

Our Firm Foundation

The Seventh-day Sabbath

Christ Our Righteousness

The Immutable Law of God

The Non-Immortality of the Soul

The Three Angels' Messages

The Sanctuary

Volume 19, Number 6

June 2004



THE
PASSION

A film reel and a film strip are shown. The film strip is draped over the word 'PASSION' in the title. The background is yellow.



Berean Overcomers

Dear readers and supporters of the gospel of Christ,

In this crisis hour we are commanded by Christ to study to show ourselves approved unto God, to search the Scriptures, to seek the righteousness of Christ by His faith working in the soul with a fervor—a zeal of the Bereans—to overcome every sinful trait of character, to be perfect in His power.

“And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Acts 17:10–11.

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15.

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” John 5:39.

“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:13.

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33.

“Will man take hold of divine power, and with determination and perseverance resist Satan, as Christ has given him example in His con-

flict with the foe in the wilderness of temptation? God cannot save man against his will from the power of Satan’s artifices. Man must work with his human power, aided by the divine power of Christ, to resist and to conquer at any cost to himself. In short, man must overcome as Christ overcame. . . .

“The Saviour overcame to show man how he may overcome. All the temptations of Satan, Christ met with the Word of God. By trusting in God’s promises, He received power to obey God’s commandments, and the tempter could gain no advantage.” *Sons and Daughters of God*, 156.

We must be willing each day and every moment to abide in Christ in obedience to His commandments without a single compromise.

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” John 15:4.

“The evil tendencies of mankind are hard to overcome. The battles are tedious. Every soul in the strife knows how severe, how bitter, are these contests. Everything about growth in grace is difficult, because the standard and maxims of the world are constantly interposed between the soul and God’s holy standard. The Lord would have us elevated, ennobled, purified, by carrying out the principles underlying His great moral standard, which will test every character in the great day of final reckoning. . . .

“Every Christian must stand on guard continually, watching every avenue of the soul where Satan might find access. He must pray for divine help and at the same time resolutely resist every inclination to sin. By courage, by faith, by persevering toil, he can conquer. But let him remember that to gain the victory Christ must abide in him and he in Christ. . . . It is only by personal union with Christ, by communion with Him daily, hourly, that we can bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit.” *The Faith I Live By*, 135.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 2:5.

We can experience a daily walk with Jesus—by beholding Him, His life, His suffering, His perfection of character—which He offers to all who are willing to be made willing to overcome as He overcame. He will then restore in each supplicant the original mind. See *The Ministry of Healing*, 492, 514.

Let us with the zeal of the Bereans continually discipline our minds in our determination to be overcomers in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are told we must be continually on guard, bringing the mind back again and again (see *Messages to Young People*, 114–115); striving, yes, agonizing in our pursuit of the crown of eternal life; witnessing of the Holy Spirit’s power. This is what it means to be abiding in Christ.



Our Mission

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

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Jean Handwerk

“Catholic and Protestant groups, as well as biblical scholars, have defended the film [Mel Gibson’s movie *The Passion*], saying it sticks closely to accounts of the crucifixion as told in the New Testament.”¹ Even the pope commended the film, saying, “It is as it was.”²

While respecting individual responses to the film, this author respectfully disagrees with that assessment.³ In fact, the film has additions not mentioned in the Gospel accounts. For example: Gibson portrayed Christ, in chains, falling from a bridge. Children threw stones at the suicidal Judas. The earthquake at Jesus’ death caused the temple floor to crack open all the way into the Most Holy Place, perhaps symbolizing the split in the church between the Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah and those who denied Him. And on the way to His crucifixion, Jesus said

to His mother, “See, Mother, how I make all things new?” Regarding that last example, these exact words are not found in Scripture, and the passage that most closely matches is not found in the gospels but in Revelation 21:5: “And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.”

Those four events are not biblical, but viewers unfamiliar with the Bible, who hear how accurate the film is, may believe that they are. Gibson may take whatever artistic license he wishes with his film, but viewers should not be misled to think that this motion picture is biblically sound.

Also, *not* included in the film is the tearing of the temple veil from top to bottom by unseen hands at the time of the earthquake. That event signified that earthly priests and sacrifices were no longer needed, since the foreshadowed Lamb of God had just been slain for

our sins. The way to the Father was no longer blocked by the veil. The ascended Jesus is now our High Priest in the heavenly Sanctuary, replacing all earthly priests. With our prayers for forgiveness He pleads the blood of His once-for-all-time sacrifice. That is a significant omission from the biblical account that could easily have been incorporated into the film.

The Centrality of Mary

In contrast to fans’ claims of Scriptural accuracy, Gibson, a staunch traditional⁴ Catholic, admits in several interviews that the film is based not only on the Gospels but also on tradition and the visions of two Catholic nuns—at least one of whom received communication from apparitions of “Mary.” Indeed, one of two major concerns regarding the religious impact of the film is the ubiquitous presence of Jesus’ mother through-

out the movie. Her suffering is the subplot of the movie. Gibson pushes her front and center in our minds, and that observation is not just this writer's opinion. Gibson himself admits his film is "so Marian. But I think the way the film displays her has been kind of an eye opener for evangelicals who don't usually look at that aspect."⁵

The movie does reflect traditional Catholic Marian devotion. In Gibson's film, Jesus' mother is given a greatly expanded role in Christ's final hours compared to the single mention of her during that time in Scripture when Jesus gives her into the care of John at the cross. In the film, Peter confesses his betrayal to her, and when she reaches out a forgiving hand to comfort him, she hears his "I'm not worthy," reminiscent of the Catholic mass. She is present at the trial before Caiaphas and at the judgment of Pilate. She is visible at the scourging, and she is in a scene with Pilate's wife, receiving linens from the sympathetic woman. Satan mocks her pain. One sees her hurrying past the crowd to place herself where she can see Jesus on the way to Calvary. She embraces Jesus' feet as He hangs on the cross, an act which bloodies her. "Let me die with you," she cries to Him. These scenes with Mary are not in the Bible, but they are making a powerful impact on moviegoers. "From whatever point in his spirituality Gibson's treatment of Mary is springing, it is touching deeply the maternal impulse in his viewers."⁶

One young Christian woman said, "I really liked Mary in the movie. She had a big part in it." However, in Scripture Mary's last recorded words were spoken more than three years earlier at the wedding feast in Cana: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." John 2:5. When she and his brothers showed up outside a house where Jesus was teaching, seeking to speak with Him, He said, "Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked

round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother." Mark 3:33–35. When someone praised His mother for giving birth to and nursing Him, Jesus' reply again put Mary in proper perspective: "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Luke 11:28. *Jesus studiously avoided exalting His mother to any position of greatness. Instead, He turned listeners' attention to "doing the will of God." The heavenly Father was to be honored, not the earthly mother.*

equal with the Creator? One can hardly countenance such a thought. Furthermore, the Bible teaches "there is one God, and *one* mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 2:5. (All emphasis supplied.) Again, the film cannot be regarded as Scripturally faithful. Underlying doctrines are at issue, as well.

Many Protestants are unaware of the important role Jesus' mother plays in Catholic life and theology. A concern is that the film's depiction will be the basis of viewers' perception of her, rather than a biblical basis. *The Passion* is not entirely

The Passion is not entirely "as it was" Scripturally regarding Mary, but it does accurately reflect Catholic tradition about her.

Traditional Catholic teaching is that her motherly suffering and sacrifice also played a part in our redemption. On the film's surface, Mary is a mother watching her child die an agonizing death. One can deeply sympathize with her suffering. In many Catholics' eyes, though, her words and presence have greater significance.

Sister Mary of Agreda, a nun whose reports of Marian apparitions influenced Gibson, wrote, "The great Mother . . . offered her own life and her own blood in satisfaction and in imitation of her Master's example."⁷ This sacrificial concept of Mary is one which Marian devotees have developed into a growing appeal to have Mary proclaimed "co-redemptrix." Gibson himself refers to Mary as a "tremendous co-redemptrix and mediatrix."⁸ But a sinful human who rejoiced in "God my Saviour" (Luke 1:47)—elevated to equality with God? The creation

"as it was" Scripturally regarding Mary, but it does accurately reflect Catholic tradition about her.

What is written in this article is not in any way intended to disparage or criticize Catholic believers. Faithful Catholics who treasure the Bible as the inspired Word of God, who also believe in church tradition, often find themselves in the confusing, distressing position of having to choose between what they're taught is the infallible Word of God and what they know to be church tradition, which often contradicts God's Word.

Some Protestants know how significant a role the mother of Jesus plays in Catholic religion, but they have followed Jesus' example in not uplifting her to prominence. Other than giving birth to the humanity of Jesus, Mary did not play a part in the plan of redemption. She is mentioned little in God's Word after the nativity, and her name is not included in John 3:16 (or anywhere else) as

having a role in our salvation: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son. . . .”

Protestants historically have not emphasized Mary in their church doctrines, but the film’s Marian emphasis may weaken that former resolve.

Gibson’s sympathetic depiction of Mary sets the emotional stage for an ominous follow-up. Increasing publicity is being given to the apparitions of “Mary” and those who are receiving them, and

and Jesus’ death was truly horrendous.

The filmmaker chose to focus on the last several hours of Jesus’ life, which necessarily included His arrest, trials, scourgings, and crucifixion. The majority of reviewers were objective in their overall analyses of the film, but when comments about the graphic violence repeatedly appeared in their reports, the pattern was noted by this writer. In some reviewers’ eyes, the violence and gore was excessive.

“It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father’s wrath upon Him as man’s substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God.”

it can hardly be doubted that those who experience the movie’s pleasantly subtle Marian indoctrination are more likely to accept the invitation to witness the apparitions for themselves. Shall we fail to understand that once Spiritualism takes root, it will be most difficult to reason from the Scriptures contrary to what the senses have experienced?

Focus on Brutality

The other major concern is the film’s brutality—not only because of its inordinate bloodiness, but because of the film’s emphasis on the cruelty to the neglect of other aspects related to Jesus’ death. One cannot doubt the barbaric cruelty of the Romans. The Roman empire is depicted in Daniel 7:23 in action: “devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.” In the Coliseum not many years after Jesus’ death, gladiators fought one another or animals to the death as the crowds cheered. Gibson researched Roman practices of the times for historical accuracy,

One review by *Catholic News Service* stated, “the violence, while explicit and extreme, does not seem an end in itself.” However, it also stated, “such savagery may be self-defeating in trying to capture the imagination of the everyday moviegoer.” The reviewers mentioned the “near-incessant blood-letting” and cited as a weakness of the film Gibson’s “horror-genre conventions” including “close-ups of Christ’s scarred and mutilated body.”⁹ This writer would include in that “horror genre” category the scenes of ravens plucking out the eyes of the unbelieving thief crucified with Jesus and the fly-and maggot-ridden animal carcass seen by Judas. To some degree, Hollywood seems to have intruded on the final hours of the Son of God.

In stark contrast, however, the Bible adds few details to the spare reports about Jesus’ physical torture. Far more is written about the meaning of His sacrificial death. That’s because *despite all the film footage of Jesus’ agony, it was not the physical pain Jesus endured prior to*

and on the cross which gives us forgiveness of sin and which justifies us in the eyes of God.

Separation From God the Greatest Cause of Suffering

Gibson’s film seems to include the physical suffering as part of the propitiation for our sins. However, Scripture teaches the significance of Jesus’ death on the cross is in His words, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Mark 15:34. His great sacrifice was in experiencing complete separation from His loving Father, which is the penalty of sin, in order that we sinners could be reconciled to the Father. *The Desire of Ages* tells us, “Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father’s acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God, that their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father’s wrath upon Him as man’s substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God.” “In that dreadful hour, Christ was not to be comforted with the Father’s presence.” Pages 753–754.

“The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestations of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father’s mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father’s reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Savior in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. *So great was*

this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.” Ibid., 753.

He took our punishment, enduring “the wrath of divine justice, and for thy sake becomes sin itself.” “Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe” (Ibid., 756), so we could live again in His presence for eternity, if we so choose. *That* is the message of the Gospels and the rest of the Bible, too. It is *that* act of selfless love that gives us hope, and upon which we build our faith.

“Well, then, might the angels rejoice as they looked upon the Saviour’s cross; for though they did not then understand all, they knew that the destruction of sin and Satan was forever made certain, that the redemption of man was assured, and that the universe was made eternally secure. Christ Himself fully comprehended the results of the sacrifice made upon Calvary. To all these He looked forward when upon the cross He cried out, ‘It is finished.’” Ibid., 764.

These words from *The Desire of Ages* convey great love and hope; they reveal the depth and richness of meaning of Jesus’ sacrifice that no reviewer or interviewee came close to when discussing his or her reactions to the film.

Gibson’s prolonged preoccupation with the torture of Christ overshadows that glorious perspective and basically turns the movie into a cinematic Stations of the Cross. Visual media can more effectively portray the physical than the spiritual agony Jesus suffered at the withdrawal of the Father’s presence from Him, yet it is the latter which has greater import for us. As Gerri Pare, David DiCerto, and Anne Navarro of *Catholic News Service* said in their movie review, “The ‘how’ of Christ’s death is lingered on at the expense of the ‘why.’”¹⁰

One wonders if most moviegoers understand that when Jesus said, “It is accomplished [finished]” (see John 19:30), He meant the ful-

fillment of His prophesied substitutionary sacrifice, not just His physical death and the end of His pain. We need to remember that some who are not very familiar with the Bible are seeing this film. Few have an understanding of the Sanctuary service’s prophetic symbolism.

Some viewers claim Jesus’ connection and later disconnection with the Father were amply presented in the film. Those who knew what to expect were more likely to see it. Others were not so sure, and one woman admitted, “I thought Jesus’ suffering was just physical.” When asked if she knows what the Scriptures say about Jesus’ death, she replied, “I go to church but I don’t read the Bible. There’s no time

of physical agony, as Gibson’s focus may lead one to conclude?

The Crucifixion and the Eucharist

Gibson explained why he dwelt so much on the sufferings of Christ. In an interview in *Christianity Today*, he said, “The film is just a jumping off point. But [it] makes some parallels for a reason. I juxtapose [scenes of] the Last Supper with the Crucifixion to point out what it is, how it was instituted, and why.” He’s referring to the daily masses during which priests offer Jesus as a propitiatory sacrifice to the Father on our behalf. Catholics believe that the eucharistic wafer does not repre-

As horrifically brutal as Jesus’ sacrifice was, how can one even think to repeat that sacrifice over and over again in the mass—especially when Scripture says once was enough forever?

because of school and work. But I saw the movie twice, and it made me believe in my faith.”

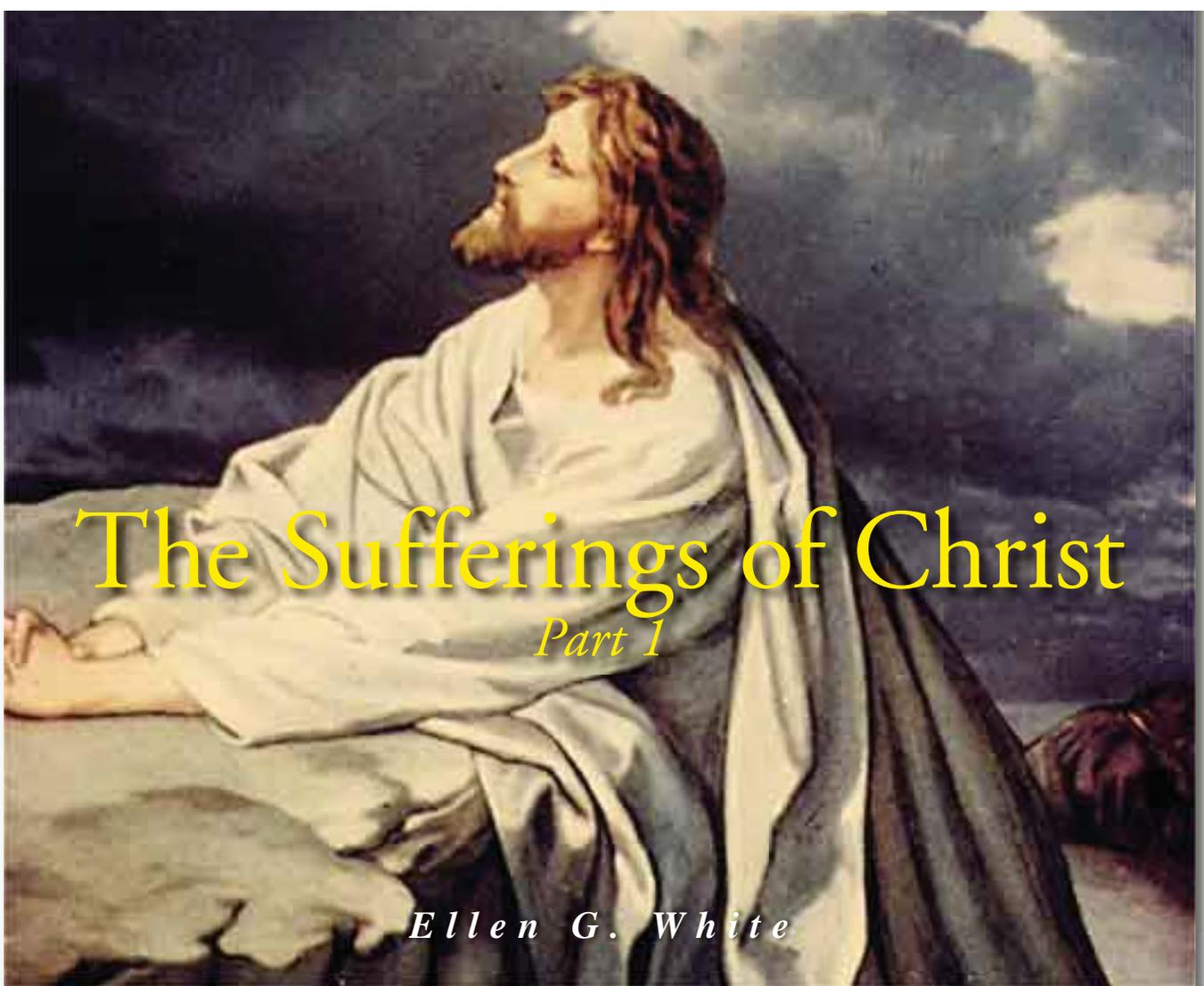
Many viewers who say, “I am humbled by all He went through for us,” mean primarily or only His physical agony, and they miss the fullness of Jesus’ mission for us sinners. They do not know Christ in the fullness of divine love for a lost race. One can only hope that they will take time to search the Word of God for deeper understanding, which can lead to greater love for our Saviour.

Finally, at the end of the film, only a few seconds are devoted to the triumph of the pain, which is His resurrection. “And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” 1 Corinthians 15:17. See also Romans 6:4. Wasn’t the resurrection worth all the suffering—or is Jesus’ victory on our behalf more due to His endurance

sent but actually *is* the body and blood of Jesus—the divine person of Jesus—whom the priests repeatedly call away from His present ministry in the heavenly Sanctuary (Hebrews 8:1–2) to come down from heaven to be a sacrifice for our sins each and every time a mass is said.

Here, Gibson’s religious perspective is not “as it was” presented to us in God’s Word. The apostle Paul clearly teaches that Jesus, our High Priest, “needed *not daily* . . . to offer up sacrifice, . . . for this he did *once*, when he offered up himself.” Jesus “offered *one* sacrifice for sins *for ever*.” “Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many.” Hebrews 7:27; 10:12; 9:28. As horrifically brutal as Jesus’ sacrifice was, how can one even think to repeat that sacrifice over and over again in the

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The Sufferings of Christ

Part 1

Ellen G. White

In order to fully realize the value of salvation, it is necessary to understand what it cost. In consequence of limited ideas of the sufferings of Christ, many place a low estimate upon the great work of the atonement. The glorious plan of man's salvation was brought about through the infinite love of God the Father. In this divine plan is seen the most marvelous manifestation of the love of God to the fallen race.

Such love as is manifested in the gift of God's beloved Son amazed the holy angels. "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 Saviour was "the brightness of his [Father's] glory and the express image of his person." Hebrews 1:3. He possessed divine majesty, perfection, and excellence. He was equal with God. "It pleased the

Father that in him should all fullness dwell." Colossians 1:19. "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." Philippians 2:6-8.

Christ consented to die in the sinner's stead, that man, by a life of obedience, might escape the penalty of the law of God. His death did not make the law of none effect; it did not slay the law, lessen its holy claims, nor detract from its sacred dignity. The death of Christ proclaimed the justice of His Father's law in punishing the transgressor, in that He consented to suffer the penalty of the law Himself in order to save fallen man from its curse.

The death of God's beloved Son on the cross shows the immutability of the law of God. His death magnifies the law and makes it honorable, and gives evidence to man of its changeless character. From His own divine lips are heard the words: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Matthew 5:17. The death of Christ justified the claims of the law.

In Christ were united the human and the divine. His mission was to reconcile God and man, to unite the finite with the infinite. This was the only way in which fallen men could be exalted through the merits of the blood of Christ to be partakers of the divine nature. Taking human nature fitted Christ to understand man's trials and sorrows, and all the temptations wherewith he is beset. Angels who were unacquainted with sin could not sympathize with

man in his peculiar trials. Christ condescended to take man's nature and was tempted in all points like as we, that He might know how to succor all who should be tempted.

Prayer

As the human was upon Him, He felt His need of strength from His Father. He had select places of prayer. He loved to hold communion with His Father in the solitude of the mountain. In this exercise His holy, human soul was strengthened for the duties and trials of the day. Our Saviour identifies Himself with our needs and weaknesses, in that He became a suppliant, a nightly petitioner, seeking from His Father fresh supplies of strength, to come forth invigorated and refreshed, braced for duty and trial. He is our example in all things. He is a brother in our infirmities, but not in possessing like passions. As the sinless One, His nature recoiled from evil. He endured struggles and torture of soul in a world of sin. His humanity made prayer a necessity and privilege. He required all the stronger divine support and comfort which His Father was ready to impart to Him, to Him who had, for the benefit of man, left the joys of heaven and chosen His home in a cold and thankless world. Christ found comfort and joy in communion with His Father. Here He could unburden His heart of the sorrows that were crushing Him. He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Isaiah 53:3.

Through the day He labored earnestly to do good to others, to save men from destruction. He healed the sick, comforted the mourning, and brought cheerfulness and hope to the despairing. He brought the dead to life. After His work was finished for the day, He went forth, evening after evening, away from the confusion of the city, and His form was bowed in some retired grove in supplication to His Father. At times the bright beams of the moon shone upon His bowed form.

And then again the clouds and darkness shut away all light. The dew and frost of night rested upon His head and beard while in the attitude of a suppliant. He frequently continued His petitions through the entire night. He is our example. If we could remember this, and imitate Him, we would be much stronger in God.

will make everyone who obtains it more than conqueror.

In Gethsemane

As the Son of God bowed in the attitude of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, the agony of His spirit forced from His pores sweat like great drops of blood. It was here that the horror of great darkness

If the Saviour of men, with His divine strength, felt the need of prayer, how much more should feeble, sinful mortals feel the necessity of prayer—fervent, constant prayer!

If the Saviour of men, with His divine strength, felt the need of prayer, how much more should feeble, sinful mortals feel the necessity of prayer—fervent, constant prayer! When Christ was the most fiercely beset by temptation, He ate nothing. He committed Himself to God and, through earnest prayer and perfect submission to the will of His Father, came off conqueror. Those who profess the truth for these last days, above every other class of professed Christians, should imitate the great Exemplar in prayer.

"It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord." Matthew 10:25. Our tables are frequently spread with luxuries neither healthful nor necessary, because we love these things more than we love self-denial, freedom from disease, and soundness of mind. Jesus sought earnestly for strength from His Father. This the divine Son of God considered of more value, even for Himself, than to sit at the most luxurious table. He has given us evidence that prayer is essential in order to receive strength to contend with the powers of darkness, and to do the work allotted us. Our own strength is weakness, but that which God gives is mighty and

surrounded Him. The sins of the world were upon Him. He was suffering in man's stead as a transgressor of His Father's law. Here was the scene of temptation. The divine light of God was receding from His vision, and He was passing into the hands of the powers of darkness. In His soul anguish He lay prostrate on the cold earth. He was realizing His Father's frown. He had taken the cup of suffering from the lips of guilty man, and proposed to drink it Himself, and in its place give to man the cup of blessing. The wrath that would have fallen upon man was now falling upon Christ. It was here that the mysterious cup trembled in His hand.

Jesus had often resorted to Gethsemane with His disciples for meditation and prayer. They were all well acquainted with this sacred retreat. Even Judas knew where to lead the murderous throng, that he might betray Jesus into their hands. Never before had the Saviour visited the spot with a heart so full of sorrow. It was not bodily suffering from which the Son of God shrank, and which wrung from His lips, in the presence of His disciples, these mournful words: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto

death." "Tarry ye here," said He, "and watch with Me." Matthew 26:38.

Leaving His disciples within hearing of His voice, He went a little distance from them and fell on His face and prayed. His soul was agonized, and He pleaded: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Verse 39. The sins of a lost world were upon Him and overwhelming Him. It was a sense of His Father's frown,

was necessary that their faith might not fail, but be strengthened for the test just before them.

But instead of watching with Christ, they were burdened with sorrow, and fell asleep. Even the ardent Peter, who, only a few hours before, had declared that he would suffer and, if need be, die for his Lord, was asleep. At the most critical moment, when the Son of God was in need of their sympathy and heartfelt prayers, they were found asleep. They lost much by thus

her night watch, however perilous, whether long or short. Sorrow is no excuse for her to be less watchful. Tribulation should not lead to carelessness, but to double vigilance. Christ has directed the church by His own example to the Source of their strength in times of need, distress, and peril. The attitude of watching is to designate the church as God's people indeed. By this sign the waiting ones are distinguished from the world and show that they are pilgrims and strangers upon the earth.

The attitude of watching is to designate the church as God's people indeed. By this sign the waiting ones are distinguished from the world and show that they are pilgrims.

Unprepared for the Trial

Again the Saviour turned sadly from His sleeping disciples, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then He came to them and said: "Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." Matthew 26:45. How cruel for the disciples to permit sleep to close their eyes, and slumber to chain their senses, while their divine Lord was enduring such inexpressible mental anguish! If they had remained watching they would not have lost their faith as they beheld the Son of God dying upon the cross.

in consequence of sin, which rent His heart with such piercing agony and forced from His brow great drops of blood, which, rolling down His pale cheeks, fell to the ground, moistening the earth.

Sleeping Disciples; Sleeping Church

Rising from His prostrate position, He came to His disciples and found them sleeping. He said unto Peter: "What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Verses 40-41. At the most important time—the time when Jesus had made a special request for them to watch with Him—the disciples were found sleeping. He knew that severe conflicts and terrible temptations were before them. He had taken them with Him that they might be a strength to Him, and that the events they should witness that night, and the lessons of instruction they should receive, might be indelibly printed upon their memories. This

sleeping. Our Saviour designed to fortify them for the severe test of their faith to which they would soon be subjected. If they had spent that mournful period in watching with the dear Saviour, and in prayer to God, Peter would not have been left to his own feeble strength to deny his Lord in the time of trial.

The Son of God went away the second time, and prayed, saying: "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." Verse 42. And again He came to His disciples and found them sleeping. Their eyes were heavy. By these sleeping disciples is represented a sleeping church, when the day of God's visitation is nigh. It is a time of clouds and thick darkness, when to be found asleep is most perilous.

Jesus has left us this warning: "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping." Mark 13:35-36. The church of God is required to fulfill

This important night watch should have been signalized by noble mental struggles and prayers, which would have brought them strength to witness the unspeakable agony of the Son of God. It would have prepared them, as they should behold His sufferings upon the cross, to understand something of the nature of the overpowering anguish which He endured in the Garden of Gethsemane. And they would have been better able to recall the words He had spoken to them in reference to His sufferings, death, and resurrection; and, amid the gloom of that terrible, trying hour, some rays of hope would have lighted up the darkness and sustained their faith.

Christ had told them before that these things would take place, but

they did not understand Him. The scene of His sufferings was to be a fiery ordeal to His disciples, hence the necessity of watchfulness and prayer. Their faith needed to be sustained by an unseen strength as they should experience the triumph of the powers of darkness.

He Became Sin for Us

We can have but faint conceptions of the inexpressible anguish of God's dear Son in Gethsemane, as He realized His separation from His Father in consequence of bearing man's sin. He became sin for the fallen race. The sense of the withdrawal of His Father's love pressed from His anguished soul these mournful words: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." Then with entire submission to His Father's will, He adds: "Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Verses 38-39.

The divine Son of God was fainting, dying. The Father sent a messenger from His presence to strengthen the divine Sufferer and brace Him to tread His blood-stained path. Could mortals have viewed the amazement and the sorrow of the angelic host as they watched in silent grief the Father separating His beams of light, love, and glory from the beloved Son of His bosom, they would better understand how offensive sin is in His sight.

His Physical Sufferings

The sword of justice was now to awake against His dear Son. He was betrayed by a kiss into the hands of His enemies, and hurried to the judgment hall of an earthly court, there to be derided and condemned to death by sinful mortals. There the glorious Son of God was "wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." Isaiah 53:5. He bore insult, mockery, and shameful abuse, until "His visage was so marred more than any

man, and his form more than the sons of men." Isaiah 52:14.

Who can comprehend the love here displayed! The angelic host beheld with wonder and with grief Him who had been the Majesty of heaven, and who had worn the crown of glory, now wearing the crown of thorns, a bleeding victim to the rage of an infuriated mob, fired to insane madness by the wrath of Satan. Behold the patient Sufferer! Upon His head is the thorny crown. His lifeblood flows from every lacerated vein. All this in consequence of sin! Nothing could have induced Christ to leave His honor and majesty in heaven, and come to a sinful world, to be neglected, despised, and rejected by those He came to save, and finally to suffer upon the cross, but eternal, redeeming love, which will ever remain a mystery.

Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth! Behold the oppressor and the oppressed! A vast multitude enclose the Saviour of the world. Mockings and jeerings are mingled with the coarse oaths of blasphemy. His lowly birth and humble life are commented upon by unfeeling wretches. His claim to be the Son of God is ridiculed by the chief priests and elders, and vulgar jests and insulting derision are passed from lip to lip. Satan was having full control of the minds of his servants. In order to do this effectually, he commences with the chief priests and elders, and imbues them with religious frenzy. They are actuated by the same satanic spirit which moves the most vile and hardened wretches. There is a corrupt harmony in the feelings of all, from the hypocritical priests and elders down to the most debased.

Christ, the precious Son of God, was led forth, and the cross was laid upon His shoulders. At every step was left blood which flowed from His wounds. Thronged by an immense crowd of bitter enemies and unfeeling spectators, He is led away to the crucifixion. "He was

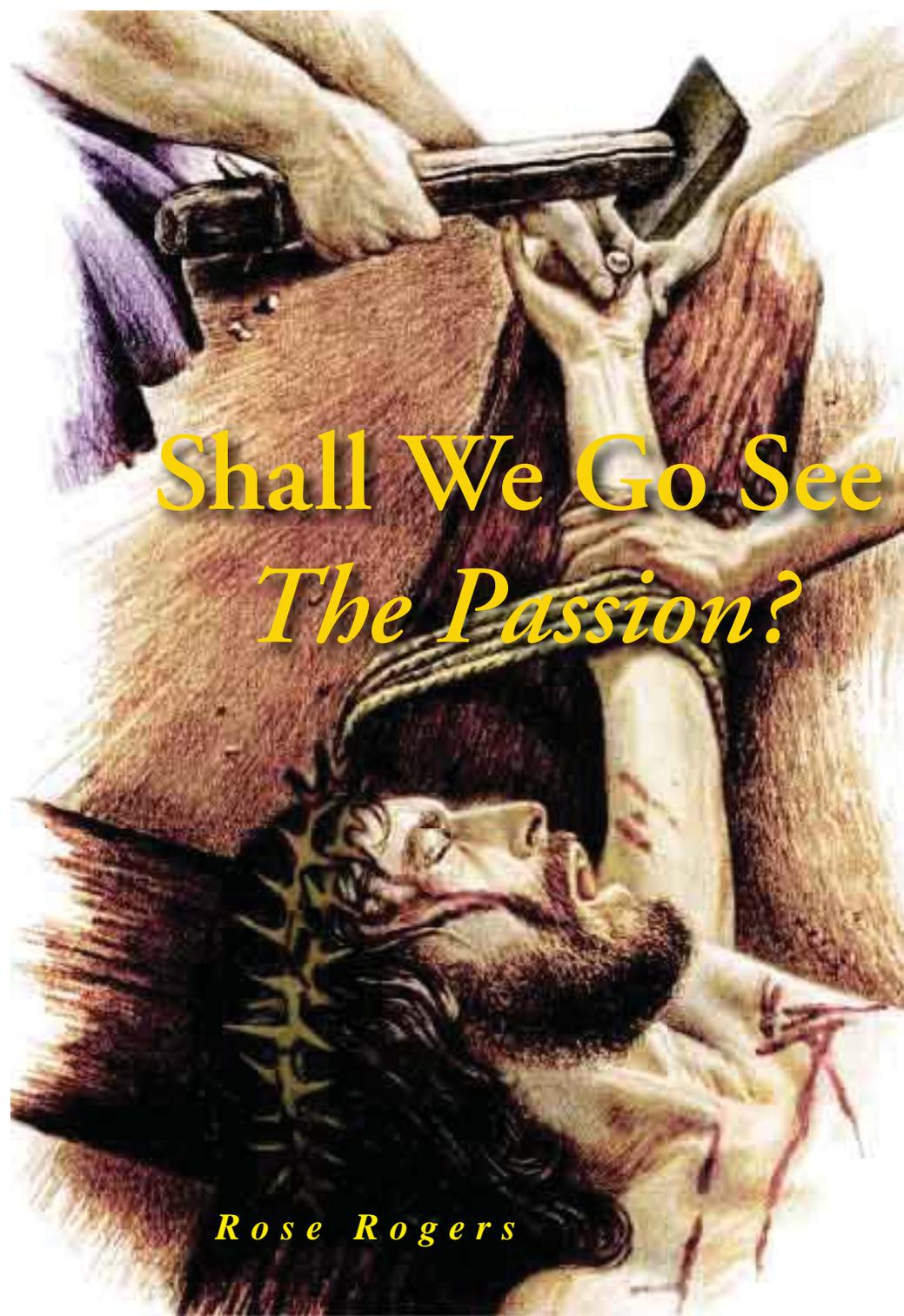
oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Isaiah 53:7.

His sorrowing disciples follow Him at a distance, behind the murderous throng. He is nailed to the cross, and hangs suspended between the heavens and the earth. Their hearts are bursting with anguish as their beloved Teacher is suffering as a criminal. Close to the cross are the blind, bigoted, faithless priests and elders, taunting, mocking, and jeering: "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, he saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God." Matthew 27:40-43.

Not one word did Jesus answer to all this. While the nails were being driven through His hands, and the sweat drops of agony were forced from His pores, from the pale, quivering lips of the innocent Sufferer a prayer of pardoning love was breathed for His murderers: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34. All heaven was gazing with profound interest upon the scene. The glorious Redeemer of a lost world was suffering the penalty of man's transgression of the Father's law. He was about to ransom His people with His own blood. He was paying the just claims of God's holy law. This was the means through which an end was to be finally made of sin and Satan, and his host to be vanquished. ✠

To be concluded.

Testimonies, vol. 2, 200-209.



Shall We Go See *The Passion?*

Rose Rogers

Thousands of Christians have been flocking to the theaters to watch Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ* since its release on February 25, 2004. Adventists have been no exception. Several leaders were present at private screenings before the date of its release. Pastor Lonnie Melashenko, speaker/director of The Voice of Prophecy, testified, "It was a profoundly spiritual display, amazingly accurate. . . . This movie will provide many witnessing opportunities. It's

almost providential that it appears during the 'Year of Evangelism' for our church."¹

Others have also extolled the virtues and blessings of this film, but we have heard only comparatively few notes of warning sounded by church leaders and pastors, especially from those who had not yet seen it. Where are the watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem? "Who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? . . . If they had stood in my counsel,

and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings." Jeremiah 23:18–22.

What saith the Lord regarding this film? Is its appearance "providential"? Shall we join the masses that are flocking to the theaters? This is no amoral decision; we stand in the counsel of the Lord.

Spiritualism

Mel Gibson has attested in several interviews that the visions of two Catholic nuns were the basis and inspiration for his film. The writings of these women center on the idea that Mary and other saints are in heaven.² Anne Catherine Emmerich claimed to be favored often by visits from Mary.³ Her writings are promoted as "the book behind the movie."⁴

This, of course, we know to be Spiritualism. *The Great Controversy*, chapter 34, explains that the concept of the immortality of the soul is the foundation of Spiritualism. This leads to communication with the spirits of the dead. Apparitions of Mary are nothing more than impersonations by evil angels. But in addition to this, Spiritualism includes a whole list of doctrines and teachings as outlined in chapter 35. For the purpose of this article, we will just look at a few.

"Satan is making the world believe that the Bible is a mere fiction, or at least a book suited to the infancy of the race, but now to be lightly regarded, or cast aside as obsolete. And to take the place of the word of God he holds out spiritual manifestations." *The Great Controversy*, 557. In *The Passion* there is far more emphasis on information from the spiritual manifestations of these nuns than on actual Bible facts.

"The spirits deny the deity of Christ and place even the Creator on a level with themselves." "The Saviour of the world [Satan] makes to be no more than a common man." *Ibid.*, 552. When people

watch an actor, they see only a human being. Even though the film may not be outright denying the divinity of Christ, it is presenting the human side nearly exclusively so that the viewers and reviewers talk only of how *human* the film is.⁵

"While it formerly denounced Christ and the Bible, [Spiritualism] now professes to accept both. But the Bible is interpreted in a manner that is pleasing to the unrenewed heart, while its solemn and vital truths are made of no effect. Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God, but it is degraded to a weak sentimentalism, making little distinction between good and evil. God's justice, His denunciations of sin, the requirements of His holy law, are all kept out of sight. The people are taught to regard the Decalogue as a dead letter. Pleasing, bewitching fables captivate the senses and lead men to reject the Bible as the foundation of their faith. Christ is as verily denied as before; but Satan has so blinded the eyes of the people that the deception is not discerned." Ibid., 558.

Based on a number of movie reviews, this movie likewise presents only the loving attribute of God without the law and His hatred of sin. While it professes to teach Bible truth, it presents far more bewitching fables that capture the senses. For examples, see the accompanying article entitled "The Passion."

There are serious consequences for knowingly exposing ourselves to the teachings of Spiritualism. After exposing the above doctrines, Sister White warns: "There are few who have any just conception of the deceptive power of spiritualism and the danger of coming under its influence. Many tamper with it merely to gratify their curiosity. They have no real faith in it and would be filled with horror at the thought of yielding themselves to the spirits' control. But they venture upon the forbidden ground, and the mighty destroyer exercises his power upon them against their will. Let them once be induced to submit their minds to his direction, and

he holds them captive. It is impossible, in their own strength, to break away from the bewitching, alluring spell. Nothing but the power of God, granted in answer to the earnest prayer of faith, can deliver these ensnared souls." Ibid., 558.

By watching *The Passion of The Christ* which is permeated with Spiritualism, we separate ourselves from the watch-care of the holy angels and place ourselves under the influence of Satanic power. See *Early Writings*, 124–125.

Catholicism

Mel Gibson is a devout Catholic, and many Catholic websites proudly attest that this film is a *Catholic* film. The movie distorts the biblical record with Catholic ideology, theology, and imagery. Have we joined

upon vital points as has been supposed, and that a little concession on our part will bring us into a better understanding with Rome." Ibid., 563. (All emphasis supplied.)

"But Romanism as a system is no more in harmony with the gospel of Christ now than at any former period in her history. The Protestant churches are in great darkness, or they would discern *the signs of the times*. The Roman Church is far-reaching in her plans and modes of operation. She is *employing every device* to extend her influence and increase her power in preparation for a fierce and determined conflict to regain control of the world, to re-establish persecution, and to undo all that Protestantism has done. Catholicism is gaining ground upon every side." Ibid., 565–566.

"Thousands who have not an experimental knowledge of Christ will be led to accept the forms of godliness without the power. Such a religion is just what the multitudes desire."

apostate Protestantism in forgetting that the Bible describes the papal power as fallen Babylon? Are we also being intoxicated with the wine of her fornication? The false, poisonous doctrines promoted in this film are none other than the wine of Babylon. Do you suppose that you can go watch it and not come under the influence of this strong drink?

Prophecy is being fulfilled: "Romanism is now regarded by Protestants with far greater favor than in former years. In those countries where Catholicism is not in the ascendancy, and the papists are taking a conciliatory course in order to gain influence, there is an *increasing indifference concerning the doctrines* that separate the reformed churches from the papal hierarchy; the opinion is gaining ground that, after all, we do not differ so widely

"The pomp and ceremony of the Catholic worship has a *seductive, bewitching power*, by which many are deceived; and they come to look upon the Roman Church as the very gate of heaven. None but those who have planted their feet firmly upon the foundation of truth, and whose hearts are renewed by the Spirit of God, are proof against her influence. Thousands who have not an experimental knowledge of Christ will be led to accept the forms of godliness without the power. Such a religion is just what the multitudes desire." Ibid., 567.

"And all the world wondered after the beast." Revelation 13:3. By watching a film that not-so-subtly promotes Catholicism, we place ourselves where we will be influenced little-by-little to join the world in wondering after the beast.

Sensationalism

Suppose, on the other hand, that instead of the producer of this film being a Catholic he were an Adventist. And instead of using the spiritualistic writings of nuns he used the Spirit of Prophecy to fill out his script. Suppose that the film *was* true to the biblical account and neither of the previous objections would apply. Then would it be a wonderful evangelistic tool? Then should we watch it and promote it?

If you search the EGW CD-Rom⁶ for the term “theat*”, you will come up with 309 references which include all occurrences of any word beginning with those letters, such as

group to study the question of the use of motion pictures. Their report was adopted as church policy on March 10, 1937. In it they recognized plainly this problem of sensationalism: “Theatrical films are evil in their influence, and consequently unacceptable, because they confuse the thinking of our people regarding the Seventh-day Adventist attitude toward the theater, the opera, and novel reading; because *they create an appetite for emotional reaction* which can be satisfied only by further indulgence; and because they make an *unwarranted play upon the emotions*. This is wrong because emotional stimulation without

der this work; and before the time for such a movement shall come, he will endeavor to prevent it by introducing a counterfeit.” *Ibid.*, 464.

This false revival is specifically described as being founded on sensationalism. “Popular revivals are too often carried by appeals to the imagination, by exciting the emotions, by gratifying the love for what is new and startling. Converts thus gained have little desire to listen to Bible truth, little interest in the testimony of prophets and apostles. Unless a religious service has something of a sensational character, it has no attractions for them. A message which appeals to unimpassioned reason awakens no response. The plain warnings of God’s Word, relating directly to their eternal interests, are unheeded. . . . Multitudes will exult that God is working marvelously for them, when the work is that of another spirit. Under a religious guise, Satan will seek to extend his influence over the Christian world. . . . There is an emotional excitement, a mingling of the true with the false, that is well adapted to mislead.” *Ibid.*, 463–464.

No matter how “good” or accurate a film may be, it can do no more than motivate an emotional revival. And by thus feeding a craving for sensationalism it will actually turn people *away* from the Word of truth, rather than towards it. Let us not fall a prey to the false revival by supporting the use of the theatrical in gospel work.

Acting

Another principle from which every drama, play, skit, or theatrical production is created is that of acting. The characters in the play are presented by people acting as if they are someone else. Every word they say, move they make, and expression on their face is dictated by the writer of the script. They are not their own selves. In order for the actors and actresses to make the play appear *real* to the viewers,

“There is an abundance of theatrical performances in our world, but in its highest order it is without God.”

theater, theatrics, etc. Among those references you will not find one instance where theatrical productions are promoted as a wonderful evangelistic tool. In fact, they are *positively condemned*.⁷

“There is an abundance of theatrical performances in our world, but in its highest order it is without God.” *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 11, 338.

One of the objections the Spirit of Prophecy presents to the use of theatrics in our work is sensationalism: “Carefully guard against anything that borders on sensationalism. . . . Labor with simplicity, humility, and graceful dignity, avoiding everything of a theatrical nature. . . .” *Testimonies*, vol. 9, 110. “We are to keep as far from the theatrical and the extraordinary as Christ kept in His work. Sensation is not religion.” *Eoangelism*, 396.

In the spring of 1937 the General Conference Committee appointed a

appropriate action is *destructive to character development*. Pictures which play upon the emotions create an appetite for the sensational, causing the individual to live in the realm of the unreal, destroying responsiveness to duty, and resulting in *emotional instability*.⁸

The Passion of the Christ, as all other theatrical productions, is specifically designed to influence the emotions, and through that avenue to implant new values and world-views into our minds. This is now as it was in the Dark Ages when “by measures which appealed to the imagination, Rome essayed to control the consciences of men.” *The Great Controversy*, 101.

We are warned: “Before the final visitation of God’s judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. . . . The enemy of souls desires to hin-

they must take on the very thoughts and feelings of the character that they are portraying. Otherwise their smiles and frowns, starry eyes and tears will be nothing but put-ons.

In every passion play, as in this movie, a man has to play the part of Christ. But we are told: "There is an abundance of theatrical performances in our world, but in its highest order it is without God. . . . The object of the death of Christ was to declare His righteousness, and no man, woman or child can do this in his own strength, or by his own words." *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 11, 388.

In *The Passion of The Christ*, Jim Caviezel played the part of Christ. He also knew that in his own strength he could not portray this character properly. In an interview with Priest Mario Knezovic for Radio "Mir" Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Jim was asked, "What was it like to play Jesus? How did you adjust your body and your soul to the body and the soul of Jesus? How was it to be Jesus?"

Jim answered, "The catharsis⁹ for me to play this role was through Medjugorje,¹⁰ through Gospa [Mary in apparition]. In preparation, I used all that Medjugorje taught me. Mel Gibson and I were going every day for Mass together. . . . I thought that I should go for confession as often as possible. I didn't want the Lucifer to have any control over the performance. Ivan Dragicevic¹¹ and his wife Lorraine gave me a piece of the true cross. I kept this on me all the time. They made a special pocket in my clothes for it. I also had relics of Padre Pio, St. Anthony of Padoua, St. Maria Goretti, and St. Denisius, the Patron Saint of Actors. . . ."

A question was directed to Jim's wife, Kerri, and she explained how Jim looked in the filming: "The first time I saw the cross on him, when he had all the make-up, he didn't look like my husband, he looked like Christ. They have taken a picture of the Shroud of Turin,¹² and they used the make-up to create that, exactly that face. It was so real,

that people looked at him in the way that people must have reacted to Christ: some were full of reverence; some were indifferent, and some made fun of him."¹³

Remember one of the biblical descriptions of the papacy: "He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God." Revelation 13:6. For this man—or any man—to pretend to be Christ is blasphemy. For the people to look at him with reverence is idolatry—even if they are only *acting*.

And consider also that in this passion play someone is required to portray the part of the devil. Strange as it may seem, Gibson chose a woman to personify this part. A reviewer described her success: "Her demeanor and countenance combined with the slow motion photography clearly depicted Satanic deviousness and hunger for evil."¹⁴ I shudder to think that a human being could be so deceived as to act the part of the devil! And what about the mob that cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"? Have they not crucified Christ afresh?

In virtually every skit, play, or theatrical production someone is required to portray the "bad guy." Someone has to act out some sin or wickedness. But God is calling us to overcome sin so that He can eradicate it from the universe. Are we not perpetuating it by acting it out again and again?

Christ is our example in all things. Sister White said that she could not find one instance in the life of Christ where He devoted time to such amusements. As the great Educator, He never taught His disciples to engage in theatrical performances. (See *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 229–230.) "Satan's ruling passion is to pervert the intellect and cause men to long for shows and theatrical performances. . . . The Lord has given evidence of His love for the world. There was *no falsity, no acting*, in what He did." *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 2, 247.

No Sanction

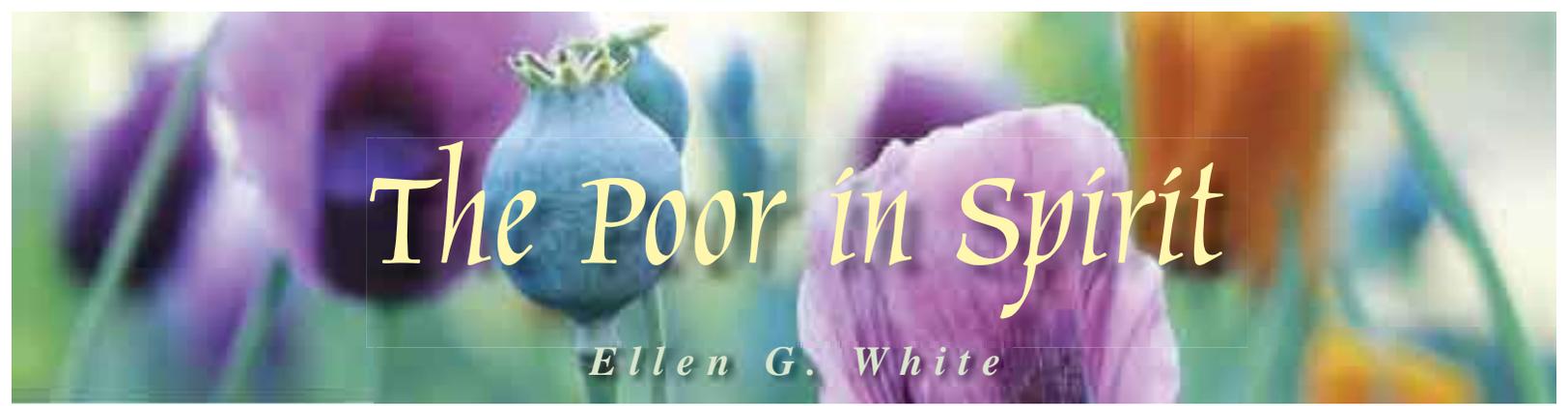
The General Conference Committee took a clear stand in

1937: "In education we are directed to build only upon the real, the actual, and the true, and to turn away from the false, the speculative, and the fanciful. . . . In character building we are admonished to reject all sham and pretense. So, likewise, in our relation to the motion picture, . . . we must definitely choose only 'whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report'; and deliberately refuse that which is untrue and unreal, which involves sham and pretense, or which is impure and corrupting. All such pictures should, because of their inherent wrong, be barred from use by the church, its organizations, institutions, and members.

"With such basic principles clearly established, we therefore take a definite and positive stand against *all dramatized* motion pictures which use character representation for the purpose of acting out a theatrical plot. Such dramatization of imaginative plots, as a method of creating impressions, influencing life, or conveying information, *should not be employed in God's service*, and is not to be countenanced by His people. We, therefore, call upon our entire church membership, young and old, to take their stand upon this platform."¹⁵

Sister White wrote a letter to a Mrs. Goric in July, 1898 because she had accompanied her daughters to the theater where they were actresses in a show. In pleading with the lady to realize that she had dishonored God she said, "In not decidedly taking your stand to give no sanction by your presence to the theatrical performance of your children, you have encouraged them in their choice of the use they have made of their talents. Their capabilities and power belong to God, but they are not now being used to gather with Christ. . . . Can the Lord Jesus Christ accept these theatrical exhibitions as service done for Him? Can He be glorified thereby? No. All this kind of work is done in the service of another leader." *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 11, 335.

continued on page 24...



The Poor in Spirit

Ellen G. White

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:1-3.

The words of our lesson are from the lips of no other than the Majesty of heaven; of Him who was equal with the Father, one with God. "Blessed are" — those who are filled with joyful emotion? who are highly elated? who feel that they are rich in spiritual attainment? — No. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." To be poor in spirit is to feel our deficiency and need because we have sinned and come short of the glory of God. It is this that causes us to mourn. But are we to conclude that Jesus would have us always lamenting our poverty of spirit, our lack of spiritual grace? — No; for by beholding we become changed, and if we talk of our poverty and weakness, we shall only become more poverty stricken, more feeble in spiritual things. To be poor in spirit is to be never satisfied with present attainments in the Christian life, but to be ever reaching up for more and more of the grace of Christ. The poor in spirit is one who looks upon the perfection of character, and is ever responding to the drawings of Christ, and who, in obtaining nearer and nearer views of Christ's perfect righteousness, sees in contrast his own unworthiness and unlikeness to Him who is glorious in holiness.

He that is poor in spirit does not make a parade of his poverty; he shows that he is of this class by

manifesting humility and meekness, by not depreciating others that he may exalt himself. He has no time for doing this; he sees too many defects in his own character which demand his attention. As he beholds the infinite love and mercy of God toward sinners, his heart is melted. He feels his poverty; but instead of calling attention to his weakness, he seeks continually for the riches of the grace of Christ, for the robe of His righteousness. The language of his heart is, "Less of self, and more of Thee." He desires Jesus. He knows that there is nothing in himself whereby he can procure the freedom which Christ has purchased for him at the infinite price of His precious blood. He sees that the good works which he has done are all mingled with self, and he can take no glory to himself because of his attainments in the Christian life. He realizes that there is merit in naught else than the blood of Christ. But it is because of this very realization that he is blessed; for if he did not feel his need, he would not obtain the heavenly treasure.

Whole or Needy?

When Christ was upon earth, the Pharisees made bitter complaint against him because He was the friend of publicans and sinners. They said to His disciples, "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto him, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Mark 9:11-12. The Pharisees felt that they were whole; they felt that they were rich and increased with goods and had need of nothing, and knew not that

they were poor and miserable and blind and naked and wretched. They were satisfied with their moral condition; but Jesus said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Luke 5:32. It is the needy that Jesus is seeking. Brethren and sisters, do you feel that you are needy? Are you saying, as did the Greeks that came to Jerusalem, "We would see Jesus"? John 12:21. The Greeks came to seek Jesus at a time when the Pharisees were upon His track, trying by every possible way to find something whereby they could accuse, condemn, and kill Him. How grateful was the sincere desire and confidence of the Greeks to the Master at this time of trial and sorrow. The Greeks wanted to see Him because they had heard of His mighty works, they had heard of His wisdom and truth; and they believed on Him, for they had searched the prophecies and felt assured that He was the desire of their hearts.

The great danger with the people who profess to believe the truth for this time is, that they will feel as if they were entitled to the blessing of God because they have made this or that sacrifice, done this or that good work for the Lord. Do you imagine, because you have decided to obey God, that He is under obligation to you, and that you have merited His blessing by thus doing? Does the sacrifice you have made look of sufficient merit to entitle you to the rich gifts of God? If you have an appreciation of the work that Christ has wrought out for you, you will see that there is no merit in yourself or in your work. You will see your lost condition. There is but one thing to do, and that is to look

continually to Jesus, to believe in Him whom the Father hath sent.

The Holy Spirit Shows Us Our Need

At one time the people asked Jesus, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said unto them, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." John 6:28-29. Now the question is, Are we doing this? Do we feel our need? God has committed to us sacred trusts. The hereditary trusts of patriarchs and prophets have come down along the lines to us, and through them precious light has shone upon us. We have received divine enlightenment, and yet we have not made the advancement in the pathway of holiness that we should have made. Our obligation and responsibility have been faithfully pointed out; but we have not taken hold upon the strength of God that we might fulfill our obligations to Him. We have failed to make the Holy Spirit the theme of our thought and instruction.

Jesus said to His disciples. "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." John 16:7-8. The Comforter is to come as a reprover, as One who is to lay open before us our defects of character, and at the same time to reveal to us the merit of Him who was one with the Father, giving hope to the hopeless. Jesus says, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Verse 14. In Christ dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and we are to be complete in Him. With all our defects of character, we are to come to Him in whom all fulness dwells.

But many of you say, "I have prayed, I have tried, I have struggled, and I do not see that I advance one step." Have you thought that

you were earning something, that you were by your struggles and works paying the price of your redemption? This you never can do. Christ has paid the price of your redemption. There is only one thing that you can do, and that is to take the gift of God. You can come in all your need, and plead the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour; but you cannot come expecting that Christ will cover your wickedness, your daily indulgence in sin, with His robe of righteousness. The people of God are to be as branches grafted into the living Vine, to be partak-

church. If we would draw upon His grace, we must feel our poverty. Our souls must be filled with an intense longing after God, until we realize that we shall perish unless Christ shall do the work for us.

As we come to feel our utter reliance upon Christ for salvation, are we to fold our hands, and say, "I have nothing to do; I am saved; Jesus has done it all"?—No, we are to put forth every energy that we may become partakers of the divine nature. We are to be continually watching, waiting, praying, and working. But do all that we may, we

If you have an appreciation of the work that Christ has wrought out for you, you will see that there is no merit in yourself or in your work.

ers of the nature of the Vine. If you are a living branch of the true Vine, Jesus will prove you by trial, by affliction, that you may bring forth fruit more abundantly.

Danger of Self-satisfaction

The reason that we have not more of the Spirit and power of God with us is that we feel too well satisfied with ourselves. There is a marked tendency among those who are converted to the truth, to make a certain measure of advancement, and then settle down into a state of stolidity, where no further progress is attained. They stand right where they are, and cease to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But the religion of Christ is of a character that demands constant advancement. The Lord does not design that we shall ever feel that we have reached to the full measure of the stature of Christ. Through all eternity we are to grow in the knowledge of Him who is the head of all things in the

cannot pay a ransom for our souls. We can do nothing to originate faith, for faith is the gift of God; neither can we perfect it, for Christ is the finisher of our faith. It is all of Christ.

All the longing after a better life is from Christ, and is an evidence that He is drawing you to Himself, and that you are responding to His drawing power. You are to be as clay in the hands of the Potter; and if you submit yourself to Christ, He will fashion you into a vessel unto honor, fit for the Master's use. The only thing that stands in the way of the soul who is not fashioned after the divine Pattern is that he does not become poor in spirit; for he who is poor in spirit will look to a higher Source than himself that he may obtain the grace that will make him rich unto God. While he will feel that he cannot originate anything, he will say, "The Lord is my helper." Hebrews 13:6. ✠

The Bible Echo, May 15, 1892.

mass—especially when Scripture says *once was enough forever?*

Jesus asked us to remember His sacrifice by participating in the Lord's Supper. "This do in remembrance of me," he said. Luke 22:19. In other words, "When you meet together to solemnly recall what I've done for the forgiveness of your sins, break bread and drink grape juice together in loving unity and remember the symbolism I've given you." "This is my body; . . . this is my blood." Mark 14:22, 24. We are asked to "remember," not to "repeat."

And even though the rending of the temple veil signified that earthly priests no longer needed to make sacrifices for sin, since Jesus had fulfilled that role "once" "forever," priests in the Catholic mass continue similar rituals as the priests of the ancient Jewish sanctuary service. They continue to offer sacrifice for sins, although their role has been somewhat enlarged in recognition of what Jesus did on the cross. "The Sacrifice of the Mass is and ought to be considered one and the same Sacrifice as that of the cross." "The priest is also one and the same, Christ the Lord; for the ministers who offer

His continuing ministry for us. They know Jesus only as the Sacrifice, but not as our High Priest.

Again, this article is not intended to find fault with faithful Catholic believers, but it does propose to explain some of the wide differences in beliefs between Catholics and Protestants.

The unblemished Lamb of God, the devastating experience of a seemingly permanent loss of the Father's love and forgiveness in our stead so that each one of us could be restored to a relationship with the Father, the resurrection to eternal life as an example of the future that all repentant sinners may have—these constitute the important points of the plan of redemption slighted by Gibson's movie. These reflect God's selfless act of redemptive love for us far more than the physical agony so relentlessly and thoroughly depicted in *The Passion*. Not a few who appreciate what Gibson has done also wish he had focused more on these points and less on the scourgings.

Is it truly necessary, as Gibson suggests, that one virtually "experience" Jesus' horrific death in . . . order to remember and appreciate what He did for us on that cross?

Given the bloodied body of Jesus in the film and Gibson's attempt to make a connection between the Last Supper (present-day communion) and Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, it is almost ironic that the symbol of Christ's blood is no longer offered to Catholic communicants. With few exceptions, only the officiating priests are permitted the wine. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that communion bread alone is sufficient to fulfill the Lord's instructions regarding the remembrance of His sacrifice. "Since Christ is sacramentally present under each of the species, communion under the species of bread alone makes it possible to receive all the fruit of Eucharistic grace."¹¹ This has been church practice for centuries, actually. In fact, in 1562 the Council of Trent declared a curse on anyone who objects to this departure from Jesus' instructions: "If anyone saith, that, . . . all and each of the faithful of Christ ought to receive both species of the most holy sacrament, . . . let him be anathema [cursed]."¹²

Sacrifice, consecrate the holy mysteries, not in their own person, but in that of Christ, . . . acting in the Person of Christ the Lord." [The Mass is] "truly a propitiary Sacrifice, by which God is appeased. . . . As often as the commemoration of this victim is celebrated, so often is the work of our salvation being done."¹³

The Catholic church considers Jesus' death on the cross insufficient for our redemption, necessitating a continual "unbloody" re-offering of Him to the Father by the earthly priests in order to divert God's wrath from the sinner. This repetition of Jesus' sacrifice—focusing on the "accomplished" part of His ministry—takes critical attention away from where Jesus is, and what He's doing for us now. He's standing before the mercy seat in the Most Holy Place in heaven, officiating as our High Priest during earth's momentous and solemn Day of Atonement. Soon after that work "is finished," He will come for His faithful. Many will not be ready, for they are unaware of

Won't Many Be Turned to Christ?

This article acknowledges that the film might motivate some toward a deeper relationship with Jesus—perhaps even a sincere seeking after Him in God's Word. Due to this movie, there may be many who search the Scriptures for greater understanding of this event, who will be led by the Holy Spirit into saving truth. There must be much prayer to that end.

Two concerns will be expressed here, though, in love for those who have responded so positively to the movie. First, we hope that they are not led into apostate belief systems during their quest for a closer walk with the Savior. Both Mel Gibson and his movie (called one of two "THOROUGHLY TRADITIONAL CATHOLIC MOVIES"¹⁴ currently playing—emphasis in the original) are quite popular in the media and with many Christians right now. *Daily Catholic* editor Michael Cain called Gibson "[God's] modern prophet and Saint Augustine of these

times.”¹⁵ However, Gibson and his film are not the basis for belief. God’s Word alone is.

We also hope that once the intensity of emotion returns to normal, the resolve for a closer relationship will remain as strong. Unfortunately, human nature is rather weak on fulfilling vows, as those who make New Year’s resolutions know all too well. After the destruction of the World Trade Center, sales of Bibles increased and church attendance swelled, but within a year, church attendance had returned to pre-9/11 levels, and Bibles were no longer hot sellers.

Those who rely on stirred emotions to sustain a relationship, or as a measure of a meaningful relationship, become easily discouraged or lose conviction during ordinary or trying times when faith in God’s unfailing Word is all they have to keep them faithful to God. On the other hand, solid Scripture study leads to solid faith, and solid faith leads to a deeply rewarding, even intense relationship with our God. It is not dependent on emotional intensity, but on steady, quiet time with the Lord in prayer and study and service. The sense of His abiding presence is a constant comfort and strength, smoothing out the ups and downs of life.

Two Questions

This article does not question Gibson’s high purposes in making this film, which even he stated is “not meant as historical documentary nor does it claim to have assembled all the facts. . . . One is compelled to remember . . . [that] which cannot be articulated, only experienced.”¹⁶ However, after the overwhelming emotional impact of the film subsides, viewers can more easily proceed with dispassionate analysis. Then two questions must be asked. *First, is it truly necessary, as Gibson suggests, that one virtually “experience” Jesus’ horrific death by watching drama in order to remember and appreciate what He did for us on that cross? Before film existed, how did believers come to*

have faith? “Neither pray I for these [apostles] alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their *word*.” “Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy *word* is truth.” John 17:20, 17. Jesus said, “Blessed are they that have *not seen*, and yet have believed.” John 20:29.

Secondly, at what point does “some” creative digression from the truth in this film, either by addition, omission, transposition, or emphasis, become “too much” Scriptural and doctrinal inaccuracy and church tradition to deem the movie a trustworthy conveyance of the details and significance of Jesus’ death for us? What does the inspired Word recommend? “Finally, brethren, what-

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, . . . think on these things.”

soever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, . . . think on these things.” Philippians 4:8. “We have also a *more sure word* of prophecy.” 2 Peter 1:19. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” 2 Timothy 3:16.

We do not *need* anything more than Scripture to find and experience the way of salvation. ✠

Jean Handwerk is a former teacher who now spends much of her time giving Bible studies and writing about biblical topics. She loves the outdoors.

Notes:

¹ “Gibson’s *Passion* to Hit U.S. Screens Big,” *Reuters*, January 14, 2004, <http://www.dailycatholic.org/issue/04Jan/jan16pas.htm>.

² Five weeks after he said those words, the pope’s private secretary Archbishop Stanislaw Dziwisz disavowed the pope’s having said them, although the former had been the one

who initially relayed the pope’s words to the film’s producer. Michael Cain, “‘It’ Depends on What ‘Is’ Was!” Editorial on “The Dent in the Denial,” *Daily Catholic*, January 21, 2004, vol. 15, no. 21, <http://www.dailycatholic.org/issue/04Jan/ed012104.htm>.

³ This author has not and will not see the film. She feels it should not be necessary to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil to warn others about its fruit.

⁴ “Traditional” Catholics are those who do not prefer the perceived liberalism and ecumenism of Vatican II (1962–1965) policies.

⁵ Quoted by David Neff and Jane Johnson Struck, “‘Dude, That was Graphic’: Mel Gibson talks about *The Passion of The Christ*,” *Christianity Today*, posted February 23, 2004, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/movies/interviews/melgibson.html>.

⁶ David Neff, “Mel, Mary, and Mothers,” *Christianity Today*, posted February 20, 2004, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/movies/commentaries/passion-melmarymothers.html>.

⁷ Mary of Agreda, *Mystical City of God*, vol. IV, “The Coronation,” 565.

⁸ Quoted by David Neff, “Mel, Mary, and Mothers,” *Ibid*.

⁹ Gerri Pare, David DiCerto, Anne Navarro, “The Passion of the Christ,” *Catholic News Service*, <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/movies/04mv276.htm>.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ Part 2, Section 2, Chapter 1, Article 3, VI, “The Paschal Banquet,” paragraph 1390, <http://www.christusrex.org/www1/CDHN/euch2.html#BANQUET>.

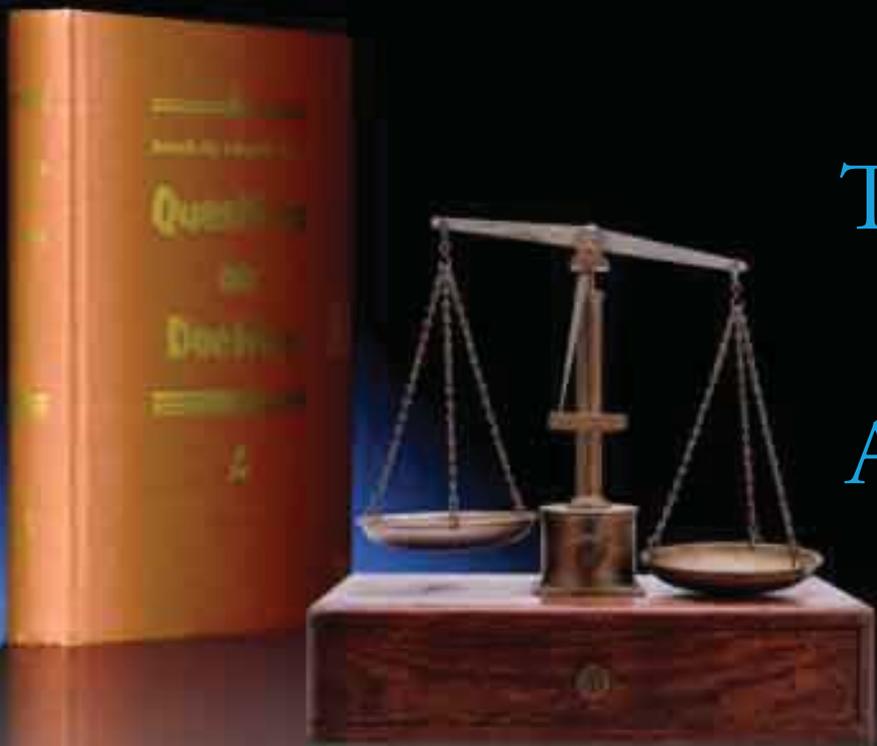
¹² J. Waterworth, ed. and trans., *The Council of Trent: The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent*, London: Dolman, 1848, Session 21, Chapter IV, Canon I, 143, <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/Trent/CT21CC.html>.

¹³ Charles Borromeo, ed., “Excellence of the Mass,” “The Sacrament of the Eucharist,” *The Roman Catechism: Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests*, published by decree of Pope Pius V, www.cin.org/users/james/ebooks/master/trent/tsacr-e.htm.

¹⁴ *Daily Catholic*, March 18, 2004, vol. 15, no. 78, <http://www.dailycatholic.org/issue/04Mar/40318txt.htm#col-5>.

¹⁵ Michael Cain, *op. cit*.

¹⁶ Mel Gibson, “Foreword,” Ken Duncan, Philippe Antonello, *The Passion: Photography From the Movie The Passion of the Christ*, Icon Distributors, Inc., 2004, <http://www.leftbehind.com/channelbooks.asp?pageid=916&channelID=198>.



The Scandal of a Book: A Summary

Part 5

Ralph Larson

Let's add it up.
What actually happened in the 1950s?

In the 1950s a tiny group of men, five in number, decided to make a major change in a major doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Who appointed them to this task?

Nobody. They appointed themselves.

What doctrine of our church did they decide to change?

Our doctrine of Christ—our Christology, a most foundational doctrine.

Were they denying the divinity of Christ, like some other churches were doing?

No. They were denying that Christ came to earth in the fallen human nature of man.

How did they believe that Christ came to the earth?

They believed that Christ came to earth in the unfallen nature of Adam.

Where did they get this idea?

From some of the daughters of Babylon, Calvinist-Protestant churches.

Had this idea ever been taught in Seventh-day Adventist churches?

Only once, by an apostate group in Indiana, called the “Holy Flesh” movement. They believed that Christ came to earth in the unfallen nature of Adam, and therefore had holy flesh. They believed that we can also gain holy flesh by going through certain spiritual exercises.

How did our church relate to this idea?

It was firmly and forcefully rejected by our church leaders and by Ellen White, who came all the way back from Australia to deal with it.

Had our church ever published our belief about the human nature of Christ?

Yes, in more than four hundred statements by Ellen White, and more than eight hundred statements by other church leaders, before the 1950s.

How did the tiny group who decided to make the change manage to do it?

By two methods. First, they did their work in *absolute secrecy*. The church members at large knew nothing at all about what was going on until it was too late. Until recently the church leaders had not revealed their names.¹ We had to get them from other sources.

Second, and this is the part that hurts the most. *They employed deliberate misrepresentation and falsification.* The existing evidence makes this conclusion inescapable. We will here present only a recapitulation in outline form. Bear in mind that these men were doing their work at our world headquarters in Washington, D. C., where all of the relevant historical records were readily available.

They found in the grand old book, *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*, 1915 edition, a forceful statement, nearly a full page long, that Christ had come to the earth in the fallen human nature of man.² They announced that they could not understand how it had “slipped into the book,” and they deleted it in the year 1946.³

They invited Elder F. D. Nichol to join the group, but when he protested against what they were doing, they had him removed.

They were opposed in what they were doing by a highly respected Adventist theologian, Elder M. L. Andreason, so they turned on him with ruthless fury and caused him to lose his ministerial credentials and his sustentation.

In September 1956, when they were fully prepared, they launched a barrage of misinformation in *Ministry* magazine. The barrage began with some carefully selected fragments of Ellen White quotations that were arranged to make it appear that Ellen White had taught that Christ came to this earth in the unfallen nature of Adam, *although not one of them said that, and she had published the opposite four hundred times.*

They put these mangled quotations under the following title: "Took Sinless Nature of Adam Before Fall"⁴

They published in the same issue of *Ministry* a lengthy editorial entitled *Human, Not Carnal*. The misinformation in the editorial includes this line: ". . . He took upon Him sinless human nature."⁵

This is a direct and bold contradiction to the four hundred statements to the contrary by Ellen White and the eight hundred statements to the contrary by other church leaders. For example, in *Medical Ministry*, 181, Inspiration states, "He took upon His sinless nature *our sinful nature.*"

Again, Ellen White's four hundred statements seem to be ignored when the editor refers to those who make "a hasty reading of the *two or three statements* from *The Desire of Ages* without the repeated counterbalancing statements found in so many other places. . . ."⁶

The *Ministry* editors published in April 1957 another barrage of misinformation consisting of two articles and an editorial. One article urges upon us the senseless proposition that Christ took our fallen human natures *vicariously*, in the same way that He took the penalty for our sins.⁷ The truth is, we do not have to pay the penalty for our sins because He paid that penalty for us, vicariously. But we still have to deal with the reality of our fallen natures, because *He has not taken our fallen human natures from us by any means whatsoever.*

Each of the April 1957 articles strongly support the tiny group's false statement about the human nature of Christ, and the editorial hails the false statement and its acceptance by the Calvinist theologians as a new "milestone" in Adventism.⁸

This was indeed a new milestone in Adventism. Never before in the history of our church had such fakery and fraud occurred. But it is not a milestone toward the kingdom of God. It is a milestone in the opposite direction. May the Lord have mercy on us.

What might Satan accomplish by

development of our church, they could not fail to recognize that the influence of Ellen White had been paramount in the entire picture. If that influence were destroyed, then the Seventh-day Adventist church could be expected to go the way so many other Protestant churches have gone.

So, with great cunning, and with great skill, a long-range plan was devised for the purpose of destroying the influence of Ellen White.

That is what it is all about, the inspiration of Ellen White.

The changing of our doctrine of Christ and the publishing of the

*It is not a milestone
toward the kingdom of God.
It is a milestone in the opposite direction.*

inspiring this deception?

If Ellen White wrote four hundred times that Christ came to the earth in the fallen human nature of man, and if it can be proven that the opposite is true, then she is beyond question a false prophet. In that case we should hold her writings in contempt, and let them have no authority or influence in the church.

That is what is happening right now, in many of our churches and educational institutions around the world. And it is largely because of a book called Questions On Doctrine.

Somebody, somewhere, had strong reasons to want to put our church out of existence and silence its voice. Bear in mind that our church is virtually the only church on earth that is still preaching and proclaiming the truths set forth in the great prophecies of the Bible about the Antichrist.

As these concerned enemies studied carefully the history and

book, *Questions On Doctrine*, were only the means to that end. And it worked, folks. It worked. Just look around you and see for yourself. It worked.

It cannot be said that this is the first time that evil had raised its ugly head in the Seventh-day Adventist church. But what is very different in this case is the strangely indifferent attitude of our church administrators about it.

In the fall of the year 1936 I registered as a freshman in the school of theology at Walla Walla College in the state of Washington. As the first quarter of the school year progressed, it became apparent that three newly appointed professors in the theology department were undermining the students' confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy—the writings of Ellen White.

continued on page 24...



Spiritual Gifts

Part 1

Roswell F. Cottrell

The gift of prophecy was manifested in the church during the Jewish dispensation. If it disappeared for a few centuries, on account of the corrupt state of the church towards the close of that dispensation, it re-appeared to usher in the Messiah. Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, "was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied." Luke 1:67. Simeon, a just and devout man who was "waiting for the consolation of Israel," came by the Spirit into the temple and prophesied of Jesus as "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of . . . Israel"; and Anna a prophetess "spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Luke 2:25, 32, 38. And there was no greater prophet than John, who was chosen of God to introduce to Israel "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29.

The Christian age commenced with the outpouring of the Spirit, and a great variety of spiritual gifts was manifested among the believers; and these were so abundant that Paul could say to the Corinthian church, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." 1 Corinthians 12:7. To every man in the church,

not to every man in the world, as many have applied it.

Since the great apostasy these gifts have rarely been manifested; and this is probably the reason why professed Christians generally believe that they were limited to the period of the primitive church. But is it not on account of the errors and unbelief of the church that the gifts have ceased? And when the people of God shall attain to primitive faith and practice, as they certainly will by the proclamation of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, will not the "latter rain" again develop the gifts? Reasoning from analogy we should expect it. Notwithstanding the apostasies of the Jewish age, it opened and closed with special manifestations of the Spirit of God. And it is unreasonable to suppose that the Christian age, the light of which, compared with the former dispensation, is as the light of the sun to the feeble rays of the moon, should commence in glory and close in obscurity. And since a special work of the Spirit was necessary to prepare a people for the first advent of Christ, how much more so for the second; especially, since the last days were to be perilous beyond all precedent, and false prophets were to have power "to shew great signs and wonders,

insomuch that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect!" Matthew 24:24. . . .

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Mark 16:15-18.

Says Campbell's translation, "These miraculous powers shall attend the believers." The gifts were not confined to the apostles, but extended to the believers. Who will have them? Those that believe. How long? There is no limitation; the promise seems to run parallel with the great commission to preach the gospel, and to reach the last believer.

But it is objected that the promised aid was only to the apostles, and to those who believed through their preaching; that they fulfilled the commission, established the gospel, and that the gifts ceased with that generation. Let us see if the great commission ended with

that generation. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:19–20.

That the preaching of the gospel under this commission did not end with the primitive church is evident from the promise, "I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." He does not say, I am with you, apostles, everywhere, even to the ends of the earth; but it is *always*—to the end of the world, or age. It will not do to say that the Jewish age is meant, for that had already ended at the cross. I conclude then that the preaching and the belief of the primitive gospel will be attended with the same spiritual aid. The apostles' commission belonged to the Christian age, and embraced the whole of it. Consequently the gifts were only lost through apostasy, and will be revived with the revival of primitive faith and practice.

In 1 Corinthians 12:28, we are informed that God hath set, placed or fixed, certain spiritual gifts in the church. In the absence of any scriptural proof that He has removed or abolished them, we must think they were intended to remain. Where is the proof then that they were abolished? In the same chapter where the *Jewish Sabbath* is abolished and the *Christian Sabbath* instituted—a chapter in the Acts of the Mystery of Iniquity and the Man of Sin. But the objector claims Bible proof that the gifts were to cease, contained in the following text: "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I

spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly: but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." 1 Corinthians 13:8–13.

and knowledge ever manifested in this mortal state.

The objection founded upon 2 Timothy 3:16, which some have gravely presented, deserves no more than a passing remark. If Paul, in saying that the Scriptures were able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, meant that nothing more should be written by inspi-

When the people of God shall attain to primitive faith and practice, as they certainly will by the proclamation of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, will not the "latter rain" again develop the gifts?

Well, this text does foretell the cessation of spiritual gifts, also of faith and hope. But *when* were they to cease? We still look forward to the time when

"Hope shall change to glad fruition,
Faith to sight and prayer to praise."¹

They are to cease when that which is perfect is come—when we shall no longer see through a glass darkly, but face to face. The perfect day, when the just are made perfect, and see as they are seen, is yet in the future. It is true that the Man of Sin, when arrived at manhood, had put away such "childish things" as prophecies, tongues and knowledge, and also the faith and hope and charity of the primitive Christians. But there is nothing in the text to show that God designed to take away the gifts which He had set in the church till the consummation of her faith and hope—till the surpassing glory of the immortal state should eclipse the most brilliant displays of spiritual power

ration, why was he, at that moment, adding to those Scriptures? At least, why did he not drop the pen as soon as that sentence was written? And why did John, thirty years afterwards, write the book of Revelation?

This book contains another text which is quoted to prove the abolition of spiritual gifts. "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." Revelation 22:18–19.

From this text it is claimed that "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" (Hebrews 1:1), and, in the commencement of the gospel day, by Jesus and His apostles, hath hereby solemnly promised never to communicate anything more to man in that way. Hence

all prophesying after this date must be false. This, say they, closes the canon of inspiration. If so, why did John write his gospel after his return from Patmos to Ephesus? In doing so, did he add to the words of the prophecy of that book written in the isle of Patmos? It is evident from the text, that the caution against adding to, or taking from, refers not to the Bible as we have the volume compiled, but to the separate book of Revelation, as it came from the hand of the Apostle. Yet no man has a right to add to or subtract from any other book written by inspiration of God. Did John, in writing the book of Revelation, add anything to the book of Daniel's prophecy? Not at all. A prophet has

no right to alter the word of God. But the visions of John corroborate those of Daniel, and give much additional light upon the subjects there introduced. I conclude then that the Lord has not bound Himself to keep silence, but is still at liberty to speak. Ever be it the language of my heart, "Speak, Lord, through whom thou wilt; thy servant heareth." See 1 Samuel 3:9.

Thus the attempt to prove from Scripture the abolition of spiritual gifts proves a total failure. And since the gates of *hades* have not prevailed against the church, but God still has a people on earth, we may look for the development of the gifts in connection with the

third angel's message—a message which will bring back the church to apostolic ground, and make them indeed the light—not darkness—of the world. ✠

To be continued.

Roswell F. Cottrell lived from 1814 to 1892. After his conversion to the Seventh-day Adventist message, he served the Lord in a variety of capacities, including that of being a "Corresponding Editor" for the Advent Review and Sabbath Herald for a number of years.

Note:

¹ Henry F. Lyte, "Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken."

"Shall We Go See the Passion?" ...continued from page 15

Let us not sanction this film—or any other dramatic film, play, or theatrical production—by our presence. Instead, let us put on the whole armor of God and use the methods which God has sanctioned for taking the gospel to all the world—preaching the gospel, publishing salvation, healing the sick, and telling what God has done for you. See 2 Timothy 4:2; Isaiah 52:7; Matthew 10:8; Mark 5:20. ✠

Rose Rogers writes from Saskatchewan, Canada, where she copyedits Our Firm Foundation and other publications when she isn't assisting her husband on their farm.

Notes:

¹ Quoted by Mark A. Kellner, "ANN News Analysis: Adventists and 'The Passion of the Christ,'" Adventist News Network, Silver

Spring, MD, February 24, 2004, <http://www.adventist.org/news/data/2004/01/1077630765/index.html>.

² Mary of Agreda, *Mystical City of God*, <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Ithaca/7194/contents.html>; Anne Catherine Emmerich, *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, http://www.emmerich1.com/DOLOROUS_PASSION_OF_OUR_LORD_JESUS_CHRIST.htm.

³ Emmerich, 15, http://www.emmerich1.com/ANNE_CATHERINE_EMMERICH.htm.

⁴ <http://www.spiritdaily.com>.

⁵ <http://www.unfashionableobservations.com/passionofthechrist.html>.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Complete Published Writings of Ellen G. White*, Ellen G. White Estate, 1999.

⁷ For your convenience, the pertinent references have been compiled into a small booklet by Elder Wilber Atwood, *Theatrical Performances*, Medical Missionary Press, Marshall, NC, 2001. Available from Orion Publishing, 1-800-471-4284, orion@mcn.org.

⁸ Quoted by F. M. Wilcox, "Seventh-day Adventists and the Theater: Judging the Evil and the Good," *Review and Herald*, Washington, D.C., April 8, 1937, 2.

⁹ Purification that brings about "spiritual" renewal and release from an emotional problem.

¹⁰ A small village where apparitions of Mary have drawn millions of pilgrims of all faiths since 1981. See www.medjugorje.org.

¹¹ One of the young boys, now a grown man, who saw the first apparition.

¹² A centuries old linen cloth that bears the image of a crucified man. Millions believe that this was the actual cloth that wrapped Jesus' crucified body and thus bears His likeness. See www.shroud.com.

¹³ <http://www.medjugorje.hr/int%20Caviezel%20ENG.htm>.

¹⁴ Tom Carter, February 2004, quoted by Berit Kjos, "Mel Gibson's 'Passion,'" February 2004, <http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/04/passion.htm>.

¹⁵ Quoted by F. M. Wilcox, *Ibid.*, 6.

"The Scandal of a Book" ...continued from page 21

The college board conducted a thorough investigation, then advised the three professors, one of whom was the dean, that at the end of the first quarter their services would be terminated. The college president, who had recommended these three professors for employment, was told that his services would be terminated at the end of the school year.

Contrast that with the strange attitude of indifference being manifested by our church administrators right now. How should we understand this? May our Lord deliver us. ✠

Notes:

¹ See George Knight, ed., *Questions on Doctrine*, Annotated Edition, xiv.

² Revised edition. Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C., Copyrighted

1914, Published 1916.

³ Roy Allan Anderson, "Editorial: Human, Not Carnal," *Ministry*, Review and Herald, September 1956, 14.

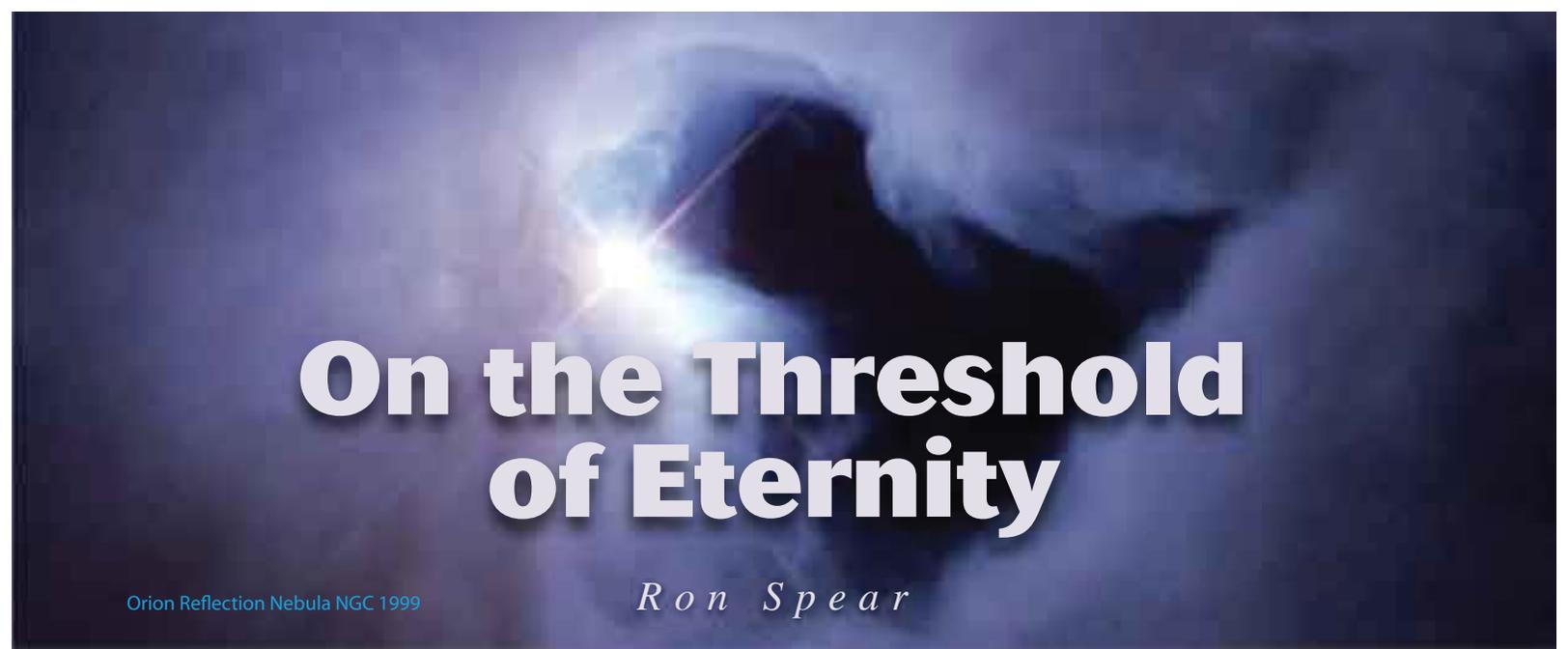
⁴ "Counsel from the Spirit of Prophecy: Christ's Nature During the Incarnation," *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵ Roy Allan Anderson, *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷ Roy Allan Anderson, "God With Us," *Ministry*, April 1957, 35.

⁸ Louise C. Kleuser, "Adventism's New Milestone," 31–32.

A vibrant, multi-colored nebula with a bright central star, set against a dark blue background.

On the Threshold of Eternity

Orion Reflection Nebula NGC 1999

Ron Spear

We are now on the threshold of the greatest hour of the history of the great controversy.

“We are standing upon the threshold of great and solemn events. Prophecies are fulfilling. Strange, eventful history is being recorded in the books of heaven. Everything in our world is in agitation. There are wars and rumors of wars. The nations are angry, and the time of the dead has come, that they should be judged. Events are changing to bring about the day of God, which hasteth greatly. Only a moment of time, as it were, yet remains. But while already nation is rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, there is not now a general engagement. As yet the four winds are held until the servants of God shall be sealed in their foreheads. Then the powers of earth will marshal their forces for the last great battle.” *Testimonies*, vol. 6, 14.

Strange eventful history is being recorded. Everything in our world is in agitation; the nations are angry. Events are changing in our world daily to bring about the day of God, which hasteth greatly. God tells us that when these events are about to overwhelm the world and the church, only a moment of time remains.

We are told that there is not now a general engagement, which implies that there will soon be

a war that will end all wars—Armageddon.

The Church’s Forgetfulness

In the light of the great evidence of the end of all things, and the coming of our Lord, have we forgotten the apostasy—the history of the ancient church? We must soon meet our forgetfulness—our apostasy.

God has spoken clearly to us through His prophets:

“It is a solemn and terrible truth that many who have been zealous in proclaiming the third angel’s message are now becoming listless and indifferent! The line of demarcation between worldlings and many professed Christians is almost indistinguishable. Many who once were earnest Adventists are conforming to the world—to its practices, its customs, its selfishness. Instead of leading the world to render obedience to God’s law, the church is uniting more and more closely with the world in transgression. Daily the church is becoming converted to the world. How many professing Christians are slaves of mammon! Their indulgence of appetite, their extravagant expenditure of money for selfish gratification, greatly dishonors God.

“And through lack of zeal for the promulgation of the third angel’s message, many others, while not apparently living in transgression,

are nevertheless as verily lending their influence on the side of Satan as are those who openly sin against God. Multitudes are perishing; but how few are burdened for these souls! There is a stupor, a paralysis, upon many of the people of God, which prevents them from understanding the duty of the hour.” *Testimonies*, vol. 8, 118–119.

A Divine Warning to Laodicea

“The warning for the last church also must be proclaimed to all who claim to be Christians. The Laodicean message, like a sharp, two-edged sword, must go to all the churches: ‘I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: 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 with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.’ Revelation 3:15–19. It is our work to proclaim this message.

Are we putting forth every effort that the churches may be warned?" *Testimonies*, vol. 6, 77.

Those of us who are in the Laodicean condition—whether we be leaders, pastors, or laity—are in a condition of spiritual blindness. When we are spiritually blind, we are characterized by forgetfulness and trusting in falsehood: "This is thy lot, the portion of thy measures from me, saith the LORD; because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood." Jeremiah 13:25.

"The message to the church of the Laodiceans is a startling denunciation, and is applicable to the people of God at the present time. . . . The Lord here shows us that the message to be borne to His

the sight of God." *Testimonies*, vol. 3, 252–253.

Wake Up! Take Your Position!

We are now in the great awakening, promised by God to His faithful church members:

"We are made sad as we see in many places so much left undone that should be done. But the Lord will use in the accomplishment of His work means that we do not now see. He will raise up from among the common people, men and women to do His work, even as of old He called fishermen to be His disciples. There will soon be an awakening that will surprise many. Those who do not realize the necessity of what is to be done,

into many hands, while a mighty general cried out with a loud voice: 'Come into line. Let those who are loyal to the commandments of God and the testimony of Christ now take their position. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." 2 Corinthians 6:17–18. Let all who will come up "to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty." Judges 5:23.' " *Testimonies*, vol. 8, 41.

Our Present Condition

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Revelation 2:5.

"Oh, how few know the time of their visitation! How few, even among those who claim to believe present truth, understand the signs of the times or what we are to experience before the end! We are today under divine forbearance; but how long will the angels of God continue to hold the winds, that they shall not blow?

"Notwithstanding God's inexpressible mercy toward us, how few in our churches are truly humble, devoted, God-fearing servants of Christ! How few hearts are full of gratitude and thanksgiving because they are called and honored to act a part in the work of God, being partakers with Christ of His sufferings!

"Today a large part of those who compose our congregations are dead in trespasses and sins. They come and go like the door upon its hinges. For years they have complacently listened to the most solemn, soul-stirring truths, but they have not put them in practice. Therefore they are less and less sensible of the preciousness of truth. The stirring testimonies of reproof and warning do not arouse them to repen-

"There will soon be an awakening that will surprise many. Those who do not realize the necessity of what is to be done, will be passed by."

people by ministers whom He has called to warn the people is not a peace-and-safety message. It is not merely theoretical, but practical in every particular. The people of God are represented in the message to the Laodiceans as in a position of carnal security. They are at ease, believing themselves to be in an exalted condition of spiritual attainments. 'Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.'

"What greater deception can come upon human minds than a confidence that they are right when they are all wrong! The message of the True Witness finds the people of God in a sad deception, yet honest in that deception. They know not that their condition is deplorable in

will be passed by, and the heavenly messengers will work with those who are called the common people, fitting them to carry the truth to many places. Now is the time for us to awake and do what we can." *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15, 312–313.

God is now preparing to lead His army for the final battle between Christ and Satan:

"In vision I saw two armies in terrible conflict. One army was led by banners bearing the world's insignia; the other was led by the bloodstained banner of Prince Immanuel. Standard after standard was left to trail in the dust as company after company from the Lord's army joined the foe and tribe after tribe from the ranks of the enemy united with the commandment-keeping people of God. An angel flying in the midst of heaven put the standard of Immanuel

tance. The sweetest melodies that come from God through human lips—justification by faith, and the righteousness of Christ—do not call forth from them a response of love and gratitude. Though the heavenly Merchantman displays before them the richest jewels of faith and love, though He invites them to buy of Him ‘gold tried in the fire,’ and ‘white raiment’ that they may be clothed, and ‘eyesalve’ that they may see, they steel their hearts against Him, and fail to exchange their lukewarmness for love and zeal. While making a profession, they deny the power of godliness. If they continue in this state, God will reject them. They are unfitting themselves to be members of His family.” *Testimonies*, vol. 6, 426–427.

The Shaking of Adventism

Only a very few are weeping between the porch and the altar for the abominations now in the world and in the remnant church. The majority are rising up against the straight testimony that God commands to be given at this crisis hour.

“As the praying ones continued their earnest cries, at times a ray of light from Jesus came to them, to encourage their hearts and light up their countenances. Some, I saw, did not participate in this work of agonizing and pleading. They seemed indifferent and careless. They were not resisting the darkness around them, and it shut them in like a thick cloud. The angels of God left these and went to the aid of the earnest, praying ones. I saw angels of God hasten to the assistance of all who were struggling with all their power to resist the evil angels and trying to help themselves by calling upon God with perseverance. But His angels left those who made no effort to help themselves, and I lost sight of them.

“I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans.

This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this is what will cause a shaking among God’s people.

something higher than the truth, and their hearts are not prepared to receive Jesus. Individuals are tested and proved a length of time to see if they will sacrifice their idols and heed the counsel of the True Witness. If any will not be purified through obeying the truth, and

“The solemn testimony upon which the destiny of the church hangs has been lightly esteemed, if not entirely disregarded.”

“I saw that the testimony of the True Witness has not been half heeded. The solemn testimony upon which the destiny of the church hangs has been lightly esteemed, if not entirely disregarded. This testimony must work deep repentance; all who truly receive it will obey it and be purified.” *Early Writings*, 270.

We Are Being Tested

“God leads His people on, step by step. He brings them up to different points calculated to manifest what is in the heart. Some endure at one point, but fall off at the next. At every advanced point the heart is tested and tried a little closer. If the professed people of God find their hearts opposed to this straight work, it should convince them that they have a work to do to overcome, if they would not be spewed out of the mouth of the Lord. Said the angel: ‘God will bring His work closer and closer to test and prove every one of His people.’ Some are willing to receive one point; but when God brings them to another testing point, they shrink from it and stand back, because they find that it strikes directly at some cherished idol. Here they have opportunity to see what is in their hearts that shuts out Jesus. They prize

overcome their selfishness, their pride, and evil passions, the angels of God have the charge: ‘They are joined to their idols, let them alone’ (see Hosea 4:17), and they pass on to their work, leaving these with their sinful traits unsubdued, to the control of evil angels. Those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will receive the latter rain, and thus be fitted for translation.” *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 187.

As we end this important study, I ask the question: How many will survive the final test?—Will you?

“Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.” Isaiah 1:9.

Friend, do not shrink back and resist God’s refining work in your life. Has He revealed to you some cherished idol? Please, surrender it *today!* Through the power of His promises, God will enable you to “come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome.”

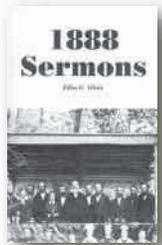
We are truly on the threshold of eternity. Let us commit ourselves to be overcomers and to meet each other around the tree of life when time and eternity meet. ✠

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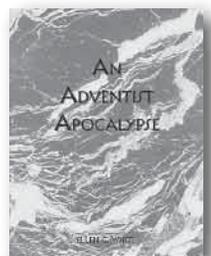
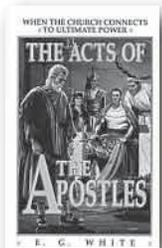
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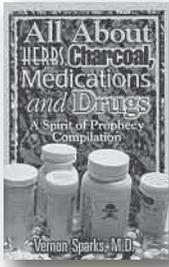
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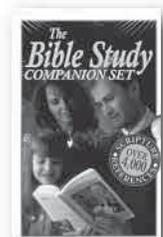
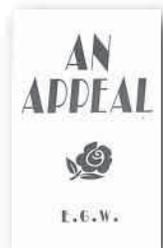
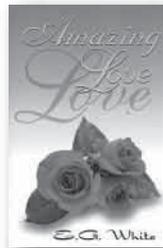
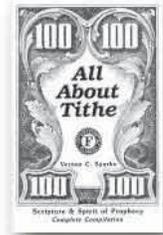
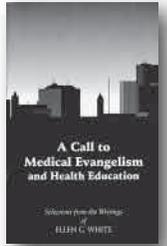
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Letters to the Editor



Thank you for sending your magazine to my home at this time. The Lord knew I needed *Our Firm Foundation* *now!* Praise the Lord He loves me so!

I have been inactive for a few years and have been feeling the Holy Spirit nudging me to “snap out of it.” Time is short for us all, and I needed this eye-opener.

Thank you again for my trial subscription. Oh, what truth—and how I loved reading every line! Enclosed please find my subscription.

AG, Wisconsin

Thank you for letting us know of your needs. I'm 80 and at home, so I have time to do things for the Lord. These quilts will keep someone warm. God keep you in His care.

MJ, Washington

It is my sincere and honest opinion that you are the true “voices of God” to our generation.

Ever since the first issue crossed my path, some two years ago, I was smitten by the pure, undefiled, message of Christ's love to me!

I devour every article each month, sometimes reading it through twice. I'm lost without its comfort and direction and it seems to answer my questions and quell my doubts.

It is so refreshing to have the Spirit of Prophecy presented in all the pertinent lessons you present for our times. This precious gift is so sadly neglected in most of our “modern” churches.

Your perfectly undiluted, uncontaminated presentation of God's purpose for man, I find absolutely essential for my spiritual wellbeing.

Pray for me, as I pray for your ministry. As He provides for me, I will

do my little part through offerings for you to use where most needed.

May the Lord continue to bless your marvelous work in spite of all the opposition that you must confront daily. How wonderful to know that if we stand with God, none can stand against us!

BH, California

I'm so grateful for your ministry. It was so wonderful to attend many of your wonderful campmeetings at Eatonville, Washington.

VK, California

We have been receiving *Our Firm Foundation* for a number of years. Would not want to be without it—it has always been a blessing. December's issue was another *tops*, wish I had a few to give out. Must be selfish, not wanting to lose the ones that I have!

The magazine has been and is truly a blessing for us. We also request your prayers, as we pray for you.

DC, Florida

Thank you for this great magazine please keep mine coming. As I read your letters to the editor it seems we are all experiencing the same problems world-wide.

I especially salute those who are trying to hang in there with apostate churches.

GJ, New Mexico

Can you please continue or renew my subscription for another year? I really enjoy reading *Our Firm Foundation*. I have learned a lot from it and get blessings from it. Is there any way I can receive used Sabbath school quarterlies? I know new ones cost money. Maybe the used ones will be free. It doesn't matter how old it is; it could be a year old. I have not seen a Sabbath school quarterly for the last two years.

I appreciate the help you are going to give me. Thank you for showing interest in my problem. May the Lord bless you and your work.

TL, Wisconsin

I was introduced to *Our Firm Foundation* about four or five years ago, through a March 1991 issue. I had been out of the church for some time. This particular issue had been sent to my daughter who was still a member.

I was very impressed and spiritually moved by the articles in the magazine. I know God was responsible for sending this magazine so I would know I was not by myself. I had seen so many changes in our church that I didn't understand, and I wondered why no one else could see what was happening.

I have always considered myself a “grass-roots” Seventh-day Adventist Christian, being careful not to get involved with the fanatical, always leaving my mind and spirit open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. After reading and re-reading the March '91 issue several times I found another issue, May '95 and again I read and re-read it also.

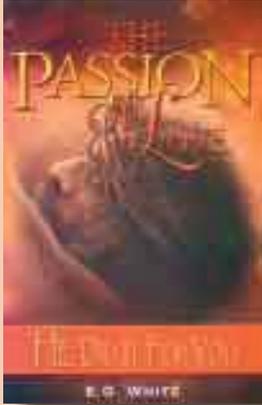
So finally around the year 2000 I subscribed to *Our Firm Foundation*. I found myself looking forward to the next month's issue. I only read a little before going to sleep so I could savor each article and make it last all month.

Then with the help from a brother-in-Christ from Hope International I was led by the Holy Spirit to rejoin the Seventh-day Adventist church by baptism. I believed that I could help my brothers and sisters from within the church. Fortunately I found a church that had not apostatized but could be vulnerable to apostasy. They needed help in finding their way to the “upper-room.”

LB, Florida

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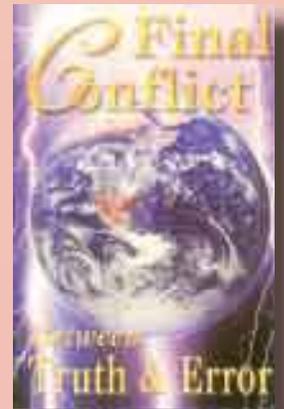
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