WHAT gives life and power to the end-time remnant church is the faith of Jesus in connection with the holy law of God. These two combined make up the everlasting gospel proclaimed by the angel of Revelation 14:6.

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12.

This is the same gospel that was given to Adam and Eve and is given to every generation during the great controversy between truth and error. In the history of God's church, those who have experienced the faith of Jesus by a continual complete surrender of their will to Christ, have gained the victory over sin and are living witnesses to the power of the true gospel. See Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, 94; Steps to Christ, 47; Christ's Object Lessons, 331–332; Selected Messages, book 3, 146; Gospel Workers, 13.

When the faith of Jesus is left out of the experience the power of God is absent from the life. When complete surrender evidenced by obedience to all truth is missing, the sinner is left to struggle with temptation in his own strength. Continual failure may lead him to give up the battle, or to accept the New Theology, or perhaps to become a legalist, struggling, but never experiencing victory and peace through receiving Christ's imputed and imparted righteousness, true justification and sanctification. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 5:1.

In 1888 a message was given to the church which was to bring the leaders, pastors and laity to an understanding of their great need of Jesus and of His faith, which need they had lost sight of. Their preaching, we are told, had become "as dry as the hills of Gilboa, without dew or rain." See Evangelism, 170, 619; Selected Messages, book 2, 126–127.

Ellen White tells us "Elder E. J. Waggoner had the privilege granted him of speaking plainly, and presenting his views upon justification by faith and the righteousness of Christ in relation to the law. It was no new light, but was old light placed where it should be in the third angel's message. What is the burden of that message? John sees a people. He says, 'Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.' Revelation 14:12.

"The faith of Jesus has been overlooked and treated in an indifferent, careless manner. It has not occupied the prominent position in which it was revealed to John. Faith in Christ as the sinner's only hope has been largely left out, not only of the discourses given but of the religious experience of very many who claim to believe the third angel's message." Selected Messages, book 3, 168.

Why did this appalling condition exist in the 1888 church? Because the Holy Spirit was not in her midst. The message given her was the Laodicean message. It is the same message given for the church today. It was to lead the church to repentance and to guide leaders, pastors and laity into all truth, especially into present truth. This message presented the experience of victory over all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to sin; but the church was spiritually unable to grasp this ultimate meaning of the cleansing of the sanctuary and the three angels' messages. See Review and Herald, July 24, 1888, and Testimonies, vol. 2, 440–445.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Revelation 3:19. God says that the Laodicean church is under divine rebuke because of her spiritual state. This rebuke is evidence of a partial rejection by, or separation from, God. The union between Christ and the church is not yet complete as is seen from the fact that He is depicted as outside the door knocking, pleading to be invited in. He is not in the innermost sanctuary of the hearts of His people; He does not yet have full possession of His church-temple. "Since the time of the [1888] Minneapolis meeting, I have seen the state of the Laodicean church as never before. I have heard the rebuke of God spoken to those who feel so well satisfied, who know not their spiritual destitution. . . . Like the Jews, many have closed their eyes lest they should see; but there is as great peril now, in closing the eye to light, and in walking apart from Christ, feeling need of nothing, as there was when He was upon earth." Review and Herald, August 26, 1890.

The following statement is a comment on Revelation 3:20, and shows that as long as Christ is kept outside the door, He is not in the midst of Zion and is excluded from His own temple. "The church is in the Laodicean state. The presence of God is not in her midst. . . . What a terrible thing it is to exclude Christ from His own temple! What a loss to the church! Our Redeemer sends His messengers to bear a testimony to His people. He says, 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me.' But many refuse to receive Him, because they fear that He will be an expensive guest. The Holy Spirit waits to soften and subdue hearts, but they are not willing to open the door and let the Saviour in; for they fear that He will require something of them. And so Jesus of Nazareth passes by. He longs to bestow on them His rich blessings and gifts of grace, but they refuse to accept them." Notebook Leaflets, 99–100.

It seems that many in the church of 1888 feared that Jesus would ask too much of them, that He would be too expensive a guest for them to invite in. Therefore they rejected His knockings as sounded by Elders Jones and Waggoner. "An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth, lay at the foundation of a large share of
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.—Ed.

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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.
Are We a Mainline Church?

There has been and is a growing desire among Seventh-day Adventists to distance themselves from the appellation “a peculiar people.” See 1 Peter 2:9. This desire has become increasingly evident since the General Conference representatives’ dialogue with evangelical ministers Donald Barnhouse and Walter Martin in 1956.

Recently the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists initiated legal action against the Melbourne (Australia) Sun Herald. Why? Because the Sun Herald, responding to the Waco tragedy, published an article on cults in Australia in which Seventh-day Adventists were included. See South Pacific Record, May 29, 1993.

Eventually the author of the article and the feature editor of the newspaper consented to meet with the president and the ministerial secretary of the Victoria Conference to review the grievance. Among the matters they discussed was the work “ADRA was doing in Bosnia.” Also the conference officials “gave them [the newpersons] a series of brochures on Adventism, Howqua, the Basin, [both youth camps in Victoria] and other projects. We pointed out the school, the old folks’ home and the family-counseling center, and they began to see such activities as being a legitimate aspect of church life.” South Pacific Record, June 26, 1993. “We wanted to make the point that we are a mainstream church,” reported the president of the Victoria Conference. Ibid.

But do we truly envy the so-called status of being a recognized mainline denomination? The United States recognizes seven mainline Christian denominations. Each of these seven churches has decreased in membership since 1965. The August 9, 1993, Newsweek gave the following list of these denominations, with their 1965 and 1992 membership figures:

- United Methodist Church—11.0 million; 8.7 million. (John Savage, the founder of Lab I and Lab II programs, is a pastor of this denomination. Clearly his methods have utterly failed to assist his own church.)
- Lutheran Church—5.7 million; 5.2 million.
- Presbyterian Church—4.2 million; 2.8 million.
- Episcopal Church—3.6 million; 2.4 million.
- United Church of Christ—2.0 million; 1.5 million.
- American Baptist Church—1.3 million; 1.2 million.
- Disciples of Christ Church—1.9 million; 1.0 million.

Has our zeal to be seen as part of mainline Christianity led us into a similar membership decline in Western nations as these churches have experienced? In 1992 of the eleven conferences in Australia and New Zealand only four (the South Queensland, the Victoria, the North New Zealand and the Western Australian) had more members on December 31 than on January 1. One conference (the South Australian) had precisely the same membership on both dates, while six conferences (the South New Zealand, the Greater Sydney, the South New South Wales, the Tasmanian, the North New South Wales and the Northern Australian) reported declines in membership. See South Pacific Record, April 24, 1993.

There was a time when the Seventh-day Adventist Church was one of the fastest-growing churches in Australia and New Zealand. Now we are in a perilous situation in which we are not even holding our own.

It is mandatory that we seek the cause of this tragic situation in the remnant church. Could it be that the reason is our desire to be like the churches about us?

This condition of things is not confined to the South Pacific. “We are deeply concerned about the local churches across North America. Most are not growing.” Adventist Review, March 7, 1991. By
these words the administrators of the North American Division faced reality at the conclusion of their Quinquennial session in San Diego in 1991. In truth this view of the state of God's church in North America was most optimistic. It is almost certain that if an actual head count were taken on Sabbath we would discover a diminishing church attendance in the North American Division.

In one year, 1992, the South Pacific Division Sabbath-school membership dropped an incredible 14 percent. (Statistics published in the South Pacific Record, April 24, 1993.) In other words, one in every seven Sabbath-school members dropped out. Again we must seek the cause.

The author of the August 9, 1993, Newsweek article offered a perceptive explanation for the membership decline in the mainline denominations: "The mainline denominations may be dying because they lost their theological integrity." Could this also be the cause of Seventh-day Adventists' present failure to thrive in the developed countries?

When the New Theology first entered our church through the publication of the revised 1949 edition of Bible Readings for the Home Circle, the 1957 book, Questions on Doctrine and the 1971 work, Movement of Destiny, the doctrinal integrity so dear to earnest souls was lost. The loss was dismissed as being simply a matter of semantics, a clearer and faster expression of old truths. With such deceptive words as these were the doctrines of our faith undermined. As Eve was beguiled by the clever words of the serpent, so were many Seventh-day Adventists beguiled by the clever phrasings of these authors.

At the annual meetings of the South Pacific Division, November 1992, a policy designed to destroy self-supporting ministries loyal to doctrinal purity was adopted. In the policy document no fewer than twenty-seven (a peculiarly significant number these days) doctrinal differences were cited as distinguishing such self-supporting organizations from division administrations. When this policy was voted in, all pretense of mere semantic alterations in our faith was gone.

We have even gone so far as to uphold Dr. George Knight's reconstruction of our church history in which he claims that our doctrines most certainly did change in the 1950s, but the change was from what he falsely claims to have been apostasy in the period 1920–1950, to "truth" in the 1950s.

One who agrees with Knight's views writes: "The militant conservatives of our church claim that the church went into apostasy in 1956 at the time of the release of Questions on Doctrine. George Knight shows that in the 1920s the conservative element took control of the church and purged from leadership those who were open and stood by teachings endorsed by Ellen White. Men like A.G.Daniells and W.C. White were removed from power and M.L. Anderson [Andreasen] became the leading theologian. It was during the era 1920 until about 1956 that most of our senior ministers received their training and mindset. It was Andreasen who introduced the New Theology and it was not until the 1950s and the 1960s that the conservative theology was challenged. What the church is teaching today is a return to the theology that the church espoused before the conservative New Theology was introduced. This is the opposite of what the conservative today would have us believe. . . . "When the conservatives argue for a return to historic Adventism, they know not what they say. What they are pleading for is a return to the theology of the 1920s to the 1950s which is not historic Adventism."

The preceding is from a letter written by Pastor John Gate, ministerial secretary of the South Pacific Division to presidents and ministerial association secretaries of union conferences and union missions, March 23, 1992. This letter was later distributed to all pastors employed by the North New Zealand Conference, dated April 16, 1992.

To date not a single pastor employed within the South Pacific Division has evinced sufficient courage to openly denounce this alteration of history, which alteration is worse than anything achieved by the Soviet historians during the Joseph Stalin era. Pastor Gate's report of Dr. George Knight's views came from taped seminars presented by Dr. Knight in Australia just prior to the writing of Pastor Gate's letter.

For our church to ignore this astounding falsification of Seventh-day Adventist Church history by a professor of church history, a man who was called upon to present the devotional messages at the 1992 General Conference Annual Council, is an almost criminal negligence. One matter is certain, so gross are the alterations in doctrine which are now widely accepted in God's church that no longer is it possible for administrators to pretend that we still hold the same faith we held in the first half of the twentieth century. Is this fact not the cause of our serious membership crisis?

The twenty-seven doctrinal matters cited by the South Pacific Division as being areas of tension between themselves and self-supporting ministries are

1. The Human Nature of Christ.
2. Sanctification.
3. Righteousness by Faith.
4. Justification.
5. Perfection.
10. Role, Function and Authority of Sister White.
11. Authority of the Church.
12. Remnant.
13. The Sanctuary.
14. 1844.
15. Landmarks.
17. Standards.
19. Good News Unlimited [Dr. Desmond Ford's organization].
20. Worship.
22. Lab I and Lab II.
23. NLP and Hypnosis.
24. Assertion That There Is Apostasy at All Levels.
25. Use of Tithe.
27. Historic Adventism.

The mainline denominations may be dying because they lost their theological integrity." Could this also be the cause of Seventh-day Adventists' present failure to thrive in the developed countries?
Utterly alarming is the fact that the North American Division administrators have openly declared that they have no certainty of faith on vital doctrines such as the human nature of Christ, the atonement, victory over sin, the nature of sin and sanctification.

So serious are our doctrinal alterations, so irreverent are many of our worship services and so faulted are our social standards that it should not surprise anyone that the administrators of the North American Division, in their San Diego Covenant, (Adventist Review, March 7, 1991) asserted that in their division “there is a lack of warmth and inclusiveness.” “Large numbers of youth and adults in their thirties are inactive.” “Outreach and service to the community are in danger of being lost in comfortable rituals.” “Giving and volunteering are down.”

In their anguish, the administrators of the North American Division gave the most solemn warning ever issued by a division administration: “There is grave danger that the precious Adventist message will not be passed on to the next generation.” Ibid. If Inspiration had not stated otherwise, we, too, would feel impelled to concur with this conclusion, so serious are matters in our church.

Surely it is now time to reason from cause to effect. God has plainly spoken on this matter. The cause of failure in God’s church is precisely set forth. “But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee.” Deuteronomy 28:15.

“The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me.” Deuteronomy 28:20. God’s people need to hearken to His voice with all diligence, to confess and forsake their sins, and to seek the Lord with the whole heart. We are in deep, deep apostasy, and our persistent denial of our condition concerns God’s church to further decline and, even more seriously, it imperils the eternal salvation of God’s children.

Utterly alarming is the fact that the North American Division administrators have openly declared that they have no certainty of faith on vital doctrines such as the human nature of Christ, the atonement, victory over sin, the nature of sin and sanctification.

It is tragic when church administrators contradict the plain Word of God.

Our Lord saw that the nature of sin would also become an issue at the end of time. Yet our North American Division administrators have failed to heed His warning. “It is Satan’s constant effort to misrepresent the character of God, the nature of sin, and the real issues at stake in the great controversy.” The Great Controversy, 569. What is perplexing is that division administrators in some divisions of the world field (for example, the South Pacific and the Far Eastern Divisions) have openly supported the apostate positions taken in the book Issues by the Division officers and Union presidents in North America.

Could it be that some administrators in God’s church have lost their doctrinal integrity? If so, we are indeed in danger of joining the ranks of the mainline denominations. The author of the Newsweek, August 9, 1993, article has perceptively suggested that “the mainline denominations may be dying because they lost their theological integrity.” Could it be true that by following faulted strategy, the administrators in God’s church are in danger of setting the seal of death upon our church? Apparently these administrators now fear that the precious Adventist faith will not survive the present generation, as was documented above.

Are we not following the course of mainline churches who have decided to permit the unchurched to dictate their service forms? As Pastor Walter Kallestad of the Lutheran Community Church of Joy in Glendale, Arizona, states: “People today aren’t interested in traditional doctrines like justification, sanctification and redemption.” Ibid. We have here documented the fact that some influential Seventh-day Adventists are advocating a similar downplaying of vital salvational doctrines. The words of church historian Martin E. Marty deserve consideration. He states: “To give the whole store away to match what this year’s market says the unchurched want is to have the people who know least about faith determine most about its expression.” Ibid. Have the children of this world become wiser than the children of light? See Luke 16:8. It appears so.
In our ecumenical zeal, in our courting of ministers of the fallen churches of Babylon, in our eagerness to listen to their messages in our churches, in our joy at their accepting our invitations to pass on their felicitations at our General Conference sessions, in our desire to join their Palm Sunday processions (for example, "King In Church," Tasmania, Australia, 1993, reported in the Launceston Examiner of April 3, 1993), in our love for Easter sunrise services which we encourage our members to attend (Walla Walla Village Church bulletin, April 10, 1993), in our presentation of the fourteen stations of the cross in our Walla Walla College Church, April 2, 1993, in these declensions from our high calling we have lost much of our sense of the holiness of God’s purpose for His remnant church. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” 1 Peter 2:9.

As precious doctrine after precious doctrine is assailed in our church, divisions within us grow deeper and evangelistic success recedes. But our Lord has promised He “will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms.” The Great Controversy, 595. He will have a people who will demand, before accepting any point of religious faith, “a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support.” Ibid. The shaking of Adventism has come “by the introduction of false theories” (Testimonies to Ministers, 112) and by the rising up which we are seeing against the counsel of the straight testimony of the True Witness to the church of Laodicea. See Early Writings, 270.

Widespread has grown the fatal cry, “Let us suppress doctrinal preaching and just preach Christ,” as if every doctrine is not a revelation of the character and mission of our Saviour. Such cries are destroying our church. These calls, already given in mainline Protestantism, have destroyed its doctrinal integrity. As we look at the blasphemous Charismatic worship services adopted in a frantic effort to bolster attendance in its polluted churches, we observe that something else may arise even worse than its lack of doctrinal integrity. “The only thing worse, perhaps, would be the rise of a new Protestant establishment that succeeds because it never had any [doctrinal integrity].” Newsweek, April 9, 1993. For God’s remnant church the loss of doctrinal integrity and the use of Pentecostal-service forms forged in paganism will never bring success of any kind.

But let us not fear that all is lost, for our God has promised that He will have “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Ephesians 5:27.

Will you, dear church administrator, dear pastor, dear layman, bought by Jesus’ blood, be part of that church? Will I?

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COMPANIONSHIP and fellowship with God constitute a church "for the presence of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity can alone constitute a church." Manuscript Releases, vol. 17, 82. From the first creation of intelligent life God has had a church in heaven. Prior to the entrance of sin God's church consisted only of pure, faithful and loyal souls. God had planted only good seed in His one united church, but with Lucifer's first thoughts of pride and jealousy God's church became two churches with a difference in membership. All created beings who remained loyal, faithful and pure continued as His true spiritual church. They formed God's invisible church because created intelligences could not determine with any degree of certainty who made up its members. The invisible church could be seen and known only by God. The unfaithful Lucifer as well as those who remained faithful made up God's visible church.

After a period of time Lucifer began sharing his doubts and evil surmisings with the other angels. Nearly half of the angels came to share Satan's doubts regarding God's character and laws. See The Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 1, 22. These doubting angels continued to participate in the activities of heaven and to all outward appearance they were still members of God's church—His visible church.

God retained Satan and the other disaffected angels long in the church in heaven and repeatedly offered them pardon if they would repent.

"God in His great mercy bore long with Lucifer. He was not immediately degraded from his exalted station when he first indulged the spirit of discontent, nor even when he began to present his false claims before the loyal angels. Long was he retained in heaven. Again and again he was offered pardon on condition of repentance and submission. Such efforts as only infinite love and wisdom could devise were made to convince him of his error. The spirit of discontent had never before been known in heaven. Lucifer himself did not at first see whither he was drifting; he did not understand the real nature of his feelings. But as his dissatisfaction was proved to be without cause, Lucifer was convinced that he was in the wrong, that the divine claims were just, and that he ought to acknowledge them as such before all heaven. Had he done this, he might have saved himself and many angels. He had not at this time fully cast off his allegiance to God. Though he had forsaken his position as covering cherub, yet if he had been willing to return to God, acknowledging the Creator's wisdom, and satisfied to fill the place appointed him in God's great plan, he would have been reinstated in his office. But pride forbade him to submit. He persistently defended his own course, maintained that he had no need of repentance, and fully committed himself, in the great controversy, against his Maker." The Great Controversy, 495-496.

During this "long" period of probation for Satan and his followers, they and the other created intelligences were in the valley of decision. God's visible church in heaven consisted of all of the pure, faithful and loyal members plus those that were in the valley of decision and even Lucifer and the one-third of the angels who eventually rejected all pleas for repentance. Therefore God's visible church in heaven contained the good seed, along with the good seed which had turned into tares and that seed which was in the valley of decision. Thus even before man was created (see The Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 1, 24-25) God had three classes of church members in His two churches. His professed, or visible church contained faithful as well as unfaithful souls who had freedom to switch, during probationary time, between the two categories. God's true church consisted only of the loyal and faithful who were known only to Him. They made up His invisible but genuine church.

Persistent rebellion on the part of Satan and one-third of the angels finally necessitated their being disfellowshipped from the church in heaven. "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great
dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” Revelation 12:7-9.

Even after this disfellowshipping there still remained, in a sense, two churches in heaven. The obedient, created intelligences remaining in the church in heaven could not be certain, because of continuing doubts regarding the claims of Satan, as to who of them might eventually cast their lot with the fallen angels. Only as they observed the unfolding of the ongoing controversy between Christ and Satan would their decisions be finalized as to whether they would side with Christ or Satan. Only as their decisions became final could the created intelligences know who of the remaining angels were true, faithful members of God’s invisible church and who were unfaithful and members only of His visible church. This pattern of a visible church containing the pure loyal and faithful, along with the tares and those in the valley of decision, and an invisible church containing only the pure, loyal and faithful, known only to God, was to be continued on earth through probationary time.

When Adam and Eve also chose to believe Satan rather than God they lost their inherent willpower to obey God. It was also lost for all of their descendants. Fallen man’s evil nature left him without enmity against Satan. Without Christ’s special intervention all mankind would have entered with Satan into a confederacy against God. To prevent this automatic alliance, Christ promised: “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. This enmity is not naturally entertained. When man transgressed the divine law, his nature became evil, and he was in harmony, and not at variance, with Satan. There exists naturally no enmity between sinful man and the originator of sin. Both became evil through apostasy. Had not God specially interposed, Satan and man would have entered into an alliance against Heaven; and instead of cherishing enmity against Satan, the whole human family would have been united in opposition to God.” The Great Controversy, 505.

This enmity was given not just to the spiritual—faithful, pure and obedient—seed of Eve, but a measure of divine grace—spiritual power—was to be given to every one of Eve’s physical descendants. “Christ is the ‘Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.’ John 1:9. As through Christ every human being has life, so also through Him every soul receives some ray of divine light. Not only intellectual but spiritual power, a perception of right, a desire for goodness, exists in every heart.” Education, 29.

Thus from the beginning of sin on this earth God provided fallen man with a measure of grace in order that he might have the desire to, and a measure of strength to, resist Satan and to join with others in Christ’s visible church. Members of this church would be militant against the power of sin in themselves, in their fellow brethren and in the world around them.

God continues to bear long with sin and with those who have been deceived by it. He woos sinners back to loyalty to Him by demonstrating to them His character of self-sacrificing love. All living beings are dependent for their breath, food and for every heartbeat upon the sustaining mercy of Christ. By virtue of this relationship with Christ every sinner and saint on earth is a member of a “visible” church. In this “earth church” each person has an appointed portion of probationary time in which to demonstrate his or her willingness to serve God or Satan.

Throughout the millennia of the great controversy on this earth God has had a chosen group or people to whom He revealed special truths. His purpose in revealing these truths to them was that they might better perceive His character. He also designed that they should share by word and example God’s message of pardon and restoration to every other member of humanity. Down through the ages God’s chosen groups of people have constituted His visible church. Never has God’s chosen, visible church on earth, after the sin of Adam and Eve, contained only the loyal, faithful and pure. Neither has it ever been completely destitute of at least some members of that class.

In biblical record the most prominent of God’s visible churches was that of the physical children of Israel. God indicated His choice by entrusting to them a knowledge of His physical, social and moral health laws. He planted this church most visibly in Canaan, the crossroads of the then-known world. In spite of their repeated failures to experience personally and to share His truths with the world, God bore long with physical Israel—His visible church on earth. During the last centuries of Israel’s existence as God’s chosen people they co-existed with the Samaritans who also professed to be God’s people or His visible church. Christ clarified that Israel was His true visible church on earth even though they were then plotting to crucify Him, thereby forever ending their exalted position. Their standing as God’s chosen, visible, true church on earth during the nearly 1500 years in Canaan had been determined more by their physical possession of the truth than it had been by their spiritual relationship to that truth.

Throughout the Christian era God’s visible, true church has been determined from among all those bodies professing to be His true church by the amount of truth entrusted to and understood by them. During the Dark Ages the more visible Catholic Church was supplanted by the less visible, persecuted Church in the Wilderness because the latter had a fuller possession of and understanding of present truth.

Out of the ashes of the Millerite movement’s October 22, 1844, disappointment God raised up His last visible church on earth. It is His true physical church today even though there are some three hundred other professed Christian churches. This group is God’s true physical church because of its greater understanding of pres-
ent truth. In fulfillment of Revelation 12:17 and 19:10 the presence in its midst of the living messenger of God—Ellen G. White—enabled the “remnant of the seed” to understand the fuller meanings of biblical truth. As with physical Israel, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was entrusted with a knowledge of God’s physical, social and moral health laws far surpassing that given any other religious body on earth in the history of the great controversy.

As we are brought together in church capacity, we pledge ourselves to be faithful one to another; and any failure in our duty here, any wrong done to our brother, is registered in the books of heaven as a wrong done to Christ in the person of his saints.

Compared to all Christian bodies in existence today the Seventh-day Adventist Church has unique biblical truths. “God has chosen a people and made them the repositories of truth weighty with eternal results. To them has been given the light that must illuminate the world.” The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary: Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 7, 962. No other Christian body has been entrusted with an understanding of the heavenly sanctuary and Christ’s ministry there to cleanse His visible church on earth. No other professed church understands Christ’s enabling grace. This grace will be utilized by the maturing wheat in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, sanctifying them from all sin, and thus enabling them to receive God’s seal in their foreheads. Those who receive this seal then receive the latter rain and give the loud cry to call Christ’s other sheep out of the other folds. Together they then go through the time of trouble remaining loyal, pure and faithful to God without a mediator for sin.

Christ has capacitated the Seventh-day Adventist Church to be His end-time visible church, not only with the gift of prophecy but also with the other gifts of the Spirit. See Ephesians 4:8; 11; 1 Corinthians 12:28. The purpose of these gifts is “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Ephesians 4:12-13.

Christ, through the Holy Spirit and the angels, could lead each one, individually, into a complete knowledge of full truth. He has chosen, however, to work in part, through the varied gifts of the Spirit given to different human beings. By working and associating together in church fellowship members of God’s church can experience the perfecting of the saints and can share the experience of the Christian walk with the rest of mankind. “Christ is the fountain; the church is the channel of communication.” The Acts of the Apostles, 122.

“Christ here gives all His people an example of the manner of His working for the salvation of men. The Son of God identifies Himself with His organized church. His blessings are to come through the agencies He has ordained, and He desires men to connect themselves with this channel of blessing.” The Signs of the Times, November 10, 1898. See Steps to Christ, 79.

We are to make decided efforts to attend every religious meeting possible, even if only two or three are present, for there Jesus meets to bless His worshippers.

“You need to take a decided interest in religious meetings. You have no strength to keep yourself under the sharp assaults of the enemy. You are kept by the power of God through faith. Make earnest and determined efforts to be at every meeting possible. The divine direction is, Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is, but so much the more as you see the day approaching. [See Hebrews 10:25] You are to be found among the little few who meet to worship God. The help of every soul who loves the truth is needed to bear testimony of the truth and act as missionaries of God, home missionaries to strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die. Every jot of influence from Christ’s soldiers is now called for on the Lord’s side. Where two or three are assembled together in My name, there am I in the midst and that to bless. [See Matt. 18:20.] Then if we allow ourselves to be hindered by supposed excuses, the enemy will have a hand in creating circumstances so that we shall not be present where Jesus meets to bless His worshippers.” Manuscript Releases, vol. 12, 105-106.

There is strength gained in association with fellow believers. “You have failed to appreciate the privilege of associating together in the capacity of believers. You are not to come together simply as a matter of form and ceremony, but for the interchange of thought, for the relation of your daily experiences, for the expression of your daily experiences, for the utterance of your sincere desire for divine enlightenment, that you may know God and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. Communing together in regard to Christ will strengthen the soul for the conflicts and trials that will come upon you. Never entertain the idea that you can be Christians and still withdraw yourselves within yourselves.” Ellen G. White Pamphlets, No. 152, 32.

“He has gathered the believers in church capacity, that they may labor unitedly, strengthening and building up one another in the faith.” Review and Herald, December 11, 1900.

We each need the love and watchcare of brethren in church capacity. “The poor, straying, lost sheep are to be hunted up, and brought back to the fold. They are to be cared for, strengthened, and encouraged. We each need a Saviour, and we each need the sympathy, watchcare, and love of our brethren. As we are brought together in church capacity, we pledge ourselves to be faithful one to another; and any failure in our duty here, any wrong done to our brother, is registered in the books of heaven as a wrong done to Christ in the person of his saints.” The Signs of the Times, January 6, 1887.

God unites His followers into a Christian society in order for all to benefit from the gifts of the Spirit given to each individually.

“The church is a Christian society formed for the members composing it, that each member may enjoy the assistance of all the graces and talents of the other members, and the working of God upon them, according to their several gifts and abilities. The church is
united in the holy bonds of fellowship in order that each member may be benefited by the influence of the other. All are to bind themselves to the covenant of love and harmony. The Christian principles and graces of the whole society of believers are to gather strength and force in harmonious action. Each believer is to be benefited and improved by the refining and transforming influence of the varied capabilities of the other members, that the things lacking in one may be more abundantly displayed in another. All the members are to draw together, that the church may become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.” Selected Messages, book 3, 15–16.

God gives special consideration to the united prayers of His organized church members, to the earnest desire of several minds centered on the same point.

“Our Saviour follows His lessons of instruction with a promise that if two or three should be united in asking anything of God it should be given them. Christ here shows that there must be union with others, even in our desires for a given object. Great importance is attached to the united prayer, the union of purpose. God hears the prayers of individuals, but on this occasion Jesus was giving especial and important lessons that were to have a special bearing upon His newly organized church on the earth. There must be an agreement in the things which they desire and for which they pray. It was not merely the thoughts and exercises of one mind, liable to deception; but the petition was to be the earnest desire of several minds centered on the same point.” Testimonies, vol. 3, 429.

Attendance at church assemblies is not to be just for our own benefit. It is also to impart to others the consolation we have received and to share our gifts or talents with the Spirit with fellow members, thus contributing to their perfection. See Testimonies, vol. 6, 365.

God’s visible church is His workshop into which He brings rough stones quarried from the world that in the atmosphere of the varied gifts of the Spirit manifested in the various members they will be perfected to stand (see The Faith I Live By, 317) during the time of Jacob’s trouble without need for pardon from sin. In every church body and even in paganism, Christ has His precious stones that are living up to all the light they have. See The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary: Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 4, 1184; Testimonies, vol. 6, 70–71; The Great Controversy, 383, 390. These faithful, loyal, and pure of all persuasions are members of Christ’s spiritual true church. See The Acts of the Apostles, 11; The Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 4, 237; General Conference Bulletin, April 23, 1901; The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary: Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 7, 931; Manuscript Releases, vol. 17, 81–82. Known only to Him they are thus part of His invisible church. Under the increased light of the latter rain and the loud cry these scattered jewels of Christ’s invisible church will accept the spiritual truths entrusted to Christ’s visible church. Then the pure, loyal and faithful of the two churches of Christ (“The Shaking of Adventism—Phases 1–3, Our Firm Foundation July, August and September 1993) will blend into one visible and spiritual church to stand as His true church, victorious over sin during the time of trouble.

Even prior to the purification of Christ’s present-day true visible church—the Seventh-day Adventist Church—the loyal and faithful to Christ who are convicted of the truths entrusted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church are called of God to unite with it. “I saw that all who profess the truth should unite together to walk in church parables. These parables point out that there are clear differences between His visible true church and His invisible true church.

The most familiar of the parables of the kingdom of heaven is that of the wheat and the tares. See Matthew 13:24–30. Another parable describing the response to the preaching of the gospel was the parable of the wedding feast to which both bad and good presented themselves. See Matthew 22:2–10. Christ also likened the work of His visible church to a fishing net that gathered of every kind bringing both good and bad fish into the church. See Christ’s Object Lessons, 122–123, and Matthew 13:47–50. He also compared the kingdom of heaven to ten virgins, five wise and five foolish. See Matthew 25:1–13.

We are instructed that we are to work for the purification of the church. See Review and Herald, June 3, 1880. But in spite of our best efforts the above parables inform us that the good and the bad remain together in God’s visible church until God Himself separates the two at the close of probationary time.

In church capacity, we see the capacity of Christ in His workshop, we will encounter many errors that need reproving.

In church capacity there are many things that we must do if we would be laborers together with God. If we would study Christ’s methods, we would see many things to be reproved and corrected. But in doing this, we are to be sure to follow Christ’s methods.

capacity, to be a mutual strength and help to each other.” Manuscript Releases, vol. 15, 125. “Christ would have His followers brought together in church capacity, observing order, having rules and discipline, and all subject one to another, esteeming others better than themselves.” Testimonies, vol. 3, 445.

John the Baptist began calling people to join Christ’s visible church on earth with the message repent and be baptized, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Christ continued this message, and it is to be echoed to sinners throughout probationary time. Christ described the makeup of His kingdom of heaven, His visible church, His workshop for the polishing of rough stones, by the means of several and correcting. “In church capacity there are many things that we must do if we would be laborers together with God. If we would study Christ’s methods, we would see many things to be reproved and corrected. But in doing this, we are to be sure to follow Christ’s methods. Christ’s fellowship reveals duties to be performed and responsibilities to be borne. In all we are to follow Christ’s example. In failing to deal faithfully with one who has erred, in refusing to speak kindly to him, we commit a grievous sin in the sight of God. In acting a harsh, stubborn part, in treating the one [who] has made a mistake in accordance with our own unchristlike traits of character, we may discourage a soul that is in danger,
and leave him to settle down into spiritual dwarfishness, or to relapse into spiritual death.” Manuscript Releases vol. 15, 169.

As members of God’s visible church, which contains both good and bad, we are to do our utmost to preserve peace, harmony and love. “We profess to be the depositaries of God’s law; we claim to have greater light and to aim at a higher standard than any other people upon the earth; therefore we should show greater perfection of character and more earnest devotion. A most solemn message has been entrusted to those who have received the light of present truth. Our light should shine forth to brighten the pathway of those who are in darkness. As members of the visible church, and workers in the vineyard of the Lord, all professed Christians should do their utmost to preserve peace, harmony, and love in the church.” Testimonies vol. 5, 619.

All who take the name of Christ are to depart from iniquity. However, in the great house of God’s true, visible church we will find both the vile and the precious. “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.” 2 Timothy 2:19–20. The ‘great house’ represents the church. In the church will be found the vile as well as the precious.” Review and Herald, February 5, 1901.

Yes, only the Lord knoweth them that are His. Although each follower of Christ’s church is to work with Him for the purification of His church, there is great danger in their running ahead of Christ by attempting a premature purification of His people. There is equally great danger in not working with Him in that purification process. As we comprehend the existence and the nature of Christ’s visible but defective church we will be better be able to co-operate with Him in the purification of that church and to be a participant in His spiritual, and presently invisible, church when the two churches become one.

In our next article, we will discuss some of the ways of running ahead of the Lord in the purification of His people. Is there any word from the Lord as to how we are to respond to this momentous issue?

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**Presenting God’s Plan to Restore the Family**

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

God tells us in the Scriptures, however, that the wisdom of this world is foolishness in His sight. He counsels us to turn to Him, the only genuine Source of wisdom, for help and guidance.

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The Concept of Forensic Justification

In the latter part of the 1960s, three concepts were being taught by Robert Brinsmead which I had not previously heard in Seventh-day Adventism. Robert Brinsmead is the Australian who commenced the “Sanctuary Awakening Message” in the late 1950s. These three concepts were original sin, unconscious sin, and forensic justification.

I followed the development of the Sanctuary Awakening Message closely during the 1960s. These concepts, especially the emphasis upon original sin, surprised me. I recall on one occasion talking with Robert about original and unconscious sin. He assured me that they were quite biblical and were supported by the Spirit of Prophecy, but unlike so many other views that he presented in his messages, I never did receive evidence of inspired support for these concepts.

It was not long after this conversation that Robert paid a surprise visit to me on the campus of Avondale College. He expressed great disappointment at the lack of response to the Sanctuary Awakening Message by the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He confided that he had decided to take his message to the evangelical world. The rest is history. Rather than his bringing an end-time message to the evangelicals, he was ensnared by their Augustinian, Calvinistic theology.

In retrospect, his journey into apostasy is easy to understand. While most concepts presented by Robert were sound authentic Adventism, the three concepts of original sin, unconscious sin, and forensic justification, were a fertile field in which the doctrines of evangelicalism could grow within his theology. Clinging to these concepts led to Robert’s ultimate rejection of the Seventh-day Adventist message, and to his acceptance of evangelicalism, and has brought him to where today he no longer has a strong burden for a ministry by which he was once highly motivated.

In this article I want to examine one of these areas—forensic justification. What is forensic justification? It is the idea that justification is a legal act of God transacted in heaven declaring the person righteous apart from any transforming power of the grace of God. This faulted belief is drawn from the fact that we are not justified by keeping the law (Romans 3:24; Titus 3:7; Romans 5:1; Galatians 2:16).

The heavy emphasis of the evangelical movement is upon justification. Many of the sixteenth century Reformers proclaimed that the gospel is justification alone, thus excluding sanctification from the gospel; but the Bible teaches that we are justified by faith (Romans 5:1), and sanctified by faith (Acts 26:18). The Bible also teaches that we are justified by the sacrifice of Jesus (Romans 5:9), and sanctified by the sacrifice of Jesus (Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 13:12; Hebrews 10:10). Thus the Bible denies the very basis of the evangelical view of salvation. The justification alone “salvation” concept fails to account for the fact that frequently justification and sanctification are strongly “married” together in the Bible (See Romans 8:1; Romans 8:3-4; Acts 5:31-32; Acts 26:18; John 3:5; Matthew 6:12-13).

While justification is wholly of Christ, through His grace, and by His faith, this wonderful truth has been perverted. Evangelicals have taken this truth to mean that no change takes place when we are justified. However, this view defies the very meaning of the word “justified.” The common Greek word translated justified is “dikaioo.” The common word translated righteous is “dikaios.” In the English language “justified” and “righteous” look so different from each other, that we may not always make the connection. In the Romance languages, such as Spanish, French, Portuguese and Italian,
The obvious connection between justified and righteous is seen in the words used. According to Strong’s Concordance, “dikaios” may be translated “just” as well as righteous, and “dikaioi” may be translated righteous, as well as justified.

In one of the most important texts of Scripture, it is significant to note the Greek usage: “And he that is righteous (dikaios), let him be righteous (dikaioo) still.” In the original both the words righteous and justified are used in this critical text. Indeed, in the original Greek both verbs are effective aorists, stressing the accomplishment of the action, to be declared righteous, to be justified.

I can recall on one occasion preaching in a church in Australia where I made this emphasis, fully knowing that the pastor of the church had been strongly influenced by the New Theology. At the end of the sermon I was surprised that he did not comment upon this aspect of my sermon, but as we walked together a few days later, he confessed that what I had said had “blown my mind.” After my discourse he checked in his Greek lexicon and confirmed what I had said. On the walk he asked, “How can we ever do justification when it is the act of God?” He had accepted a forensic or legal form of justification, rather than a justification that is built upon righteousness by faith. The servant of the Lord has clarified this principle: “While God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ’s righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul.” Selected Messages, book 1, 356.

This passage wholly refutes the concept once put forward by Dr. Desmond Ford that “There is no difference between the drunk in the gutter and the converted man, other than the latter has accepted Christ.” Indeed, there must be new motives, new impulses, new desires awakened in the heart before true justification can take place. There must be new actions of continual obedience for true justification to be retained.

Now let us turn our attention to some of the present concepts of forensic justification. There are those who believe that there are two kinds of justification: justification by faith and legal or forensic justification. The basis for the legal justification is founded upon Romans 5:18 (although other texts are used): “Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” The prevailing concept is that legal justification is not a justification unto salvation, but is a justifying act of God passed upon every human being as a result of the death of Christ. This belief is contrasted with justification by faith, which is a saving justification bringing to all those who accept it eternal salvation.

God requires an entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul.

I have had to reject the concept of forensic or legal justification because I find in it the following pitfalls:

1) As I read through the Scriptures, I find not the slightest evidence of two kinds of justification. There is no justification that is not of faith. Of course not every biblical statement links justification with faith, but this fact is not to be taken as proof that not all justification is predicated upon faith. Hebrews 11 is often referred to as the faith chapter, but it really should be referred to as “the faith that works” chapter. Each one of these Old Testament saints demonstrated his or her justification by obedience to the Word and the commands of God. If they had not had the faith to be obedient to God, they certainly would not have been His justified, chosen ones.

2) A thorough search of the Spirit of Prophecy reveals no evidence of a justification that is separate from justification by faith. Never once has the servant of the Lord defined two kinds of justification. Therefore I have to conclude that the dualistic concept of justification by faith and forensic justification goes beyond the words of Inspiration.

3) Frequently, the concept of forensic justification has been linked with the 1888 message of Waggoner and Jones. A study of Waggoner’s writings on the book of Romans does not justify or confirm such a conclusion. For example, commenting on Romans 5:18, Waggoner has this to say: “There is no exception here as the condemnation came upon all, forensic justification comes upon all. Christ has paid the death for every man. He has given Himself for all, He has given Himself to every man. A free gift has come upon all. The fact that it is a free gift is evident that there is no exception. If it comes upon only those who have some special qualification, then it would not be a free gift, period. It is a fact that, therefore, plainly stated in the Bible, the gift of righteousness and life in Christ have come to every man on earth. There is not the slightest reason why all men who have ever lived should not be saved unto eternal life, except that they would not have it. So many spurn the gift offered so freely.” Waggoner on Romans, 101.

4) Waggoner, I believe, rightly understood Romans 5:18. Here the death of Christ provided justification for every human being. All could be made righteous, but as Waggoner says, “So many spurn the gift offered so freely.” The concept of universal forensic justification would not allow its spurning. It would automatically pass upon everyone.

5) Waggoner saw Romans 5:18 in the same light as Romans 5:1, because he understood it as the justification that every human being can accept or reject.

6) There is no reason to believe that Romans 5:18 presents a different justification from Romans 5:1. The very intent of this whole development by Paul is to address righteousness by faith. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:1. It is neither logical nor reasonable to assume that without any further definition the justification in Romans 5:18 is different from the justification in Romans 5:1.

7) It is frequently argued that forensic justification is evidenced by every breath and every heartbeat. This misunderstand-
The greatest fallacy in the forensic justification concept is that it fails to recognize that justification means “made righteous.”

justification by faith. In the same way that “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45) God provides probationary life for all.

The greatest fallacy in the forensic-justification concept is that it fails to recognize that justification means “made righteous.” There is nothing in our breathing or our heart beat that makes us righteous. The whole concept of forensic justification without willing acceptance by the receiver is an anomaly. That kind of justification does not exist, for unless we are made righteous, which is right-doing, (see Christ’s Object Lessons, 312) we are not justified. Romans 5:19 clarifies the situation. “As by one man’s disobedience many are made sinners, so by the righteousness of one many are made righteous.” That this text could well be translated, “many are justified,” the real meaning of what Paul is seeking to say here is plain. Paul is not presenting a justification that every human receives, but a justification that is made available to everyone.

9) One might ask if there is any danger in presenting forensic justification, providing justification by faith is preached. The answer is “Yes.” Truth is always devalued when joined with error. It has always been Satan’s method to deceive by the intrusion of error into an accepted truth. Through this means he gradually succeeds in giving credibility to the error until the truth and the error are seen as of equal merit. Eventually the truth is cantly diminished, while the error becomes the central focus of a false “gospel.” A review of contemporary literature confirms that there is more and more emphasis being placed upon what relates to forensic justification and less and less emphasis is laid upon justification by faith. The error, which all agree is not unto salvation, is given preeminence and the truth which all agree is of eternal consequence is diminished.

How then do we understand the universality of Romans 5:18? “By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” It has to be understood in the sense that all human beings are invited to accept the sacrifice of Jesus, which sacrifice provides justification for all who accept it. This truth denies the doctrine of predestination which claims that some are preordained to eternal salvation and others to eternal destruction. Indeed, everyone has the opportunity of accepting the justifying power of Christ by faith. The universal nature of Romans 5:18 must be understood in the light of many other universal statements in the Bible. Typical of this fact is Jesus’ comment to His disciples not long before His crucifixion: “Now is the judgment of this world come: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” John 12:31–32.

We know that not all men accept the drawing of Jesus. In fact, only a small minority do. But if we were to take John 12 in the same way that many explain Romans 5:18, we would have to believe that all men are drawn to Jesus Christ. That is opposed to the truths that God has placed in His Word. Christ clarified that there will be wheat and tares, there will be sheep and goats, there will be gold and dross. Some will be raised in the first resurrection unto eternal life, others in the second resurrection unto eternal destruction (Daniel 12:2). There are no universal principles in salvation. Only those who accept the sacrifice of Jesus by faith will be saved in the kingdom.

In summary, the “forensic justification” concept leads in the direction of Antinomianism. Just as it proved a fatal flaw in the theology of Robert Brinsmade, so it will prove in the theology of those who accept it today. It tends to lead to an imbalance between Christ’s love and justice. Thus it opens itself wide to the concept that God does not destroy, for it pictures a God so loving that He does not perform “his strange act.” Isaiah 28:21.

Such a concept is inimical to Inspiration. (See Genesis 6:7; Revelation 20:9; Patriarchs and Prophets, 405; The Great Controversy, 614). Fundamentally, it will undermine the authority of the Spirit of Prophecy because it is a concept of which there is no hint in the writings of Sister White. Ultimately it will lead to a reinterpretation of Scripture.

This pathway is too dangerous to trod for any faithful Seventh-day Adventist. Above all it is not the message of Christ our righteousness as presented by Waggoner, Jones and Sister White. It is rather a reinterpretation of that message. There is an urgent need to understand and live the message of Christ our righteousness, but let us study it clearly from the divine source, especially from the pen of inspiration, as well as from the writings of Jones and Waggoner.

The true message of righteousness by faith will change the lives of all who accept it. This message will lead to the pouring out of the latter rain and to the giving of the loud cry to the world, thus providing for the return of Jesus and the redemption of the saints.

1 The belief that faith alone, not obedience to the moral law, is necessary for salvation.
The great plan of redemption was laid before the foundation of the world. Christ did not stand alone in this wondrous undertaking for the ransom of man. In the councils of heaven, before the world was created, the Father and the Son covenanted together that if man proved disloyal to God, Christ, one with the Father, would take the place of the transgressor, and suffer the penalty of justice that must fall upon him. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. What a price was this for Heaven to pay to ransom the transgressor of the law of Jehovah!

Christ did not come to change the Sabbath of the fourth commandment; He did not come to weaken or set aside the law of God in one particular: He came to express in His own person the love of God, and to vindicate every precept of the holy law. Instead of abrogating the law to meet man in his fallen condition, Christ maintained its sacred dignity.

The Lord does not save sinners by abrogating His law, the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. God is a judge, the guardian of justice. The transgression of His law in a single instance, in the smallest particular, is sin. God cannot dispense with His law; He cannot do away with its smallest item, in order to pardon sin. The justice, the moral excellence, of the law must be maintained and vindicated before the heavenly universe. And that holy law could not be maintained at any smaller price than the death of the Son of God.

Christ bore sin in man’s behalf, that the sinner might have another trial, with all its opportunities and advantages. “Whosoever committeth sin,” says John, “transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.” 1 John 3:4–6.

When Christ gave the sermon on the mount, the Pharisees were present, watching every word. The Saviour read their hearts; He knew that they were bracing themselves to resist light. Their prejudice against Him was strengthening. They were saying in their hearts, “He is doing away with the law. We will have no such teaching.” But while they were bottling up their wrath, there fell on their startled ears the answer to their unspoken thought: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:17–19.

This is the judgment pronounced in the kingdom of heaven. Some have thought that the commandment-breaker will be there, but will occupy the lowest place. This is a mistake. Sinners will never enter the abode of bliss. The commandment-breaker, and all who unite with him in teaching that it makes no difference whether men break or observe the divine law, will by the universe of heaven be called least among the human agencies. For not only have they been disloyal themselves, but they have taught others to break the law of God. Christ pronounces judgment upon those who claim to have a knowledge of the law, but who, by precept and example, lead souls into confusion and darkness. They are teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, and making void the law of God through their traditions. “For I say unto you [my disciples], That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Verse 20.

“Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” Verse 18. As long as heaven and earth remain, not one jot nor tittle shall pass from the law. As long as the canopy of heaven is above our heads, and the earth beneath our feet, there should be no argument nor controversy over this question. Until the heavens and the earth remove, you may be sure that the law of Jehovah will hold its exalted place.

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” Matthew 3:13–15. In “fulfilling” all righteousness, Christ did not bring all righteousness to an end. He fulfilled all the requirements of God in repentance, faith, and baptism, the steps of grace in...
genuine conversion. He did this as an example, that we should follow in His steps. In His humanity, Christ filled up the measure of the law's requirements. And this He did as an example to us. He was the head of humanity, its Substitute and Surety. Human beings, by uniting their weakness to the strength of His divine nature, may become partakers of His character.

Satan will use every subtle argument to deceive men and women as he did in Eden to deceive Adam and Eve. “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” Satan said to Eve. “And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” Genesis 3:1-5.

Adam and Eve both ate of the fruit, and obtained a knowledge which, had they obeyed God, they would never have had—an experience in disobedience and disloyalty to God—the knowledge that they were naked. The garment of innocence, a covering from God, which surrounded them, departed; and they supplied the place of this heavenly garment by sewing together fig-leaves for aprons.

This is the covering that the transgressors of the law of God have used since the days of Adam and Eve’s disobedience. They have sewed together fig-leaves to cover their nakedness, caused by transgression. The fig-leaves represent the arguments used to cover disobedience. When the Lord calls the attention of men and women to the truth, the making of fig-leaves into aprons will be begun, to hide the nakedness of the soul. But the nakedness of the sinner is not covered. All the arguments pieced together by all who have interested themselves in this flimsy work will come to naught.

The Lord Jesus Christ has prepared a covering, the robe of His own righteousness, that He will put on every repenting, believing soul who by faith will receive it. Said John, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29. Sin is the transgression of the law; but Christ died to make it possible for every man to have his sins taken away. A fig-leaf apron will never cover our nakedness. Sin must be taken away, the garment of Christ’s righteousness must cover the transgressor of God’s law. Then when the Lord looks upon the believing sinner, He sees, not the fig-leaves covering him, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah.

Christ came to give an example of the perfect conformity to the law of God required of all, from Adam, the first man, down to the last man who shall live on the earth. He declared that His mission was not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it in perfect and entire obedience. In this way He magnified the law, and made it honorable. In His life He revealed its spiritual nature. In the sight of heavenly beings, of worlds unfallen, and of a disobedient, unthankful, unholy world, He fulfilled the far-reaching principles of the law. He came to demonstrate the fact that humanity, allied by living faith to divinity, can keep all the commandments of God. He came to make plain the immutable character of the law, to declare that disobedience and transgression can never be rewarded with eternal life. He came as a man to humanity, that humanity might touch humanity, while divinity laid hold upon the throne of God. But in no case did He come to lessen the obligation of men to be perfectly obedient. He did not destroy the validity of the Old Testament Scriptures. He fulfilled that which was predicted by God Himself. He came, not to set men free from that law, but to open a way whereby they might obey that law, and teach others to do the same.

This idea of incarnation is the central doctrine of all Paul’s teaching. It is His remedy for sin, his basis of hope for the past and the future. As God was in Christ, so Christ, by the Holy Spirit, will be in His people, changing their hearts, transforming their lives, and making them fit for the very presence of God.

As God was in Christ, so Christ, by the Holy Spirit, will be in His people, changing their hearts, transforming their lives, and making them fit for the very presence of God.

There will also be progress. The whole idea of sanctification is not revealed at conversion. As the conscience becomes more active, more tender, more quick-sighted, the process of sanctification goes deeper. It is not sufficient to refrain from sins of action and word; sins of thought become odious. Sinful desires must not be held in check; they must be cast out. The memory has to be purged, imagination has to be purified. With Christ in the heart, the whole nature is gradually brought under His sway until it is attuned to His spirit. We become, not so much His followers as His very impersonations. Our words and acts are His; and as He was, so are we in this world.

How is it that this delightful conception is not realized in every Christian? A hint of the reason is given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:16-23. The temple of God is holy. But the temple may be defiled; the beneficent power may be resisted; there may be a lack of docility. A leaning to our own way, a dependence on our own powers, a hungering for old gratifications, may thwart God’s will in us; for it is very gentle, and will force no man into the way of life. To get the full benefit of His presence, there must be not only submission, but cheerful acquiescence and a working together with Him for our own salvation. This is the secret of success or failure. □

The Review and Herald, November 15, 1898.

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IN AN HOUR AS WE THINK NOT

THERE shall be . . . earthquakes in divers places.” Matthew 24:7. It was March 25, 1993, and as usual, it was a peaceful early morning. My mother was playing her autoharp, singing some hymns, and recording them on a tape for my grandma. I was listening to her sing, “Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole; I want Thee forever to live . . .” when at 5:34 A.M. a muffled thunder was heard coming from under the ground. The sound quickly increased to a very loud roar. Then our house began to violently shake for a long forty-five seconds. My first thought was that one of our big fir trees had fallen on the house; but no, the house kept moving and pictures were falling off the walls. The ground, as one person saw it, was heaving and swelling like the waves of the sea, twelve inches high and six feet apart. I do not think I have ever felt so utterly helpless in my entire life as in this earthquake. There was nothing that I could do to stop it.

As soon as the earthquake, 5.7 on the Richter scale, ceased and our trembling legs could move, my father, white as a sheet, came from the other room, where he had been having devotions, and said in a shaky voice, “That was an earthquake! Let us kneel down and pray.” Moving part of the ceiling that had fallen, my parents and I huddled together, and we each said a prayer of thanksgiving for the Lord’s protection.

God promises us that the righteous will be preserved in the midst of these commotions, as Noah was preserved in the ark. He will be their refuge and under His wings shall they trust. Says the psalmist: “Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee.” Psalm 91:9–10. “In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me.” Psalm 27:5. “Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high because he hath known my name.” Psalm 91:14. It is such a blessing to have these chapters memorized in song, for in circumstances like this the promises immediately come to mind.

As you remember, my mother was recording songs on a tape when the earthquake took place. The tape recorder had flipped off shortly after the earthquake, and we now rewound it to see what had been recorded. The song began and rang out on the clear morning air when all of a sudden, the music ceased, and the loud roar of muffled thunder took its place. We also heard the sound of things falling to the floor. Exactly forty-five seconds before the end of the tape, the earthquake began, and the recording was in distinct exactness.

Later that day, we had an unexpected visitor. It was the head geologist at Oregon State University with a whole van full of graduate students who wanted to go down into our pasture along the Abiqua Creek and examine a break in the crust of the earth which might have been caused by the earthquake. After they had looked at it, they said that it was not exactly what they were looking for, but that the fault did run right along the Abiqua Creek through our property. In visiting with them and asking them questions, we had an opportunity to share what we had just read that morning for family worship about what causes earthquakes from a Christian’s aspect. And they agreed that what we were saying was correct. If you wish to read about what causes earthquakes, please read the beautiful description found in Patriarchs and Prophets, 108–110.

Lisa Panasuk is a 16-year-old homeschooler who has dedicated her talents to win souls for Christ. She writes from Silverton, Oregon.
"We hear now of earthquakes in divers places [who ever heard of earthquakes in Oregon?], of fires, of tempests, of disasters by sea and land, of pestilence, of famine. What weight do these signs have upon you? This earthquake is only the beginning of what shall be.

"If such scenes as this are to come, such tremendous judgments on a guilty world, where will be the refuge for God’s people? ... John sees the elements of nature—earthquake, tempest, and political strife—represented as being held by four angels. ... The angels of God do His bidding, holding back the winds of the earth ... until the servants of God should be sealed in their foreheads. This mightiest of angels has in his hand the seal of the living God, or of Him who alone can give life, who can inscribe upon the foreheads the mark or inscription, to whom shall be granted immortality, eternal life. ... Only those who, in their attitude before God, are filling the position of those who are repenting and confessing their sins in the great antitypical day of atonement, will be recognized and marked as worthy of God’s protection ... Even after the saints are sealed with the seal of the living God, His elect will have trials individually. ... But the furnace is closely watched by an eye that will not suffer the gold to be consumed.

... Let your souls answer the question, Does my character correspond to the qualifications essential that I may receive a passport to the mansions Christ has prepared for those who are fitted for them? ‘Holiness must be inwrought in our character.” Testimonies to Ministers, 444–446.

Our family was thankful that the earthquake came during the time of our personal devotions and communion with God, for when else is it easier to be abiding in Christ? But what if it had come during home school when my mother was showing me something on my math paper that needed correcting? Would I have chosen not my will but God’s will? What if it had come while we were eating lunch? Would we be found eating to God’s honor and glory, and of the most simple, wholesome, and natural of foods as possible? Or what if the earthquake had come when I was associating together with one of my friends? Would we be found conversing on many topics, but scarcely mentioning the name of Jesus; involved in a foolish conversation or activity; or sharing together our best Friend, Jesus, and how He is helping us to have victory in our lives, and recalling what in our personal devotions has helped us? Would we be conversing upon the beauty and joy of our heavenly home, the theme upon which we should delight to dwell? These are some of the solemn questions that I had to ask myself. Truly, how would we live if we knew this was our last day of life?

The other day I said to my parents, "Everything is now going as usual, and we have not felt any tremors lately. Everything is peaceful and calm, and most everyone has well-nigh forgotten the earthquake. But have we forgotten the lessons the Lord taught us through such a display of uncontrollable power?"

Let us, dear youth, seek God more earnestly. "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 unrighteous 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.” Isaiah 55:6–7. "The tempest is coming, and we must get ready for its fury by having repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord will arise to shake terribly the earth. We shall see troubles on all sides. ... The end is near, probation is closing. Oh, let us seek God while he may be found, call upon him while he is near!" Messages to Young People, 89–90. □

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October 1993 Our Firm Foundation 19
Accepted in Christ

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. This message is for the world, for “whosoever” means that any and all who comply with the condition may share the blessing. All who look unto Jesus, believing in Him as their personal Saviour, shall “not perish, but have everlasting life.” Every provision has been made that we may have the everlasting reward. Christ is our Sacrifice, our Substitute, our Surety, our divine Intercessor; He is made unto us righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” Hebrews 9:24.

The intercession of Christ in our behalf is that of presenting His divine merits in the offering of Himself to the Father as our Substitute and Surety; for He ascended up on high to make an atonement for our transgressions. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propi-

Ellen G. White
longer looks attractive to him; for he beholds the Chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely. He realizes by a personal experience the power of the gospel, whose vastness of design is equalled only by its preciousness of purpose.

We have a living Saviour. He is not in Joseph's new tomb; He is risen from the dead, and has ascended on high as a substitute and surety for every believing soul. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 5:1. The sinner is justified through the merits of Jesus, and this is God's acknowledgment of the perfection of the ransom paid for man. That Christ was obedient even unto the death of the cross is a pledge of the repenting sinner's acceptance with the Father. Then shall we permit ourselves to have a vacillating experience of doubting and believing, believing and doubting? Jesus is the pledge of our acceptance with God. We stand in favor before God, not because of any merit in ourselves, but because of our faith in "the Lord our righteousness."

Jesus stands in the Holy of Holies, now to appear in the presence of God for us. There He ceases not to present His people moment by moment, complete in Himself. But because we are thus represented before the Father, we are not to imagine that we are to presume upon His mercy, and become careless, indifferent, and self-indulgent. Christ is not the minister of sin. We are complete in Him, accepted in the Beloved, only as we abide in Him by faith.

Perfection through our own good works we can never attain. The soul who sees Jesus by faith, repudiates his own righteousness. He sees himself as incomplete, his repentance insufficient, his strongest faith but feebleness, his most costly sacrifice as meager, and he sinks in humility at the foot of the cross. But a voice speaks to him from the oracles of God's Word. In amazement he hears the message, "Ye are complete in him." Colossians 2:10. Now all is at rest in his soul. No longer must he strive to find some worthiness in himself, some meritorious deed by which to gain the favor of God.

Beholding the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, he finds the peace of Christ; for pardon is written against his name, and he accepts the word of God, "Ye are complete in him." How hard is it for humanity, long accustomed to cherish doubt, to grasp this great truth! But what peace it brings to the soul, what vital life! In looking to ourselves for righteousness, by which to find acceptance with God, we look to the wrong place, "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23. We are to look to Jesus; "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." 2 Corinthians 3:18. You are to find your completeness by beholding the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

Standing before the broken law of God, the sinner cannot cleanse himself; but, believing in Christ, he is the object of His infinite love and clothed in His spotless righteousness. For those who believe in Christ, Jesus prayed: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth... that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." John 17:17, 21–22, 25–26.

Who can comprehend the nature of that righteousness which makes the believing sinner whole, presenting him to God without spot or wrinkle or any such thing? We have the pledged word of God that Christ is made unto us righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. God grant that we may rely upon His Word with implicit trust, and enjoy His richest blessing. "For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." John 16:27.

Signs of the Times, July 4, 1892.

Spalding and Magan's Unpublished Testimonies

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

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the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord’s message through Brethren [E.J.] Waggoner and [A.T.] Jones. By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the

The experience called for by the 1888 message would produce the final demonstration of God’s power. Unfortunately it is a message still little understood. “All should understand the truths contained in these messages and demonstrate them in the will, by continual obedience, that the ‘blessing’ of justification is retained.” Selected Messages, book 1, 396–397.

“When we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, we shall have no relish for sin; for Christ will be working with us. . . . A door has been opened, and no man can close it, neither the highest powers nor the lowest; you alone can close the door of your heart, so that the Lord cannot reach you.” Review and Herald, March 18, 1890.

This true experience in the third angel’s message was lost sight of in 1888. The animosity of church leaders to that message prevented the latter-rain experience which would have come to the church in its wake. Our continued refusal to accept this message is still keeping us from the second Pentecost. The faith of Jesus must now be brought into the experience of every person who believes that Jesus is soon to come. See The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, 984; Testimonies to Ministers, 90–97; Review and Herald Extra, December 23, 1890. Those who refuse to obey all the commandments of God in every detail without compromise, whether they be leader, pastor, or layman, will be spewed out of the mouth of God as Laodiceans, unpurified, unworthy to receive the seal of the living God. As a result they will adopt a counterfeit gospel, and false theories concerning prophecy and the plan of salvation.

God revealed to Ellen White “that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of ‘refreshing’ and the ‘latter-rain’ to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! They had neglected the needful preparation; therefore they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of a holy God. Those who refuse to be hewed by the prophets and fail to purify their souls in obeying the whole truth, and who are willing to believe that their condition is far better than it really is, will come up to the time of the falling of the plagues, and then see that they needed to be hewed and squared for the building. But there will be no time then to do it and no Mediator to plead their cause before the Father. Before this time the awfully solemn declaration has gone forth, ‘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. I

truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world.” Evangelism, 196.

“The 1888 message was to turn the preaching of leaders and pastors to uplifting Christ, His sacrifice, and His perfect obedience as an example for the remnant of God. It was to offer to the church the entire experience of Christ encompassing complete victory over all temptation. Satan knows that this message, clearly presented, will destroy his power over the remnant church. He realizes that all is lost for him when God’s people partake of the divine nature experience, by receiving the faith of Jesus into the life. He knows they can only do this through daily searching the Holy Scriptures and the inspired testimonies given by Jesus to the final generation through the gift of prophecy. This experience will produce the obedience of Jesus in the life. ‘True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God.’ Christ’s Object Lessons, 97–98.

In 1888 God made a desperate effort through the preaching of Waggoner and Jones and the prophet, Ellen G. White, to restore the faith of Jesus to its rightful place in the gospel. Receiving this message would have brought to the church the latter rain, encompassing perfect law-keeping by the power of the Holy Spirit, and God’s final demonstration of His power in righteousness.

Unless divine power is brought into the experience of the people of God, false theories and erroneous ideas will take minds captive, Christ and His righteousness will be dropped out of the experience of many, and their faith will be without power or life.

While we were studying the teachings of God by the living experience of the救灾 as manifest by the Holy Spirit, we have dropped the theories, the actions, the ideas, the principles, and the power of the Holy Spirit into the earth, and our experience has thereby been a false one. The working of our faith has been shown to be wrong, and our experience has been a false experience.

The experience that shall be in the world is this: The faith of Christ, the principles of faith, the power of faith, the experience of righteousness, and the rewards of righteousness, shall all be brought into the experience of the people of God. Without this, our experience will be a false one.

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The experience called for by the 1888 message would produce the final demonstration of God's power. Unfortunately it is a message still little understood. "All should understand the truths contained in these messages and demonstrate them in the will, by continual obedience, that the 'blessing' of justification is retained." Selected Messages, book 1, 396–397.

"When we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, we shall have no relish for sin; for Christ will be working with us. ... A door has been opened, and no man can close it, neither the highest powers nor the lowest; you alone can close the door of your heart, so that the Lord cannot reach you." Review and Herald, March 18, 1890.

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saw that none could share the 'refreshing' unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action. We should, therefore, be drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord and be earnestly seeking that preparation necessary to enable us to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. Let all remember that God is holy and that none but holy beings can ever dwell in His presence.” Early Writings, 71.

The 1888 message reminds us that we must be born again every day, if we are to see the kingdom of God.

“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” John 3:1-6.

“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” 1 John 3:6-9.

Our daily new birth will be evidenced to all by our actions. “Righteousness within is testified to by righteousness without. He who is righteous within is not hardhearted and unsympathetic, but day by day he grows into the image of Christ, going on from strength to strength. He who is being sanctified by the truth will be self-controlled, and will follow in the footsteps of Christ until grace is lost in glory.” Review and Herald, June 4, 1895.

“When we accept Christ, good works will appear as fruitful evidence that we are in the way of life, that Christ is our way, and that we are treading the true path that leads to heaven.” Ibid., November 4, 1890.

“When Christ is in the heart it will be so softened and subdued by love for God and man that fretting, faultfinding, and contention will not exist there. The religion of Christ in the heart will gain for its possessor a complete victory over those passions that are seeking for the mastery.” Testimonies, vol. 4, 610.

“When a man is converted to God, a new moral taste is created; and he loves the things that God loves; for his life is bound up by the golden chain of the immutable promises, to the life of Jesus. His heart is drawn out after God. His prayer is, ‘Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.’ Psalm 119:18. In the immutable standard he sees the character of the Redeemer, and knows that though he has sinned, he is not to be saved in his sins, but from his sins; for Jesus is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” Review and Herald, June 21, 1892.

“Only those who are clothed in the garments of His righteousness will be able to endure the glory of His presence when He shall appear with 'power and great glory.' ” Ibid., July 9, 1908.

The preceding statements by our prophet portray the faith of Jesus found in the third angel's message. A true understanding of the faith of Jesus has largely been lost sight of. May we now search for this true experience which will quickly bring on the latter rain and the second Pentecost, is my prayer. We are told that “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.” The Great Controversy, 625.

Only those who with Christ's faith have overcome all sin as Christ did, will participate in giving the final call of the third angel's message.

“‘The third angel’s message is to lighten the earth with its glory; but only those who have withstood temptation in the strength of the Mighty One will be permitted to act a part in proclaiming it when it shall have swelled into the loud cry,” Review and Herald, November 19, 1908. “Those who wait for the Bridegroom's coming are to say to the people, 'Befold your God.' The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them.”


Today the 1888 message of victory over sin through the faith of Jesus is sounding again to God's remnant people. Will this message to the Laodiceans again be rejected by the majority? See Testimonies, vol. 5, 136, 50, 10; vol. 1, 608-609.

“The message of Christ's righteousness is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the glory of God, which closes the work of the third angel.” Ibid., vol. 6, 19.

Those who will receive this message, will by the power of the Holy Spirit demonstrate it in their lives. Jesus said, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” Matthew 22:14. Victory over all sin by the Holy Spirit's power will be the experience of those who are sealed with the seal of the living God. By living out the 1888 message God's remnant people will make the final demonstration of God's love. God's faithful, loyal, obedient, victorious people will vindicate His character before the universe. By God's grace we must be part of that final demonstration.

Ron Spear, Editor
The message of reformers, or their methods of working, have seldom been embraced by the establishment except after long and trying conflicts.

With Bible believers who see the need of reform should we expect anything less? Seventh-day Adventists have been raised up with a reform message concerning salvation for end-time earthly inhabitants. Sadly, this important Bible saving and warning message has not been embraced by professing Christendom. Should we then “water down” or “sugar-coat” the proclamation? Should we change the truths to suit those adhering to human traditions?

We have gone over this ground before. Take the case of those wanting to soften the witness of the “Sentinel,” an early Adventist religious-liberty journal. Commenting on this, asking the pointed question and answering with God’s truth the Spirit of Prophecy states:

“Shall we for the sake of policy, betray a sacred trust? If the world is in error and delusion, breaking the law of God, is it not our duty to show them the sin and danger? We must proclaim the third angel’s message.

“What is the Sentinel for, but to be the voice of the watchmen on the walls of Zion, to sound the danger signal. We are not to cringe and beg pardon of the world for telling them the truth: we should scorn concealment. Unfurl your colors to meet the case of men and angels. Let it be understood that Seventh-day Adventists can make no compromise. In your opinions and faith there must not be the least appearance of waveri; the world has a right to know what to expect of us, and will look upon us as dishonest, as hiding our real sentiments and principles out of policy, if we carry even the semblance of being uncommitted till the popular voice has pointed out the safe way. The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, which Christ said He would send into the world, was to bear an unwavering testimony.” *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 95.

There is a wealth of heavenly counsel given us through the Spirit of Prophecy we would do well to heed at this time. I see it as light, glorious light, shining on God’s Word giving us life and assurance. The true believer who is walking in the Spirit, obeying God’s commandments, is not a legalist but one revealing the true love of Jesus in holy lifestyle, and longing for the return of Jesus.

In light of the above I see *Our Firm Foundation* magazine as a channel of grace and mercy, warning us of the subtle evils within and without. *Our Firm Foundation* is not any more absolute in its style or presentations than any other church journal. All readers must equate its message with the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy as we should do with the *Adventist Review, Ministry, Signs*, or any other publication raised up by God.

Indeed we need all these journals and more. Each should let the truth go forth as a lamp that burneth until the earth is lighted with present truth. God bless your earnest endeavors in encouraging all believers unto faithfulness and solidarity for truth, for the Seventh-day Adventist voice of reform.

—Ernest Steed (retired General Conference Temperance secretary), Florida

My husband and I appreciate your tapes as we are slow readers. Next birthday, if he lives, he will be 80 years old. Next month I can send you some money for the tapes.

—JO, North Carolina

If you or someone you know appreciates the messages in *Our Firm Foundation* but has poor eyesight, you may subscribe to the large-print edition of *Our Firm Foundation*. A subscription to *Our Firm Foundation* on audio cassette is also available (US$48/year to U.S. addresses) for the blind as well as others.—EDITORS

Praise the Lord! Do you realize how close we are to seeing our lovely Saviour face to face? Can you imagine how much there is to go through before that time? Events will happen very quickly. “Only by looking to Jesus, the Lamb of God, and following in His steps, can you prepare to meet God.” *Youth’s Instructor*, August 20, 1896. Thank you for assisting Jesus in this great work of preparation.

—RB, Virginia

I appreciate your periodical very much. Its spiritual tone is meeting the needs of God’s people in this critical time. I believe that many of God’s commandment-keeping people would have left the organized church without the influence of *Our Firm Foundation*. The most dedicated members of our local church are those who read it. They are also liberal in giving of their means to support the church. Conservative in belief and liberal in giving seem to go hand-in-hand. The North American Division, in their attempt to discredit the magazine by publishing *Issues*, is biting the hand that feeds it.

—LN, Michigan

Our grandson sent us the Week of Prayer videos by Jim Hohnberger and Tom and Alane Waters, and I certainly appreciate them. I only wish I had had information like that fifty years ago. I wish every Seventh-day Adventist family could watch and heed the advice offered in these videos.

How I wish I’d had some training and instruction, such as is offered in these videos instead of blundering through life as a Seventh-day Adventist. We have four children. Some are now grandparents. All are in the “church.” And for that I thank God. However, I really wished I’d had some studies so I could have been a better witness. I hope that these videos will be really advertised as practical advice on Christian living and how to train children.

I think we spend too much time on all the warfare that is going on and not nearly enough time on the practical things.

—HM, Washington

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Need for a Proper Concept of Righteousness by Faith

By invitation I made some remarks in the ministers' tent, to the ministers. We talked some in regard to the best plans to be arranged to educate the people here upon this very ground in reference to home religion.

Many people seem to be ignorant of what constitutes faith. Many complain of darkness and discouragements. I asked, "Are your faces turned toward Jesus? Are you beholding Him, the Sun of Righteousness? You need plainly to define to the churches the matter of faith and entire dependence upon the righteousness of Christ. In your talks and prayers there has been so little dwelling upon Christ, His matchless love, His great sacrifice made in our behalf, that Satan has nearly eclipsed the views we should have and must have of Jesus Christ. We must trust less in human beings for spiritual help and more, far more, in approaching Jesus Christ as our Redeemer. We may dwell with a determined purpose on the heavenly attributes of Jesus Christ; we may talk of His love, we may tell and sing of His mercies, we may make Him our own personal Saviour. Then we are one with Christ. We love that which Christ loved, we hate sin, that which Christ hated. These things must be talked of, dwelt upon."

I address the ministers. Lead the people along step by step, dwelling upon Christ's efficiency until, by a living faith, they see Jesus as He is—see Him in His fullness, a sin-pardoning Saviour, One who can pardon all our transgressions. It is by beholding that we become changed into His likeness. This is present truth. We have talked the law. This is right. But we have only casually lifted up Christ as the sin-pardoning Saviour.

We are to keep before the mind the sin-pardoning Saviour. But we are to present Him in His true position—coming to die to magnify the law of God and make it honorable, and yet to justify the sinner who shall depend wholly upon the merits of the blood of a crucified and risen Saviour. This is not made plain.

The soul-saving message, the third angel's message, is the message to be given to the world. The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus are both important, immensely important, and must be given with equal force and power. The first part of the message has been dwelt upon mostly, the last part casually. The faith of Jesus is not comprehended. We must talk it, we must live it, we must pray it, and educate the people to bring this part of the message into their home life. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Philippians 2:5.

There have been entire discourses, dry and Christless, in which Jesus has scarcely been named. The speaker's heart is not subdued and melted by the love of Jesus. He dwells upon dry theories. No great impression is made. The speaker has not the divine union, and how can he move the hearts of the people? We need to repent and be converted—yes, the preacher converted. The people must have Jesus lifted up before them, and they must be entreated to "Look and live."

Why are our lips so silent upon the subject of Christ's righteousness and His love for the world? Why do we not give to the people that which will revive and quicken them into a new life? The apostle Paul is filled with transport and adoration as he declares, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." 1 Timothy 3:16.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form
of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross... That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:5–11.

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” Colossians 1:14–17.

This is the grand and heavenly theme that has in a large degree been left out of the discourses because Christ is not formed within the human mind. And Satan has had his way that it shall be thus, that Christ should not be the theme of contemplation and adoration. This name, so powerful, so essential, should be on every tongue.

“Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.” Colossians 1:25–29.

Here is the work of the ministers of Christ. Because this work has not been done, because Christ and His character, His words, and His work have not been brought before the people, the religious state of the churches testifies against their teachers. The churches are ready to die because little of Christ is presented. They have not spiritual life and spiritual discernment.

The teachers of the people have not themselves become acquainted by living experience with the Source of their dependence and their strength. And when the Lord raises up men and sends them with the very message for this time to give to the people—a message which is not a new truth, but the very same that Paul taught, that Christ Himself taught—it is to them a strange doctrine. They begin to caution the people—who are ready to die because they have not been strengthened with the lifting up of Christ before them—“Do not be too hasty. Better wait, and not take up with this matter until you know more about it.” And the ministers preach the same dry theories, when the people need fresh manna.

The character of Christ is an infinitely perfect character, and He must be lifted up. He must be brought prominently into view, for He is the power, the might, the sanctification and righteousness of all who believe in Him. The men who have had a Pharisaical spirit, think if they hold to the good old theories, and have no part in the message sent of God to His people, they will be in a good and safe position. So thought the Pharisees of old, and their example should warn ministers off that self-satisfied ground.

We need a power to come upon us now and stir us up to diligence and earnest faith. Then, baptized with the Holy Spirit, we shall have Christ formed within, the hope of glory. Then we will exhibit Christ as the divine object of our faith and our love. We will talk of Christ, we will pray to Christ and about Christ. We will praise His holy name. We will present before the people His miracles, His self-denial, His character. If they did this, there would be no apostasies, there would be none separated from the Conference because they have, by their licentious practices, disgraced the cause of God and put Jesus to an open shame. The powers of every minister of the gospel should be employed to educate the believing churches to receive Christ by faith as their personal Saviour, to take Him into their very lives and make Him their Pattern to learn of Jesus, believe in Jesus, and exalt Jesus. The minister should himself dwell on the character of Christ. He should ponder the truth, and meditate upon the mysteries of redemption, especially the mediatorial work of Christ for this time.

If Christ is all and in all to every one of us, why are not His incarnation and His atoning sacrifice dwelt upon more in the churches? Why are not hearts and tongues employed in the Redeemer’s praise? This will be the employment of the powers of the redeemed through the ceaseless ages of eternity.

We need to have a living connection with God ourselves in order to teach Jesus. Then we can give the living personal experience of what Christ is to us by experience and faith. We have received Christ and with divine earnestness we can tell that which is an abiding power with us. The people must be drawn to Christ. Prominence must be given to His saving efficacy.

We need to have a living connection with God ourselves in order to teach Jesus. Then we can give the living personal experience of what Christ is to us by experience and faith.
Oh, that it might be said of ministers who are preaching to the people and to the churches, “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures”!

Letters to the Editor
Continued from 24

We just want to say how much we enjoy Our Firm Foundation and also let you know that our prayers will be with you during the meetings at Douglasville, Georgia. We attended our first camp meeting with you at Eatonville, Washington, as part of our honeymoon five years ago this month. That holds special memories. May God continue to bless you and keep you humble and obedient to His voice.
-LH, Tennessee

Thank you for Our Firm Foundation. I enjoy reading it and am strengthened by the messages. May God continue to bless your efforts and allow you to grow from strength to strength. Regardless of the opposition, continue to trust our God. He will see you through. We need these messages. Please renew my subscription.
-MB, New York

I just have to let you know how I appreciate your magazine Our Firm Foundation and the monthly tapes you are sending me. I am glad someone is giving the historic message. It makes me so sad I could cry (which I do sometimes) when so many of our pastors are not giving the three angels’ messages or speaking on the sanctuary. We have such a wonderful message. Why, oh, why don’t they preach this wonderful plan of salvation? Praise the Lord for all who write articles in your magazine.
-HV, California

I want to give a heartfelt thanks for your ministry. I appreciate receiving Our Firm Foundation every month and always read it from cover to cover. I also appreciate your newsletters. I do want to keep informed on current events and all aspects of what is happening in your ministry. My prayer is that the Lord Jesus will continue to bless, guide, direct, and lead in all your endeavors.
-WW, Virginia

You have done an excellent job in answering the North American Division’s charges in their Issues book (a very unfair and dishonest publication). I wish every Seventh-day Adventist could read a copy of this book (Issues Clarified).
-PJ, Arkansas

I think this magazine should be in the hands of every member of our Seventh-day Adventist churches.
-RA, Texas

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Letters to a Futurist—Part 2

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 fulfillment 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

Ellen G. White
temporal prince led to misapplication of Scripture.

Jesus came as an infant of days, of poor parentage. But there were some who were willing to receive the heavenly Guest. For these the angel messengers veiled their glory, and the heavenly chorus rang over the hills of Bethlehem with hosannas to the newborn King. The humble shepherds believed Him, received Him, and worshipped Him. But the very ones who ought to have been the first to welcome Jesus did not discern Him. He was not the one their ambitious hopes desired. The false path they had entered, they continued to follow to the end. They became unteachable, self-righteous, and self-sufficient, fancying they possessed true light and that they were the only safe instructors of the people.

The very same Satan is at work to undermine the faith of the people of God at this time. There are persons ready to catch up every new idea. The prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation are misinterpreted. These persons do not consider that the truth has been set forth at the appointed time by the very men whom God was leading to do this special work. These men followed on step by step in the very fulfillment of prophecy, and those who have not had a personal experience in this work are to take the Word of God and believe on "their word" who have been led by the Lord in the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. These messages, received and acted upon, are doing their work to prepare a people to stand in the great day of God. If we search the Scriptures to confirm the truth God has given His servants for the world, we shall be found proclaiming the first, second, and third angels' messages.

It is true that there are prophecies yet to be fulfilled. But very erroneous work has been done again and again, and will continue to be done by those who seek to find new light in the prophecies, and who begin by turning away from the light that God has already given. The messages of Revelation 14 are those by which the world is to be tested; they are the everlasting gospel, and are to be sounded everywhere. But the Lord does not lay upon those who have not had an experience in His work the burden of making a new exposition of those prophecies which He has, by His Holy Spirit, moved upon His chosen servants to explain.

According to the light God has given me, this is the work which you, Brother John Bell, have been attempting to do. Your views have found favor with some; but it is because these persons have not discernment to see the true bearing of the arguments you present. They have had but a limited experience in the work of God for this time, and they do not see where your views would lead them, and you do not see yourself where they would lead. They are ready to assent to your statements; they see nothing in them but that which is correct. But they are misled because you have woven together much Scripture in constructing your theory. Your arguments appear conclusive to them.

But then Satan is at work to undermine the faith of the people of God at this time. There are persons ready to catch up every new idea. The prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation are misinterpreted.

Not so, however, with those who have an experimental knowledge of the truth that applies in the last period of this earth's history. While they see that you hold some precious truth, they see also that you have misapplied Scripture, placing it in a framework of error where it does not belong, and making it give force to that which is not present truth. Because some accept that which you have written, do not become elated. It is most trying to your brethren who have confidence in you as a Christian and who love you as such, to state to you that the network of argument, which you have thought of so great consequence is not the theory of truth that God has given His people to proclaim for this time.

The light God has given me is that the Scriptures you have woven together you yourself do not fully understand. If you did, you would discern that your theories tear up the very foundation of our faith.

My brother, I have had many testimonies to correct those who have started out in the same way you are now traveling. These persons seemed sure that they were led by God, and they have come with their different theories to ministers who were preaching the truth. I said to these ministers, "The Lord is not in this; be not deceived, neither take the responsibility of deceiving others." At camp meetings I have had to speak plainly in regard to those who were thus leading away from right paths. With pen and voice I have borne the message, "Go not ye after them."

The hardest task I ever had to do in this line was in dealing with one who, I knew, wanted to follow the Lord. For some time he had thought he was obtaining new light. He was very ill, and must soon die. And oh, how my heart hoped he would not make it necessary for me to tell him just what he was doing! Those to whom he presented his views listened to him eagerly, and some thought him inspired. He had a chart made, and reasoned from the Scriptures to show that the Lord would come at a certain date.

The very same Satan is at work to undermine the faith of the people of God at this time.

In 1894, I think. To many his reasoning seemed to be without a flaw. They told of his powerful exhortations in his sickroom. Most wonderful views passed before him. But what was the source of his inspiration? It was the morphine given him to relieve his pain.

At our camp meeting at Lansing, Michigan, just before I came to Australia, I had to speak plainly in regard to this new light. I told the people that the words they had heard were not the truth of Inspiration. The wonderful light, which presented such a show of truth, was the result of a misapplication of Scripture. The Lord's work would not close up in 1894. The word of the Lord to me was, "This is not truth, but will lead into strange paths, and some will become confused over this representation, and will give up the faith."

Other persons have written to me of most flattering views which had been presented to them, and some have had them put in print. A new life has seemed to stir them; they are full of zeal. But the word comes to me as it has come to me in regard to the theories you hold: "Believe them not." You have a mixture of truth and error, so combined that you think it all genuine. Here is where the Jews stumbled. They wove a fabric that appeared to them a beautiful thing, but it led them to refuse the light Christ brought to them. They thought they had great light, and in that light they walked, and rejected the pure, true light.
which Christ had come to give. Intensity is taking possession of minds, urging them into different ventures, which lead them they knew not where.

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.

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

God has warned His people of the perils before them. John beholds the things which will be in the last days, and he sees a people working counter to God. Read Revelation 12:17; 14:10–13, and chapters 17 and 13. John sees the company who have been deceived. He says, "I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief, Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." Revelation 16:13–15.

From those who have rejected truth, the light of God has departed. They did not heed the message of the True Witness, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes 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 message of the angels which are represented as flying in the midst of heaven, with the last warning to a fallen world. If we are not called upon to prophesy, we are called to believe the prophecies, and to cooperate with God in giving light to other minds. This we are trying to do.

You can help us, my brother, in many ways. But I am commissioned of the Lord to say to you that you are not to be self-centered. Take heed how you hear, how you understand, and how you appropriate the Word of God. The Lord will bless you in drawing in even lines with your brethren. Those whom He has sent forth to proclaim the third angel’s message have been working in unison with the heavenly intelligences. The Lord does not lay upon you a burden to proclaim a message that will bring discord into the ranks of believers. I repeat, He is not leading anyone by His Holy Spirit to frame a theory that will unsettle faith in the solemn messages He has given His people to bear to our world.

I advise you not to regard your writings as precious truth. It would not be advisable for you to immortalize by putting in print that which has cost you so much anxiety. It is not the Lord’s will that this matter should be brought before His people, for it will work to hinder the very message of truth they are to believe and practice in these last days of peril.

The Lord Jesus said to His disciples when He was with them, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." John 16:12. He could have made disclosures which would have absorbed the attention of the disciples and caused them to lose sight of His former instruction that He wished to be the subject of their most earnest thought. But He withheld those things which they would have been amazed to hear, and which would have afforded them opportunity to cavil, to create misunderstanding and disaffection. He would give no occasion for persons of little faith and piety to mystify and misrepresent the truth, and thus create factions.

Jesus could have presented mysteries which would have given subject for thought and investigation for generations, even to the close of time. Himself the source of all true science, He could have
led men to the investigation of mysteries, and age after age their minds would have been so thoroughly absorbed that they would have felt no desire to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God.

Jesus well knew that Satan is constantly working to excite curiosity, and busy men with conjecture. Thus he seeks to eclipse the grand and momentous truth which Christ wished to be ever prominent before their minds. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” John 17:3.

There is a lesson for us in those words of Christ spoken after the feeding of the five thousand. He said, “Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.” John 6:12. These words meant more than that the disciples should gather the broken pieces of bread into baskets. Jesus meant that they should mark His words, should study the Scriptures, and treasure every ray of light. Instead of searching for a knowledge of something that God had not revealed, they were carefully to gather up what He had given them.

Satan had tried to eclipse from human minds the knowledge of God, and to eradicate from their hearts the attributes of God. Man was seeking out many inventions, which he supposed that he himself had originated, and he thought himself wiser than God. That which God had revealed was misconstrued, misapplied, and mingled with satanic delusions. Satan will quote Scripture in order to deceive. He tried to deceive Christ in this way. So he tries to deceive men. He will lead them to misconstrue the Scriptures, and make them testify to falsehood.

Christ came to adjust truths that had been misplaced and made to serve the cause of error. He recalled them, repeated them, placed them in their proper position in the framework of truth, and bade them stand fast forever. Thus it was with the law of God, with the Sabbath, and with the marriage institution. We are to study His example. Satan seeks to obliterate everything that would keep the true God in remembrance; but the followers of Christ are to treasure up what God has revealed. No truth of His Word, opened to them by His Spirit, is to be set aside.

Theories will be continually agitated to divert the mind, to unsettle the faith. Those who have had the actual experience in the unfolding of the prophecies, have been made what they are today, Seventh-day Adventists, by these prophecies. They are to stand with their loins girt about with truth, and with the whole armor on. Those who have not had this experience are privileged to hold the message of truth with the same confidence. The light that God has been pleased to give His people will not weaken their confidence in the path in which He has led them in the past, but will strengthen them to hold fast the faith. We must hold the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end.

“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12. Here we stand, under the third angel's message. “And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.” Revelation 18:1–5.

Thus the substance of the second angel's message is again given to the world by that other angel who lightens the earth with his glory. These messages all blend in one, to come before the people in the closing days of this earth's history. All the world will be tested, and all that have been in the darkness of error in regard to the Sabbath of the fourth commandment will understand the last message of mercy that is to be given to men.

Our work is to proclaim the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. “Prepare to meet thy God” (Amos 4:12), is the warning given to the world. It is a warning to us individually. We are called upon to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily betise us. There is a work for you, my brother, to do, to yoke up with Christ. Make sure that your building is on the rock. Do not risk eternity on a probability. You may not live to participate in the perilous scenes on which we are now entering. The life of no one of us is assured for any given time. Should you not watch every moment? Should you not closely examine your own self, and inquire, What will eternity be to me?

The great burden of every soul should be, Is my heart renewed? Is my soul transformed? Are my sins pardoned through faith in Christ? Have I been born again? Am I complying with the invitation, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28–30. Do you count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus? And do you feel it your duty to believe every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God?}

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