

# the REFORMATION *herald*

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22ND GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION SPECIAL REPORT

# the REFORMATION herald

Volume 56, Number 5

## IN THIS ISSUE

### Editorial

*Why Does God Call for a General Conference?*

3

### The Doctrines of the Faith

*What is the difference between a doctrine and a resolution?*

4

### Highlights From the Doctrinal Decisions

*Faith applied in everyday issues.*

8

### 2015–2019 General Conference Officers and Committees

*Varied talents united in consecrated teamwork.*

12

### All Heaven in One Gift

*God gave everything by sending Christ to rescue humanity.*

16

### Christ Is All for Me

*It's up to each individual to choose to give all for Christ.*

18

### Christ Is All for My Friends

*The good news needs to be shared with others.*

20

### A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words

*Memorable moments from the spiritual meetings.*

24

### What About the Music?

*Praising the Lord in sacred song.*

28

### Children's Corner

*Keeping God's Church in Order.*

32



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"The age in which we live calls for  
reformatory action."

—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 488.

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# Why Does God Call for a General Conference?



Back in 1873, at the General Conference session held by the Seventh-day Adventists that year, an idea was presented that one man was to be their visible denominational leader, as Moses was the visible leader of the Hebrews. The presentation was printed in pamphlet form and widely circulated. James White, however, became instrumental in refuting such a position by publishing a series of three editorials uplifting Christ as the only head of the church, quoting Matthew 23:8, “One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.”

The Spirit of Prophecy concurs. “In the work of the Lord for these last days there

“It is a source of encouragement to know that these different organizations [mentioned in the 1906 denominational yearbook] in various countries and nationalities are all united in the promulgation of the one great cause of truth, and the salvation of men. Not in the mere formal machinery of organization do we trust, but in God, the author of order and organization. With His blessing upon the united and harmonious action of His workers we may realize how good and pleasant it is for brethren to be united, to dwell together in unity, and to have ‘all things done decently and in order.’”<sup>2</sup>

Likewise, the unity found in the SDA Reform Movement is similarly

theme of the conference was “Christ Is All, and in All,” centered on the merits of our all-sufficient Saviour.

In this issue of the *Reformation Herald*, you will find news updates from the delegation session followed by a brief sampling of some of the spiritual messages presented at the conference. Additional messages from this event will be brought in future issues. In the meantime, please check out our website also at [gcsession.sdarm.org](http://gcsession.sdarm.org) to learn more.

## References

<sup>1</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 232, 233.

<sup>2</sup> John N. Loughborough: *The Church, Its Organization, Order and Discipline*, p. 159.

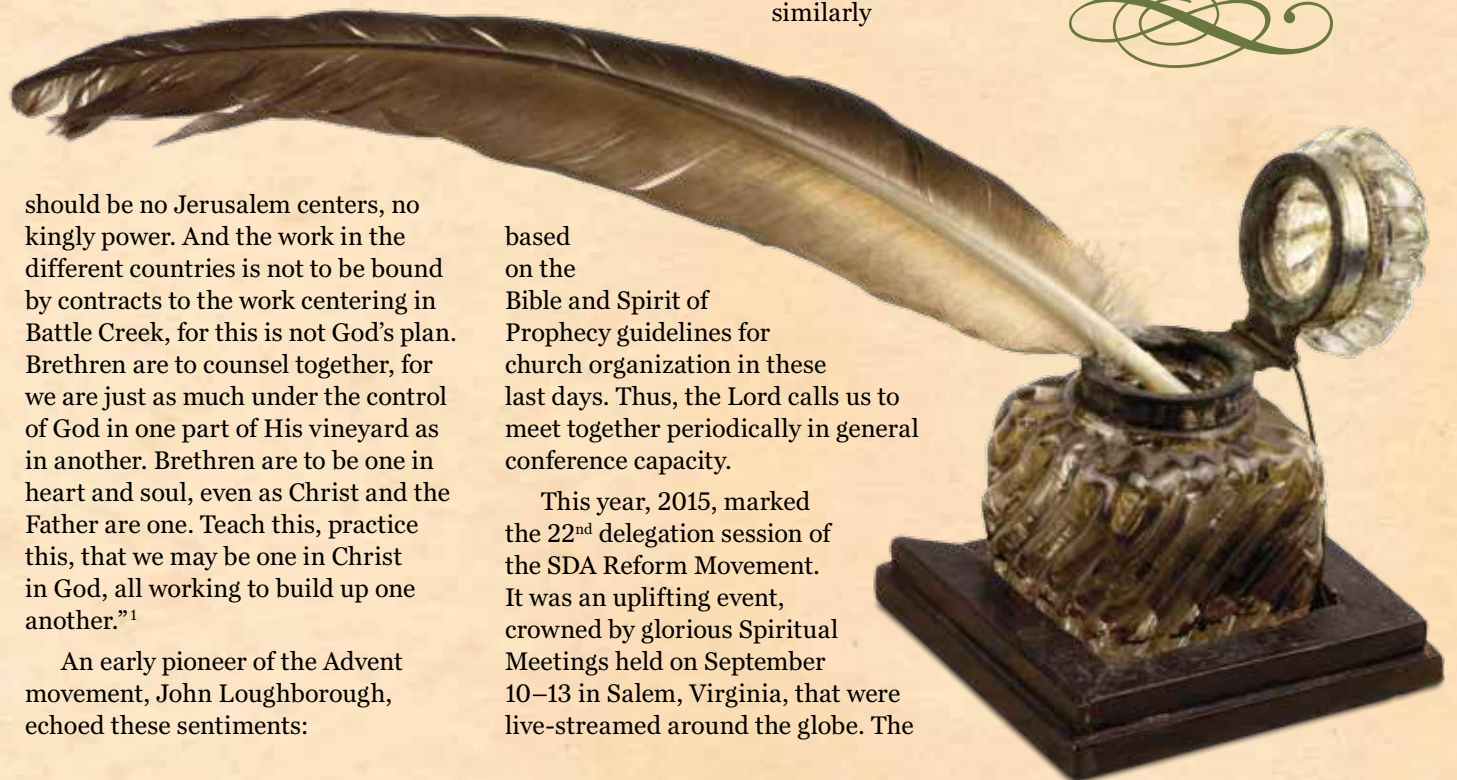


should be no Jerusalem centers, no kingly power. And the work in the different countries is not to be bound by contracts to the work centering in Battle Creek, for this is not God’s plan. Brethren are to counsel together, for we are just as much under the control of God in one part of His vineyard as in another. Brethren are to be one in heart and soul, even as Christ and the Father are one. Teach this, practice this, that we may be one in Christ in God, all working to build up one another.”<sup>1</sup>

An early pioneer of the Advent movement, John Loughborough, echoed these sentiments:

based on the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy guidelines for church organization in these last days. Thus, the Lord calls us to meet together periodically in general conference capacity.

This year, 2015, marked the 22<sup>nd</sup> delegation session of the SDA Reform Movement. It was an uplifting event, crowned by glorious Spiritual Meetings held on September 10–13 in Salem, Virginia, that were live-streamed around the globe. The



# The Doctrines of the Faith

*By Peter D. Lausevic*

**W**hen we talk about our faith we often refer to that element that makes it possible to believe in God and place our trust fully in Him. We obtain such a faith through the study of His word. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). This is the most prevalent way that faith is used in the Bible. However, faith is more than believing and trusting. Faith is the basis on which we formulate that upon which we believe. This basis is what we call the doctrines of the church. We must be clear on what these doctrines are, for which we must earnestly contend. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should **earnestly contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3, emphasis supplied).

This faith makes us who we are; it differentiates us from the rest of the world as well as from the professed churches in Christianity—and when

manifested in our character, it becomes the power to influence and change the world. "Though few in numbers, without wealth, position, or honorary titles, [the early Christians] were a terror to evildoers wherever their **character and doctrines** were known."<sup>1</sup>

If we do not keep a vigilant watch over these set of beliefs, the devil uses this avenue as an entering wedge to get into the church and capture well-meaning souls for destruction. "Well would it be for the church and the world if the principles that actuated those steadfast souls were revived in the hearts of God's professed people. There is an **alarming indifference in regard to the doctrines** which are the pillars of the Christian faith. The opinion is gaining ground, that, after all, these are not of vital importance. This **degeneracy** is strengthening the hands of the agents of Satan, so that false theories and fatal delusions which the faithful in ages past **imperiled their lives to resist and expose**, are now

regarded with favor by thousands who claim to be followers of Christ."<sup>2</sup>

It is this faith that makes us who we are. "Many claim that it matters not what one believes, if his life is only right. But the life is molded by the faith. If light and truth is within our reach, and we neglect to improve the privilege of hearing and seeing it, we virtually reject it; we are choosing darkness rather than light."<sup>3</sup>

Our faithful forefathers were willing to die rather than give up the doctrines of the faith. This was especially true during the period of Pergamos, when many were forced to make such a choice between their life and their fundamental system of beliefs. The testimony of the True Witness was, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast **not denied my faith**, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth" (Revelation 2:13, emphasis supplied).



## Prayer for unity

In our desire to maintain the pure faith, we must also be just as eager to form a bond of unity one to another. Before the cross, before Gethsemane, Jesus prayed for such unity. **“That they all may be one;** as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21, emphasis supplied). This union of believers one to another is a requirement before we can experience the outpouring of the Latter Rain and it is the prerequisite to successful evangelism. “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with **one accord** in one place” (Acts 2:1, emphasis supplied).

Without this power of true love, the pure, vivifying, transforming agency of the truth becomes dead and destructive in its character. “A jealous regard for what is termed theological truth often accompanies a hatred of genuine truth as made manifest in life. The darkest chapters of history are burdened with the record of crimes committed by bigoted religionists.”<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of the truth is unifying in its nature, and this is why it radiates past all types of human barriers. Its work is not in the intellect merely but in the change of nature. “The greatest deception of the human mind in Christ’s day was that a mere assent to the truth constitutes righteousness. In all human experience a theoretical knowledge of the truth has been proved to be insufficient for the saving of the soul.”<sup>5</sup>

When we truly experience the truth in the form of the gospel of Jesus Christ, then individuals from different nationalities, languages, cultures, and personalities are able to work together in the bond of unity, and the natural result is that the world will believe that Jesus is the true Messiah and that the gospel really “is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16).

## A General Conference session

The purpose of a General Conference session is not merely to elect new officers, evaluate methods of labor, formulate rules for the organizational structure of the church, and make sure we are in a strong financial basis so that we can enter into new countries. The main reason for calling delegates from all parts of the world field is to make sure that our doctrines are founded upon a strong scriptural basis. The very first record of a General Conference session is found in Acts chapter 15. As important as such sessions may be, Inspiration did not see the need to record the election of officers or its guidelines on how the organizational structure will operate. There were doctrinal issues that were causing unnecessary divisions in the church, and the purpose of this meeting was to find a consensus consistent with biblical teachings under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

When doctrines are causing divisions, it is not a time to polarize ourselves one from another and to form factions as did the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. The purpose of church leadership is to guide the members into a oneness that is miraculous from the standpoint of this world. “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

**Till we all come in the unity of the faith,** and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Ephesians 4:11–14, emphasis supplied).

This means that when a point is causing divisions in the church, it is time to prayerfully lay that subject aside until we can find a platform of unity in a General Conference session. “The [circumcision] matter resulted in much discussion and want of harmony in the church, until finally the church of Antioch, apprehending that a division among them would occur from any further discussion of the question, decided to send Paul and Barnabas, together with some responsible men of Antioch, to Jerusalem, to lay the matter before the apostles and elders. There they were to meet delegates from the different churches, and those who had come to attend the approaching annual festivals. **Meanwhile all controversy was to cease until a final decision should be made** by the responsible men of the church.”<sup>6</sup>

Before that first recorded General Conference session, the various factions did not travel from place to place debating their ideas and trying to influence those coming to the session. They were to lay their



differences aside until the proper time and place for this discussion.

Too often we really believe in the need for unity and even strongly teach the need for it and then do all in our power to make sure that everyone agrees with “me.” Genuine unity is not based on everyone agreeing with “me” but rather everyone submitting to the evidences given, based on the unerring Scriptures of the prophets. Real submission has been and ever will be the basis of true religion. “Submit yourselves therefore to God” (James 4:7). We have a very important principle in that meeting in Jerusalem regarding the rite of circumcision. “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things” (Acts 15:28). “The council **did not claim infallibility in their deliberations**, but moved from the dictates of **enlightened judgment**, and with the dignity of a church established by the divine will. They saw that **God Himself had decided this question by favoring the Gentiles with the Holy Ghost**; and it was left for them to follow the guidance of the Spirit.”<sup>7</sup> The purpose of the session was to understand the will of God as revealed through the Holy Spirit either directly or through the experiences gained by seeing the blessing that God had given to those who were guided by the purported “new teaching.”

This means that many delegates had to change their mind from what they had at first thought. They were there to listen, not just to speak. “And when there had been **much disputing**, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.” After Peter gave the clear evidences of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on believers who were not circumcised, then the delegates were in a mood to listen quietly and patiently to the apostles who had labored for the gentile world. “Then **all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience** to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them” (Acts 15:7, 12, emphasis supplied).

Sometimes people have a wrong idea of what it means to be a delegate. Since we are elected to represent certain areas, we feel that we must vote according to what we are told by our constituents. If that were the case, we would not even need to



spend all the money and time to go to a session. All we would need to do is send out a ballot to the various units, and they could simply vote without having everyone come together. But that would defeat the real purpose of a delegation session. We come together not only to express our views on a subject but also to listen to the opposing view. By listening we sometimes change our mind and accept what we were not prepared to accept before we came together. And sometimes, we may even conclude that neither side was correct and, as a result, come to a completely different conclusion. “God calls upon those who hold responsible positions in Sabbath School work to put away all egotism, all self-confidence, and pride of opinion; if a message comes that you do not understand, take pains that you may hear the reasons the messenger may give, comparing scripture with scripture, that you may know whether or not it is sustained by the word of God. If you believe that the positions taken have not the word of God for their foundation, if the position you hold on the subject cannot be controverted, then produce your strong reasons; for your position will not be shaken by coming in contact with error. There is no virtue or manliness in keeping up a continual warfare in the dark, closing your eyes lest you may see, closing your ears lest you may hear, hardening your heart in ignorance and unbelief lest you may have to humble yourselves and acknowledge that you have received light on some points of truth.”<sup>8</sup>





The reason for this is because unity can only come when we surrender our will to the written will of God. “If the professed followers of Christ would accept God’s standard, it would bring them into unity; but so long as human wisdom is exalted above His Holy Word, there will be divisions and dissension.”<sup>9</sup> This is why there is no room for personal opinions or preferences or even the traditions of the church. The reason we discuss doctrinal issues at a General Conference session, even some issues coming up again and again, is so that we can be very clear that our beliefs are clearly based on the Word of God, and the Word of God alone. “God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support.”<sup>10</sup>

## Implementing resolutions

After the resolutions are made, we are not to go from country to country teaching these resolutions. That is not our message to the world. We need to know them as workers and members, but our unified message is to have a clear inspired basis. “In the commission to His disciples, Christ not only outlined their work, but gave them their message. Teach the people, He said, ‘to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you’ (Matthew 28:20). The disciples were to teach what Christ had taught. That which He had spoken, not only in person, but through all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament, is here included. Human teaching is shut out. There is no place for tradition, for man’s theories and conclusions, or for church legislation. No laws ordained by ecclesiastical authority are



included in the commission. None of these are Christ’s servants to teach.”<sup>11</sup>

We must also be very careful how we apply the decisions that we make, even with the clear biblical evidences in their support. We must remember how the truth is to be taught. “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:15). Sinful people were attracted to the pure truth and impeccable purity of Jesus. “Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them” (Luke 15:1, 2).

Jesus came to save sinners. The way He could reach them was because they realized that sinful though they were, the Messiah really loved them. “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). “Now that Jesus has ascended to heaven, His disciples are His representatives among men, and one of the most effective ways of winning souls to Him is in exemplifying His character in our daily life. Our influence upon others depends not so much upon what we say as upon what we are. Men may combat and defy our logic, they may resist our appeals; but a life of disinterested love is an argument they cannot gainsay. A consistent life, characterized by the meekness of Christ, is a power in the world.”<sup>12</sup>

In other words, people need to know that we actually love them and that, in teaching the truth, we are doing so because of that love.

The servant of the Lord testified: “It seems to me that the Lord is giving the erring, the weak and trembling, and even those who have apostatized from the truth, a special call to come fully into the fold. But there are but few in our churches who feel that this is the case. And there are still fewer who stand where they can help such. There are more who stand directly in the way of these poor souls. Very many have an exacting spirit. They require them to come to just such and such terms before they will reach to them the helping hand. Thus they hold them off at arms’ length. They have not learned that they have a special duty to go and search for these lost sheep. They must not wait till these come to them. Read the touching parable of the lost sheep. . . .

“The Pharisees murmured because Jesus received publicans and common sinners, and ate with them. In their self-righteousness they despised these poor sinners who gladly heard the words of Jesus. To rebuke this spirit in the scribes and Pharisees, and leave an impressive lesson for all, the Lord gave the parable of the lost sheep.”<sup>13</sup>

## Conclusion

The resolutions as they were decided follow this article. I hope that in reading them along with the references may be a blessing to you and an encouragement to the believers around the world. *R*

## References

- <sup>1</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 46. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 597.
- <sup>4</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 309.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 63. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>8</sup> *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, pp. 28, 29.
- <sup>9</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 124.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 595.
- <sup>11</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 826.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 141, 142.
- <sup>13</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 20, 21.

## Organ Donation

WHEREAS a question was submitted regarding the church's position on organ donation, it was **RESOLVED**, that when organs may be used to sustain someone's life, body organs may be donated, provided that the deceased person had given prior consent and/or the family members give consent to donate. There is no Scriptural prohibition in donation of organs to save someone's life. While we are alive, we may donate blood or other organs to help sustain life. This is also in accordance with the gospel principle.

"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die" (Romans 5:7).

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11).

"Our personal identity is preserved in the resurrection, though not the same particles of matter or material

substance as went into the grave. The wondrous works of God are a mystery to man. The spirit, the character of man, is returned to God, there to be preserved. In the resurrection every man will have his own character. God in His own time will call forth the dead, giving again the breath of life, and bidding the dry bones live. The same form will come forth, but it will be free from disease and every defect. It lives again bearing the same individuality of features, so that friend will recognize friend. There is no law of God in nature which shows that God gives back the same identical particles of matter which

# Highlights From the Doctrinal Decisions





composed the body before death. God shall give the righteous dead a body that will please Him.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1093.

## Laodicea

WHEREAS the issue of the placement of the Reform Movement within the prophecy of the seven churches had been discussed by the General Conference Delegation Session (#52/2003) and was passed to the Working Doctrinal Committee, it was RESOLVED, that we acknowledge that the prophecy of the seven churches represent Christ’s church living in different periods of the Christian era, and that the Reform Movement, as the remnant church of Christ, is living within the period of Laodicea. The counsel of the Faithful Witness applies to each individual who desires salvation. It is our duty to accept this message personally and it is our mission to preach it to the whole world. Those who overcome during the Laodicean period will be granted to sit with Christ in His throne.

It was FURTHER RESOLVED, that there is a difference between a person or denomination living in the last period of the New Testament church who have a tendency to fall into the condition described in the message to the Laodiceans receiving the message of warning and hope, and between those who actually come to the point of being spewed out. The missionary outreach programs or other religious exercises of an individual or denomination that is spewed out of the mouth of Christ are not accepted before God.

It was FURTHER RESOLVED, that we as a people continue to recognize our spiritual need of this most precious message of Christ Our Righteousness as it began to be presented in 1888. “The message which the messengers have been proclaiming is the message to the Laodicean church [Revelation 3:14–20 quoted.]” *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 1051. The acceptance of this message is made manifest in the

obedience to all the commandments of God as it accomplishes the needed reformation among those who are preparing for translation. As the church of God in the last period of the Christian era, the important counsels of each of the seven churches are to be accepted. “I call upon our church members to read the whole of the third chapter of Revelation, and to make an application of it” (*The Review and Herald*, August 20, 1903).

“The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian Era. The number 7 indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages extend to the end of time, while the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at different periods in the history of the world.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 585.

## Euthanasia

WHEREAS God is the Life-giver, and it is not the right of anyone to take human life, it was RESOLVED, that the practice of any human being intentionally ending a human life in order to relieve pain or suffering (euthanasia) is contrary to God’s will (Exodus 20:13). As Christians, we are not to request or consent to euthanasia nor should we be involved in the so-called mercy killing of another human being.

It was FURTHER RESOLVED, that we believe that every human being has a personal human right to either choose or refuse medical treatment for any ailment, including terminal illness.

## Tribal Marriage

WHEREAS a question regarding the properly conducted customary (tribal) marriage between a man and a woman was considered and how far we recognize this as a legal marriage, and further clarification was requested on Resolution #61/1995, it was

RESOLVED that in compliance with Resolution #32 /1955, such a marriage when properly conducted in the presence of witnesses and recognized by the society as an official

marriage is binding before God and the church considers that couple married; and it was

FURTHER RESOLVED, that when the law or necessity requires further documentation of such marriage, then that marriage should be registered with the appropriate government body.

In such cases where the individuals are already members, they must follow our existing principle on marriage that also requires a church blessing in addition to the above (see Principles of Faith and Church Order, point 18).

## Abortion

WHEREAS the subject of abortion was analyzed because of its prevalence in many cultures, and WHEREAS it is the church’s duty to reiterate its clear stand against killing through abortion and also to instruct those that seek its guidance, it was

RESOLVED, that abortion is contrary to the biblical expression of human life beginning at conception.

The Bible supports the idea that human life begins at conception, not only at birth. At the moment of conception a new human being is created—possessing his or her own individuality with a God-given right to a future. (Jeremiah 1:5; Psalms 22:9, 10; 71:6; Job 31:15.)

Human life from conception is a wonderful and sacred gift of God that deserves . . . protection from being destroyed. . . .

The taking of life at any stage of development is murder and forbidden by God. (Exodus 20:13; Matthew 19:18.)

## Consequences of Choice

God does not arbitrarily rule the conscience of an individual. It is also not the role or intention of God’s church to control the individual’s conscience.

“[Thousands today] do not see that to deprive man of the freedom of choice would be to rob him of his prerogative as an intelligent being and make him a mere automaton. It is not

God's purpose to coerce the will. Man was created a free moral agent. Like the inhabitants of all other worlds, he must be subjected to the test of obedience; but he is never brought into such a position that yielding to evil becomes a matter of necessity. No temptation or trial is permitted to come to him which he is unable to resist. God made such ample provision that man need never have been defeated in the conflict with Satan."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 331, 332.

Each individual is endowed with the capability of choosing. Therefore each individual is responsible for his or her choice, and those that abuse this capability and choose contrary to the requirements of God's Word will be responsible for the tragic consequences of their choices. (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20.)

"Your entire future will be influenced for good or for evil by the path you now choose."—*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 421.

God is the One who gives life to all, and He is the only One who can maintain it. Therefore, He is the only One who has the right to take it away under any circumstance. (Acts 17:25, 26, 28; Genesis 2:7; Job 1:21.)

Opposition to the termination of human life before birth (based on the biblical imperative to protect life) is not a rejection of the choice of a woman to control her own destiny or her own body. A woman is free to avoid conception or to make the parental sacrifice and place the child in the care of another loving parent if the mother cannot raise the child herself.

We recognize that carrying a human life inside her womb is a significant experience requiring effort and sacrifice from the mother. Having that experience forced upon her by the sin of another human being can be very difficult. Nonetheless, avoiding that experience by abortion is no more morally defensible or acceptable than infanticide after the birth of the child. In such cases adoption may be a viable option.

Any woman who has a pregnancy forced upon her needs the support and encouragement of Christians. Avoiding or rejecting such a person is contrary to the example of Jesus (Matthew 9:10, 11) and the teachings of His word.

### **Implications for Family Planning and Contraception**

To be a parent is a God-given responsibility and one not to be taken lightly nor given up lightly. In order to establish healthful families, part of the gospel work is to hold seminars for single young people, instructing them how to have a healthy relationship before marriage.

The church, as an institution that cares for the life and happiness of its members and of society in general, should hold family seminars in order to strengthen family ties. During these seminars, parents must be instructed about the privileges and responsibilities involved in training a child from the womb. (Judges 13:7, 13, 17; *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 372, 373.)

Proper birth control and family planning is a Christian requirement according to the following counsel: "Parents should not increase their families any faster than they know that their children can be well cared for, and educated. A child in the mother's arms from year to year is great injustice to her. It lessens, and often destroys, social enjoyment, and increases domestic wretchedness. It robs their children of that care, education, and happiness, which parents should feel it their duty to bestow upon them. The husband violates the marriage vow, and the duties enjoined upon him in the word of God, when he disregards the health and happiness of the wife, by increasing her burdens and cares by numerous offspring. 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.' '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, 28, 29)" (*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 425).

We do not accept as a method of contraception any intrauterine device (such as intrauterine spirals) and any medication which prevents the implantation of a fertilized egg or destroys a fertilized egg (Proverbs 24:10–12). This is not contraception in its proper understanding but just another form of abortion—as it removes the fetus after conception.

### **A Supportive Role**

Jesus demonstrated that humans struggling with temptation and its consequences need compassion. Attitudes of condemnation are inappropriate in those who have accepted the gospel. Among the responsibilities of the church is the care for the poor and needy. Therefore the church should provide relief for individuals and families facing a pregnancy crisis as well as support to those who mistakenly have made wrong choices and are in need of spiritual, moral, and psychological help. (Proverbs 29:7; 31:9; Job 4:3, 4; Isaiah 35:3; Acts 20:35.)

In cases where the baby has already died, the mother must follow the physician's guidance to preserve her life and health. The removal of a dead fetus cannot be considered an abortion.

In cases where one insists upon the continuation of a pregnancy that imposes a great threat to the mother's life and little possibility for the baby's survival, then the mother, together with the physician's guidance, must consider the options and possibilities according to the specific circumstances. Such decisions will be more appropriately dealt with withing a healthy family environment.

### **Photography on the Sabbath day**

WHEREAS the topic of photography, videography, and other multimedia and their use on the Sabbath has been raised over many years due to concerns for true Sabbath observance; and while we realize the danger of photography and multimedia becoming a species



of idolatry when abused, we also realize that when rightly used, it can have a beneficial effect in spreading the gospel message. In order to understand what is appropriate with photography or the use of multimedia on the Sabbath, the following considerations were made.

### **Why the Sabbath Is Given**

The Sabbath is a time for us to come into a closer relationship with God and spend time in worship, meditation, praise, fellowship, holy deeds of necessity, and commemoration of what He has done for us.

“If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words” (Isaiah 58:13).

“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his” (Hebrews 4:9, 10).

“The Sabbath is not intended to be a period of useless inactivity. The law forbids secular labor on the rest day of the Lord; the toil that gains a livelihood must cease; no labor for worldly pleasure or profit is lawful upon that day; but as God ceased His labor of creating, and rested upon the Sabbath and blessed it, so man is to leave the occupations of his daily life, and devote those sacred hours to healthful rest, to worship, and to holy deeds.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 207.

“When you associate together, let the mind be reverently turned to the contemplation of eternal realities. Thus you will be helping one another to be spiritually minded.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, p. 141.

### **Photography or videography on the Sabbath**

In view of the above principles of true Sabbathkeeping, it was

RESOLVED that the use of multimedia, such as photos, video, and similar technologies, intended for

use in the promotion or dissemination of the truth, such as baptisms, religious meetings, and other spiritual events, when taken on the Sabbath is in harmony with the spirit of true Sabbathkeeping. However, we should keep in mind that “from doing works of necessity” we may “fall into the habit of doing things on the Sabbath that are not necessary. The sense of its sacredness is lost, and the holy commandment is of no effect” (MM 215). Also, care should be taken by all members that reverence for the Sabbath and the house of God is maintained at all times. In order to maintain reverence during the meetings, it may be necessary for local organizers to appoint a limited number of people to be responsible for multimedia recording, including photography.

### **Common photography or videography**

Ministers and members “upon the Sabbath . . . should conscientiously restrict themselves to conversation upon religious themes—to present truth, present duty, the Christian’s hopes and fears, trials, conflicts, and afflictions; to overcoming at last, and the reward to be received” (*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 704).

The servant of the Lord counsels us that “albums filled with photographs of the family and their friends are placed where they will attract the attention of visitors. Thus the thoughts, which should be upon God and heavenly interests, are brought down to common things. Is not this a species of idolatry?” (*Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 317).

As the photography or videography of family and friends when taken, viewed or shared on the Sabbath

in a non-religious context has a tendency to bring the thoughts down to common things, in order to keep the Sabbath day holy, we should avoid such practice.

### **Rental of church properties**

RESOLVED, that while we do not rent out our sanctuaries, in general we also do not rent out our churches or meeting halls, particularly where we gather for weekly services. However, we believe that we can make some exceptions, particularly where the church owns a property that is not being used on a regular, weekly basis for religious services (an example of this may be a church-run school or a campground where conferences are held). Where this is the case, the properties generally are underutilized, by staying vacant most of the year. In such cases, we may consider renting the facilities to outside groups from Sunday to Friday. However, we should be careful in evaluating each group and each situation on its own merit. Some points to analyze include: the particular organization and its purposes, types of activities to be conducted, and any implications to the honor of God and the reputation of our organization for allowing that group or activity on our facility. We should be careful not to allow such inappropriate activities as the playing of loud music, consumption of alcoholic beverages, or anything that is opposed to our fundamental principles, and so forth. If the facility rental would also include the Sabbath hours, then all the above are applicable, with the addition that the purpose and activities of the renting organization would not violate the principles of true Sabbathkeeping. *R*



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# ALL HEAVEN IN ONE GIFT

*Highlights from the sermon  
presented by Davi Paes Silva*

“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).

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son—the level of the love is proportional to the value of the gift.

“In our behalf the Father gave His only-begotten Son; and Christ, having given up all that He had, then gave Himself, that man might be saved. The cross of Calvary should appeal to the benevolence of every follower of the Saviour. The principle there illustrated is to give, give. ‘He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked’ (1 John 2:6).<sup>1</sup>

“‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son’ (John 3:16). **It is through that one gift that every other is imparted to men.** Daily the whole world receives blessing from God. Every drop of rain, every ray of light shed on our unthankful race, every leaf and flower and fruit, testifies to God’s long forbearance and His great love.”<sup>2</sup>

“[God] gave [His Son] not only to bear our sins, and to die as our

sacrifice; He gave Him to the fallen race. To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature.”<sup>3</sup>

“The treasure of the gospel, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, was among [the Jews], but they rejected **the greatest gift** that Heaven could bestow.”<sup>4</sup>

“The Prince of heaven was among His people. **The greatest gift of God had been given to the world.** Joy to the poor; for Christ had come to make them heirs of His kingdom. Joy to the rich; for He would teach them how to secure eternal riches. Joy to the ignorant; He would make them wise unto salvation. Joy to the learned; He would open to them deeper mysteries than they had ever fathomed; truths that had been hidden from the foundation of the world would be opened to men by the Saviour’s mission.”<sup>5</sup>

“**When God gave Jesus to our world, He gave all heaven.** This gift has secured for us our adoption into God’s family. The Father’s promise is Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. Never will He falsify. Never

will He alter the thing that has gone out of His mouth. The clouds of uncertainty and unbelief rolled back as the Saviour cried out upon the cross, ‘It is finished.’ No longer had the enemy power to tempt or annoy Him. Holiness and justice united in the completion of the great work of redemption. On the cross mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other. Jesus had testified that God is true. Faith demands no more. The doubting soul need not ask, Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? The answer comes clear and strong, ‘**God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**’”<sup>6</sup>

## The testimony of the Lord's servant

“God the Father has given unto man the greatest gift that Heaven held. ‘Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God’ (1 John 3:1). I believe that the heart of the great God is touched and moved



by the condition of sinners today, as when He gave His Son to die for the sins of the world. Christ says, 'I and my Father are one' (John 10:30). Sinners and backsliders, it is your duty to believe that God loves you this day, and that Christ loves you. The Redeemer of the world made a great sacrifice to purchase for you life everlasting. Can you now say, 'Here on my heart the burden lies, and past offenses pain my eyes?'

"The Father has given a pledge to sinners, in that He withheld not His dearly beloved Son, but gave Him a sacrifice for them. Christ has given the pledge of His love to sinners, in that He gave His life to save them. If the Father has manifested His love for sinners by giving His only son, will He not freely give every mercy and blessing? . . . The Father takes no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but He wants him to repent of his sins and turn to righteousness and be saved. When the sinner desires the approval of the Lord more than any thing else and is willing to make any and every sacrifice for the love of Jesus, he may settle it in his mind as a fact that, if he perseveres, he will stand finally in the city of God upon the gold-paved streets."<sup>7</sup>

### An appeal for each of us

"[God] has given you the gift of His Son, the greatest gift that Heaven could bestow; and now if you connect with God, if you connect with heaven, you may, in the name and strength of Jesus develop symmetrical characters; characters that are spotless as the pure lily that opens its blossom on the bosom of the lake. I invite you to take hold of heaven's blessings and then you can have a right hold upon the earth. I invite you to look up through nature to nature's God. Let these things teach you the love of God, and the care that He has for those formed in His image."<sup>8</sup>

"The greatest gift that God could bestow upon men was bestowed in the gift of His beloved Son. . . . There was nothing held in reserve. No second probation will ever be provided. If the unspeakable gift of God does

not lead man to repentance, there is nothing that ever will move his heart. There is no power held in reserve to act upon his mind, and arouse his sensibilities. The whole character of God was revealed in His Son, the whole range of the possibilities of heaven is displayed for the acceptance of man in the Son of the Infinite One. The way for man's return to God and heaven has no barriers. The matchless depths of the Saviour's love have been demonstrated; and if this manifestation of God's love for the children of men does not prevail to draw men to Himself, there is nothing that ever will."<sup>9</sup>

**"The preaching of the gospel gives sinners opportunity to receive the greatest gift ever proffered human beings. Those who refuse this gift reveal the highest contempt for God."**<sup>10</sup>

"What has [Christ] done for the human family? He has elevated man in the scale of moral value. We may become conquerors through our Sufficiency. There is hope for the most hopeless, in Christ. . . . What did Christ come here for? To represent the Father. What a heart of love and sympathy! . . . **When God gave His Son, He gave all heaven. He could give no more.**"<sup>11</sup>

### Our greatest gift to God

"Will you appreciate the great sacrifice Christ has made in your behalf? Give yourself, body, soul, and spirit, to the dear Saviour who loves you. This is the greatest gift you can make to Him. Will you do this?"<sup>12</sup>

"The heart belongs to Jesus. He has paid an infinite price for the soul; and He intercedes before the Father as our Mediator, pleading not as a petitioner, but as conqueror who would claim that which is His own. He is able to save to the uttermost, for He ever lives to make intercession for us. A young heart is a precious offering, the most valuable gift that can be presented to God. All that you are, all the ability you possess, comes from God a sacred trust, to be rendered back to Him again in a willing, holy offering. You cannot give to God

anything that He has not first given you. Therefore when the heart is given to God, it is giving to Him a gift which he has purchased and is His own."<sup>13</sup>

"In the parable the pearl is not represented as a gift. The merchantman bought it at the price of all that he had. Many question the meaning of this, since Christ is represented in the Scriptures as a gift. He is a gift, but only to those who give themselves, soul, body, and spirit, to Him without reserve. We are to give ourselves to Christ, to live a life of willing obedience to all His requirements. All that we are, all the talents and capabilities we possess, are the Lord's, to be consecrated to His service. When we thus give ourselves wholly to Him, Christ, with all the treasures of heaven, gives Himself to us. We obtain the pearl of great price.

"Salvation is a free gift, and yet it is to be bought and sold. In the market of which divine mercy has the management, the precious pearl is represented as being bought without money and without price. In this market all may obtain the goods of heaven. The treasury of the jewels of truth is open to all. 'Behold, I have set before thee an open door,' the Lord declares, 'and no man can shut it.' No sword guards the way through this door. Voices from within and at the door say, Come. The Saviour's voice earnestly and lovingly invites us: 'I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich' (Revelation 3:8, 18)."<sup>14</sup> R

### References

- <sup>1</sup> *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 339.
- <sup>2</sup> *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 301, 302. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>3</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.
- <sup>4</sup> *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 105. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>5</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 277. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>6</sup> *The Bible Echo*, July 23, 1900. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>7</sup> *The Review and Herald*, May 4, 1876.
- <sup>8</sup> *The Signs of the Times*, February 7, 1878.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, December 30, 1889.
- <sup>10</sup> *Loma Linda Messages*, p. 156. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>11</sup> *Temperance*, pp. 286, 287. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>12</sup> *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 7, p. 9.
- <sup>13</sup> *Messages to Young People*, p. 407.
- <sup>14</sup> *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 116, 117.



# CHRIST IS ALL FOR ME

*Highlights from the sermon presented by Ion Adrian Finaru*



How beautiful is the first-love experience of new believers! Yet how important it is to be sure that it continues throughout our Christian journey. We are to buy from Jesus gold tried in the fire that we may be rich, white raiment that we may be clothed, and to anoint our eyes with eyesalve that we may see. (Revelation 3:18.)

The world routinely teaches us that we are to be accustomed to stand on our own, to be self-sufficient and not to need anything—so the injunction for us—because of our great deficiency—to obtain these items seems rather foreign to human nature.

### Gold tried in the fire

What is this “gold tried in the fire”? We are told by Inspiration that it is “faith that works by love.”<sup>1</sup> Since “God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Romans 12:3), we really do not need more faith than what God has already given us. But the faith that we already have grows and develops—in fact, the “just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). Our faith grows and develops by exercise, first of all, by hearing, for “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). So, in summary, faith comes by the word of God. By believing in the word of Jesus, we receive more than any other way possible.

Remember the experience of the centurion who exercised the faith he had received from birth (Matthew 8:5–13). Why? Circumstances arose that caused the centurion to realize his need of Jesus who was able to heal his servant by one word. “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth” (Psalm 33:6). Likewise today, the same creative power that made the world can create in us what we do not have. God promises, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26). A new heart—just imagine, hasn’t that been

the goal of our prayers for many years now? I remember that as early as the age of 6, I had the tendency to do bad things. My parents wondered about my future. They hoped that perhaps the schoolteacher would change me. Finally, by the time I was 18, I could not reconcile a positive future with the state of my life. I was trying to find a way to change myself, but could not.

Then one morning about 2:00 a.m., I remembered that my grandparents had given a Bible to my parents. I found it and started reading it. Then, the next time I went to a disco bar, I looked at the people dancing there and thought, “Is that really the way I look, too?” . . . The word of God was changing me. . . . Soon afterward, I was invited to an evangelistic meeting at the church—and when the speaker asked for someone to pray, I found myself volunteering.

As we believe in the power of God to create something out of nothing, we are creationists, not evolutionists. The Lord is omnipotent; He does not need time in order to fulfill His promises. If every one of us would allow the word of God to work in our hearts the same way we did when we first accepted the truth, we would not be here today—we would already be in the kingdom of Heaven. So, even right now we can experience the same grace as when we first accepted Jesus. The word of God is all-powerful to sustain the world. He is able to maintain our love for Him if we desire His presence the same way as when we first trusted Him.

Think of how it is when a small child learns to walk. As soon as the child is able to walk alone, he or she tends to walk away from the parent, instead of wanting to be carried.

Likewise with us! As soon as we think that we can walk alone, we cease to depend on God’s word—and so the creative power of God’s word is not as active in our lives as it should be. If you feel that the promise of Ezekiel 36:26 is not being fulfilled in your life today, ask yourself: How much am I reading God’s word today? How much am I depending on it?

Are you scared that the word of the Lord will transform you so much that you will no longer crave the things of this world? Are you trying to hold onto some kind of an old identity instead of surrendering fully to God?

Are we afraid to allow some words of Scripture to transform us drastically? We need to be like little, dependent children—trusting God completely.



Do you want that gold tried in the fire? Do you want that faith that works by love? This is our chance—to “buy” by studying the word of God profoundly. Read it to your children morning and evening. The same Lord can create this life in the lives of both you and your children, just as He created the world. May the Lord bless His church with this hope! Amen.

### Reference

<sup>1</sup> *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 158.



# CHRIST IS ALL FOR MY FRIENDS

*Highlights from the  
sermon presented by  
Duraismy Sureshkumar*

In these precious hours, as we are acknowledging Christ's creation and accepting His redemption, we stand at the brink of eternity. In this end time of the end time, we need to consider the beginning of our life and our experience in Christ Jesus.

## **A lesson from history**

In the history of one of the counties in England, the experience is told of a farmer in a small village who dug a little well. As he reached water, he discovered that this water happened to have a miraculous touch of unusual healing power. He shared the good news with his neighbor. The water was sweet-tasting and indeed promoted health—and the farmer was willing to give it freely to others. Soon, the word spread around the neighborhood and gradually, as the

water was shared with more people, an entire town was founded—based on this water. Many flocked to the town, and it eventually became a popular place for various business enterprises.

Several years passed, and a scholarly journalist came to interview the mayor of the town. He had heard the reports about how the town had originally been founded. So he asked the mayor where this source of water was located. Sadly, the mayor explained, they no longer knew where the fountain was! The city had now become a center for all kinds of business; it was a place where lots of money was being made in a variety of ways, and the precious water was forgotten.

Today, people have established all kinds of business commodities

based on the name of Jesus Christ. Material items and mega-churches monopolize on that name. Yet we who are gathered here do not want to be looking to Jesus as some kind of money-making commodity, but rather as a source of the genuine life-giving properties that come through Him.

## **Remembering the Samaritan woman**

When Jesus was dwelling on the earth as the Son of man, He came to a well. In this particular scenario, the opposite occurred from the story above. The people of the community were quite aware of the location of the well. You are familiar with this story in John chapter 4. Christ's conversation with a woman of Samaria concluded with the fact that He would be the One to give the



water—water that would not merely quench the thirst, but be such that the soul who would partake of it would never thirst again. If such literal water would be in existence here today, a lot of bottling companies would lose their business.

Jesus explained, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). This is not just some kind of miraculous healing water, but actually life-giving water—providing eternal life, the chance to live with God forever.

The Lord’s provision for human beings to live forever was to continue throughout history. For this, one thing is needed: To drink of the water of life.

In the conversation at the well, while Jesus was testing the woman’s understanding, He disclosed that He was aware of her life and experience. As she realized that He knew this, she declared that He must be a prophet. The reality, however, was that He was greater and much more powerful than any prophet—He’s the One that made the prophets and revealed to them the secrets that they spoke. He knows everything!

“The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he” (Verses 25, 26).

Now she put it all together in her mind. . . . She must have thought, “He knows the secrets of my past; He knows the future; He has life-giving power. . . .”

Suddenly she forgot the purpose for which she came to the well and instead ran to tell those in the city: “Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” (Verse 29). At this point, she understood the meaning of the

*Introduce Christ as a  
Friend to a friend.*

Messiah as the Saviour, and she brought the message of Christ to the entire town.

## Who is Jesus?

People find Jesus in different ways. What is Jesus to you, to me, to my friends, my family, and to my entire town? Let’s recall some other examples:

Martha acknowledged the identity of Christ at the resurrection of her brother, Lazarus. “[Martha] saith unto [Jesus], Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the son of God, which should come into the world” (John 11:27). Here Martha recognized Jesus as the Son of God just as the woman at the well had recognized Him as the Messiah, the Saviour.

In Matthew 16:16, Simon Peter showed that he realized the same truth when he declared, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

John the beloved disciple testified, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1–3). He was the Creator Himself, the Word made flesh.

In John 20:28, Thomas acknowledged Jesus as “My Lord and my God.”

For every person, Jesus means something. The Lord declared of our relationship with Him, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (John 15:14).

Jesus says that you are His friend—His brother—and He is not ashamed to call us brethren. A friend gives his or her life for a brother. What can we do to Jesus in turn? If we really are friends of Christ, we need to prove it. We can give to Him our broken, contrite heart. Jesus says that if we are His friends, we will do what He tells us to do, and we will reflect His character, His moral image.

Then the results will be seen in a similar way to how they were described in Acts 4:13 when the

people “took knowledge of [the disciples], that they had been with Jesus.” What identified the disciples as having been with Jesus? When they spoke, it was evident. Even the one who denied Jesus was still reflecting some characteristics that he had been with Jesus.

If we are friends of Jesus, we will abide in Him and reflect His character. If we are thus doing His will, we will have a wonderful experience.

What about the woman at the well? When she found the Saviour, she ran to tell everyone in the village—her friends, family, neighbors—the gospel of good tidings.

James warns us, on the other hand, of the opposite: If we are “a friend of the world,” we are the “enemy of God” (James 4:4).

So, we need to shun those things that are of the world and think instead of those things that are above. As Christians, we need to take to our community the good news of the Saviour.

## Spreading the word

In Acts chapter 16, we read the experience of how Paul and Silas were singing and telling the message of a crucified and risen Saviour. Eventually, they were invited to the house of the prison keeper and the entire family was able to enjoy the wonderful experience of having Jesus in the home.

The good things we receive are not to be kept to ourselves. We are called to be light bearers to others. This includes my friend, my neighbor, my society. We as Christ’s friends are to carry forth His love and His message, just as He has shown His love for each one of us by dying on the cross in our behalf. We are to share the good message of Christ in the life, and we should tell others of His love—and of His injunction to us all: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

We are to “behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of

the world” (John 1:29). In his prayer at the Saviour’s birth, the prophet Simeon referred to Jesus as “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:32). Christ is the light, the glory of the Father and His character. The Father was able to testify of Him, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). As His followers, His glory should likewise be reflected in our life. In fact, this wonderful Friend and Saviour should be the chief motivating factor in the life of every one of us.

At each delegation session, the forefathers of our Movement often expressed the desire that that particular delegation would be the last on earth. They cherished the hope that the Lord’s coming would be soon enough that we might be in the kingdom of heaven before the next delegation session would come. Surely, we share that hope amid the myriad struggles of daily life. Yes, we may be having all kinds of difficulties, but we must keep in mind how the apostle Paul was punished and imprisoned, yet his driving force was Christ. His zeal was not quenched by all the persecution he faced. Instead he declared, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (Romans 1:16) that promises eternal life.

This gospel—this eternal life—should reach everyone. We need to teach an unpopular message, even if it is unwelcome to some. We may face discouragements, difficulties, and problems in our life and in the church. But God will give us power to endure. His assurance echoes down through the centuries to us here today: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

The invitation of Jesus for you and for me is wide open. The time for us to listen to His voice is now. Then we will have the wonderful experience of being able to sup with Him—and we will have the great privilege to be with Him in the new earth.

A good friend lays down his life for his brethren—a gesture He has already completed for us.

### Accept His “friend request”

In our day, especially among the youth, we routinely see electronic chatting and communication. It is common to make “friend requests” and to accept a friend.

And at this time, Jesus is knocking. He is throwing us a friendly



request with a signal that will not fade. Are we willing to accept His request?

The remnant people—the light-bearers—are to bear this message. We are to come to the foot of the cross, the highest place we can be. But let us

not do this alone; we should bring at least one friend. We need not begin by expecting huge numbers, but let us each make it a goal to lead at least one friend to the foot of the cross.

We need to contemplate the sufferings of Jesus. He has promised that He’s not going to leave us alone. In the upper room experience, the disciples were able to multiply friends and believers—not merely in ones, but in thousands.

When Christ ascended, He did not leave us alone. He sent power; He sent the Holy Spirit. Now we need to pray to receive the Holy Spirit in the harvest experience. The success does not come because of you or me—it is solely through His power “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Those who are waiting for the Lord’s return have the message and the responsibility of teaching and leading others to Christ. Each friend won becomes a star in your crown.

In the time of the early church, everyone in the upper room had one common purpose: To receive the power of the Holy Spirit. We are to have the same experience, the same purpose. We have the name as those waiting for the advent of the Lord. Just as the disciples in Acts 1:14, we need to be of one accord and trust in His promise, seeking the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 2:1, 2, we read that “when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.”

This should be our experience before we leave this place. This solemn assembly is a place where we should pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We cannot leave this place empty-hearted. When we go from here, we can be a wonderful witness wherever we go; we can bring a friend to Jesus, that more friends can be added and that we may be able





to finish the task that is before us: To take the message to all the world. We need to carry the everlasting gospel to the whole world, bringing people to fear God and give glory to Him.

The signs of the times are fulfilling, and the countdown is beginning for His soon return and for the final events to take place. We may not have the opportunity to preach in a pulpit; soon we might not have the liberty to carry the Bible. We may not have the liberty to worship on the day the Lord has given us. . . .

But we must take the opportunity to bring a friend to Jesus. Let us take hold of the opportunity before us and echo the words of Joshua, “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

### Connected through the cross

The time of test is just upon us. We need to stand firm at the test—and in order to do this, we need His power and His Spirit. In closing, let us consider once more the experience of Jesus with the woman at the well:

“The water to which Christ referred was the revelation of His grace in His Word. His spirit, His teaching, His love is as a satisfying

fountain to every soul. Every other source to which men resort proves unsatisfying; but the Word of truth is as cool streams, represented as the waters of Lebanon, which are always satisfying. In Christ is fullness of joy forevermore. The pleasures and amusements of the world are never satisfying, or healing to the soul. But Jesus says, ‘Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life’ (John 6:54).

“Christ’s gracious presence in His Word ever speaks to the soul, representing Him as the well of living water to refresh the thirsting. It is our privilege to have a living, abiding Saviour. He is the source of spiritual power in us, and His influence will flow forth in words and actions that will refresh all within the sphere of our influence, begetting in them desires and aspirations for strength and purity, for holiness and peace, for that joy which brings no sorrow with it. Such an experience will be the result of having Christ as an indwelling Saviour.”<sup>1</sup>

Those who experience the fullness of joy in Christ will never crave the world’s attractions. They will accept His grace, His teachings, and the gift of His love.

“Without the cross, man could have no connection with the Father. On it hangs our every hope. In view of it the Christian may advance with the steps of a conqueror; for from it streams the light of the Saviour’s love. When the sinner reaches the cross, and looks up to the One who died to save him, he may rejoice with fullness of joy; for his sins are pardoned. Kneeling at the cross, he has reached the highest place to which man can attain. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ; and the words of pardon are spoken: Live, O ye guilty sinners live. Your repentance is accepted; for I have found a ransom.”<sup>2</sup>

Looking at the cross, we will have that wonderful hope renewed. Let us therefore “behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Introduce Him as a Friend to a friend. Let us plead for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that we might have a greater experience of joy in our life. This is my prayer. Amen.

### References

<sup>1</sup> *Reflecting Christ*, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> *The Review and Herald*, April 29, 1902.



# A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

By Barbara Montrose



The Spiritual Meetings held September 10–13, 2015, in Salem, Virginia, certainly turned out to be the crown jewel of the 22<sup>nd</sup> General Conference Session.

What glorious theme could be better than: "Christ Is All, and in All?" This indeed describes our fervent desire—to be so imbued with the love of Christ that His Holy Spirit will prevail in all of our words, thoughts, actions, and relationships with others. Besides the refreshing missionary reports given from the various regions around the world, the spiritual topics that were presented included:







The meetings were live-streamed around the globe via Internet, and the conference was well attended by eager listeners from all over the world. Visitors came from the local community, as well—thanks largely to the beautiful invitations carried in person door-to-door by consecrated volunteers from various countries.

One highly successful outreach effort was the Wellness Health Fair held on September 11 by dedicated health professionals from our church.

- Christ Is All for Me
- Christ Is All for My Friends
- All Heaven in One Gift (All in All)
- Christ Is All for My Family
- All for Christ
- Christ Is All in the Future



Over 300 people visited the health fair and stopped at our eight stations where they were able to check their weight and blood pressure, to taste some healthful vegan food, and to have a low cost blood draw. Over 66 people took the lab tests. The health message is surely the right arm to open doors to hearts at convocations held by God's people.

How important it is for us to host such events! The Holy Spirit is poured out in abundant measure when we study, pray, and fellowship together with believers of like precious faith—and enthusiastically seek to win others to the present truth entrusted to us.

“The earnestness of our efforts for others should be in proportion to the value of that which God has given





to us to present to the world. All who keep in a prayerful frame of mind, looking to God for heavenly wisdom, will be able, through the grace of Christ, to speak a word in season to those who are brought within the sphere of their influence.

“The necessity of a real heart work for every member of the body must be pressed upon the people. The labor should be directed right to the one end— a more complete putting away of idols, a deeper consecration, a stronger faith, and more personal effort for the salvation of others.

“My brethren, there should be a different kind of labor from what we too often see in our camp meetings. There should be more prayer and weeping, and more confession of sin to God and to one another. Let the indifference be broken up, let the complaining and faultfinding cease, and the time heretofore worse than wasted in this manner be spent in prayers of living faith for the refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Let us arouse as one man, and

unitedly call upon God to send down His grace upon the souls of His people, and to revive His work in the midst of the years.”<sup>1</sup>

### Reference

<sup>1</sup> *Gospel Workers* (1892), pp. 224, 225.









# WHAT ABOUT THE MUSIC?

By Barbara Montrose



It was a dream come true. . . . It began with a chat on a veranda in Bolivia at the 1<sup>st</sup> Symposium of Music in the South American Region. Then, at the summer vacation music camp organized by the Brazilian Unions, the inspiration ran higher, and for the first time, the plan was actually put on paper (a paper napkin to be specific!).

What was the dream? A multinational choir and orchestra of Reformers that would come together to unite their talents to praise God at the Spiritual Meetings to follow the 22<sup>nd</sup> SDARM General Conference Session! Not just groups from here and there—but everyone together.







Search was immediately made for a venue for the rehearsals. Of course there had to be rehearsals—at least for a few days! People would be coming from various countries and continents—how could they unite in technically difficult music if they did not rehearse? This could not just be

something casually thrown together—it had to be assembled as carefully and reverently as possible in the fear of God.

Scheduling would be a challenge. In the United States and many other places, the early part of the academic school year at all levels—

from elementary grades through university—is heavily underway in the first week of September. We wanted to involve a lot of our youth in this project—but what conscientious youth would be willing to risk their academic success by trying to get excused from their important







to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of

weekday classes to participate in an all-day activity outside of school or college? Very few—but the plan still went forward.

The GC brethren graciously provided us extra space at their venue and little by little, the musicians began to sign up to participate. A balanced orchestra was needed—and some of the vital instruments were able to come into the picture only at the eleventh hour through the power of prayer to our mighty God who mercifully heard our petitions.

The idea of having this international orchestra and choir was inspired by a grand convocation in Bible history when at the dedication of the temple in the days of Solomon,



skilled musicians were chosen to praise God—and the Holy Spirit was poured out in great measure:

“It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one,

the Lord had filled the house of God” (2 Chronicles 5:13, 14).

How were the trumpeters and singers able to be “as one”? Let’s face reality—this does not happen







by accident! The truth is that painstaking, diligent effort in advance is required to bring musicians to perform together “as one”!

So the musicians arrived early to begin intensive rehearsals on September 7 and continued daily before departing on September 10 to the Salem Civic Center. Only three days available for an orchestra and choir formed mostly of nonprofessionals. . . . It all seemed impossible, but God somehow brought it together. You could feel the joy. You

could sense the heartfelt dedication to this common goal.

Existing groups of all ages from around the world also signed up to share their special music items. They rehearsed arduously in their local areas for months in advance. The results were inspiring. The choirs from Canada, for example, assembled from various towns in that chilly part of the world—driving long hours in order to be able to practice together. The beautifully elegant custom-designed gowns of their ladies and

the delightful robes of their children’s choir added a crowning touch to the event. The sweet sincerity of their voices moved the hearts of us all.

Other groups were also an inspiration—in fact, all of them were! The observation was made that at this event, the music was not worshipped, neither the musicians, but rather God was truly worshipped with the music! All glory and thanks go to Him. Would you like a sample? Just go to [www.sdarm.org](http://www.sdarm.org) and click on the “sacred concert.”





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MOVING? Please let us know.

# Keeping God's Church in Order

One of the great prayers of King David is found in Psalm 119:133, "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity [sin] have dominion [rule] over me."

Why is it so important to have our steps be ordered in God's word? "Order is heaven's first law."<sup>1</sup>

But what does it mean to be orderly?

Have your parents ever told you to clean up your room or to pick up your dishes and wipe the table after you eat? Can you imagine what home would look like if no one ever did that? It would be a mess!

Keeping things in order helps us be healthier and happier. Even the angels are in perfect order. Ellen White was shown in vision:

"I have been shown the order, the perfect order, of heaven, and have been enraptured as I listened to the perfect music there. . . . I have seen companies of angels, who stood in a hollow square, everyone having a harp of gold. . . . There is one angel who always leads, who first touches the harp and strikes the note, and then all join in the rich, perfect music of heaven."<sup>2</sup>

When Jesus came to this earth, He also did things in an orderly way at the miracle of the loaves: "He commanded [the disciples] to make [the people] sit

down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties" (Mark 6:39, 40).

Later, when the early Christian church was at work, the believers from all over the world came to study and pray together in their mission to spread the gospel—that they might be able to be a united people, one in spirit. The apostle Paul pleaded:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

This is why we need to have General Conference sessions. As we seek to be in order according to the Bible and to be in agreement with our fellow believers, we will enjoy another blessing that the apostle Paul speaks about:

"Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Corinthians 13:11).—*BHM*

## References

<sup>1</sup> *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 146.