our health system seems to be entrapped by Satan, bound up in such a way that it can no longer be revised into the pattern that God originally ordained.

Some years ago it was thought prudent by some hospital administrators to include community leaders on the hospital boards, thus involving them in the decision-making administration of the hospitals. It was argued that such men, in many cases, would be even more protective of the purpose of the Seventh-day Adventist institutions than were some Seventh-day Adventists, but Satan was playing his waiting game. This tactic has led to major lawsuits and with them, compromise away from the patterns that God has given to us.

"Now and ever we are to stand as a distinct and peculiar people, free from all worldly policy, unembarrassed by confederating with those who have not wisdom to discern God's claims so plainly set
forth in His law. All our medical institutions are established as Seventh-day Adventist institutions to represent the various features of gospel medical missionary work and thus to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. We are to show that we are seeking to work in harmony with heaven....

"In the discharge of our duties we are neither to despise nor to fear our enemies. To bind ourselves up by contracts with

try meant to go with this opening wedge of the work of God.

"Why should the Christian physician, who is believing, expecting, looking, waiting, and longing for the coming and kingdom of Christ, when sickness and death will no longer have power over the saints, expect more pay for his services than the Christian editor or the Christian minister? He may say that his work is more wearing. That is yet to be

proved. Let him work as he can endure it, and not violate the laws of life which he teaches to his patients. There are no good reasons why he should overwork and receive large pay for it, more than the minister or the editor. Let all who act a part in the Institute and receive pay for their services, act on the same liberal principle. No one should be suffered to remain as helper in the Institute who does it simply for pay. There are those of ability who, for the love of Christ, His cause, and the suffering followers of their Master, will fill stations in that Institute faithfully and cheerfully, and with a spirit of sacrifice. Those who have not this spirit should remove and give place to those who have it." Testimonies, vol. 1, 640–641.

What is the solution? It is not easy now to address the problems. There are those who believe that we are now so irreversibly in debt that even if we were to sell off every hospital we have in North America, we would still owe hundreds of millions of dollars. Nevertheless, we have divine counsels as to the type of health institutions, their size, location and management. See "God's Plan for the Health Work," Our Firm Foundation, May 1990. And therefore it seems that Conferences and Unions have a responsibility to start again in faith with the principles that God has provided, offering to physicians, nurses and other health practitioners the opportunity of learning to unite the health message with the gospel commission.

"We never proposed to establish sanitariums to have them run in nearly the same grooves as other institutions. If we do not have a sanitarium which is in many things decidedly contrary to other institutions, we can see nothing gained." Spalding and Magan Collection, 45.

If we do not have the means to replace our present urban hospitals with multiple little sanitariums and other health institutions around the cities of the world, then perhaps we can encourage dedicated lay persons and health personnel to open health clinics and conditioning centers where men and women can receive the balm of Gilead that God provides for the human race. These institutions can be simple; they can be created in a homelike environment; they can be operated with small staffs who help support themselves by cultivating the land and with simple industries. These institutions can become outpost centers from which to work the cities. They can also provide training and education for those interested in understanding health principles and in learning how to present them to others. Further, to this end we can utilize the resources of our faithful lay members.

It is not necessary to have studied in the world's great institutions of learning to be a medical missionary. Lay persons can readily be trained to present the gospel in relationship with vegetarian cooking schools, stop-smoking clinics, cardiac-exercise programs, nutritional classes and in many other ways. Christ was not dependent upon a huge budget to carry forward His ministry, and we do not need large means to truly make the health message the entering wedge and the right arm of our gospel presentation.

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Did you hear a sermon at the Hope International camp meeting that you would like to share with your Adventist friends? Perhaps you were unable to attend this year, but many who did attend our ninth annual camp meeting said it was one of the best ever. We trust you will be blessed as you listen to these tapes, compare the messages with the Word of God, and share them with others. Look for additional camp-meeting sermons from other localities in future issues of Our Firm Foundation.

**Ray DeCarlo**
*Revelation 17 (3 tapes)*
Many Adventists have been puzzled by some of the prophecies of Revelation 17. Ray DeCarlo shows how these prophecies are being fulfilled in a manner which harmonizes with the historic Adventist understanding of Daniel and the Revelation.

**Steve Dickie**
*Bible Studies for Russia (1 tape)*
Catch a glimpse of God’s providential leadings as Steve Dickie and others worked to provide in the Russian language a complete set of Bible studies, including the three angels’ messages.

**Clark Floyd**
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Is Christ truly the center of all our thoughts and priorities? Learn for yourself what it means to look unto Jesus, “the author and finisher of our faith.”

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*Living Faith: Ready for the Hour, Unprepared for the Moment: The Two Essentials (3 tapes)*
Does your daily life reflect your Christian profession? Jim Hohnberger again focuses on the practical, day-to-day aspects of the gospel.

**Ralph Moss**
*Current Events in the Light of Bible Prophecy (1 tape)*
Ralph Moss, editor of “Hope Liberty News,” gives an update on some of the recent events in the religious and the political arenas which indicate the nearness of Christ’s return.

**Norberto Restrepo**
*Redemption Is Education (1 tape)*
Where are your children? God asks this question of parents as they consider the education of their children. Norberto Restrepo, who resides in Venezuela, preached this sermon in Spanish, which was then translated into English—a unique experience for many English-speaking listeners.

**Gwen and Rick Shorter**
*Video: $8; Audio: $2.50*
From Show Business to Something Bigger (1 tape)
A testimony of how God led two people who were searching for a meaningful life from show business to unite their lives in ministry for Him.

**Ron Spear**
*Video: $24; Audio: $6*
Teach Me to Pray; The Cleansing of the Sanctuary; Study the Word (3 tapes)
Have we learned to pray as Jesus did? Do we understand how the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary involves each of us? Are we grounded in the Word of God, or are we blown about by the many winds of doctrine? Elder Ron Spear addresses these important questions in these three sermons.

**Colin Standish**
*Video: $24; Audio: $6*
The Perils of Time Setting; The Plight of the Foolish Virgins; Why I Believe the Seventh-day Adventist Church Is Not Babylon (3 tapes)
Dr. Colin Standish warns of three dangers imperiling many Adventists today. Are we guilty of destroying our faith through speculation, futurism and time setting? Could we believe all the right doctrines and still be foolish virgins? Are we in danger of forsaking God’s people, rebellious though they may be, before God has forsaken them?

**Russell Standish**
*Video: $24; Audio: $6*
If We Had Lived in the Days of Our Fathers; The Christless Sabbath; Gross Abominations (3 tapes)
Dr. Russell Standish (brother of Colin Standish) asks whether we are guilty of relating to those whom God has sent with the straight testimony in the same manner that Israel related to the prophets. What lessons can we learn from the events which occurred during the only Christless Sabbath in history? Are we committing abominations in God’s church?

**Bill Stringfellow**
*Video: $16; Audio: $4*
The Reply; Terrible Tidings (2 tapes)
Author Bill Stringfellow (best known for his book *The Greatest Deception, or All in the Name of the Lord*) was asked by a church-leader friend several questions relating to independent ministries. In the first tape Brother Stringfellow replies with some serious, thought-provoking questions of his own. In his second sermon he discusses the last verses of Daniel 11.

*Video prices: This price is special for orders received by October 15. The regular price for the camp—meeting video tapes will be $10 per tape. Until October 15 you may also order the complete set of 22 videos for $150 (save $25).
**Cassette prices: Any single sermon may be ordered for $2.50 per tape. All 22 tapes: $45.
Please add 10% postage and handling to all orders ($1.50 minimum). Washington residents please add 7.5% sales tax.
Let Both Grow Together

A NOETHER parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” Matthew 13:24–30.

The Lord does not leave the work of judging to finite man; for unless the Holy Spirit sanctifies the soul, man cannot be a cautious, safe judge. In the parable of the wheat and the tares, the Lord gave special directions to warn his disciples against uprooting those from the church who they supposed were spurious Christians. He had said, “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” Matthew 7:1–2. This lesson has been strangely neglected by those who profess to be doers of the words of Christ; for if a brother errer, and did not meet their ideas, they manifested hard-heartedness, a cold, critical spirit, and rashly followed their impulses, and turned the offender adrift.

The Lord sums up the whole duty of man in the following words: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteons man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it.” Ecclesiastes 12:13–14; Matthew 12:36–37; Acts 17:30–31; Isaiah 55:6–11.

There are many who are treated as tares and hopeless subjects, whom Christ is drawing to Himself. Men judge from the outward appearance, and think they discern the true measurement of a man’s character, but they make many blunders in their judgments. They put a high estimate upon a man whose appearance is as an angel of light, when in thought and heart he is corrupt and unworthy. On another whose appearance is not so favorable, they par criticism, make him an offender for a word, and would separate him from the church.
because of his supposed defective character, when it may be that He who reads the heart, sees true moral worth in the man. Human judgment does not decide any case; or the Lord’s thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are His ways our ways. He whom we would separate from the church as altogether unworthy, is the object of the Lord’s solicitude and love. All Heaven is engaged in doing the appointed work of drawing souls to God, and the Lord has said concerning His word, “It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it.” Isaiah 55:11.

Then since the Lord is working through His own divine agency upon the hearts of those whom we would term hopeless subjects, let not man be officious, let him stand out of the way of God’s work; for His word that goeth forth from His mouth, will accomplish its appointed work, and prosper in the thing whereunto it is sent. Let not man set himself up as judge of his brethren; for God “hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” “And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.” “But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.” “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. . . . For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.” Acts 17:31; 10:42; Romans 14:10–13; John 5:22–27.

Jesus clothed His divinity with humanity in order that He might reach humanity. The apostle says, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same. . . . For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore as all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” Hebrews 2:14–18. Jesus is the only one that has ever walked in the flesh who is able to judge righteously. Looking at outward acts, men may condemn and root up that which they think to be tares; but they may greatly mistake. Both ministers and laymen should be Bible students, and understand how to act in regard to the erring. They are not to move rashly, to be actuated by prejudices or partiality, to be evil? Do I reveal the fact to others that I am in the faith?” If upon careful, prayerful examination of ourselves, we discover that we are not able to bear the test of human investigation, then how shall we endure the test of the eyes of God, if we set ourselves up as judges of others?

Before judging others, our first work is to watch and pray, to institute a warfare against the evils of our own hearts through the grace of Christ. We are to stand under the shadow of the cross of Calvary, humbling our hearts, confessing our sins, and entreat the Lord to pardon our defects of

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ready with an unfeeling heart, to uproot one and tear down another; for this is most solemn work. In criticizing and condemning their brethren, the accusers wound and bruise the souls for whom Christ has died. Christ has purchased them with His own precious blood; and although men, judging from outward appearances, pronounce sentence against them, their judgment in the courts of heaven is more favorable than that of their accusers. Before any of you speak against your brethren, or act decidedly to cut them off from church fellowship, follow the injunction of the apostle: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” 2 Corinthians 13:5.

Let those who would dispose of their brethren, look well to the character of their own thoughts, their motives, their impulses, purposes, and deeds. Compare your experience with the law of God, and see whether you are an example in character, in conversation, in purity. Said Christ, “I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified.” John 17:19. Before condemning others, let us ask ourselves, “Am I an example to my brethren in bearing fruit unto holiness? Do the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, appear in my life? Have I that charity which suffereth long, and is kind; that thinketh no character, and strengthen our love for our brethren. If we neglect this heart searching in the light of divine truth, self-love will blind our eyes, and we shall have a much better opinion of ourselves than God has of us. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. And it is written, “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.” Proverbs 28:26.

The reason is plain why Christ has said, “Judge not”; for it is natural for man to exalt his own goodness, to shun a candid examination of his own heart, and depreciate others. If we looked upon things in the right light, we should see that we need mercy from Christ every moment, and should render the same to our brethren. Jesus has not placed man upon the judgment-seat; for He knew human nature too well to give man the power to judge and condemn others. He knew that in their fallible judgment, they would root up some as tares, who were worthy of their sympathy and confidence, and would pass by others who deserved to be dealt with in a decided manner. When there are cases in the church which need to be dealt with decidedly, let the rule of the Bible be carried out. If the influence of erring members has an influence that corrupts others, they should be disfellowshipped; and Heaven will ratify the action. It is the work of the enemy to sow tares among the wheat; and there will be men found in the church whose influence, as far as we can discern from outward
appearance, is no blessing to the church. But even in cases of this character we are to move cautiously; for Christ and heavenly agencies are at work to purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

While Christ is at work to preserve a pure church in the earth, Satan ever seeks to counteract His agency and work. Spurious Christians are found in the church of God; for we find men, while professing the name of Christ, more firmly united to Satan than to the church. They are united with pure and holy influences. They gather darkness and unbelief from Satan, and they communicate it to the church. They profess to have the power of discernment, and discover spots and stains in the character of their brethren, and are not slow to communicate their suspicions to other members of the church. They distribute the leaven of distrust, of malice and accusation. And as a result, alienation and estrangement come in between brethren. All these false accusers, though their names are on the church records, are under the control of Satan, and work as his agents to weaken and confuse the church, and divide the brethren of Christ on earth. When this has been accomplished, Satan exults over the divided state of the church, and points the world to the professed followers of Christ, thus bringing the name of Christ into dishonor before the world, and entrenching men in their unbelief and rebellion against God.

"Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." Matthew 7:3–5.

We have great need to search the Scriptures that we may be representatives of Christ, and act our part as laborers together with God to build up the church in the most holy faith. There is not enough careful, prayerful, painstaking investigation in accepting members into the church. We cannot follow the example of the world, or allow their criticisms to sway us from the path of duty. They will blame us if we refuse to admit certain persons into church fellowship, and on the other hand, they condemn the church for its unworthy members. They will say, The church is no better than the world; for its members deceive and cheat and bear false witness; so the world's tares, ye root up also the wheat with them." There is such a thing as zeal not according to knowledge; and could all the circumstances be opened which surround these souls, the zealous church members might have their ideas modified, and be led to pursue an entirely different course. They would see that a work devoted upon them to seek and save instead of to destroy, to manifest long-suffering, gentleness, patience, and love, to those whose character and life are below the standard. To cut them off from the church would, perhaps, extinguish their last hope. And who can determine how God looks upon these manifestly erring ones? In many cases it is evident that those who are most zealous to see the church without blemish, have serious defects of character which they do not discern. Because of their own mistakes and failings, unconsciously to themselves, they may be doing greater harm than the ones they judge unworthy to remain in fellowship with the church.

Many a church trial is the result of personal likes and dislikes. Evil surmisings have led to evil speaking and accusing. Because of some mistake in business dealing, men have become suspicious of their brethren. Instead of going to their brethren privately, and speaking plainly to them of their errors, thus manifesting true love, and removing the cloud of difficulty, they have brought about a church trial, and would have the questions which vex them settled by the church by digging up the supposed tares. Many have been severed from the church because of these personal spites, and have been thrown upon the enemy's battleground, where they have become discouraged, and through manifold temptations, have fallen into the very sins of which they were accused.

Let the words of Christ be carefully studied, "Let both grow together until the harvest." Matthew 13:30. Let there be no triumphing over a brother that has stumbled, but rather let there be a following of the Scripture injunction: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:1–2.

The scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman whom they accused as guilty of breaking the seventh commandment. They said to Him, "Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse.
him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said to them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. "John 8:5-8. Curiosity led them to draw near, and read what was written on the ground. There they saw their own sins plainly stated—sins of a far more aggravated character than that into which she had been betrayed; for her accusers had induced her to sin, that they might lay a snare for Christ. And they which heard the words of Christ, "being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last." John 8:9.

Those who are most guilty of wrong, are the first to see wrong; therefore let every church member see to it that his own heart is pure before God, that his name is not only written on the church books, but registered in the Lamb's book of life. Then he will not be a judge of his brethren, he will not be a desipser of those whom he considers defective. He will remember the words of the apostle, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgeth: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. ... And thinkest thou this, man, that judgest him which doeth such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering: not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentence?" Romans 2:1-4.

The spirit that instigates accusation and condemnation in the church which results in uprooting those that are looked upon as evildoers, has manifested itself in seeking to correct wrongs through the civil power. This is Satan's own method for bringing the world under his dominion; but the Lord Jesus Christ has given us no such example for thus dealing with the erring. God has been misrepresented through the church by this very way of dealing with heretics; He has been represented as the one who empowered the church to do these wicked things.

Those who have suffered from the established doctrines have been imprisoned, put to torture and to death, because the dignities of the church could not endure those who dissented from ideas which these leaders deemed to be true. Satan himself is the sower of tares; but even though he is the sower of them, they are not to be rooted up, lest by chance the wheat be rooted up with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and the harvest is the end of probationary time.

**Satan himself is the sower of tares; but even though he is the sower of them, they are not to be rooted up, lest by chance the wheat be rooted up with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and the harvest is the end of probationary time.**
The young man wanted eternal life; but he could not accept the conditions upon which Christ offered it to him, and he turned away from Christ with a sorrowful heart. And yet Christ was not asking of him a sacrifice which He had not made Himself, for He had left His glory, His riches, His honor, and for our sake had become poor, and of no reputation, that He might win for us eternal riches and immortal glory. He enlightened this young man in regard to his own heart, showing him that he could not hoard up his treasures for personal gratification, and yet possess a Christian character. Christ says, “Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.” But the young man was not ready to follow the Prince of life, to become poor that he might make others rich.

The love of the world disqualifies a man for the service of God. Those who would be servants of God must give their best energies to the work, planning ways and means by which the cause of truth may be made successful. If a man’s best thought is concentrated in devising ways and means to gather in earthly treasure, his heart is with his treasure, and he minds earthly things. Those who consecrate themselves to God, and constantly seek wisdom from on high, know that they cannot engage in business where their whole energies are devoted to the world, and still be the servants of God; for everything they do must be to His glory.

Spiritual advancement in no wise disqualifies men for engaging in worldly business; for where Christ is formed within, the hope of glory, they can do their business as in the sight of the Lord and for His honor.

But the servants of Christ cannot bind themselves up with the world; they cannot belong to secret societies, without binding themselves in with the tares. He who has placed himself under the banner of Christ, has pledged himself to follow no pursuit, to engage in no enterprise, that shall interfere with his service to the Lord of heaven. Christ is to be his all, and in all.

Christ requires personal faithfulness of His servants, and we are to show that we have no fellowship with the secret, hidden things of darkness. The wheat is not to sow itself among the tares; for although we may not practice the works of some of the members of the secret orders, in joining them we are registered in heaven as partakers of the evil deeds, responsible for their works of evil, and bound up in bundles with them as tares. Thank God, it is not too late for Christians to sever themselves from all unholy connections, and come fully unto the side of Christ. But while the church is to separate itself from evildoers, to come out from among them, and be separate, and touch not the unclean, the Lord would not have His people judge and condemn others. The tares are permitted to grow among the wheat, to have all the advantage of sun and shower; but in the time of the harvest, “shall ye return, and discern . . . between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not” (see Malachi 3:18); for then every soul will be revealed in his true character. The tares will be bound into bundles to be burned, the wheat gathered into the heavenly garner.

Review and Herald, January 3 and 10, 1893

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Evil Surmising or Beneficial Devisings?

Evil surmisings—what does this phrase mean? Until about a year ago I am not sure that I was even acquainted with the term, much less able to recognize that it was a part of my own experience. Then God began to show me that the thoughts I was having toward a friend—even though justifiable from my perspective—would lead to separation unless I was willing to use the principles given in God’s Word to work through the difficulty between us.

Zechariah 7:10 says, “Let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.” To imagine or surmise evil includes much more than gross or wicked thoughts about someone. It also includes untrue or misrepresentative thoughts about what I suppose someone might be thinking; it is suspecting, conjecturing or imagining what someone is thinking about me or about some situation he and I are involved in, with little or no evidence to sustain my suppositions. Stop and reflect honestly for a moment—how many times have you seen someone whispering, noticed an expression on a face, or heard a bit of gossip and immediately entertained thoughts which you later discovered were wrong? The whisperings were in fact about you, the expression on the face was from a recent back injury, and the gossip was a misconstrued story missing a few important details.

Friends, the sad reality is that we have been “evil surmising,” we have been justifying wrong thoughts and opinions, not recognizing them to be a terrible sin in the sight of God, a sin which separates marriages, ministries, churches and best friends. Most often, at least in my experience, these surmisings result from being misunderstood, or from at least thinking I have been misunderstood—which really means self has been crossed, and in order to preserve self I must place myself and my position in a good light and place another person’s position in a bad light. Such was the situation in which my friend and I found ourselves. I began to see that if both of us refused to seek a solution to these surmisings an alienation would begin in our hearts, not a separation because of our holding truth as it is in Jesus, but rather because of our holding opinions as they are in self. We were casting the blame and the need for change on each other. I am thankful to say that God led both of us to a resolution of this situation and a deeper understanding of the danger of evil surmisings. Our friendship was strengthened as both of us were willing to allow God to subdue self in this area of our thoughts.

God is continuing to show me the importance of my thoughts and their bearing upon my Christian experience. I may appear well-studied, pious and outwardly religious, but do my thoughts truly reveal my union with Christ? Proverbs 23:7 says, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” We little recognize the danger of holding on to wrong thoughts about another person, thoughts that may be true, but are held in a spirit that is hard and spiteful. These thoughts may not be the truth at all but nonetheless are believed to be true. I shudder when I realize that all our fierce battles with self, all the curse of sin with which we live began with evil surmisings in the mind of Lucifer toward our heavenly Father. These thoughts were entertained, nurtured and mixed with jealous feelings until Lucifer believed them. Then he began to express those surmisings to the pure and holy angels until one third of them decided to believe his insinuations. Today Satan uses the same methods. He insinuates doubts and evil surmisings between husbands and wives, parents and brothers and sisters.

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Tom Waters

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children, close friends, work associates and those in the church who may not see things as we do.

We would avoid much evil surmising if we would simply communicate with and treat others as we would like them to communicate with and treat us if circumstances were reversed. See Matthew 7:12. An illustration from my experience may help clarify what I am trying to say.

I had a recent telephone conversation with a friend. As we talked it became obvious that there was a misunderstanding between us. As my friend shared his side of the story and his view of circumstances which involved me, I could see why he was struggling with evil surmising toward me. I was thankful that he was honest with me about what he had heard, but was saddened that he had entertained these thoughts about me for so long without finding out whether he was holding a correct view of what had taken place. However, I tried to put myself in his position. I told him that I could understand why he had drawn the conclusion he had; at the same time I told him I was confident that when he heard the full story, by putting himself in my position, he would see that it was not as he had imagined it to be. Unfortunately, at this point my friend became less open to seeing my side of the picture or listening carefully to my perspective. This reaction left me wishing I had never tried to discuss my position at all.

Friends, that telephone conversation left me with wounded feelings, and evil surmising of my own began to crop up in my thoughts. Now I found myself in a real mind battle, in the greatest battle I face, with my greatest enemy—self. I had a wounded self. A self that wanted to justify its position. A self that wanted to be preserved when it had been crossed. I was bombarded with thoughts like these: How come I have to yield self? Why can't he? I listened to him and tried to understand his perspective; why would he not do the same for me? Then I heard the Spirit remind me, “When self is unsubduced, there can be no rest.” God was drawing me to realize that my real battle was with an unsubdued self, not with being misunderstood or misrepresented by my friend.

As I was willing to place my power of choice on the side of doing God’s will, He began to remind me of the eight principles that I had been practicing since my eyes were opened to the dangers of evil surmisings. I call these eight principles “Beneficial Devisings” and have found them to be useful, practical tools in fighting the temptation to entertain gossip, evil reports, evil thoughts, misrepresentations of others and so on. I have them written in my Bible and encourage you to write them in yours and to use them at the first temptation to fall into Satan’s trap. They are as follows:

1) Banish the thought by communion with God.—I have found that I cannot be in union with Christ and communion with God while holding onto wrong thoughts about something or someone, even if the thoughts might be true. Remember Philippians 4:8: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

2) Pray for that person.—You and I do not know the struggles and temptations another may be binding under. If we did we would probably have compassion on him. Luke 6:28 says, “Pray for them which despitefully use you.”

3) Ask God to show me my part in the problem.—We are prone to cast blame rather than include ourselves in the examining process. If we cannot pray for the other person, we surely will not be willing for God to show us our problem. Psalm 139:23 says, “Search me, O God, and know my heart.”

4) Pray for God to work in his heart, if the problem is real.—If we have been willing to pray for him and to ask God to search our hearts, now we can honestly ask God to show him his problem, and for Him to work in his heart. Remember, if the Holy Spirit is not able to convict and convince, then how can it? Zechariah 4:6 says, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.”

5) Think of the blessings that have come through this person.—Often evil experience, but the Lord that we profess to serve will impart it to us, if we truly desire to reveal Him to others. Matthew 7:7 says, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find.”

6) Ask God for a self-abasing, self-subduing love for that person.—We cannot put that kind of love into our own even if the thoughts might be true. Remember Philippians 4:8: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

7) Begin immediately to serve his needs.—Let us show him that we are more interested in understanding and serving his needs than we are in serving self. We do not have to be with him to do this; even in our thoughts, we can hold a sweet spirit toward him. We can express our care with a call or letter of genuine encouragement. The point is that he will see now, maybe for the first time, the spirit of a true Christian, one who is allowing Christ to work in him against the strong pulls of self. Romans 12:21 says, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

8) Be thankful; God often uses those who know us best and love us most to reveal the self that still subdues us.—God could use much more severe means and He will if necessary (as He did with Israel of old) to show us our true selves. But, friends, let us learn the lesson from those who love us. I am learning that I need not be so concerned about who or what causes self to want to rise; rather I must be concerned with whether I will fight the real battle with the self that is wanting to rise. Too often we want to do battle with the one who has wounded self, instead of with the real enemy, the enemy self.
Now that we have some useful tools for dealing with the temptation of evil surmising, does it mean we need never go to another person to reconcile a misunderstanding or difficulty between us? No. Matthew 18:15 says, “If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.” You will notice it does not say that we should go to others about our brother’s fault.

May God help us to co-operate with Him by beginning to use His principles in dealing with one another. Yes, we need to go to others, but we need to go to them with the right motives and spirit. Are we going to them to prove them wrong and set them straight, to show them we are right? If so, even if we are right and they are wrong, we will not win and restore our brother. We need to go to others with a desire and intent to restore harmony between us and to unite our souls to God. How sad I feel as I reflect upon times when I have gone to someone with a right answer, the truth. They were wrong and I showed them their error, but I was not myself experiencing the truth or the living connection to the Saviour I professed to be representing with such zeal. Consider this thought, “Not until you feel that you could sacrifice your own self-dignity, and even lay down your life in order to save an erring brother, have you cast the beam out of your own eye so that you are prepared to help your brother. Then you can approach him and touch his heart.” Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, 128-129.

Friends, this is not a guarantee that our differences will be resolved, but it is guaranteed as the most effective means to accomplish that end, if both persons are sensitive to the Spirit.

My wife and I received a phone call from a couple who were facing a difficult experience in their home. They wanted us to be open and share some principles that they could apply to their needs. We shared some principles that cut very close and would require some serious changes if results were to be seen. We did not hear from them for several months and I began to be tempted to surmise what they must be thinking. (A dangerous thing to do.) I was quite sure they were offended and we probably would not be hearing from them anymore. But the Lord gently reproved me for these thoughts and reminded me of the love I had for them and the spirit in which the suggestions had been made. Some time later we received a call that they were in the area and wanted to stop by. My old surmisings came into my mind as I imagined the visit, and again I had to respond to the appeals of the Spirit to put away the thoughts. We had a nice visit and near the close the wife said, “Oh, by the way, I want to apologize for not communicating with you after our last phone conversation. We actually began implementing the suggestions that very night and have had tremendous results, but we’ve been so busy that we haven’t had time to communicate.” I confessed the thoughts I had been tempted by and was so thankful I had not harbored those thoughts against them.

However, sadly enough harboring wrong thoughts often occurs. We get a thought in our minds and we entertain it until we begin to believe it is true. Such misleading thinking can destroy the best relationships, the strongest friendships. We need to know the seriousness of the sin of misrepresenting the thoughts and motives of others. In The Upward Look, 122, we find these strong words: “This sin is worse than the sin of Achan. Its influence is not confined to those who cherish it. It is a root of bitterness, whereby many are defiled. God cannot bless the church till it is purged of this evil that corrupts minds and spirits.” Friends, too often we have been more concerned about ridding “the camp” of everyone else’s sin while our own hearts are not being scrutinized before God. Yes, it is time to get the sin out of the camp, but to do so I must start with dealing with me first, and with this sin of evil surmising “worse than the sin of Achan.” We need to be asking ourselves whether our profession of Christ, of being a “Christian,” is in harmony with all of our thoughts. Are we entertaining evil surmisings about others who may not see things as we do? Can we really be in union with Christ and hold opinions of others based on hearsay? Even if our opinions are true, is our intention to encourage and restore? If we are Christ’s, our desire will be to bring our thoughts into harmony with Him, “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:5.

Finally, consider these words from The Upward Look, 117: “Envy, evil surmising, backbiting, and faultfinding—let none of these be named among Christ’s disciples. These are the cause of the present feebleness of the church.”

Because I know that none of us wants to contribute to “the present feebleness of the church,” I invite each of you right now to take one minute, right where you are, and ask God whether you are holding any evil thoughts, any thoughts out of harmony with Christ toward anyone. Then go back and review the eight simple steps and begin to co-operate with God by turning those “evil surmisings” into “beneficial devisings” for the honor of God, the blessing of others and the peace of your conscience.

This article was taken from a 5-tape series entitled: “From Failure to Faithfulness.” If you would like the full series send $12 to Tom and Alane Waters, 1100 Sherman Creek Rd., Eureka, MT 59917.

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Looking Unto Jesus

In the years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, potential situations arose that could have caused great harm to the fledgling Christian church. For one thing, many new Jewish Christians were coming into the church as the program of evangelism of the early apostles was touching many hearts.

As these Jewish people came in, many retained their old ways as well as their new understandings. They were caught between two dispensations, so to speak. They recognized Christ as the Messiah, but at the same time held on to the feasts and ordinances which were only important in pointing them forward to those events which had now taken place—the crucifixion and resurrection of the Son of God.

Paul had to deal with some of those who went too far, whom he termed Judaizers, in the book of Galatians, written around A.D. 58. Still, Paul allowed himself to be talked into going through certain ordinances at Jerusalem, because of the “thousands of Jews there are which believe.” This brought about his imprisonment at Jerusalem. See Acts 21.

However, during his imprisonment, and before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, Paul wrote the book of Hebrews. Soon the whole earthly sacrificial system would be destroyed. Jesus was not going to be returning soon. Many believing Jews would be dispersed throughout the world as they fled from Jerusalem. Questions of what Jesus was now doing, of the merits of the earthly sacrificial system, of the delay in His coming, all needed to be answered to maintain the unity of the new church. This book of Hebrews contained the answers needed.

Both the humanity and deity of Christ were reasserted to reinforce the faith of the believers. The fact that Christ is the One to give us the Sabbath rest in its fulness was presented next. And, finally, information concerning our High Priest, Jesus, and what He was then doing and would be doing. The heavenly sanctuary was more fully brought to light so that as the earthly one was destroyed, the Hebrews would not be devastated, but would understand the transfer of services.

And the people were especially told how to keep their Christian walk intact, by looking unto Jesus.

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:2.

In Hebrews 11 is the great “hall of fame,” the faith chapter of the Bible. Paul begins with Abel, the second son of Adam, and then lists a long line of Bible “heroes,” common men and women like you and me, who have lived with eternal vision, looking through the eye of faith to a time when they will enter the city of God. We also must look in faith to that time, knowing that the promises of God are sure, and that Jesus is coming soon.

In Hebrews 12, Paul refers to these men and women of chapter 11 as a “great cloud of witnesses” or examples of faith for each of us as he personalizes his message and speaks to our hearts. He tells us that in order for us, too, to be candidates for the heavenly city “whose builder and maker is God,” we must “lay aside the sin” in our lives and go forward in patience, knowing what lies ahead of us before Jesus comes.

But he does not stop there. He gives us the key to successful Christian living: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” The Greek word for looking here is “aphorao,” which can be translated “to consider attentively, to fix one’s vision, or to stare.” Brothers and sisters, our eyes, both spiritual and physical, need to be considering Jesus attentively.

Ellen White counsels us: “It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene especially the closing ones.” The Discourses, 83.
It is a Bible principle that what we fix our minds upon is what we will become. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7. "It is a law of the human mind that by beholding we become changed. Man will rise no higher than his conceptions of truth, purity, and holiness." Patriarchs and Prophets, 91.

The heroes of Hebrews 11 have successfully run the race before us. We can look at their lives and see the ups and downs and the final victories, but they should not be the center of our focus. "We are to copy no human being. There is no human being wise enough to be our criterion. We are to look to the Man Christ Jesus, who is complete in the perfection of righteousness and holiness. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. He is the pattern Man. His experience is the measure of the experience that we are to gain. His character is our model. Let us then, take our minds off the perplexities and the difficulties of this life, and fix them on Him, that by beholding we may be changed into His likeness. We may behold Christ to good purpose. We may safely look to Him; for He is all-wise. As we look to Him and think of Him, He will be formed within, the hope of glory." Review and Herald, March 9, 1905.

But in order to look "attentively" at Jesus, it is often necessary to remove other things from our view. Satan will give us a whole array of items to hold our attention in order to keep our focus from the Lord. It can be a continual battle with self.

Before I became a Seventh-day Adventist Christian, and even during a part of my ministry, I invested many of my precious hours watching football, especially my home team, at that time the Denver Broncos. However as I studied the Spirit of Prophecy, I became very aware of the fact that we should not become involved in competitive sports, either through physical or visual participation. It was a real struggle for me to give up football. I would find myself sneaking a look every once in a while, but the Lord finally gave me the victory.

For a time I still looked at the sports page in the newspaper or checked scores occasionally. But I soon realized that this tendency also hindered my relationship with Jesus. I was not fixing my full attention on Him; nor was I heeding His admonition in Philippians 4:8. I have found I must purpose in my heart ahead of time not to allow the sports page to catch me. And I do not miss it if I do not look at it.

David, in Psalm 101, alludes to the experience of allowing our vision to settle on objects which are not for our edification, resolving, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." Verse 3. And in Psalm 119:37, he prays, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity [worthless things]; and quicken thou me in thy way." Then in Psalm 16:8 he gives us the formula for victory in our lives: "I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." In Psalm 25:15, David speaks of our only safety: "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net."

Of course, football is not the only pitfall. Competitive sports might not be a problem for you. Perhaps you like to read fictional-type works. The prophet says regarding fiction: "Cheap works of fiction do not profit. They impart no real knowledge. . . . They take time which should be given to the practical duties of life and to the service of God." Fundamentals of Christian Education, 92. She also says, "The mind, the soul is built up by that upon which it feeds; and it rests with us to determine upon what it shall be fed. It is within the power of every one to choose the topics that shall occupy the thoughts and shape the character." Education, 126-127.

Maybe television is your weakness. Isaiah speaks to some of the problems found in what we see and hear on television. He refers to the kind of person who will survive the devouring fire and describes that person as "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil." Isaiah 33:15.

But maybe you watch only that which is uplifting. If you are doing so in lieu of spending the necessary time with your Lord, then your time is still being stolen from Jesus.

In one of the churches that I pastored, there was a young man who was serious about his walk with Jesus Christ. But he was having a terrible battle with self. He was addicted to television. He could not leave it alone, no matter how hard he tried. He would be fine for a few days, and then he was back again to those favorite programs. Finally someone else in the church, without this young man's permission or knowledge, advertised his television for sale, giving his home number in the advertisement. As the phone calls came in, he began to realize that it really was his TV set that was advertised. He knew that it was the answer, and he sold his TV. Now I do not recommend this solution for all television problems, but it can be a tremendous boost to the work of the Holy Spirit to remove the source of a temptation from us.

We need to pray daily that God will set a guard over our eyes, ears and lips on a day-by-day basis so that we sin not against Him. And if Satan seeks to divert the mind to low and sensual things, bring it back again and place it on eternal things; and when the Lord sees the determined effort made to retain only pure thoughts, He will attract the mind, like the magnet, purify the thoughts, and enable them to cleanse themselves from every secret sin." Mind, Character, and Personality, vol. 2, 595.

Ellen White says, "We cannot see our Lord in peace, unless our souls are spotless. We must bear the perfect image of Christ. Every thought must be brought into subjection to the will of Christ. . . . We must strive daily against outward evil and inward sin, if we would reach the perfection of Christian character." Review and Herald, May 30, 1882.

Satan has a thousand ways to draw your mind from Christ. One way could be through the music coming over the speakers in the department stores you visit. Another way might be through the pictures on the covers of the newspapers and magazines displayed in the little market where you buy gasoline. Could he not also draw your attention away from Jesus through the conversation of a friend or loved one? Our prophet says, "The first work of those who
would reform is to purify the imagination. If the mind is led out in a vicious direction, it must be restrained to dwell only upon pure and elevated subjects. When tempted to yield to a corrupt imagination, then flee to the throne of grace and pray for strength from Heaven. In the strength of God the imagination can be disciplined to dwell upon things which are pure and heavenly." Mind, Character, and Personality, vol. 2, 595.

There are witnesses who have gone before us who show us that God can truly change character. Every man and woman of faith in Hebrews 11 grew in character as they walked the path of life. Sometimes they stumbled, but they allowed God to pick them up and to help them move forward in their lives. By faith they endured, and thus have become witnesses to us today of what God can do with weak, fallible men and women.

One witness to God's recreative power to change character not listed in Hebrews 11 is the apostle John. "The prevalent opinion that John was naturally of a meek and yielding character is proved, by a study of his life, to be erroneous. He had high ambitions to be first in the kingdom of Christ. He had decidedly rebuked one who was casting out devils in the name of Jesus, because he was not in their company. He had strong traits of character, not weak and vacillating, but self-assertive and ambitious for honor. Jesus taught the needed lessons of humility and patience. He manifested, in contrast to John's violent spirit, calm consideration and forbearance. John was a learner in the school of Christ. As the character of the divine One was manifested to him, he saw his own deficiency and was humbled by the knowledge. The strength and the patience, the power and tenderness, the majesty and the meekness, that he beheld in the daily life of the Son of God, filled his soul with admiration and love; but he was not simply an admirer; he showed his appreciation by imitating the divine characteristics of his Lord. His revengeful, ambitious temper he yielded to the molding power of the Spirit of Christ. He set his soul to copy the lovely Pattern and become like Him who is meek and lowly of heart.

"This is the sure result of association with Jesus. As we meditate upon His character our hearts are drawn out in love, desire awakens to become like Him whom we love, and, by beholding, we become changed. When Christ abides in the heart, the whole nature is transformed. Everything that defiles is banished from the soul's temple. Lust, base passions, impure thoughts, pride, inordinate affections, revenge, retaliation, covetousness, envy, all these are prohibited; and what we once loved [for example, sports, worthless books, television?], now we hate; for we become new creatures in Christ Jesus, Christ's Spirit, Christ's love, softens th' heart, subdues the soul, and raises the thoughts and desires toward God and Heaven." Signs of the Times, January 13, 1888.

The Bible says: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Corinthians 3:18.

"Look to Christ, behold the attractive loveliness of His character, and by beholding you will become changed into His likeness." The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 6, 1097.

Brothers and sisters, time is short. God is looking for a people who perfectly reflect the character of Christ. He wants you and me to be that people. He has shown us how in the Bible and in the Spirit of Prophecy. He has promised us the needed power in each of our lives. He is waiting for our total co-operation with Him. Are we willing to be made willing to follow Jesus wherever He takes us? We can answer only in our own hearts. God will have those who will make the total commitment needed. Will we be among them? □
Editorial
Continued from 2

gs of the angels which are represented as flying in the midst of heaven, with thest warning to a fallen world. If we are not called upon to prophesy, we are called to believe the prophecies, and to co-operate with God in giving light to other minds.” Ibid., book 2, 114-115.

Ellen White faced the same problems in her day as we do today. She had to constantly deal with speculations and false doctrines.

Listen to these inspired words:
“In these days, many deceptions are being taught as truth. Some of our brethren have taught views which we cannot endorse. Fanciful ideas, strained and peculiar interpretations of the Scripture, are coming in. Some of these teachings may seem to be but dots and tittles now, but they will grow and become snares to the inexperienced....

“We need to search the Scriptures daily, that we may know the way of the Lord, and that we be not deceived by religious fallacies. The world is full of false theories and seductive spiritualistic ideas, which tend to destroy clear spiritual perception, and to lead away from truth and holiness. Especially at this time do we need to heed the warning, ‘Let no man receive you with vain words.”

“We must be careful lest we misinterpret the Scriptures. The plain teachings of the Word of God are not to be so spiritualized that the reality is lost sight of. Do not overstrain the meaning of sentences in the Bible in an effort to bring forth something odd in order to please the fancy. Take the Scriptures as they read. Avoid idle speculation.” *The Upward Look*, 316.

Futurism—the reappplication of prophecies making them contradict the positions of the pioneers and our prophet—has spread like a prairie fire around the world. The prophet makes it clear that new light will not contradict the views of the pioneers.

“When the power of God testifies as to what is truth, that truth is to stand forever as the truth. No athersuppositions, contrary to the light given are to be entertained. Men will arise with interpretations of Scripture which are to them truth, but which are not truth. The truth for this time, God has given us as a foundation for our faith. He Himself has taught us what is truth. One will arise, and still another, with new light which contradicts the light that God has given under the demonstration of His Holy

Spirit.” *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 31-32.

Speculation regarding prophecies or regarding who may be a Jesus will save no one. I am sure that there may be some Jesuits among us, but what we need to live and preach is present truth, through careful study and with prayer every day that we may understand present truth as well as any new light God will send us. The Holy Spirit is the only safe teacher. He magnifies the true gospel.

God speaks to us:
“The Spirit was to quicken their understanding, that they might have an appreciation of heavenly things. When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, said Jesus, ‘he will guide you into all truth.’ John 16:13.

“The Comforter is called ‘the Spirit of truth.’ His work is to define and maintain the truth. He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth, and thus He becomes the Comforter. There is comfort and peace in the truth, but no real peace or comfort can be found in falsehood. It is through false theories and traditions that Satan gains his power over the mind. By directing men to false standards, he misshapes the character. Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus He exposes error, and expels it from the soul. It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the Word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself.

“In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people.” *The Desire of Ages*, 670-671.

This is the truth, present truth.

Those who set themselves up as teachers of the people, who teach contrary to our prophet Ellen White, who reapply the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation without a “Thus saith the Lord,” who insist that Ellen White made mistakes, have set themselves up as “better” prophets than the one chosen of the Lord. Inspiration speaks to us: “Each of the ancient prophets spoke less for their own time than for ours, so that their prophesying is in force for us.” *Selected Messages*, book 3, 338.

This statement also applies to the writings of Ellen White. She spoke for God for her time, but, more important, for our time. The long delay is not God’s fault. God wanted to take the children of Israel straight into the Promised Land. It was their rebellion that kept them from going in. See *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 129; vol. 2, 194; vol. 5, 75-83; *Selected Messages*, book 1, 68; *Evangelism*, 696.

The same sort of rebellion has kept the Seventh-day Adventist Church from finishing the work God has chosen us to do.

False prophets will always tell you what they want you to hear. “We believe in Ellen White as a prophet. We believe in victory over sin. We believe in the three angels’ messages and the cleansing of the sanctuary.” Then they teach you what they want you to believe. They misuse Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy, using them to cloak what they say is new light. They are insidiously destroying the very foundations and the pillars of our faith, contradicting the pioneers and the prophet. Those who listen to them without testing their doctrine, “to the law and the testimony,” “line upon line,” “precept upon precept, here a little and there a little,” will be misled. They will become foolish virgins.

Listening to tapes or watching videos while neglecting Bible study and prayer will not anchor you into Christ. You must search the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy daily to make sure that the words of any man or woman “are so.”

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Acts 17:11.

“The Scriptures are the great agency in the transformation of character. Christ prayed, ‘Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.’ John 17:17. If studied and obeyed, the Word of God works in the heart, subduing every unholy attribute. The Holy Spirit comes to convict of sin, and the faith that springs up in the heart works by love to Christ, conforming us in body, soul, and spirit to His own image. Then God can use us to do His will. The power given us works from within outwardly, leading us to communicate to others the truth that has been communicated to us.” *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 100.

Ron Spear—EDITOR
Listen as three self-supporting ministry leaders discuss the ongoing impact of the North American Division book *Issues: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Certain Private Ministries*. Among the questions they address are:

- Do the views expressed in the book *Issues* accurately represent the opinions of the church at large?
- Does the book *Issues* suggest the Seventh-day Adventist Church is confused about what is truth? If the church is confused, how can we call people in other churches to come out of confusion?
- Since justification and sanctification are married in the Bible, why do the authors of *Issues* seem to be trying to divorce them?
- What constitutes loyalty to God’s Remnant Church?
- Should we remain silent on life and death topics?

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