



GENERAL CHURCH PAPER OF THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST REFORM MOVEMENT



The Christian Family

October–December 1998

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The Reformation Herald

"The age in which we live calls for reformatory action."
—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 488.

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THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

This year 1998 is coming to its close. As we glance retrospectively to the days that have passed, we can say with the prophet: "Ebenezer, . . . Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." 1 Samuel 7:12.

It is by God's mercy that we have been brought safely to another week of prayer. The Lord has been very gracious to every one of us; He has preserved our lives, and has granted us health and strength. He has provided our daily bread, clothing, dwelling place, and much more. His patience has been manifested in that He has given us another opportunity to experience a deeper and truer consecration in the coming year, more than we have had in the year just passing into eternity.

"The Christian Family" is the subject for this week of prayer. We thank God for the Christian families that are among us, because they are as shining lights in society. In order to have good churches and a good society, practical Christianity in the family is the only answer.

During this week of prayer special provisions should be made for those who are unable to come to the meetings because of different circumstances (sickness, isolation, etc.). They should not be forgotten. Let some of the officers of the church be appointed to take the readings to them.

Differences that might exist among the brethren should be settled before the week of prayer. Evil surmisings, evil speaking, and criticizing, which bar the working of the Holy Spirit, should be overcome and forsaken. Our hearts should be cleansed and our consciences purged from all evil, so that the Spirit of God may work powerfully among His people. We should not let the arm of the Lord go until we feel that we are really blessed, as did Jacob.

Sabbath, **December 12**, is suggested to be a special day of fasting and supplication. Although some brethren are not able to fast, those who can are invited to join the whole worldwide church in this service of fasting and prayer. The time usually devoted for the meal should be employed with seasons of prayer.

On the last day of the week of prayer, Sunday, **December 13**, a special offering will be collected and used to spread the work of God in foreign missions. We appeal to the brethren to bring to the Lord an offering with sacrifice, not just an ordinary offering. The blessings of the Lord will be upon all who cheerfully bring to Him a thanksgiving offering. When the offering is collected, Bible texts or hymns of praise in which all may take part, may be presented.

It is our earnest prayer that the Lord may richly bless all who take heed of the messages of this week of prayer. May the Lord help us all, and bless our families, so that we may stand as a bulwark against the tide of corruption prevailing in the world. We sincerely wish that the coming year may be a blessed one.

—*The brethren of the General Conference*

Friday, December 4, 1998

by E. G. White

Religion in the Home

The place to begin

The work of sanctification must begin in the home. It is God's purpose that the families of His people shall be symbols of the family above. Those who are Christians in the home will be Christians in the church and in the world. Many do not grow in grace and in knowledge of the truth because they fail to cultivate home religion.

In the family the spirit of criticism and faultfinding should have no place. The peace of the home is too sacred to be marred by this spirit. But how often, when seated at the meal-table, the members of the family pass round a dish of criticism, faultfinding, and scandal. Should Christ come today, would He not find many of the families who profess to be Christians cherishing the spirit of criticism and unkindness? The members of such families are unready to unite with the family above. I am instructed to say to them, "Prepare to meet thy God." Discord in families leads to discord in the church. The unruly tongue creates mischief of all kinds.

Guarding the tongue

God expects His children to use the talent of speech in a way that will honor the Saviour. Let the heart be cleansed from all evil thinking and evil speaking. Let this be put away as evil leaven that will produce contention, alienation, and strife. Let the unruly tongue be brought under the control of God.

The brotherhood that is the outworking of Bible religion is to be more manifestly revealed in the lives of God's people today. In the family

an education is to be given that will create a pure, elevating atmosphere. A high standard is ever to be kept uplifted. No harsh, passionate word is ever spoken without grieving the Lord Jesus, and hurting the heart of speaker and hearer. From the Christian home all angry or trifling speeches will be excluded; for nothing of this kind finds entrance into the home above.

Parents, be sure to spend some time each day in private prayer, asking the Lord for wisdom, lest self-importance take possession of your hearts, and you give the talent of speech into the control of Satanic agencies. The members of the church are to be ever on their guard against unadvised words. Sound words, seasoned with the grace of Christ, will produce correct practices. In the home circle, generous, gracious, Christlike words are of more value than any earthly treasure.

The power of example

Remember that your children will follow closely the example that in word and deed you set them. Live lives that will help them to prepare for translation into the courts above, when the last trump shall sound, and Christ shall come to gather His faithful ones to Himself. Do not neglect your children. They are your first care. The home is to be their first school. And in this school you yourselves are to learn lessons that will prepare you better to work for their salvation and for the salvation of others. These lessons will be of the highest value to you in your religious experience. As you labor successfully for your children, you are working out your own salvation, and

God is working in you, to will and to do of His good pleasure.

The importance of self-control

Kindly, but firmly, correct every inclination to wrong that may appear in the lives of your children. But when you are obliged to correct a child, do not raise the voice to a sharp key, bringing into it that which will arouse the worst passions of the child's heart. Do not lose your self-control. The parent who, when correcting a child, gives way to anger, is far more guilty than the child.

Restrain every hasty speech that struggles for utterance. Before you speak that fretful, impatient word, stop and think of the influence that, if spoken, it will exert upon others. Remember that the ears of children are quick to hear every word and to mark every intonation of the voice. Remember, too, that angels hear the words you speak. You are a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. Follow a course that will be an honor to Jesus, a course that will bring holy angels to your side. Let your home life be such that Christ can enter your dwelling as an abiding guest. Let it be such that people will take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus, and have learned of Him.

Working in harmony

Husband and wife are to be closely united in their work in the home school. They are to be very tender and very guarded in their speech, lest they open a door of temptation through which Satan will enter to obtain victory after victory.

They are to be kind and courteous to each other, acting in such a way that they can respect one another. Each is to help the other to bring into the home a pleasant, wholesome atmosphere. They should not differ in the presence of their children. Christian dignity is ever to be preserved.

The duty of the husband and father

To the man who is a husband and a father, I would say, Be sure that a pure, holy atmosphere surrounds your soul. As priest and house-band of your family, you are to learn daily of Christ. Never, never are you to show a tyrannical spirit in the home. The man who does this is working in partnership with satanic agencies. Bring your will into submission to the will of God. Do all in your power to make the life of your wife pleasant and happy. Take the word of God as the man of your counsel. In the home live out the teachings of the word. Then you will live them out in the church, and will take them with you to your place of business. The principles of heaven will ennoble all your transactions. Angels of God will cooperate with you, helping you to reveal Christ to the world.

The mother's influence

Necessarily a large share of the training of the children falls to the mother. She is to teach her children from their babyhood the lesson of obedience. The reins of control are not to be placed in their hands. The children are to be taught to regard their mother, not as a slave, whose work it is to wait on them, but as a queen, who is to guide and direct them, teaching them line upon line, precept upon precept.

Mothers, however provoking your children may be in their ignorance, do not give way to impatience. Teach them patiently and lovingly. Be firm with them. Do not let Satan control them. Discipline them only when you are under the discipline of God. Christ will be victor in the lives of your children if you

will learn of Him who is meek and lowly, pure and undefiled.

Cooperating with God

Parents, live the Christ-life. Place yourselves where you can cooperate with God. There are many whose minds and hearts need to be ennobled and refined by the grace of heaven. Christianity is to preside in the heart and in the home. The counsel of God is to control in the home. Let us remember this, and become familiar with the directions that He has given in His word.

The word of God is to be our lesson book. We are not merely to read it, and say that we believe the truth for this time. This profession must be accompanied by an earnest, faithful practice of the teachings of the word of God. Under its hallowed power, the tenderest and most sanctified dispositions are to be developed in the home circle.

"Prove your own selves"

Let every one attend most critically to himself. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." Body and mind must be carefully and strictly dealt with, that unchristlike traits of character and tendencies to wrong may not bear sway. Unless a strict watch is kept over the heart, wrong principles will prevail in the life, and great unhappiness will be wrought. Every departure from righteousness becomes a force that works against the Lord Jesus. When right words and deeds are left out of the home life, there come in unchristlike words and deeds. Parents and children work at cross purposes with God. The family is placed where Christ will pronounce against it the woe pronounced against Chorazin and Bethsaida.

I appeal to parents to prepare themselves and their children to unite with the family above. Get ready, for Christ's sake, get ready to meet your Lord in peace. Begin to work in your family on right lines. Get down to the root of the matter. Bring the truth into your homes, to sanctify and purify them. Do not keep it in the

outer court. How blind many professing Christians are to their own interests! How utterly they fail to see what Christ would do for them were He admitted into their homes. Let Christians work as earnestly to win the crown of life as worldlings work to win earthly advantages, and the church of God will certainly move forward with power.

The Christian home a power for good

A deeper and more successful work will be done in the church when the families composing it stand in right relation to God. The church will then reap the advantage of the Christlike influence exerted in the homes of the members.

The Holy Spirit produces actions that are in harmony with the law of God. The regenerating work of the Spirit will be seen in families where painstaking efforts are put forth to manifest kindness, patience, and love. Almighty power is at work, preparing minds and hearts to submit to the moulding influence of the Holy Spirit, leading parents to sanctify themselves, that their children also may be sanctified.

The home in which the members are polite, courteous Christians exerts a far-reaching influence for good. Other families will mark the results attained by such a home, and will follow the example set, in their turn guarding the home against satanic influences.

The angels of God will often visit the home in which the will of God bears sway. Under the power of divine grace such a home becomes a place of refreshing to worn, weary pilgrims. By watchfully guarding, self is kept from asserting itself. Correct habits are formed. There is a careful recognition of the rights of others. The faith that works by love and purifies the soul stands at the helm, presiding over the whole household. Under the hallowed influence of such a home, the principle of brotherhood laid down in the word of God is more widely recognized and obeyed. —*The Southern Watchman*, January 19, 1904.



The Father— the House-band

THE Christian home constitutes the most beautiful representation of Heaven on earth. Each member of the family has his own position and duty specified in the Word of God. Today we will consider the position and duty of the husband and father in the home.

At creation, God placed man on earth as His representative. Even after the fall, man was invested with authority to be the leader and administrator of his home, according to the principles of God's holy Word.

In Deuteronomy 6:4–9, in an objective and brief manner, principles are stated by which parents are to act in the administration of the home, and in the education of their children.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

Let us consider carefully the duties of parents in order for them to succeed in their sacred mission toward the education of their children:

1. Recognize that the Lord is the only God, and is **our** God. This means that parents should surrender themselves to His divine control. The first commandment of God's holy Law says exactly the same thing in different words: **"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."** Exodus 20:3.
2. Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and strength.
3. Establish these basic principles in the heart—the mind.
4. Convey these principles to your children through precept and example, in the home, by the way, when lying down, and when rising up. This is education as a whole. Parents are to be the best friends and companions of their children at all times.
5. These principles should be in the mind of parents first ("between your eyes"), and to be practiced in our daily lives ("as a sign on your hand").

"Parents are responsible for the work coming from their hands. They should have wisdom and firmness to do their work faithfully and in the right spirit. They are to train their children for usefulness by developing their God-given talents. A failure to do this should not be winked at, but should be made a matter of church discipline, for it will bring the curse of God on the parents and a reproach and grievous trials and difficulties on the church. A moral leprosy that is contagious, polluting the bodies and souls of the youth, often results from a failure to discipline and restrain the young; and it is time that something was done to check its ravages.

"The Bible gives explicit directions concerning the important work of educating children: [Deuteronomy 6:4–9 quoted].

"Here the duties of parents are clearly set forth. The word of God is to be their daily monitor. It gives such instruction that parents need not err in regard to the education of their children; but it admits of no indifference or negligence. The law of God is to be kept before the minds of the children as the great moral standard. When they rise up, and when they sit down, when they go out, and when they come in, this law is to be taught them as the great rule of life, and its principles are to be interwoven with all their experience. They are to be taught to be honest, truthful, temperate, economical, and industrious, and to love God with the whole heart. This is bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This is setting their feet in the path of duty and safety."¹

Sacred duties of the husband and father

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the

Lord the church." Ephesians 5:25–29.

"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Colossians 3:19.

"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." 1 Peter 3:7.

"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Ephesians 6:4.

"Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." Colossians 3:21.

Father — the priest of the home

"The father is the priest and the house-band of the home. The mother is the teacher of the little ones from their babyhood, and the queen of the household. Never is she to be slighted. Never are careless, indifferent words to be spoken to her before the children. She is their teacher. In thought and word and deed the father is to reveal the religion of Christ, that his children may see plainly that he has a knowledge of what it means to be a Christian."²

"A great responsibility rests upon the husband—house-band—to bind the household together, by the ties of kindness, love, and harmony. In the patriarchal ages, the husband and father was the priest of his own household. And still it is his duty to invoke in their behalf the divine blessing and to instruct and guide them in the way of life."³

"The mother should ever have the cooperation of the father in her efforts to lay the foundation of a good Christian character in her children. A doting father should not close his eyes to the faults of his children because it is not pleasant to administer correction."⁴

"A Christian father is the house-band of his family, binding them close to the throne of God. Never is his interest in his children to flag. The father who has a family of boys

should not leave these restless boys wholly to the care of the mother. This is too heavy a burden for her. He should make himself their companion and friend. He should exert himself to keep them from evil associates. It may be hard for the mother to exercise self-control. If the husband sees that his wife's weakness is endangering the safety of the children, he should take more of the burden upon himself, doing all in his power to lead his boys to God."⁵

The family altar Abraham—a worthy example

"And Abram passed, through the land unto the place of Sichem . . . , and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord." "And he went on his journeys from the south even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Hai; Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord. . . . Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord." Genesis 12:6–8; 13:3, 4, 18.

"Abraham, the friend of God, set us a worthy example. His was a life of prayer and humble obedience, and he was a light in the world. Wherever he pitched his tent, close beside it was set up his altar, calling for the morning and evening sacrifice of each member of his family. When his tent was removed, the altar remained. The roving Canaanite, as he came across that altar, knew who had been there before him; and when he had pitched his tent, he repaired the altar, and worshiped the living God."⁶

The family altar today

"Before leaving the house for labor, all the family should be called

together; and the father, or the mother in the father's absence, should plead fervently with God to keep them through the day. Come in humility, with a heart full of tenderness, and with a sense of the temptations and dangers before yourselves and your children; by faith bind them upon the altar, entreating for them the care of the Lord. Ministering angels will guard children who are thus dedicated to God."⁷

"You should never separate Christ from your life and family, and close the doors against him by un-Christlike words and actions. There are those who profess the truth who neglect family prayer. But how can you venture to go to your labor without committing the care of your souls to your heavenly Father. You should show that you trust in Him. You should consecrate your families to God before you leave your homes. Every prayer that you offer up to God in faith will surely be respected and answered by your heavenly Father. When Abraham was told to go out into a place which he knew not, wherever he pitched his tent he built an altar, and offered up his prayer morning and evening; and the Lord said of Abraham, 'I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.' This is the very work that should be done in every family, but it is strangely neglected. We want to live as in the sight of God in this world. It is of the greatest importance that we constantly make preparation here for the future, immortal life. We may have that life that measures with the life of God; if we are faithful, we shall behold the matchless charms of our blessed Saviour."⁸

"The characters we form will speak in the home life. If there is sweet accord in the home circle, the angels of God may minister in the home. If there is wise management at home, kindness, meekness, forbearance, combined with firm principles, then be assured that the husband is a house band; he binds the family together with holy cords and presents them to God, binding him-

self with them upon the altar of God. What a light shines forth from such a family!"⁹

"Make the home life as nearly as possible like heaven. Let the members of the family forget not, as they gather round the family altar, to pray for the men in positions of responsibility in God's work. The physicians in our sanitariums, the ministers of the gospel, those in charge of our publishing houses and schools, need your prayers. They are tempted and tried. As you plead with God to bless them, your own hearts will be subdued and softened by His grace. We are living amid the perils of the last days, and we are to cleanse ourselves from all defilement and put on the robe of Christ's righteousness."¹⁰

"In a sense the father is the priest of the household, laying upon the family altar the morning and evening sacrifice. But the wife and children should unite in prayer and join in the song of praise. In the morning before he leaves home for his daily labor, let the father gather his children about him and, bowing before God, commit them to the care of the Father in heaven. When the cares of the day are past, let the family unite in offering grateful prayer and raising the song of praise, in acknowledgment of divine care during the day."¹¹

"Those who profess the name of Christ should not neglect to establish the family altar, where they can seek God daily with all the earnestness with which they would seek him in a religious assembly. They should make the season of family prayer a season of special interest, and in this way they will be obtaining an education that will fit them to become a benefit to the church. You may obtain a knowledge of how to serve God acceptably in the home. You may learn how to pray, you may learn how to believe in God; and those who neglect this means of grace in their families, are not preparing themselves for usefulness in the church."¹²

"Fathers and mothers, however pressing your business, do not fail to gather your family around God's altar. Ask for the guardianship of

holy angels in your home. Remember that your dear ones are exposed to temptations."¹³

"A well-disciplined family, who love and obey God, will be cheerful and happy. The father, when he returns from his daily labor, will not bring his perplexities to his home. He will feel that home, and the family circle, are too sacred to be marred with unhappy perplexities. When he left his home, he did not leave his Saviour and his religion behind. Both were his companions. The sweet influence of his home, the blessing of his wife, and love of his children, make his burdens light, and he returns with peace in his heart, and cheerful encouraging words for his wife and children, who are waiting to joyfully welcome his coming. As he bows with his family, at the altar of prayer, to offer up his grateful thanks to God, for His preserving care of himself and loved ones through the day, angels of God hover in the room, and bear the fervent prayers of God-fearing parents to Heaven, as sweet incense, which are answered by returning blessings."¹⁴

"With such a household Jesus will tarry, and through His quickening influence the parents' joyful exclamations shall yet be heard amid more exalted scenes, saying: 'Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me.' Saved, saved, eternally saved! freed from the corruption that is in the world through lust, and through the merits of Christ made heirs of immortality!"¹⁵

The brethren in leadership of a certain church were very surprised once when a lady came to them with an unusual proposal:

"I would like to ask you permission to bring all our furniture into the area of the church and live here with my family."

Knowing that that family had a good financial situation, the brethren asked the lady why she brought such a proposition. They were astonished by her answer:

"Because here is a wonderful place. My husband is a Christian person when he is here. He is a

kind, calm, social man always when he is here. In our home, he is exactly the opposite. Because of that, I would like to live here forever."

Do you know any similar case?

The environment of the Christian home

"How different is it in the Christian home, where the mother is attentive to the wants of husband and children, and takes pleasure in the performance of her sweet duties; where the father cooperates in all her efforts to make home happy, and to lay the foundation of a good Christian character by training the children in the way they should go. Such parents, while they win the affections of their children by their sympathy and tender care, will yet be firm and decided in their government, and will guard them with jealous care. They will exhort, reprove, and counsel their children when they rise up, and when they sit down, when they go out, and when they come in."¹⁶

"Watch, pray, work! To be in a position of watching, working, praying, and waiting, is to be in the proper position. We are to act as wise stewards, as faithful servants doing the work of the Master."¹⁷

May the Lord help the families of His people all around the world to be ready to fulfil this sacred mission in preparing for heavenly citizenship!

¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 328, 329.

² *Reflecting Christ*, p. 178.

³ *The Signs of the Times*, February 23, 1882.

⁴ *Child Guidance*, p. 239.

⁵ *The Review and Herald*, July 8, 1902.

⁶ *The Signs of the Times*, August 7, 1884.

⁷ *Child Guidance*, p. 519.

⁸ *The Review and Herald*, August 5, 1890.

⁹ *Evangelism*, p. 342.

¹⁰ *In Heavenly Places*, p. 211.

¹¹ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 392.

¹² *The Review and Herald*, October 22, 1889.

¹³ *Child Guidance*, p. 520.

¹⁴ *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 439.

¹⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 547.

¹⁶ *The Signs of the Times*, October 2, 1884.

¹⁷ *The Review and Herald*, March 13, 1894.

Sunday, December 6, 1998

By Daniel Dumitru—U.S.A.



The Mother

I am quite sure that every time the name "home" is mentioned, many of us will be able to recollect quite a number of pleasant memories of the home where we grew up: pleasant memories that we have fondly treasured in our hearts, the place where we spent perhaps the sweetest days of our lives—our childhood and adolescent years.

Henry R. Bishop composed a hymn that many of us know and love to sing. In the last verse are some nostalgic and significant words, "To us, in despite of the absence of years, How sweet the remembrance of home still appears; From allurements abroad which but flatter the eye, The unsatisfied heart turns and says with a sigh—Home, home, sweet home! Be it ever so humble, There's no place like home!"

Inevitably among the recollections of our homes, no other thing will be the center of our thoughts more than the sweet person of our mothers. The Bible gives a beautiful description of a happy home where the mother is the center of attraction, receiving loving commendation by her family. "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her." Proverbs 31:28. Let us then focus, in this reading for the week of prayer, on the important work of a Christian mother who is looking after the happiness of her family, and on the active role she plays in God's plan for the salvation of her children.

The influence of the mother

It has been said that the three sweetest words in every language are: "mother, home, and heaven." There is much truth in this saying, for these three words are intimately related. Besides the physical well-being a Christian mother seeks to offer her children, she is also interested in providing her offspring with a proper education for usefulness in this life and fitness for the great heavenly home. In this sense no one can have a more powerful influence over her children than the mother. It has been truthfully said that "next to God, the mother's power for good is the strongest known on earth."

"A Christian mother, above all others, can deeply implant and faithfully cherish the seeds of truth in the young and tender heart. More even than the father, the mother molds the life, character and destiny of a human being. Every stage and phase of life is touched and influenced by her. Infancy, childhood, youth, manhood, and old age alike center in her. She is both the evening and morning star of life—the angel spirit of the home."¹

Undoubtedly this is a convincing statement, but at the same time the fact cannot be overlooked that a mother may also exert a wrong influence upon her children, affecting not only their physical but also their spiritual life, with no possibility of recovery, and with the risk of her children being eternally lost.

In the *Health Reformer* magazine of the early Advent movement, much was printed of what the Lord's

servant wrote about the mother's influence, for example: "The mother is exercising her influence continually. Every glance of her eye, every word her lips utter, every act of her life, carries with it an influence which has power to affect the character and future destiny of her children. This influence may gladden the heart, or bring discouragement, and deform the character."²

"Childhood is the season in which the most abiding impressions may be made. What the child sees and hears is drawing deep lines upon the tender mind, which no circumstances in life can entirely efface. The intellect is now taken shape, and the affections receiving direction and strength. Repeated acts in a giving course become habits. These may be modified by severe training, in after life, but are seldom changed. . . . At an early age the path of virtue is entered upon, which leads to honor and eternal life; or the path of disobedience and vice, which leads to unhappiness, dishonor, and the ruin of the soul."³

Realizing that a mother's attitude is so vital for the destiny of her children, mothers should inquire in the fear of the Lord: Will my children be instruments of blessing or a curse to the world? What shall I do to secure for my dear ones a character fitted for heaven? What kind of example should I daily give to my children, that they may be subjects for the future heavenly kingdom? What kind of impression should I give to their developing minds that will remain with them all through life? Who can give me the right and complete answer to these important

questions? There is no other than Jesus. "Let every mother go often to the Saviour with the prayer, 'Teach us, how shall we order the child, and what shall we do unto him?' Let her heed the instruction which God has given in His word, and wisdom will be given her as she shall have need."⁴

"Let the mothers come to Jesus with their perplexities. They will find grace sufficient to aid them in the management of their children. The gates are open for every mother who would lay her burdens at the Saviour's feet. Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not,' still invites the mothers to lead up their little ones to be blessed by Him. Even the babes in its mother's arms may dwell as under the shadow of the Almighty through the faith of the praying mother. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth. If we will live in communion with God, we too may expect the divine Spirit to mold our little ones, even from their earliest moments."⁵

Lasting impressions

Mothers, you will bring joy to your own heart by guiding the feet of your children in right paths, but you can hope to have success in your endeavors to form a right character in your children only when you follow the teachings of Christ in your own life. This is the preparation time for the coming of the Lord, and if you set your own life in order and earnestly work for the salvation of your children, you will see that your efforts are not in vain.

When you make an unreserved surrender of yourself to God, then you will see many obstacles that you or your children now face being removed and heavenly graces freely bestowed upon your whole family. "When you take up the cross and follow Christ, when you bring your lives into conformity to the will of God, your children will be converted."⁶

Dear mothers, today you cannot foresee the results of your efforts in training your children. Today you do not know what the future has in

store for them. Whether their lives will be a blessing or a curse depends not only upon the choices they one day will make, but on the kind of education and example they are now getting at home. It is in the family circle and not in the school that the work of education should begin. It is at home that the first impressions which a child receives have a more lasting effect on his mind than the knowledge obtained in future years.

What was the experience of Joseph in Egypt and of Daniel and his companions in the Babylonian kingdom? or the experience of Samuel whose mother's training developed in him such strong moral worth, and connected him with God? Have you ever thought that the child that you are now carrying in your arms and are prayerfully training may one day be called by God to occupy a leading position in the church or in society?

Mothers, please do not underestimate the potential that exists in your children. Don't forget that they will be what your teaching and training shall make them. If time should last, your children are to become citizens either to influence or to be influenced, to sway or to be swayed. Think about this seriously. Along this line the Lord's servant says: "The [mother] will perseveringly do her work, that [the children] may be educated to use their abilities. She will consider that they may fill positions of trust, that they may sit in legislative councils to make and execute laws; and when in after-years they may go far beyond her strength and intellect they will look with pleasure and pride upon the mother, for to her is due the influence which they have. They honor the mother whose discipline and training made them what they are."⁷

John Quincy Adams, an outstanding champion of the antislavery cause in the United States, once paid this precious tribute to his mother: "It is due to gratitude and nature that I should acknowledge and avow that such as I have been, whatever it was, such as I am, whatever it is, and such as I hope to

be in all futurity, must be ascribed, under Providence, to the precepts and example of my mother."⁸

A good start in life's journey

Mothers, God expects you to give your child a good start in life's journey. If you are convinced that your life is precious because God has given you a work to perform, then you will take up cheerfully the duties lying directly in your path. How early should you start training your child?

"Even before the birth of the child, the preparation should begin that will enable it to fight successfully the battle against evil. If before the birth of her child she is indulgent, if she is selfish, impatient, and exacting, these traits will be reflected in the disposition of the child. Thus many children have received as a birthright almost unconquerable tendencies to evil. But if the mother unswervingly adheres to right principles, if she is temperate and self-denying, if she is kind, gentle, and unselfish, she may give her child these same precious traits of character."⁹

Let us now consider three important aspects of a child's life—things relating to his or her physical, moral, and spiritual well-being. Children have lessons to learn from their mothers at an early enough age for their characters to be molded in right principles of life and in right habits of conduct. God has created us, man and woman, with distinctive organs and faculties. For mothers there are golden opportunities to guide their children in the basic knowledge of how to care for their bodies. From the very beginning of life they should be taught, by precept and example, how to preserve physical, mental, and moral health—for their joy and usefulness in this life is dependent upon health. Then as boys and girls reach the adolescent years it will be easier for parents—especially for mothers—to explain the structure, nature, and function of the human organs, and the relation they bear to life, the right manner of use, and the disastrous consequences of abuse.

Touching this subject a little bit deeper, it is opportune for us to quote what is written in an article penned in 1873, entitled: "Earnest Words to Mothers." Sister White mentions that "the following excellent article from the *Herald of Health*, should be carefully read and thoughtfully pondered." The writer states: "Better, far, that as little children, they should be taught of their own structure and development, as the plants and the trees, and taught to trace in it God's loving mind and hand, than at age when they most need care and sympathy, when mysterious feelings are pressing upon them, and the great questions of life rise before them, that they should be forced to learn from playmates, or ignorant, perhaps vulgar, servants, those things which it should be a mother's privilege to teach, and the sacredness of which they cannot have too high a conception!"

"But", say some mothers, 'I tell my children all that is necessary, there is time enough.' And, 'I cannot speak of these things, it is too embarrassing; I do it, but it is mortifying.' (These are from life.)

"Do you tell them all that is necessary? Do you know all that you ought of these wonderful matters, these daily miracles? Have you labored earnestly to inform yourself concerning these laws? Do you tell your daughters, yes, and your boys, that a 'corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit;' that our moral and physical qualities are transmitted from generation to generation, and that are all more or less responsible for the lives which may spring from ours; that all our actions, from childhood up, are laying the foundations not only of our character, but of generations yet unborn?"¹⁰

Of one thing a mother may be sure, that if she ignores this subject or fails in her duty to instruct, guide, or correct what is not good, her children will naturally choose what is evil. Please read chapters 68–71 in the book *Child Guidance*.

It is impossible to estimate the result of what a God-fearing mother can do when she instructs her children—following the Bible as the

main text book. It is well known that through the tender care and faithful instruction in Bible principles on the part of a godly mother, men and women throughout the ages have been able to become a blessing to the cause of God and to humanity.

This is what the God-fearing Timothy's mother did when she needed to educate her son. How early in life did he receive a knowledge of the things of God and with what result? The answer to this question is found in the book of God. "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:15.

Because Timothy was instructed in the Word of God, in his latter years this knowledge became a safeguard for him against evil influences, and at the same time helped him to resist the temptation to choose a life of selfish and sensual pleasures. The pen of inspiration gives additional information about his training: "The lessons of the Bible have a moral and religious influence on the character, as they are brought into practical life. Timothy learned and practiced these lessons. The great apostle often drew him out and questioned him in regard to Scripture history. He showed him the necessity of shunning every evil way and told him that blessing would surely attend all who are faithful and true, given them a faithful, noble manhood. A noble, all-round manhood does not come by chance. It is the result of the molding process of character building in the early years of youth, and a practice of the law of God in the home. God will bless the faithful efforts of all who teach their children as He has directed."¹¹

The mother's reward

Mothers, instruct and train your children while very young to become followers of Jesus, to become real Christians. Train them not as heirs to the throne of an earthly empire, but as kings unto God, to reign through unending ages.

It may cost you tears, anxiety, and many sleepless nights to look after the character building of your children, but you will not be disappointed—you will be richly rewarded. In that great day, when the Lord will ask mothers: "Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?" Think of what will be your answer: "Here am I, Lord, and the children that Thou hast given me." I am sure you could not dream of hearing a greater commendation than that which is expressed by the Lord in Matthew 25:21, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

"With joy unutterable, parents see the crown, the robe, the harp, given to their children. The days of hope and fear are ended. The seed sown with tears and prayers may have seemed to be sown in vain, but their harvest is reaped with joy at last. Their children have been redeemed. Fathers, mothers, shall the voices of your children swell the song of gladness in that day?"¹²

Mothers, in conclusion, picture for yourselves the additional joy you will have in that glorious day when in the presence of the immense number of the redeemed host and the heavenly angels, your sons and daughters shall receive their crown of glory from the hands of Jesus. They then, turning around and looking at you with their crowns in their hands, and waving them high above their heads, will gladly and gratefully acknowledge that your faithful instructions and unflinching love—through the grace and merits of Christ—have helped to crown them with immortal glory!

¹ *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*, p. 724. [1920 edition.]

² *The Health Reformer*, p. 199.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁴ *Child Guidance*, p. 132.

⁵ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 512.

⁶ *The Review and Herald*, July 15, 1902.

⁷ *The Health Reformer*, p. 204.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁹ *The Adventist Home*, p. 256.

¹⁰ *The Health Reformer*, p. 103.

¹¹ *Child Guidance*, pp. 41, 42.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 569.

Mutual Respect

GOD created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Genesis 1:27.

So it was at the beginning—a man and a woman created in the image of God and united in marriage by God Himself, thus forming a family, a single body.

"Life is a training school, from which parents and children are to be graduated to the higher school in the mansions of God." ¹ Considered from this point of view, our human existence on planet Earth gains consistency and meaning, and the family regains its edenic dignity and dimension as a home of faith, in which mutual respect is a holy principle.

The term "mutual respect" means a respect that is "directed and received in equal amount, reciprocal." ²

Mutual respect means first giving and then receiving. This was the guiding principle in the plan of salvation and the whole plan of redemption breathes this principle—first to give. In the divine order, receiving is a child of giving (see Isaiah 53:11). Love conceives love. Love stimulates to nobler aims.

"Let each give love rather than exact it. Cultivate that which is noblest in yourselves, and be quick to recognize the good qualities in each other. The consciousness of being appreciated is a wonderful stimulus and satisfaction. Sympathy and respect encourage the striving after excellence, and love itself increases as it stimulates to nobler aims." ³

"God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." ¹ John 4:10. Why did He die for us? "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

The Lord Jesus died not only for those that will be redeemed, but also for those who could have been redeemed if they had accepted Him as their Redeemer. Our Saviour was not looking at man with his shortcomings, but at what man could become by accepting the divine investment by faith.

In the faithful home, this divine principle of giving before receiving represents the natural breathing which maintains spiritual life.

The home set up by God

There are three ways by which the youth may form a family:

1. They get married by virtue of their simple decision, which reflects their mutual desire, known and accepted by them, based, in the majority of cases, merely upon what the natural eyes can see. In such cases, sooner or later, the two realize they have foolishly "taken the package for the goods." In such families, mutual respect is lacking. (Remember the sad experience of Samson.)

2. The two get married solely on the advice of others (parents, brethren, friends). This can involve an abuse of authority on the part of the advisers, cowardice, or an abandonment or postponement of the responsibilities of the youth. The pair may later become inclined to blame their subsequent marital problems on those who thus

advised them. Mutual respect is lacking in these homes, too.

3. The third way—the only viable one—is when the two are married by God Himself. Only when God unites the pair in marriage does the family formed on earth have its name from heaven. (See Ephesians 3:14, 15.) This is the faithful home where mutual respect and love abide.

After creating Adam, "the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." Genesis 2:18. God fulfilled His plan; He made a woman—not just any kind of woman, but one who had this quality of "an help meet" for Adam, and He "brought her unto the man." Genesis 2:22. Adam immediately marveled not so much at the perfection of his bride but at her amazing suitability to him, when he exclaimed, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." Verse 23. And "what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Matthew 19:6.

So it was at the beginning! He, the God of the Universe and our Creator, looking at everything He had made in the six working days, included the human family in His declaration that "it was very good." Genesis 1:31.

Though the tragedy of sin entered, mankind was soon to see that God, our Creator, has not only creative powers. He also has re-creative powers! He is, by the sacrifice on Golgotha, a Re-Creator, even of the family.

Do we have courage to surrender everything to God, even the forming of our family by faith? Does God really know how to do everything in the best way possible? Surely, yes. What He begins He knows how to carry through.

In marriage, in the family life, it is very important to realize that at your side is the wife given to you by God Himself. Marriage is not a means of getting an infallible person, but the way of receiving a fitting helper given by God.

When we want to get married, we should not ask for a husband or wife who will never err, but rather we should expect to receive from God a husband or wife whom He considers to be the "help meet" offered to us by grace, due to no merit of our own. "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord." Proverbs 18:22. "House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the Lord." Chapter 19:14. And any gift given personally by God cannot be other than good.

The wife that God gives you is the best one, because she is the most suitable helper to you. Certainly, there are plenty of other women who have fine qualities, too. But they are not the specific helper designed for you. One person's qualities do not involve the chance of fitness as well, because fitness means that what you are missing can be completed by the qualities of your spouse.

The submission of the wife

By nature, women have a more affectionate heart; they are more sentimental, with a natural inclination to affection. But the Word of God does not tell the woman, first and foremost, to love her husband, but rather sets aside her natural inclination and speaks to her in another way: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." Ephesians 5:22.

Whenever God looks upon the family, He does not consider the woman as the head, but rather the husband, because God is the One who has established that order.

This submission on the part of the wife is possible only where there is a certain consistent frame of mind: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God." Verse 20. That means not only for some things, but for all, because "all things work

together for good to them that love God." Romans 8:28. And the one who loves God loves also the order established by Him in all of life's aspects, including the home.

The inspired word underlines: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, **as unto the Lord.**" Ephesians 5:22. [Emphasis supplied.] This is an important aspect of submission, which may help those wives who doubt the need to submit themselves. The word says to submit yourself "as unto the Lord." If you respect God, being convinced that He has authority and you are willing to follow His advice, then don't forget that He is telling you: "Submit yourself to your husband as unto Me," or "Submit yourself to your husband, because he is My representative before you; he is your head, and I am his Head." If a woman does not see in her husband the ideal dream, she should seek the Lord in prayer. What grace and blessings would exist in the home if this divine order were taken into account! "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." Verse 23.

Although this submission of the wife is part of the divine order in the faithful home, marriage does not destroy the individuality of the pair. The husband and wife become one flesh, but keep their own individuality. "We have an individuality of our own, and the wife's individuality is never to be sunk into that of her husband."⁴ "Neither the husband nor the wife should attempt to exercise over the other an arbitrary control. Do not try to compel each other to yield to your wishes. You cannot do this and retain each other's love. Be kind, patient, and forbearing, considerate, and courteous. By the grace of God you can succeed in making each other happy, as in your marriage vow you promised to do."⁵

"But while you are to blend as one, neither of you is to lose his or her individuality in the other. God is the owner of your individuality. Of Him you are to ask: What is right? What is wrong? How may I best fulfill the purpose of my creation?"⁶

The husband's loving attitude

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." Verse 25.

"Husbands should study the pattern and seek to know what is meant by the symbol presented in Ephesians, the relation Christ sustains to the church. The husband is to be as a Saviour in his family. Will he stand in his noble, God-given manhood, ever seeking to uplift his wife and children? Will he breathe about him a pure, sweet atmosphere?"⁷

"When the husband has the nobility of character, purity of heart, elevation of mind, that every true Christian must possess, it will be made manifest in the marriage relation. . . . He will seek to keep his wife in health and courage. He will strive to speak words of comfort, to create an atmosphere of peace in the home circle."⁸

Even in those cases when our wives may not be fulfilling the conditions by which to be loved, we as husbands should follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus was not looking at what the church was, but at what it could become in the future, through His love and sacrifice. "He gave Himself for it," not because it was holy, but "that He might sanctify it," not because it was clean, but "that He might cleanse it," not because it was worthy, but to make it worthy. The church is not perfect. It is Christ that will make it perfect.

True love does not look at existing virtues, but at those that could be.

If you want your wife to have a quality that she does not possess, you have to love her, so that she will be empowered to attain that quality. If you say: "I don't love her because she doesn't have that quality" then you have understood nothing from the example of the Lord Jesus, who is the Head. He loved the church and gave Himself for it so that it may become as He wants it to be: "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Verse 27. This love does not constitute a mere declaration nor is it a mere feeling, but

is the result of supreme sacrifice which through faith can achieve even that which is humanly impossible.

We notice that the husbands' love for their wives is placed between two guide marks: a heavenly one ("as Christ loved"), and a human one ("as their own bodies"). "A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self, showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation."⁹

The principle recommended in the Word of God to those who wish to establish a family, for a man to leave his father and mother and be joined unto his wife, has its origin in the love between Christ and His church. For the sake of those whom He loved, "with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3), Christ left the heavenly family to rescue the human family "at the risk of failure and eternal loss."¹⁰

"Around every family there is a sacred circle that should be kept unbroken. Within this circle no other person has a right to come. Let not the husband or the wife permit another to share the confidences that belong solely to themselves."¹¹

Mutual respect between parents and children

Before the birth of the children in the family, the members of the conjugal couple are called husband and wife. After the birth of the children, the two remain husband and wife, but they also get a new name with a heavenly resonance—parents, that is, father and mother. The parents have no previous personal experience in regard to the birth and bringing up of children. But though this new responsibility is now involved, we are still to keep the quality possessed before the birth of the children; we remain children of God, brought up and protected by God, to be able to bring up and educate, in our turn, the children given us by our Father, for His name's honor and glory.

As parents, in this position, we are being brought up together with our children, because our children's

age expresses our age as parents as well. We are not parents by birth, but we become parents and are totally dependent upon God to train us in this sense.

The respect of parents toward their children and that of children toward their parents means respect toward God who has given them to us. The respect of parents toward the child begins before his birth, being first of all manifested through the forming of the family and its functioning according to God's will, as presented earlier. Observing the principles of health reform has a very important role in this. (See Judges 13.)

"The character also of the child is more or less affected by the nature of the nourishment received from the mother. How important, then, that the mother, while nursing her infant, should preserve a happy state of mind, having perfect control of her own spirit. By thus doing, the food of the child is not injured, and the calm, self-possessed course the mother pursues in the treatment of her child has much to do in molding the mind of the infant. If it is nervous and easily agitated, the mother's careful, unhurried manner will have a soothing and correcting influence, and the health of the infant will be much improved."¹²

The children are not our property, but God's property, entrusted to us to educate to become members of the heavenly family. "Your children are God's property, bought with a price. Be very particular, O fathers and mothers, to treat them in a Christlike manner."¹³

This thought should make us determined to be more serious in our attitude toward our children, to educate them, not merely train them as animals, to genuinely love and not spoil them. And if they make mistakes, we are to rebuke and punish them in love, not mock or be cruel to them. (See Proverbs 23:13; 19:18; 22:15; 29:15, 17.)

"A child may be so disciplined as to have, like the beast, no will of its own, his individuality being lost in that of his teacher. . . . As far as possible every child should be trained to self-reliance. By calling into exercise the various faculties,

he will learn where he is strongest and in what he is deficient. A wise instructor will give special attention to the development of the weaker traits, that the child may form a well-balanced, harmonious character."¹⁴

The atmosphere created in the family will influence the state of mind of the children. We are warned that "to a large extent parents create the atmosphere of the home circle, and when there is disagreement between father and mother, the children partake of the same spirit."¹⁵

As for the children, they are called to complete the sacred circle of the faithful home, manifesting love and respect toward their parents, to whom they have been entrusted. (See Ephesians 6:1–3.) The example of the most eloquent respect of children toward their parents can be found in the life and childhood of the child Jesus. "He spoke and acted as a child, honoring His parents and carrying out their wishes in helpful ways."¹⁶

When both parents and children follow God's ways in the faithful home—each of them having a personal relationship with Jesus—then the family on earth will be a joyful taste of the heavenly family, where mutual respect is natural behavior.

So it will be at the end—Malachi 4:6. Amen.

¹ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 363.

² *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, edited by E. D. Hirsch Jr., Joseph Kett and James Trefil.

³ *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 154.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 426.

⁵ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 361.

⁶ *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 425.

⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 160.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 46.

¹⁰ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 49.

¹¹ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 361.

¹² *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, pp. 167, 168.

¹³ *Child Guidance*, p. 27.

¹⁴ *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 425.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 500.

¹⁶ *Child Guidance*, p. 28.

Friday, December 11, 1998

By S. Karvatskii — *Ukraine*

The Fifth Commandment

BEHOLD, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Malachi 4:5.

In order to recover mankind from the loss suffered through sin, God in His love gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. There are "waymarks" along the path leading to eternity, as God says, "Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest." Jeremiah 31:21.

The way in which Jesus leads us has signs that point, warn, and prohibit for our best good— not only in this life, but also in the life to come. And these signs or waymarks are composed of God's ten commandments which Jesus Christ did not destroy or change when on earth, but rather fulfilled and vindicated, thus giving us an example for daily life.

One of these commandments is, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," "which is the first commandment with promise." Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:2. "To Israel, expecting soon to enter Canaan, it was a pledge to the obedient, of long life in that good land."¹

But this commandment has a wider meaning and applies to all the

Israel of God, and it promises to those who keep it everlasting life on the new earth cleansed from the curse of sin.

In the beginning

With loving care God crowned the formation of our planet with the creation of a truly unique being— man. As the Creator breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, "man became a living soul." Genesis 2:7. God Himself is the Father of humanity. In His desire that this creature would live harmoniously with others of his kind in loving obedience to his Creator and Father, "the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. . . . And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Genesis 2:18, 22–24. Thus, God established the first family, laying that foundation to promote the satisfaction of all our individual and social needs.

There is a special place for every member of the family—for father and mother, son and daughter, and other relatives.

"Society is composed of families, and is what the heads of families make it. Out of the heart are 'the issues of life' (Proverbs 4:23);

and the heart of the community, of the church, and of the nation is the household. The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences."²

God's beautiful plan for the family given to man in paradise was further expressed in the fifth commandment. But sadly, this beautiful plan is being destroyed. Through disobedience to this commandment, Satan has deceitfully done his destructive work and crushed the heart of the human family. The results have included: 1) loss of eternal health, and 2) shortening of life (Ephesians 6:3).

The first human family shrank with horror when struck with the terrible crime of fratricide. Yet the problem did not stop there—it has grown worse over the past 6,000 years, and the enemy of souls is ever escalating his plot to ruin every home possible.

"While men are ignorant of [Satan's] devices, this vigilant foe is upon their track every moment. He is intruding his presence in every department of the household, in every street of our cities, in the churches, in the national councils, in the courts of justice, perplexing, deceiving, seducing, everywhere ruining the souls and bodies of men, women, and children, breaking up families, sowing hatred, emulation, strife, sedition, murder."³

Today we see the rampant estrangement of families, an increase of the spirit of jealousy and unforgiveness that sows discord among the very brothers, sisters, parents and children whom God

designed to be a blessing for us. Today we can see many children forsaken by parents, and many aged parents forgotten and virtually abandoned by their children. Today we can see the fulfillment of the words of Jesus that the world is reverting to the condition of the antediluvians. And it is happening everywhere.

Describing the condition of our days, the apostle Paul says, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy." 2 Timothy 3:2.

The Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement has a special privilege of bearing to the world a message which not only speaks of the dreadful judgments that are soon to come to our rebellious planet, but also to reveal to people the Saviour full of love and readiness to save His children. In our church and in practical life we should show how God can protect and preserve our families from the corrupting influences which are in this world. And God reveals this to us in the fifth commandment. The behavior of children depends on their education.

Parents—what do you wish for your children?

Great is the honor and responsibility placed upon fathers and mothers. "Take this son, this daughter," God says; "train it for Me; give it a character polished after the similitude of a palace, that it may shine in the courts of the Lord forever."⁴ Parents have a task of great importance before them. The future of the church and society in this generation depends to a great extent upon what we are doing during the few years that our children are with us. Therefore it is very important for us to fully understand that God expects us to render a faithful influence on our children to help them reach the heavenly ideal. And God Himself "ordained that during the earlier years of life, parents shall stand in the place of God to their children."⁵ In order to fulfil this work of education we should be looking for counsel and help only from God. (See Judges 13:8, 12.)

"Too much importance cannot be placed upon the early training of children. The lessons learned, the habits formed, during the years of infancy and childhood, have more to do with the formation of the character and the direction of the life than have all the instruction and training of after years."⁶

"Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing. . . . She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her let her observe" (Judges 13:4, 14).

"The effect of prenatal influences is by many parents looked upon as a matter of little moment; but heaven does not so regard it. The message sent by an angel of God, and twice given in the most solemn manner, shows it to be deserving of our most careful thought."⁷

Parents can lay the foundation of healthy, happy life for their children. They can let them go forth from home with rich supplies of moral firmness and be able to withstand all the world's temptations with courage and strength, and successfully face all the problems in their lives.

Responsibility of Fathers

Fathers! Your responsibility in the education of your children (Deuteronomy 6:7) is not only to teach and instruct them. The greatest work is your PERSONAL EXAMPLE. In Abraham we can see an excellent example of a father who walked according to the will of God. Wherever Abraham went, he built an altar unto the Lord and called upon His name (Genesis 12:8). "Not until parents themselves walk in the law of the Lord with perfect hearts will they be prepared to command their children after them."⁸ Fathers of today may learn from Abraham how to establish morning and evening worship in their homes, giving it paramount attention. Even Ishmael "in his latter days he repented of his evil ways and returned to his father's God."⁹ Fathers! God has chosen you to "command (your)

children and (your) household after (you), and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." Genesis 18:19. The father is the law-giver in his family; he must bring the law of God into his home. But, he must also remember to "provoke not [his] children to wrath." Ephesians 6:4.

Eli was a father who ignored his children. As high priest he made intercession for the people, but he did not educate or pray for his own sons. Careless in character, he did not train them to habits of order. This resulted in the destruction not only of himself and his generation, but also the demoralization of the whole nation. (Compare with Psalm 103:13.)

Responsibility of Mothers

Moses' mother knew that her son would be soon returned to Pharaoh's palace, and amidst all the luxury and temptations that would surround him, he could be in great danger of leaving God. He spent 12 years with his mother and, as a result of this solid training, he never forgot God, even though he was forced to live outside the home for the next 28 years. While surrounded by Egyptian culture, idolatry and many worldly temptations, Moses was ever faithful to the instruction of his mother. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." Hebrews 11:24–26. And throughout the remainder of his life, Moses' great mission as a leader of Israel testifies to the important work of the Christian mother. "To a very great extent the mother holds in her own hands the destiny of her children."¹⁰

"John Huss was of humble birth, and was early left an orphan by the death of his father. His pious mother, regarding education and the fear of God as the most valuable of possessions, sought to secure this heritage for her son. . . . He was accompa-

nied on the journey to Prague by his mother; widowed and poor, she had no gifts of worldly wealth to bestow upon her son, but as they drew near to the great city, she kneeled down beside the fatherless youth and invoked for him the blessing of their Father in heaven.”¹¹

The mother is the child's first teacher in the time of his greatest potential and most active development. The main aspects of his education are, to a great extent, in her hands (Isaiah 66:13, first part). The home is the first school, and here the foundation for profitable life should be laid.

Important points in education

1. Health. The realization that man should be the temple of God and the place where His glory is revealed must be the best motive for the care and development of our physical powers.

2. Food. Our bodies are composed of what we eat. Every organ of the body needs proper food. We should always choose those foods which would provide us with all the necessary components in the most healthful manner. Wrong habits in eating cause perverted appetites. We also cannot rely on social customs. Disease and suffering everywhere is, to a great extent, caused by mistakes in eating. The One who created man and knew all his needs ordained that Adam should eat proper food (Genesis 1:29). After falling into sin man was to till the ground and eat “the herb of the field.” Genesis 3:18. Grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables are the food that God has ordained for our nutrition. And it is the best food for children.

3. Dress. Our dress must promote in every respect good health of body and soul. Fashion has a powerful and often detrimental influence on children and youth, and a true understanding of dress reform should play a significant role in their Christian education.

4. Reading and seeing. Satan has prepared many different snares for our children. Every kind of litera-

ture is offered today. The world abounds with sensational detective stories, novels, magazines full of obscene pictures, TV programs, video films, computer games; modern charismatic songs, dances, amusements, and different games. Can you recognize all this as Satan's arsenal? These things destroy the morality of children and youth. We should never give our children and youth even the various so-called theological books which only pervert the truth by subtly mingling it with error. Christian parents should also control the influences exerted over their children by their FRIENDS. We must also teach them the benefits of physical labor, and be watchful over all that could sway their tender, pliable minds.

Children

Children, does Jesus know about you? “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” Matthew 10:29–31. Do you sometimes wonder whether He really loves you? “And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. . . .”

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord.” Ephesians 6:1. This commandment is in the center of the law, just as children are in the center of the family. The Bible gives us the example of Jesus' childhood and youth. Remember where Jesus was brought up. “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” John 1:46. Yet there is an amazing description of His early life in that city. “And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. . . . And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her

heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” Luke 2:40, 51, 52. Today, the sinfulness of Nazareth covers the whole world. Jesus is our Example, and His life in His parents' house provides important lessons for us. He grew up in poverty to show us that we also can live in close communion with God when surrounded by such conditions. Consider deeply the texts written above.

Children! We are living even at the time of the second coming of our Saviour, who will change everything and return it to the beauty and splendor it had before the fall of man. Are you eager to see this great event? God calls on you today, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord.”

The fifth commandment applies also to rulers and to all others to whom God has delegated authority. We should give them respect as long as their commands do not conflict with the requirements of God as revealed in the ten commandments. With all respect to the authorities, they are not to interfere in our relationship with God. (Acts 4:19.)

The highest honor, glory, and obedience belong to our heavenly Father. And above all, children and youth should learn to trust God and seek to understand His will. This is the work of John the Baptist “in the spirit and power of Elias,” to turn our hearts to the Lord so that we may not perish. And there will be a result: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.” Isaiah 42:1.

Let us do our utmost that this week of prayer may draw us nearer to our heavenly Father and strengthen our families. Amen. ☛

¹*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.

²*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 349.

³*The Great Controversy*, p. 508.

⁴*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 376.

⁵*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.

⁶*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 380.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 372.

⁸*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 143.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 174.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹¹*The Great Controversy*, p. 98.

The Wider Family

IN life there are some things that begin large and get smaller, such as reserve accounts, big ideas, and some business companies—while other things begin small and grow larger, such as babies, deficits, and family squabbles. The disciple Peter was so loud in his affirmation of faithfulness to Christ that his subsequent denial made his name a byword for decline—in English we call it “petering out.” On the other hand, the growth of the early church has almost become a symbol of fascinating development as the first disciples filled the whole earth with their doctrine.

When our heavenly Father made the world and all that is in it, He produced only things which were perfect. Having made a perfect man He saw that he could not remain alone. The perfect woman was placed at the side of the perfect man to produce a perfect family. His direction to them was, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.” Genesis 1:28. They were to be the family, the basic unit of society; and the families were to grow so that there would be more units—all working together in a perfect wider family living according to God’s perfect plan.

Individuals cannot live alone without experiencing loss. It has been well noted that, all other things being equal, married people have better physical, mental and spiritual health than those who have a soli-

tary life. “Man was not made to dwell in solitude; he was to be a social being. Without companionship the beautiful scenes and delightful employments of Eden would have failed to yield perfect happiness. Even communion with angels could not have satisfied his desire for sympathy and companionship.”¹

“The institution [of marriage] has for its originator the Creator of the universe. . . . It was one of the first gifts of God to man, and it is one of the two institutions that, after the fall, Adam brought with him beyond the gates of Paradise. When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed in this relation, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race, it provides for man’s social needs, it elevates the physical, the intellectual, and the moral nature.”²

The entrance of sin introduced a divisive principle that would produce divided families, divided society, and eventually divided nations. That divisive principle is known as selfishness. Families become divided because a person’s self-interest becomes more important than the family interest, with the sad result of even multiple divorces and marriages. Sadly, the selfish divisive principle works the same way in other groupings within the expanse of the wider family—the church, the nation.

The family and the church

Christ stated His basic principle to His disciples: “Ye are the salt of

the earth!” Matthew 5:13. His principle of love was to be infused into the hearts of the members of the family, and through them into the church, and from the church into general society. When each member of the family is happily fulfilling his loving obedient role, the happy family tends to produce a happy church through the influence they exert upon other families.

There is happiness in the church only when the principles of God’s government within the family are applied also within the church. We know there can be no harmony in the family if father, mother, or children are trying to follow their personal interests irrespective of the needs of other family members. By the same token, there cannot be a happy relationship in the church while members or member families try to pursue their own goals irrespective of the needs and positions of the wider family.

The scripture clearly states that we are to “bear one another’s burdens” and to bear long with those who may disagree with us. Yet this cannot be left interminably without correction, for internal disagreement long contained will produce a festering sore that will not be easily healed. Many a family has been seriously divided by disagreement—parents separated from each other; children separated from the parents; children separated from each other. The principle of separation is the result of the selfishness of Lucifer in heaven; he wanted something that he could not have. His pride in his beauty suggested that he was not

accounted as worthy by God for a higher position.

When Lucifer began to speak of his disaffection with many other angels, he produced a situation that was seen as rebellion against the authority of God. In this situation a separation had to take place.

Lucifer—Satan—and his followers had to be put without the direct orbit of heaven. If they had continued to remain, the loving atmosphere of heaven would have been destroyed. Sadly, sometimes the same principle must be played out within the confines of the family, the church family and the national family in order that peace might reign within their borders. Amos said simply: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" No two people or groups of people, in the smaller or the larger context, can remain in a harmonious relationship unless there is agreement. But how is this agreement found and nurtured?

Back to basics: Personal needs

The individual must be in harmony with himself. Many times personal instability arises because of the individual being in disagreement with himself. How can this be? There are basic things in life that we begin to learn in infancy. Unless these basics are learned and followed without mental turmoil, there will come a time when personality changes begin to take place. Unrest and discontent often come through an inability to come to terms with the difference between the standards of conduct taught within the family and those observed outside of the family. There are those who see that many in the worldly condition seem to have a lot of good things and an apparently happy life, and they think, "Why can't I be like that?" David had a similar thought. He said, "I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them

about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?

Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end." Psalm 73:3–17. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him." Psalm 37:35–40.

Many try to have a little of both worlds, but it does not work. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Matthew 6:24. Jesus did not suggest that man would try to serve two masters. He stated that it is impossible to do so. But so many Christians try to do it. It just cannot be done successfully. To try and accomplish this type of dream is to follow in the steps of Satan.

"Through every age the experiment of serving two masters whose

interests were divergent has been tried over and over, but the world's Redeemer solemnly assures us, as one who knows that the experiment is utterly impracticable, that 'no man can serve two masters.' He has given important lessons on this matter, lessons that we neglect at the peril of our souls. We are to be intensely in earnest in regard to heavenly things. We are to watch, to pray, to wait, and to work. 'Why,' he asks, 'stand ye here all the day idle?' and adds, 'Go work today in my vineyard.' Work, earnest work is before us. We are to consecrate our life wholly to the service of God, and to trade diligently on our Lord's intrusted talents. We are to permit nothing to interpose between God and us, but to look well to our soul's eternal interest, and meet the claim that God has upon his human agents. We would inquire of those who profess the solemn truth for this time, Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? Is your heart reaching heavenward, and does your soul contemplate heavenly things? Have earthly things more attraction for you than heavenly things? If heaven is the theme of your contemplation, it will be the theme of your conversation. To him who is growing in grace and in a knowledge of the truth, the heavenly attractions become all absorbing, and he grows up into Christ, his living head. Responding to the glory of Christ, our righteousness is brought forth as the light, and our judgment as the noonday. In contemplating the matchless charms of Jesus, in realizing the light of his presence by faith, we have a foretaste of the joy of the heavenly world. He who follows on to know the Lord will know that his goings forth are prepared as the morning."³

"How much more may we enjoy in this life than that which we have enjoyed! In our present spiritual condition we have only a faint idea of what our life might become, of what our homes might be, if we would cultivate heavenly affections, and yield themselves wholly to the service of God. We would live in joy-

ful communion with God. Our human affections and sympathies are not to wane away and become extinct, but through living connection with God, our love is to deepen, our interest to become more intense, our efforts more successful in promoting the happiness of those around us. Through Jesus Christ, households are to have blissful harmony and unity, and parents are to live together in peace and love, neither speaking nor thinking evil one of another. Parents and children are to be kind, forbearing, forgiving, having their hearts softened by the grace of Christ.”⁴

Let it be said again: The same principles which heaven applies to the individual and to the family, apply also to the church. The wider family must follow the same principles if they are to fulfil God's purpose for them. It is sad that there are many churches that try to apply the attitudes of the world in their business dealings. Remember, Jesus said it CANNOT be done. Well, YES it can be done, but not without losing spirituality.

This has been the sad history of Laodicea. They wanted to have the benefits (?) of the world and its business, but at what a price? Perhaps we should pause a moment here. We well recognize that the sad history of Laodicea is being played out before us. But, just a moment! Don't we also live in the Laodicean phase of the history of the Christian church? If the hallmark of Laodicea is that she is “rich, and increased with goods” at the price of spiritual dearth, is it also possible that the wider family today might also come into that condition with subsequent loss? Does this bear thinking about? Is it possible for today's church to be trying to serve two masters? Remember, Jesus said that it cannot be done! If it is tried, those who attempt this impossible dream will actually be serving Satan while thinking they are serving Christ. What foolishness, what loss!

The only possible answer to this dilemma is to make Christ and ALL the principles of His kingdom appli-

cable directly to the life of the individual, to the family and to the wider family—the church.

The salt of the earth

Jesus said to His disciples, “Ye are the salt of the earth.” God's people individually and as families and as churches are to infuse themselves among the people of the world, that their influence for good may be clearly demonstrated.

“The followers of Christ are represented by Him as the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. Without the saving influence of Christians, the world would perish in its own corruption. Look upon the class of professed Christians described, who are careless of their dress and persons, and loose in their business transactions, as their dress represents, coarse, uncourteous and rough in their manners, low in their conversation; and at the same time they regard these miserable traits as marks of true humility and Christian life. Think you if our Saviour was upon earth, He would point to them as being the salt of the earth, and the light of the world? No, never! Christians are elevated in their conversation, and although they believe it to be a sin to condescend to foolish flattery, they are courteous, kind, and benevolent. Their words are those of sincerity and truth. They are faithful in their deal with their brethren, and with the world. In their dress they avoid superfluity and display; but their clothing will be neat, not gaudy, modest, and arranged upon the person with order and taste. Especial care will be taken to dress in a manner that will show a sacred regard for the holy Sabbath, and the worship of God. The line of demarcation between such a class and the world will be too plain to be mistaken. The influence of believers would be tenfold greater if men and women who embrace the truth, who have been formerly careless and slack in their habits, would be so elevated, and sanctified through the truth, as to observe habits of neatness, order, and good taste in their

dress. Our God is a God of order, and He is not in any degree pleased with distraction, with filthiness, or with sin.”⁵

“If you are Christlike, your influence will work as leaven upon those connected with you. Christ declares to His followers, ‘Ye are the salt of the earth.’ But there are very many who profess to be Christians that Jesus looks upon with sadness, saying, ‘But if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?’ How shall the world then be saved? When human effort is not combined with divine agencies, it is as salt without savor. The Saviour puts His estimate upon the Christians professors, saying, ‘It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.’ This is the description of those who profess to believe in Christ, and yet who do not imitate His virtues, His self-denial, manifest His sympathy, His goodness, His compassion and love. Their influence draws men away from Christ, because they present a false pattern to the world. They have not sanctified themselves to the service of Christ that he might make them vessels unto honor. They misrepresent the great example. Whether associated with those who believe or those who do not believe, their conversation is made up of jesting, joking, and vain, useless talk. They indulge their inclination, and live to please themselves instead of copying the Pattern. The record says, ‘For even Christ pleased not Himself.’”⁶

The power of example

There is no greater role for the Christian than to influence the church and general society for good. The example that we portray has its effects upon all those with whom we come in contact. Sadly, we would often like to have no influence at all. We might like to somehow have some type of neutrality, a situation where our influence is neither negative nor positive. This is part of the impossible dream. The apostle Paul says that we can be a savor unto life or a savor unto

death. In truth we can be both. When we conscientiously influence others for good we can at the same time see those who reject the good influence ending up in a negative position. By their own choice they reject life when they reject the good influence. But our part is to provide the good influence. If not, then we ourselves become a savor unto death.

"Frivolity, selfish indulgence, and careless indifference on the part of professed Christians are turning away many souls from the path of life. Many there are who will fear to meet at the bar of God the results of their influence."⁷

Our influence in the wider family can be very positive. "If by our example we aid others in the development of good principles, we give them power to do good. In their turn they exert the same influence upon others, and they upon still others. Thus by our unconscious influence thousands may be blessed."⁸

Paul speaking to Titus says, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 2:13, 14.

Our Saviour wants to purify unto Himself a peculiar people, individually and collectively as families and churches so that they might be truly influencing society. This work must begin in the family.

"[Parents] should set a right example before their children, and although the example of professed followers of Christ causes the children to think that their parents are too careful and severe in their restrictions, yet God will bless the efforts of these conscientious parents. If parents do not take a decided, firm course, their children will be borne down with the current, for Satan and his evil angels are working upon their minds, and the example of unconsecrated professors makes the work of overcoming far more laborious for them. Yet with faith in God and earnest prayer,

believing parents should press on in the rugged path of duty. The way of the cross is an onward, upward way. And as we advance therein, seeking the things that are above, we must leave farther and farther in the distance the things, which belong to the earth. While the world and carnal professors are rushing downward to death, those who climb the hill will have to put forth efforts or they will be carried down with them."⁹

"We often hear the remark; 'You are too exclusive.' As a people we would make any sacrifice to save souls, or lead them to the truth. But to unite with them, to love the things that they love, and have friendship with the world, we dare not, for we should then be at enmity with God."¹⁰

"It is only through the grace of God that we can make a right use of this endowment. There is nothing in us of ourselves by which we can influence others for good. If we realize our helplessness and our need of divine power, we shall not trust to ourselves. We know not what result a day, an hour, or a moment may determine, and never should we begin the day without committing our ways to our heavenly Father. His angels are appointed to watch over us, and if we put ourselves, under their guardianship, then in every time of danger they will be at our right hand. When unconsciously we are in danger of exerting a wrong influence, the angels will be by our side, prompting us, to a better course, choosing our words for us, and influencing our actions. Thus our influence may be a silent, unconscious, but mighty power in drawing others to Christ and the heavenly world."¹¹

Our responsibility before God and the wider family of the church and society requires a total commitment to Christ, who has shown in His life what one may accomplish under the control of the Holy Spirit. ✠

¹*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 46.

²*Ibid.*

³*The Signs of the Times*, July 3, 1893.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 476.

⁶*The Youth's Instructor*, October 13, 1892.

⁷*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 341.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 340.

⁹*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 279.

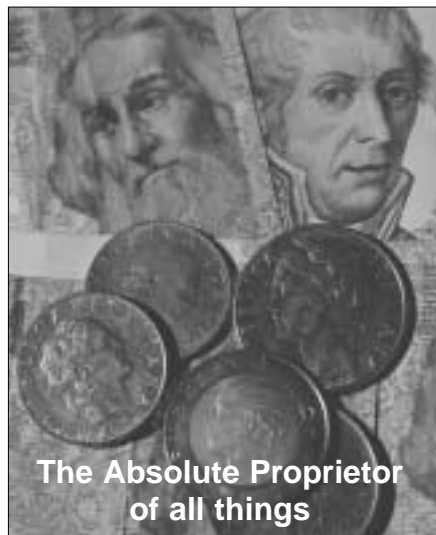
¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 282.

¹¹*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 341.

"The church of God below is one with the church of God above. Believers on the earth and the beings in heaven who have never fallen constitute one church. Every heavenly intelligence is interested in the assemblies of the saints who on earth meet to worship God. In the inner court of heaven they listen to the testimony of the witnesses for Christ in the outer court on earth, and the praise and thanksgiving from the worshipers below is taken up in the heavenly anthem, and praise and rejoicing sound through the heavenly courts because Christ has not died in vain for the fallen sons of Adam. While angels drink from the fountainhead, the saints on earth drink of the pure streams flowing from the throne, the streams that make glad the city of our God. Oh, that we could all realize the nearness of heaven to earth! When the earthborn children know it not, they have angels of light as their companions. A silent witness guards every soul that lives, seeking to draw that soul to Christ. As long as there is hope, until men resist the Holy Spirit to their eternal ruin, they are guarded by heavenly intelligences. Let us all bear in mind that in every assembly of the saints below are angels of God, listening to the testimonies, songs, and prayers. Let us remember that our praises are supplemented by the choirs of the angelic host above." — *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 366, 367.

Sunday, December 13, 1998

by M. Barbu — Romania



**The Absolute Proprietor
of all things**

By His wonderful power, God created all plants and living beings and then crowned His creation by forming from the dust of the earth the being that was to bear His own image. Man was in full accord with the will of God and his mind was capable of understanding God's mysteries. He had pure ideals and his passions were under the power of reason. Upon man's creation, God then offered him a most wonderful gift—the woman, thus establishing the family, so that man's joy should be complete.

From one end of the Bible to the other, God has manifested a special interest towards the education of the family and its salvation. Why is God interested in the family? What could be the reasons for the existence of this institution? From the record of inspiration it can readily be seen that God's intention was to populate the earth so wonderfully created, with intelligent beings. Also, it was His plan to perpetuate His knowledge from parents to children, from generation to generation. Another reason for the formation of this small social group was to fulfill man's desire for companionship, and finally, it was here in the family that the noblest traits of character were to be developed. While parents would work towards the development of their children's characters, at the same time, their own

characters would likewise be further developed. Within the family, God's love can be understood by the husband's sacrificing love for his wife and children. The mysterious intimacy between Christ and the church would be understood by the wife's fidelity towards her spouse. The trust of the children was also a lesson systematically taught, from which the adults could learn to trust more fully in the protecting care of their Creator. In Paradise the basis of education was laid for the formation of a character based on sacrifice, an essential attribute of heaven and the founding principle for the plan of redemption.

All created things were entrusted to man and his descendants, all things having been created for their happiness. "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas." Psalm 8:6–8. In these inspired words the Lord declares Himself as absolute Proprietor, and men must recognize this as His divine right, and to see themselves as His loyal stewards. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts." Haggai 2:8. "Ye are not your own." 1 Corinthians 6:19. Here are two statements that prove man's dependence on his Creator.

Adam and Eve had the freedom to be happy, to work, and to eat everything that was permitted from the trees of Paradise. They were happy enjoying the beauty of the flowers and were delighted by the singing of the birds and the musical babbling of the crystal-like waters.

In order to realize that everything that comprised their happiness was a gift from God, our first parents were to obey Him and continually acknowledge Him as Proprietor and Master. Whenever they came to the tree in the midst of the garden, they stopped to remember what God had said (Genesis 2:16, 17). This was a test for them. God did not need such a token for His own sake, since all things were already His. But for their sake, "this tree God reserved as a constant reminder of His ownership of all. Thus He gave them opportunity to demonstrate their faith and trust in Him by their perfect obedience to His requirements."¹

Stewards of God's manifold grace

"And God blessed them, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." Genesis 1:28.

The Most High never renounced His right and title of absolute Proprietor, but He gave man dominion over all His goods on this planet. Man was to be a "master" as long as he would remain faithful and obedient to God. We are not told that Adam and Eve ever worked on the Sabbath, or that they ever reacted in a negative way to the divine interdiction. They were finally deceived into believing Satan rather than God and into disregarding the right of God as Proprietor by eating from the tree reserved for Him. Here is a sin that brought as its consequences their expulsion from Paradise and an inheritance of suffering and death. They had usurped a

right that was not theirs, and in this they were robbing God of His right. Thus, their love and loyalty had been tested. They seemed to have forgotten that they were designed to act only as stewards, administrators of the Creator's goods.

From the painful experience of our first parents, God's people have always had something to learn. As God's representative on earth—His steward—man was to be always vigilant, always on guard. He does not really own any of the things he has. Whether they be lands, money, health, influence, all these have been entrusted to us to be administered to the glory of God, in His service and for the advancement of His cause.

"A steward identifies himself with his master. He accepts the responsibilities of a steward, and he must act in his master's stead, doing as his master would do were he presiding. His master's interests become his. The position of a steward is one of dignity because his master trusts him."²

Therefore, "having" actually means "being indebted," and all our business should ever be accompanied by the thought that we have a responsibility before God and that the day for rendering our account with Him is rapidly approaching. We will not escape being held accountable as stewards as surely as we will not escape death. There is but a short time for us to examine our estate and acknowledge today more than ever our dependence upon our Master in the administration of our life, health, physical powers, money, and properties. Every gift from God and every blessing requires wise administration. To ignore the responsibilities which this job of steward involves, actually means to reject the teachings and the authority of God's Word. It also means to despise the privileges of God's children and to deny the right of Christ as Redeemer.

Lessons from the parable of the talents

To be able to understand the temptations endangering those who await His coming, Jesus instructed

His disciples through the parable of the talents. Ministers and lay members, fathers and mothers, youth and children of today should all learn the lesson presented here by the world's Redeemer. Each moment, each penny or any other gift received should be used diligently for the proclamation of the message all over the world. It is time we all understood that the law of service is the link that connects us to God and to our fellowmen. Jesus has entrusted us with His wealth that must be used wisely so that we may be sure of a place in the eternal mansions of light.

To every one of us, goods have been entrusted according to our powers, according to our capacity to use what we have received. No one should ever complain for not having received better or richer gifts. We should be concerned not with how much we have received but instead, with "what am I doing with the goods entrusted to my stewardship?"

The true education of the members of the family should be understood as the preparation of all the powers of the body, mind and soul to serve God. Many of us, members of the Reform Movement, are behaving today as if we had no duty towards God and our fellowmen. How are we using our gifts and talents?

Health

One great gift which God extends to us is very much valued by many only after they have already lost it.

"Health is a great treasure. It is the greatest possession mortals can have. Wealth, honor or learning is dearly purchased, if it be at the loss of the vigor of health. None of these attainments can secure happiness, if health is wanting. It is a terrible sin to abuse the health that God has given us; for every abuse of health enfeebles us for life and makes us losers, even if we gain any amount of education."³

There are parents who leave their sons and daughters with nothing special to do, and let them choose whatever they like as work

by just picking what is easiest for them. The experiences of life have proven that there is nothing that could bring worse consequences to the spiritual and physical health of our children than by lifting the necessary burdens from off their shoulders. Exercise with their feet and arms will strengthen their muscles. They can be weary, but the sweet rest will refresh their bodies, they will have good digestion and will be strengthened for the duties of life.

Dear parents, do not exempt your children from the efforts of intense physical work. By your letting them do nothing or doing yourselves the things that could be done by them, you lay a foundation for their physical and mental debility. Who will suffer then?

The example set forth by Daniel and his companions at the court of the Babylonian king is a testimony for us both as parents and children. Many of us seem to think that Daniel and his companions were some kind of extremists. There is many a parent today among the professed people of God who would erroneously mold the tastes of their children in a wrong way, buying them sweets (candies, chocolate, ice cream) from a young age, allowing them to eat between meals or offering them Pepsi-Cola, Coca-Cola, or other harmful delicacies.

By indulging the appetite, the stomach becomes diseased from early youth. Self-indulgence and intemperance in eating grow and are strengthened with age. The intellectual powers and physical vigor are sacrificed by lustful indulgence. A Romanian proverb says that "Some people waste years during their lifetime because of intemperance, and on the brink of the grave they beg for a few seconds." Are we not robbing God of years of activity in His service and of our fellowmen if for some moments we gratify our perverted tastes? There are families where mothers complain about their children's irritability and nervousness, yet they are constantly offering them sweets to quiet them. Many of us resort to drugs to relieve the pains of our little ones.

Much money that is used for this purpose would be saved if regularity and simplicity were the law in our homes. Many precious moments could be used for study or for the benefit of others if we spent less time in preparing rich meals.

Another evil that must be avoided is the neglect to eat healthful food in order to be able to financially afford a bigger house, or buy a better car, or to provide a handsome dowry for the offspring.

"To care for the body by providing for it food that is relishable and strengthening is one of the first duties of the householder. It is far better to have less expensive clothing and furniture than to stint the supply of food. Our economy must never be of that kind which would lead to providing meager meals."⁴

"Those who thus shorten their lives . . . by disregarding nature's laws, are guilty of robbery toward God."⁵

Money

The effects of the economic crisis confronting us can be well understood if we go back in time and examine the state of mind of the Redeemer who shed tears for the generation living in the time of the end. He saw society engaged in a feverish anxiety, in a spectacular rush for pleasure and high position. The struggle for comfort and earning one's existence makes individuals ignore the principles of justice, mercy and respect. (Micah 7:2, 3.)

Every great city has a residential area where the rich live in plush homes, as well as pitiful slums where the poor live—often a stark contrast between a blatant waste of means and abject poverty. Economic matters are among the most important and most painful of our times.

Money represents a permanent test of loyalty and affection to God. Each person who earns money or has more property than is necessary for his real needs must seek for wisdom and grace in order to know his own heart and not have imaginary needs and become an

unfaithful steward, wasting that which God has entrusted to him.

"Money is not ours; houses and grounds, pictures and furniture, garments and luxuries, do not belong to us. . . . We have only a grant of those things that are necessary for health and life. . . . Our temporal blessings are given us in trust, to prove whether we can be entrusted with eternal riches."⁶

When the purpose for which these blessings are received is lost sight of, individuals open their hearts to the suggestions of Satan. Those who are careless and watch not, he approaches with thousands of temptations, offering them the riches of the world, asking them to sacrifice honesty and justice, to disregard conscience, and to allow themselves to be overcome by selfishness. As we are lulled by illusory hopes of owning the world's riches, the enemy gains control over our souls. If we, as watchmen for Christ's soon return, realize that our money belongs to Him, we will spend it wisely. The world and its habits and fashions will not be our standard. In order to counteract the continuous temptations of Satan and to overcome our own inclination towards selfishness, it is necessary to consider some dangers that can befall us—dangers which parents and children could avoid:

1. Indolence

Men and women who work see something good and grandiose in life and are willing to bear responsibilities with confidence and hope. Indolence weakens the power of reason and debases the soul. Many people could escape ruin and shipwreck, and many children would be saved much worry for tomorrow if they were instructed while young in useful and healthful kinds of work.

"There are many ways in which children can earn money themselves and can act their part in bringing thank offerings to Jesus, who gave His own life for them. . . . They should not be satisfied to take money from their father or mother

and put it into the treasury as an offering, when it is not theirs."⁷

2. Falseness and fraud

Those engaged in business are tempted to record their income and expenses incorrectly in order to minimize their taxes and thus they become unfaithful stewards.

"He [one who utters falsehood or practices deception] loses his own self-respect. He may not be conscious that God sees him and is acquainted with every business transaction, that holy angels are weighing his motives and listening to his words and that his reward will be according to his works. . . . He is degrading his mind and character. . . .

"As we deal with our fellowmen in petty dishonesty or in more daring fraud, so will we deal with God. Men who persist in a course of dishonesty will carry out their principles until they cheat their own souls and lose heaven and eternal life."⁸

3. Running into debt

"When one becomes involved in debt, he is in one of Satan's nets, which he sets for souls. . . . Abstracting and using money for any purpose, before it is earned, is a snare."⁹

"Make a solemn covenant with God that by His blessing you will pay your debts and then owe no man anything if you live on porridge and bread. It is so easy in preparing your table to throw out of your pocket twenty-five cents for extras. Take care of the pennies, and the dollars will take care of themselves. It is the mites here and the mites there that are spent for this, that, and the other, that soon run up into dollars. Deny self at least while you are walled in with debts. . . . Do not falter, be discouraged, or turn back. Deny your taste, deny the indulgence of appetite, save your pence and pay your debts. Work them off as fast as possible. When you can stand forth a free man again, owing no man anything, you will have achieved a great victory."¹⁰

"You ought not to allow yourself to become financially embarrassed; for the fact that you are in debt weakens your faith and tends to discourage you; and even the thought of it makes you nearly wild. You need to cut down your expenses, and strive to supply this deficiency in your character. You can and should make determined efforts to bring under control your disposition to spend means beyond your income."¹¹

If we run into debt, entangling ourselves economically day by day, our faith weakens, and worrying about the debt tends to hinder our ability and willingness to work and to pray, bringing discouragement and putting God's cause to shame.

Dear brethren, if we love God sincerely and above all things, earnestly seeking wisdom as to how to rightly use His goods, the temporal things will take the appropriate place where they belong in our affections. If we believe that money brings happiness without God's favor, then we will be controlled—enslaved—by money, as it perilously usurps His rightful place in our lives.

We should have a family budget and our expenses should never exceed our income. By correctly recording our expenditure and income on a regular basis, we can more easily limit ourselves to the current needs and be able to provide extra means for the work of God.

We should be thankful to God because He has ordained a system of testing our consecration and faithfulness. As the tree in the mid-

dle of the garden in Eden tested the sincerity of our first parents' faithfulness towards God, our own systematic benevolence for the Lord's work through tithes and offerings is the tangible, personal, practical and powerful means by which we acknowledge that God is the Proprietor and we are His stewards.

From their early childhood, our young people should be taught to economize and put aside what is best for God's cause. They must know the value of money and be taught to show their love for Christ by giving up personal pleasures in order to save every penny possible for missionary work.

"Keep a little money box on the mantel or in some safe place where it can be seen, in which the children can place their offerings for the Lord."¹²

Children and young people, fathers and mothers, we must understand today that God's work is soon to be finished. We are living in the period shortly before Christ leaves the heavenly sanctuary. The three angels' messages are to be quickly taken into all the world. For this there is now need of the sacrifices of all who are faithfully gathering each fragment of time, each dollar, and placing it in God's treasury.

God has ordained that the spreading of the present truth and light on earth must depend on the efforts and freewill offerings of those who are partakers of heavenly gifts. Only a relatively small num-

ber are asked to travel as missionaries or as ministers, but many are asked to contribute with their means for the spreading of the Gospel. **Our tithes and freewill offerings make up the income of the gospel.** God claims for Himself the tenth part of the means entrusted to us. We must understand that the progress of evangelistic work consists in the faithful administration of His property and is one of the conditions for receiving the latter rain. We, as God's people, must understand that if we retain for ourselves that which is due to Him, or if we use His gifts selfishly, a curse will be upon His work and heaven's windows will be shut, making His refreshing impossible.

May the Lord have mercy on us during this week of prayer, and give us wisdom to intelligently use the time of probation, the privileges of health, money and properties, so that we may soon develop characters fit for entrance into the glorious Promised Land so long awaited! ❧

¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 386.

² *Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 246.

³ *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 150.

⁴ *The Adventist Home*, p. 377.

⁵ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 346.

⁶ *The Adventist Home*, p. 367.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 387.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 392.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 257.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 254, 255

¹² *The Adventist Home*, p. 388.

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