

The background of the cover features a hand in a dark suit jacket dropping a white envelope into a white ballot box. The scene is set against a backdrop of a cloudy sky with a large, bright sun or moon on the left and a plume of fire and smoke on the right. The overall color palette is dominated by purples, blues, and oranges.

# the REFORMATION *herald*

Vol. 57, No. 5

## THE PERILS OF POLITICS

The Priesthood of Believers | Keys to Identify God's Remnant | True Freedom in Worship

# the REFORMATION *herald*

Volume 57, Number 5

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With recent advances in technology, we live in a highly visible world.

For example, there's now an electron microscope priced at \$27 million—with the ability to make images to a resolution of half the width of a hydrogen atom.

A new \$8.8 billion space telescope is scheduled to launch in 2018—and it's credited with being 100 times more potent than Hubble.

As for the ability to see and learn statistics and relevant knowledge on virtually any topic over the last 25 years, the Information Age through the worldwide web has brought loads of data to our vision at the click of a few keystrokes. Now, some say that era is currently giving way to the "Experience Age"—a new phase once again based on high visibility, this time attained by mobile connectivity and revolutionary progress made in camera technology.

## The spiritual application

Surely there's no doubt that it's a great blessing to see the physical realm as accurately as possible and to have ready access to accurate information. Yet how much more valuable it is to have spiritual eyesight: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of [God's] calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but

also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:18–23).

In this issue of *The Reformation Herald*, we will consider the importance of how both individually and collectively we are to look not to things seen—but rather to things unseen, those things which are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18). Through Scripture we have access to hidden truths unveiled through prophecy. We also gain insight to distinguish the level of trustworthy reliability surrounding us, for Jesus has said we are to know people by their fruits (Matthew 7:20). Above all, through God's word, we can see the specifics of our own spiritual defects, especially as we purchase and apply the eyesalve for sale by the True Witness to the Laodiceans: "The eyesalve is that spiritual discernment which will enable you to see the wiles of Satan and shun them, to detect sin and abhor it, to see truth and obey it."<sup>1</sup>

By faith, we can see our omnipotent Mediator pleading in our behalf in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary—helping all who earnestly take hold of His strength to be overcomers. "For

we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:12, 13).

"All who are actively engaged in the cause of God, seeking to unveil the deceptions of the evil one and to present Christ before the people, will be able to join in the testimony of Paul, in which he speaks of serving the Lord with all humility of mind, with many tears and temptations.

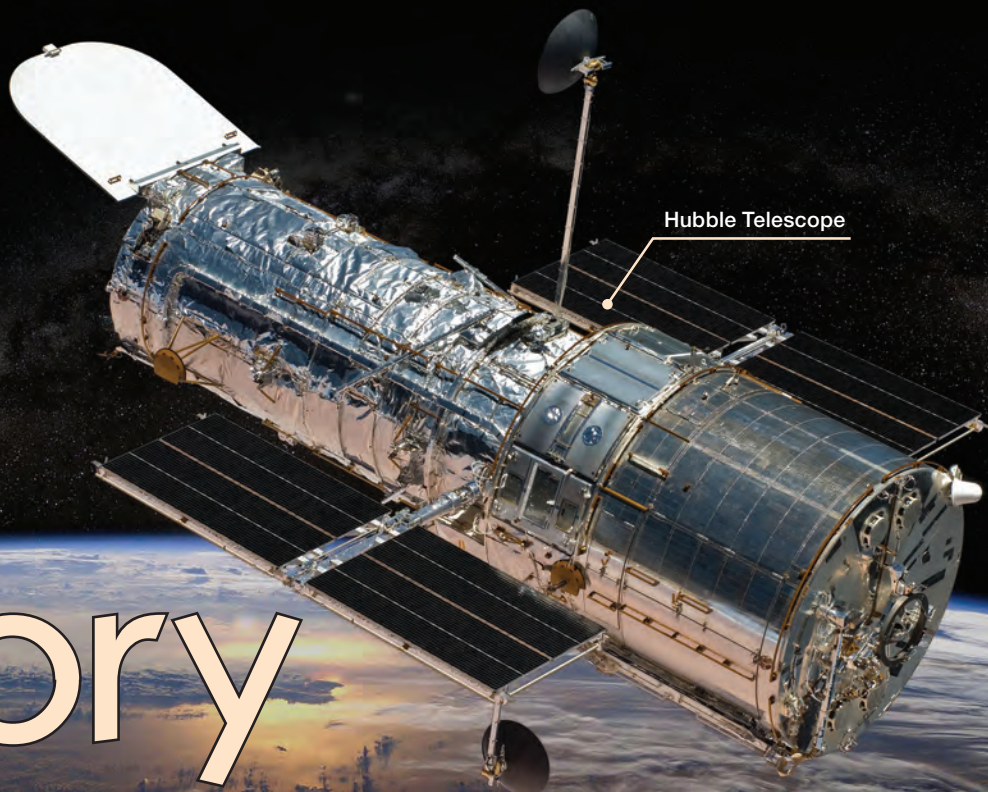
"Satan assailed Christ with his fiercest and most subtle temptations, but he was repulsed in every conflict. Those battles were fought in our behalf; those victories make it possible for us to conquer. Christ will give strength to all who seek it."<sup>2</sup>

May this be what we're looking for. Amen!

## References

<sup>1</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 510.



# A Vision for Victory





# THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS

By L. Bauer

## Promises to a people

By comparing the terms of the new covenant with those of the old covenant, it will be seen that the end contemplated by each is the same. The old said, "If ye will obey my voice;" the new says, "I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." Each has reference to the law of God. Both have holiness, and all the rewards of holiness, as the object. In the covenant at Sinai it was said to Israel, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people:

for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel" (Exodus 19:4–6).

That is just what God's own people really are—"a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9).

## Called out

God had said, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then . . . ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests." But they never became a kingdom of priests. Only one tribe, the tribe of Levi, could have anything whatsoever to do with the sanctuary and, of that tribe, only one family, that of Aaron, could be priests. It was

certain death for anyone not of the family of Aaron to presume to serve as priest in any way.

Yet all who are really the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus are "a royal priesthood," even "to whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (verses 4, 5).

This was what God promised to the nation of the Jews at Sinai, but they never attained to it because they did not keep His covenant of faith—they chose to trust instead in their own strength.

It was to this end that God called His people out of Egypt. They were “called out,” and so they constituted the church of the living God, for the Greek word that is normally rendered as “church” literally means “called out.”

God calls people out from the world, that they may be a “spiritual house, an holy priesthood,” and His presence in them makes them “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people,” (verse 9) and they “shew forth the praises of him who hath called [them] out of darkness into his marvellous light,” because He who dwells in them shines forth.

The apostle Paul gives the challenge, “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1). “But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses” (2 Corinthians 6:4).

That this was the object of God’s calling Israel out of Egypt is seen from His identification of them as “a peculiar treasure unto me above all people” (Exodus 19:5).

### **A tabernacle of reproach**

While the children of Israel were still encamped before Sinai, the Lord told Moses to direct them to bring an offering of gold, silver, brass, acacia wood, various kinds of skins, fine linen, and other materials, and said: “Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8).

What a strange thing that the Most High God, who “dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 7:48; 17:24) should ask weak mortals to build Him a house, that He might dwell among them! Why was it? The answer is plain; they were too high-minded.

The Lord declared, “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked” (Deuteronomy 10:16).

The people were evidently too self-sufficient to give place to God,

that He might dwell in their bodies, controlling every thought and act—for God dwells with the humble. Since God would not cast them off, He instead manifested His presence among them in a marked manner, hoping at length to draw them wholly to Himself. If they had believed, they would not have needed this sanctuary any more than Abraham did. The principal thing in it—and to contain that item for which it was specially built—was the moral law, the tables of testimony. But this law the children of Israel ought to have had within them:

“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Corinthians 3:3).

In that case they would have had the witness in themselves; their own bodies would have been the tabernacles of witness, and they would have been witnesses for God.

Therefore, “our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen” (Acts 7:44) was that built by Moses. The fact that this testimony which was in that building, instead of in the hearts of the people, made it a constant witness against them, a testimony to their unfaithfulness. What a pitiful thing it is when God can dwell among a people only by their building a house for Him!

“For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood” (Hebrews 7:14).

Yet as already noted, “when Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion” (Psalm 114:1, 2).

The primary design was that all Israel should be the Lord’s sanctuary, even as now. The confining of the sanctuary service to the tribe of Levi was a standing reminder of the unfaithfulness of the people, which

hindered them from receiving the fullness of God—and the raising up of Christ out of the tribe of Judah was no new thing, but a manifestation of that which had been from the beginning.

From the tabernacle built by hands some valuable lessons are to be learned, for God never directs anything to be done in vain. The jealous care that God has for His dwelling place was one of the chief lessons, but there were many things which could not be taught by that building for the simple reason that a dead thing can never show the activity of a living being.

God’s real dwelling place moves of itself and impels by His thought, while this house had to be carried by men. A stream of living water comes from God’s throne (Revelation 22:1) as it was shown at Sinai; but nothing of the kind was seen in the tabernacle of Moses. The rightful place of God’s law, as the foundation of His throne, was indicated—and this is a thing that should not be overlooked, for it must be in every heart where God dwells.

Jesus said, “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psalm 40:8).

### **Lights in a darkened world, vessels for the Master’s use**

Very emphatic testimony as to our duty to the world is borne by the apostle Peter. Read 1 Peter 2:9–12: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises [or excellencies] of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation [that is, your course of life] honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.”



“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psalm 51:17).

A broken and a contrite heart is one that is broken in pieces and ground up. Not of much worth, is it? What is it good for? Nothing. And that is why it appropriates Christ, who is of infinite worth, a sacrifice that is always acceptable to God. Having nothing in itself, it trusts wholly in Christ. He is the surety of the new covenant, and so when He comes He will say, “Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice” (Psalm 50:5).

It is as necessary for God’s royal priesthood to be clean when they engage in the Lord’s service—which is a continual service—as it was for the priests of old. We read,

“Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:16–18).

## **Washed in the blood of the Lamb**

The psalmist was well acquainted with the priests’ custom of washing at the laver before they went to the altar, and so he said, “I will wash my hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord: that I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works” (Psalm 26:6, 7).

Here is a washing that is effective. Washing in innocency—how may it be done? There is but one fountain of innocency, and that is “the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19).

We may know that we wash in this fountain and find cleansing by believing the Word of the Lord. Christ gave Himself for the church, “that he might sanctify it, having

cleansed it by the washing of water with the word” (Ephesians 5:26, RV). The margin has, “*laver*,” for washing. The King James Version has it as “baptism,” showing what was symbolized by the laver in the earthly sanctuary. Some versions have it as “cleansed by a water bath in the Word.” If we believe the Word, we have the witness of the Spirit.

May we understand our calling and rise to the full service of God!

## **Rendering reasonable service**

The inspired appeal echoes down to each one of us, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17).

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).

“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:1–5).

## **How can we abide as this holy priesthood?**

“Only by constant watchfulness and earnest prayer, mingled with faith, can we preserve our peculiar, holy character as sons and daughters of God.

“It is far more easy to profess and resolve than to perform. Like ancient Israel, many covenant to cleave unto the Lord and serve Him, and then soon forget their vows and join with the ungodly in the pursuits of worldly gain or pleasure. We should be jealous of ourselves, lest we depart from God. ‘For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven’ (Hebrews 12:25). The blessings and privileges which we enjoy place us under the most solemn obligation to improve these gifts to the glory of our Creator. They should inspire in our hearts love to God and an earnest determination to obey His requirements. Let us not become self-confident or presumptuous, but rather fear lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.

“The cause of Israel’s weakness lay in their departure from God by disobedience to His commandments. The reason of the weakness and backsliding of modern Israel is their neglect to obey the divine law. God requires from all mankind obedience to His commandments. The whole world will be judged by the moral law according to their opportunity of becoming acquainted with it, whether by reason, or tradition, or the written word.

“God’s law is spiritual. It takes cognizance of our most secret thoughts, purposes, and motives. The judgment, the will, and the affections must be controlled by its precepts. Its principles require love to God and to man; without this love, external compliance will not be accepted. This law is the standard of Christian character. Like a faithful mirror, it reveals to the children of men the defects in their moral character. It makes them watchful against temptation. It teaches them to be exact in judgment and correct in spiritual discernment. The law of God is holy, just, and good. When our lives conform to this standard we are happy.

“The Lord was constantly seeking to impress upon ancient Israel their duty to obey His law; and those words of warning and reproof apply with as much greater force to this generation as our light and privileges are greater than were those of Israel. We have seen how the disregard of God’s requirements brought trouble upon His ancient people and finally resulted in their entire separation from Him.

our reverence and unquestioning submission. If we fail to love Him with all the heart, we rob Him of the service which is His due.”<sup>1</sup>

“The believer in Christ is consecrated to high and holy purpose. Before the service of the royal priesthood the glory of the Aaronic priesthood is eclipsed. Called according to God’s purpose, set apart by grace divine, invested with Christ’s

men, when they lack wisdom, will go to their closets in prayer and ask wisdom from Him who gives to all men liberally and upbraids not. The promise is, ‘It shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed’ (James 1:5, 6). Christ has pledged Himself to be our substitute and surety, and He neglects no one. There is an inexhaustible fund of perfect obedience accruing from His obedience. In heaven His merits, His self-denial and self-sacrifice, are treasured up as incense to be offered up with the prayers of His people. As the sinner’s sincere, humble prayers ascend to the throne of God, Christ mingles with them the merits of His life of perfect obedience. Our prayers are made fragrant by this incense. Christ has pledged Himself to intercede in our behalf, and the Father always hears His Son. Pray then; pray without ceasing; an answer is sure to come.

“But let me speak in warning: ‘[If any man] regard iniquity in [his] heart, the Lord will not hear [him]’ (Psalm 66:18).

“Show a firm, undeviating trust in God. Be ever true to principle. Waver not; speak decidedly that which you know to be truth, and leave the consequences with God. Bear in mind that God tests the genuineness of your desire. Believe the word of God, and never cease to press your petitions to His throne with sanctified, holy boldness. ‘Men ought always to pray, and not to faint’ (Luke 18:1). By precept and example keep the standard uplifted. Your testimony, in its genuineness and reality, God will make powerful in the power of the life to come. The word of the Lord will be in your mouth as truth and righteousness.”<sup>2</sup>

May this be our experience! Amen.

*R*

## References

<sup>1</sup> *The Signs of the Times*, June 9, 1881.

<sup>2</sup> *The Review and Herald*, October 30, 1900.



Their sad history should be a lesson to us that nothing should be permitted to rival God in our affections. He alone can give rest, and peace, and happiness to the soul. God alone is entitled to our supreme love, to our entire confidence. He should be the object of our gratitude and adoration,

righteousness, imbued with the Holy Spirit, offering up the sacrifices of a broken and contrite heart, the true believer is indeed a representative of the Redeemer. Upon such a worshiper, God looks with delight. He will let His light shine into the chambers of the mind and into the soul temple if



# CREDIBLE GIFTS FROM THE UNBELIEVING WORLD

*A compilation from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.*

**What should a religious organization do when offered legal, legitimate exemption from taxation? Is there historic precedence for such benefits?**

## **A lesson from Nehemiah**

“The king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven” (Nehemiah 2:4).

“Nehemiah, in that brief moment of prayer to the King of kings, gathered courage to tell Artaxerxes of his desire to be released for a time from his duties at the court, and he asked for authority to build up the waste places of Jerusalem and to make it once more a strong and defended city. Momentous results to the Jewish nation hung upon this request. ‘And,’ Nehemiah declares, ‘the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me (verse 8). . . .

“His request to the king had been so favorably received that Nehemiah

was encouraged to ask for still further assistance. To give dignity and authority to his mission, as well as to provide protection on the journey, he asked for and secured a military escort. He obtained royal letters to the governors of the provinces beyond the Euphrates, the territory through which he must pass on his way to Judea; and he obtained, also, a letter to the keeper of the king’s forest in the mountains of Lebanon, directing him to furnish such timber as would be needed. That there might be no occasion for complaint that he had exceeded his commission, Nehemiah was careful to have the authority and privileges accorded him, clearly defined. . . .

“Nehemiah did not depend upon uncertainty. The means that he lacked

he solicited from those who were able to bestow. And the Lord is still willing to move upon the hearts of those in possession of His goods, in behalf of the cause of truth. Those who labor for Him are to avail themselves of the help that He prompts men to give. These gifts may open ways by which the light of truth shall go to many benighted lands. The donors may have no faith in Christ, no acquaintance with His word; but their gifts are not on this account to be refused.”<sup>1</sup>

## **Is it okay to take advantage of legal tax exemption?**

“Solemn, serious times are upon us, and perplexities will increase, to the very close of time. There may be



a little respite in these matters, but it will not be for long. I have letters to write that must go in the next mail to Battle Creek. Our brethren there are not looking at everything in the right light. The movements they have made to pay taxes on the property of the Sanitarium and Tabernacle have manifested a zeal and conscientiousness that in all respects is not wise nor correct. . . . Let these men read the book of Nehemiah with humble hearts touched by the Holy Spirit, and their false ideas will be modified, and correct principles will be seen, and the present order of things will be changed. **Nehemiah prayed to God for help, and God heard his prayer. The Lord moved upon heathen kings to come to his help.** When his enemies zealously worked against him, the Lord worked through kings to carry out His purpose, and to answer the many prayers that were ascending to Him for the help which they so much needed. . . .

“Just as long as we are in the world, we shall have to do a special work for the world; the message of warning is to go to all countries, tongues, and peoples.

“The Lord does not move upon His workers to make them take a course which will bring on the time of trouble before the time. Let them not build up a wall of separation between themselves and the world, by advancing their own ideas and notions. There is now altogether too much of this throughout our borders. The message of warning has not reached large numbers of the world in the very cities that are right at hand, and to number Israel is not to work after God’s order. Just as long as we are in this world, and the Spirit of God is striving with the world, we are to receive as well as to impart favors. We are to give to the world the light of truth as presented in the Sacred Scriptures, and we are to receive from the world that which God moves upon them to do in behalf of His cause. **The Lord still moves upon the hearts of kings and rulers in behalf of His people,**

**and it becomes those who are so deeply interested in the religious liberty question not to cut off any favors, or withdraw themselves from the help that God has moved men to give, for the advancement of His cause.**

We find examples in the word of God concerning this very matter. Cyrus, king of Persia, made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it into writing. . . . [Ezra 1:2, 3 quoted.] A second commandment was issued by Darius for the building of the house of the Lord and is recorded in the sixth chapter of Ezra. The Lord God of Israel has placed His goods in the hands of unbelievers, but they are to be used in favor of doing the works that must be done for a fallen world. The agents through whom these gifts come may open up avenues through which the truth may go. They may have no sympathy with the work, and no faith in Christ, and no practice in His words; but their gifts are not to be refused on that account.

“It is very strange that some of our brethren should feel that it is their duty to bring about a condition of things that would bind up the means that God would have set free. God has not laid upon them the responsibility of coming in conflict with the authorities and powers of the world in this matter. The withstraining [restraining] hand of God has not yet been withdrawn from the earth. Let the leaders in the work bide their time, hide in Christ, and move and work with great wisdom. Let them be as wise as serpents, and as harmless as doves. **I have repeatedly been shown that we might receive far more favors than we do in many ways if we would approach men in wisdom, acquaint them with our work, and give them an opportunity of doing those things which it is our privilege to induce them to do for the advancement of the work of God.**”<sup>2</sup>

### Relating to the public

“It is our work to speak the truth in love, and not to mix in with the

truth the unsanctified elements of the natural heart, and speak things that savor of the same spirit possessed by our enemies. All sharp thrusts will come back upon us in double measure when the power is in the hands of those who can exercise it for our injury.

**“Over and over the message has been given to me that we are not to say one word, not to publish one sentence, unless positively essential in vindicating the truth,** that will stir up our enemies against us, and arouse their passions to a white heat. Our work will soon be closed up, and soon the time of trouble such as never was will come upon us, of which we have but little idea.

“Writers and speakers among us will have to learn that the highest obligations of the Christian life involve the giving of careful attention in heeding the messages that God has sent to us. It is essential that we have a knowledge of our own motives and actions in order to have constant self-improvement. I long to see men in responsible positions feeling the burden in regard to themselves, so that they will exercise Christian politeness, and speak and write in a courteous manner. The Lord wants His workers to represent Him, the great Missionary Worker. The manifestation of zeal and rashness always does harm. The proprieties essential for Christian life must be learned daily in the school of Christ. He who is careless and heedless in uttering words or in writing words for publication to be sent broadcast into the world, is disqualifying himself to be entrusted with the sacred work which devolves upon Christ’s followers at this time. Those who practice giving hard thrusts are forming habits that will have to be repented of. To discharge every duty that devolves upon those who are entrusted with sacred responsibility, in the right manner, calls for humble prayer, and a close examination of self and study of the life of Christ.

“A surgeon, a physician, a teacher, a guide, needs to study carefully and



attentively the way in which to do the work which is entrusted to his hands. How much more should those who are entrusted with the sacred responsibility to watch for souls as they that must give an account. . . .

“We should carefully and severally examine our ways and our spirits, and see in what manner we are doing the work given us of God, which involves the destiny of souls. The very highest obligation is resting upon us. Satan is standing ready, burning with zeal, to inspire the whole confederacy of satanic agencies, that he may cause them to unite with evil men and bring upon the believers of truth speedy and severe suffering. Every unwise word that is uttered by our brethren will be treasured up by the prince of darkness. But I would like to ask, How dare finite human intelligences speak careless and venturesome words that will stir up the powers of hell against the saints of God . . . ?

“It will be impossible for us to avoid difficulties and suffering. Jesus said, ‘Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!’ (Matthew 18:7). But because offenses will come, we should be careful not to stir up the natural temperament of those who love not the truth, by unwise words and by the manifestation of an unkind spirit. The truth works by love, and purifies the soul. It is the privilege and duty of every child of God to have spiritual apprehension.

“If we are children of the light we should walk in the light as Christ is in the light and testify before the world, before angels and men, that the truth has power to transform human character and to cause men to represent Christ. With David our testimony should be, ‘Thy gentleness hath made me great’ (2 Samuel 22:36). Oh, that we might have divine perceptions and be able to appreciate the holy, sacred efficiency of the truth which fell from the lips of Christ! Oh, that a permanent impression might be made upon the hearts of all! . . .

“The deceptive errors that are widespread and that are leading the

world captive are to be unveiled. Every effort that is possible is being made to ensnare souls with subtle reasonings, to turn them from the truth to fables, and to prepare them to be deceived by strong delusions.

“But while these deceived souls turn from the truth to error, do not speak to them one word of censure. Seek to show these poor, deluded souls their danger, and [seek] to reveal to them how grievous is their course of action toward Jesus Christ; but let it all be done in pitying tenderness. By a proper manner of labor some of the souls who are ensnared by Satan may be recovered from his power. But do not blame and condemn them. **To ridicule the position held by those who are in error will not open their blind eyes, nor attract them to the truth.** . . .

### The example of Christ

“When men lose sight of Christ’s example and do not pattern after His manner of teaching, they become self-sufficient and go forth to meet Satan with his own manner of weapons. The enemy knows well how to turn his weapons upon those who use them. Jesus spake only words of pure truth and righteousness, . . . and in His example He has left us a perfect model for faith and practice.

“If ever a people needed to walk in humility before God, it is His church, His chosen ones in this generation. We all need to bewail the dullness of our intellectual faculties, the lack of appreciation of our privileges and opportunities. We have nothing whereof to boast. We grieve the Lord Jesus Christ by our harshness, by our unChristlike thrusts. We need to become complete in Him. It is true that we are commanded to ‘cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins’ (Isaiah 58:1). This message must be given. But while it must be given, we should be careful not to thrust and crowd and condemn those who have not the light that we have. We should not go out of our way to make hard thrusts at the

Catholics. Among the Catholics there are many who are most conscientious Christians, and who walk in all the light that shines upon them; and God will work in their behalf.

“Those who have had great privileges and opportunities, and who have failed to improve their physical, mental, and moral powers, but who have lived to please themselves, and have refused to bear their responsibilities, are in greater danger and in greater condemnation before God than those who are in error upon doctrinal points, yet who seek to live to do good to others, corresponding to the knowledge which they have. Do not censure others, do not condemn them. As free moral agents under the government of God, our responsibility and obligation are not limited by the knowledge we actually possess, but the knowledge we might and ought to have had if we had advanced in faith, and obtained the rich Christian experience that would have corresponded with our advantages. . . .

“If we allow selfish considerations, false reasoning, and false excuses to bring us into a perverse state of mind and heart, so that we shall not know the ways and will of God, we shall be far more guilty than the open sinner. We need to be very cautious in order that we may not condemn those who before God are less guilty than ourselves. . . .

“You inquire in respect to the propriety of receiving gifts from Gentiles or the heathen. This question is not strange; but I would ask you, Who is it that owns our world? Who are the real owners of houses and lands? Is it not God? He has an abundance in our world which He has placed in the hands of men by which the hungry might be supplied with food, the naked with clothing, the homeless with homes. The Lord would move upon worldly men, even idolaters, to give of their abundance for the support of His work, if we would approach them wisely, and give them an opportunity of doing those things which it is their privilege to do. What they would give we should be privileged to receive.



"We should become acquainted with men in high places and, by exercising the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove, we might obtain advantages from them, for God would move upon their minds to do many things on behalf of His people. If proper persons would set before those who have means and influence the needs of the work of God in a proper light, these men might do much to advance the cause of God in our world. We have put away from us privileges and advantages that we might have had the benefit of, because we chose to stand independent of the world. But we need not sacrifice one principle of truth while taking advantage of every opportunity to advance the cause of God.

"The Lord would have His people in the world but not of the world. They should seek to bring the truth before the men in high places and give them a fair chance to receive and weigh evidence. There are many who are unenlightened and uninformed, and as individuals we have a serious, solemn, wise work to do. We are to have travail of soul for those who are in high places, and go to them with the gracious invitation to come to the

marriage feast. Very much more might have been done than has been done for those in high places. The last message that Christ gave to His disciples before He was parted from them and taken up into heaven was a message to carry the gospel to all the world, and was accompanied by the promise of the Holy Spirit. The Lord said [Acts 1:8 quoted.] . . .

"Those who are laborers together with God are representatives of Christ to our world, and will have compassion for the lost, and will travail in soul for the redemption of men. Unless the church awakes and stands to her post of duty, God will charge the loss of souls to her account. I have a deep interest that the work of God shall advance.

"Those who are the chosen of God are required to multiply churches wherever they may be successful in bringing souls to the knowledge of

the truth. But the people of God are never to collect together into a large community as they have done in Battle Creek. Those who know what it is to have travail of soul will never do this, for they will feel the burden that Christ carried for the salvation of men."<sup>3</sup> R

## References

<sup>1</sup> *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 632–634.

<sup>2</sup> *Special Testimonies, Series A*, No. 3, pp. 32–35. [Emphasis added.]

<sup>3</sup> *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 16, pp. 157–165. [Emphasis added.]







# The Perils of Politics

*A Bible and Spirit of Prophecy compilation with comments by P. D. Lausevic.  
Emphasis added throughout.*

The bitterly fought 2016 elections for the president of the United States are finally over. Unlike other elections, those vying for the presidency included the Adventist neurosurgeon Ben Carson. After eventually dropping out of the candidacy for the Republican party, Dr. Carson threw in his full support for one of his competitors. This has led many Adventists who had previously supported the work of Ben Carson, and how he put Adventism in the spotlight by his work in science, to follow his lead and get involved in politics. Dr. Carson's action, more than ever, leads us to a very important question in regard to Christianity and their involvement in politics, especially in the support of one party over another.\*

\* We are not speaking here about voting on issues that are vital to our beliefs.

The Bible teaches us that it is impossible for genuine Christian to unite their efforts with those not of our faith. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:14–18).

## "Be ye separate"

The third angel's message identifies a distinct group of people in the last days. "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

But before we can truly experience verse 12, we must recognize the importance of verse 8: "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

We read above that God says to come out and be separate—and we are warned not to join in confederacies with unbelievers: "For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say



ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid" (Isaiah 8:11, 12).

The warning in 2 Corinthians 6:14 applies to many different circumstances: "The apostle Paul declares that it is impossible for the children of God to unite with worldlings: 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers' (2 Corinthians 6:14). This does not refer to marriage alone; any intimate relation of confidence and copartnership with those who have no love for God or the truth is a snare."<sup>1</sup>

This even includes partnerships. "The word 'fellowship' means **participation, partnership**. God employs the strongest figures to show that there should be **no union** between worldly parties and those who are seeking the righteousness of Christ. What communion can there be between light and darkness, truth and unrighteousness? None whatever. Light represents righteousness; darkness, unrighteousness. Christians have come out of darkness into the light. They have put on Christ, and they wear the badge of truth and obedience. They are governed by the elevated and holy principles which Christ expressed in His life."<sup>2</sup>

Before we can be accepted as sons and daughters of God, we must separate from the world. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

"Christ's followers are **required** to come out from the world, and be separate, and touch not the unclean, and they have the promise of being the sons and daughters of the Most High, members of the royal family. But if the **conditions** are not complied with on their part, they **will not, cannot, realize the fulfillment of the promise**. A profession of Christianity is nothing in the sight of God; but true, humble, willing obedience to His requirements designates the children of His

adoption, the recipients of His grace, the partakers of His great salvation. Such will be peculiar, a spectacle unto the world, to angels, and to men. Their peculiar, holy character will be discernible, and will distinctly separate them from the world, from its affections and lust."<sup>3</sup>

Why? The apostle explains in strong language, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). If we do not separate from the world, then our refusal to separate from the world is a separation from Jehovah that makes us His enemies.

### When do we make a vow to separate from the world?

What was the original meaning of circumcision? God "required of Abraham and his seed, circumcision, which was a circle cut in the flesh, as a token that God had cut them out and **separated** them **from all nations** as His peculiar treasure. By this sign they **solemnly pledged** themselves that they would **not intermarry** with other nations; for by so doing they would lose their reverence for God and His holy law, and would become like the idolatrous nations around them. By the act of circumcision they solemnly agreed to fulfill on their part the conditions of the covenant made with Abraham, to be **separate from all nations**, and to be **perfect**. If the descendants of Abraham had kept separate from other nations, they would not have been seduced into idolatry. . . .

"Some were careful to instruct their children in the law of God; but many of the Israelites had **witnessed so much idolatry that they had confused ideas of God's law**. . . . They murmured against God because of difficulties in the way and **wished to return again to Egypt**."<sup>4</sup>

Separation from other nations in the Old Testament clearly means separation from other churches in the New. The Lord declared that "the

uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant" (Genesis 17:14). "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

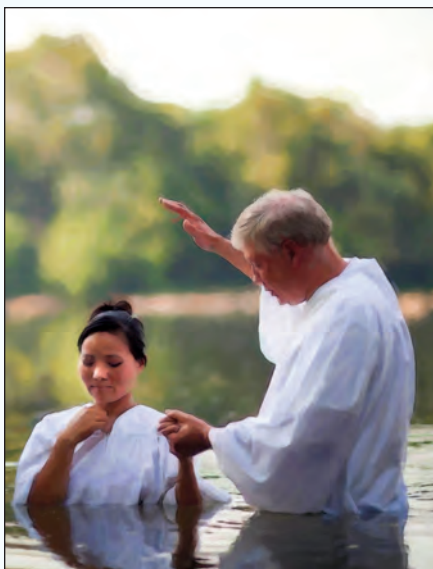
This separation is one of the conditions for receiving the seal of the living God. The 144,000 "are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" (Revelation 14:4).

They promised not to intermarry—and by it they promised to be perfect, just as God had told Abraham to be perfect (Genesis 17:1).

As Christians, "ye are complete in [Christ], which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Colossians 2:10–12).

### Baptism

When we are baptized, our earthly nature—"the old man"—is crucified and we die to sin. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:3–6).



“Baptism is **a most solemn renunciation of the world**. Those who are baptized in the threefold name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, at the very entrance of their Christian life declare publicly that they have **forsaken the service of Satan** and have **become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King**.”<sup>5</sup>

It is also a pledge not to intermarry those outside of the faith in the present truth message. “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:39).

Those who do not accept the present truth are called unbelievers. “My sister, dare you disregard these plain and positive directions? As a child of God, a subject of Christ’s kingdom, the purchase of His blood, how can you connect yourself with one who does not acknowledge His claims, who is not controlled by His Spirit? The commands I have quoted are not the word of man, but of God. **Though the companion of your choice were in all other respects worthy (which he is not), yet he has not accepted the truth for this time; he is an unbeliever, and you are forbidden of heaven to unite yourself with him.** You cannot, without peril to your soul, disregard this divine injunction.”<sup>6</sup>

Through baptism, the soul voluntarily and solemnly declares that he or she is making a complete separation from the world in the sense of partaking in any of its sinful practices and customs.

How should we treat this vow? “When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay” (Ecclesiastes 5:4, 5).

Does this mean we are to have no union at all with those not of our faith? The answer to this is found in Christ’s prayer to His heavenly Father, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:15, 16).

“The question may be asked, Are we to have no union whatever with the world? The word of the Lord is to be our guide. **Any connection with infidels and unbelievers that would identify us with them is forbidden** by the Word.”<sup>7</sup>

### How does this same principle apply to politics?

Jesus is the Christian’s example in all things. “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth” (1 Peter 2:21, 22).

All through the New Testament opportunities were provided Christ in getting involved in the politics of the day. Why did He refuse? “Again and again Christ had been asked to decide legal and political questions. But **He refused to interfere in temporal matters**. He knew that in the political world there were iniquitous proceedings and great tyranny. But His only exposure of these was the proclamation of Bible truth. To the great multitudes that thronged His steps He presented the pure, holy principles of the law of God and spoke of the blessing found in obeying these

principles. With authority from on high He enforced the importance of justice and mercy. But He refused to become entangled in personal disputes.”<sup>8</sup>

“The government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were crying abuses—extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty. **Yet the Saviour attempted no civil reforms**. He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. He did not interfere with the authority or administration of those in power. He who was our example kept aloof from earthly governments. Not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external measures. To be efficient, the cure must reach men individually and must regenerate the heart.”<sup>9</sup>

He refused to get involved in politics because the solution to society’s inequalities and injustices is not in legislation of morality but in the change of the human heart. “Not by the decisions of courts or councils or legislative assemblies, not by the patronage of worldly great men, is the kingdom of Christ established, but by **the implanting of Christ’s nature in humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit**. ‘As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God’ (John 1:12, 13). Here is the only power that can work the uplifting of mankind. And the human agency for the accomplishment of this work is the teaching and practicing of the word of God.”<sup>10</sup> Governments are ordained of God and are to be respected. This is especially true of those governments that provide freedom to its citizens to worship as their conscience dictate and protect the rights of the minority, as in the case of the constitution of the United States. However, we have no time as Christians to get involved in that political system because our work is to save as many souls as possible by helping them to see Jesus and have the opportunity to have their hearts



transformed by the renewing power of the gospel message.

Our effect as believers becomes diluted and our message becomes confused when we engage in conflicts between political parties. "God's children are to **separate themselves from politics, from any alliance with unbelievers**. They are not to link their interests with the interests of the world. 'Give proof of your allegiance to Me,' He says, 'by standing as My chosen heritage, as a people zealous of good works.' **Do not take part in political strife**. Separate from the world, and refrain from bringing into the church or school ideas that will lead to contention and disorder. Dissension is the moral poison taken into the system by human beings who are selfish. God wants His servants to have clear perceptions, true and noble dignity, that their influence may demonstrate the power of truth.

"The Christian life is not to be a haphazard, emotional life. True Christian influence, exerted for the accomplishment of the work God has appointed, is a precious agency, and it **must not be united with politics**, or bound up in a **confederacy** with unbelievers. God is to be the center of attraction. Every mind that is worked by the Holy Spirit will be satisfied with Him."<sup>11</sup>

Because discussing political questions creates unnecessary conflicts both in our evangelistic thrusts as well as within the church itself, "The Lord would have His people **bury political questions**. On these themes silence is eloquence. Christ calls upon His followers to come into unity on the pure gospel principles which are plainly revealed in the word of God. . . .

"**What are we to do, then?—Let political questions alone.** 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?'

(2 Corinthians 6:14, 15). What can there be in common between these parties? There can be no fellowship, no communion."<sup>12</sup>

This applies in a special way to party politics. "I call upon my brethren who are appointed to educate, to change their course of action. It is a mistake for you to link your interests with **any political party, to cast your vote with them or for them**. Those who stand as educators, as ministers, as laborers together with God in any line, have **no battles to fight in the political world**. Their citizenship is in heaven. The Lord calls upon them to stand as a separate and peculiar people. He would have no schisms in the body of believers. His people are to possess the elements of reconciliation."<sup>13</sup>

### Why?

What responsibility do we bear when we vote for political parties? "We cannot with safety vote for political parties; for we do not know whom we are voting for. We cannot with safety take part in any political scheme. We cannot labor to please men who will use their influence to repress religious liberty, and to set in operation oppressive measures to lead or compel their fellow men to keep Sunday as the Sabbath. The first day of the week is not a day to be revered. It is a spurious sabbath, and the members of the Lord's family cannot participate with the men who exalt this day and violate the law of God by trampling upon His Sabbath. The people of God are not to vote to place such men in office; for when they do this, they are **partakers with them of the sins which they commit while in office**."<sup>14</sup>

What should we do with those who insist on involving themselves in politics? "Those teachers in the church or in the school who distinguish themselves by their zeal in politics, should be **relieved of their work and responsibilities without delay**; for the Lord will not cooperate with them. The tithe should not be used to pay anyone for speechifying on political questions. Every teacher,

minister, or leader in our ranks who is stirred with a desire to ventilate his opinions on political questions, should be converted by a belief in the truth, or give up his work. His influence must tell as a laborer together with God in winning souls to Christ, or his credentials must be taken from him. If he does not change, he will do harm, and only harm."<sup>15</sup>

Why? "When the speaker shall, in a haphazard way, strike in anywhere, as the fancy takes him, **when he talks politics to the people, he is mingling the common fire with the sacred**. He dishonors God."<sup>16</sup>

### But if we don't take part, won't Satan control matters?

Who sets up kings and rulers? The answer is found in Daniel 2:21; 4:17; Job 12:18, 19; Jeremiah 27:4–8. It is actually the Monarch of the universe.

What should we do when called upon to discuss politics? "If anyone shall seek to draw the workers into debate or controversy on political or other questions, **take no heed** to either persuasion or challenge. Carry forward the work of God firmly and strongly, but in the meekness of Christ, and as quietly as possible."<sup>17</sup> Our work is "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10), and nothing should be allowed to hinder that vital, soul saving work. *R*

### References

- <sup>1</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 13.
- <sup>2</sup> *Gospel Workers*, pp. 392, 393.
- <sup>3</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 441.
- <sup>4</sup> *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 262, 263.
- <sup>5</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 91.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 364.
- <sup>7</sup> *Gospel Workers*, p. 394.
- <sup>8</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 218.
- <sup>9</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 509.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 509, 510.
- <sup>11</sup> *Gospel Workers*, pp. 395, 396.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 391, 392.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 393.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 391, 392.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 393.
- <sup>16</sup> *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 337.
- <sup>17</sup> *Gospel Workers*, p. 374.



*A Bible and Spirit of Prophecy comments by B. Montrose.*

*Emphasis added throughout.*

# *The Right Ring*

Picture the scene: Someone is in deep concentration, tuning a violin. Is the pitch flat or sharp? In other words, is the tension on the string too loose or is it too tight? The violinist must figure this out immediately, because for the string to be too much either way would make the violin sound sour. The distinction is extremely subtle—the actual measurement in the frequency of pitch is very slight. But it is very important, indeed.

The movement of the tuning peg needs to be turned in the right direction—otherwise the out-of-tune string could get worse instead of better.

The quick, modern way to fix this problem is just to measure the specific frequency of vibrations each second by using a digital device. But realistically,

every accomplished violinist needs to be skilled in the old-fashioned way of tuning the instrument—by playing 2 strings together until the harmony between them has the correct sound, “the right ring.”

Interestingly enough, this same expression, “the right ring” is also used by the Spirit of Prophecy in reference to our witness as Christians.

“The Bible must guide us in our dealings in daily life. We may make a profession of being followers of Christ, and yet if we are not doers of His Word we shall be like the counterfeit coin. We shall not have **the right ring.**”<sup>1</sup>

Just as the violin string will not be in tune if it is too tight or too loose—especially as compared to the other string—our sweet harmony as Christ’s

ambassadors can turn sour if our speech and deportment do not take into humble consideration our own limited perspective, coupled with the legitimate perspective of others whom we are addressing.

For example, in our midst, many of us are grandchildren and great-grandchildren of believers who were persecuted in wartime. The suffering experienced under oppressive regimes had an impact that cannot be fully understood by those who have always enjoyed religious and economic liberty. Some grew up amid a vigorous backlash against that despotism. . . .

Others come from a parochial setting with a human hierarchical system. . . .

Some may have once been micromanaged with excessive rules



and regulations and are embittered by inconsistent examples. Yet such an experience is far from universal—many others may have grown up as free-spirit weeds in the garden with minimal guidance and too scanty a dose of discipline. . . .

Whatever the case, the particular point we emphasize may end up being lopsided based on whatever we, as individuals, happen to perceive as being important.

So, how can we find that “right ring” to provide the most comprehensive present truth for smooth harmony in a rather complex mixture of experiences and perspectives? The solution is simple. Whenever we want to share sacred truth with others, we need to consider the timing, setting, and perspective not only of ourselves but also of our listeners—and seek a comprehensive balance.

**Eternal truth, of course, is timeless. But the ideal moment to emphasize different aspects of it may vary.** For example, in Martin Luther’s day, multitudes had been intimidated into buying indulgences in the vain hope that their good works would secure for them the approval of God. They lived in abject fear and had very little inkling of God’s abundant, merciful love for their souls. So, the present truth for that time was “the just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). But that present truth was not only for their day. This precious truth about God’s grace must still endure until the close of time, for it is indeed a saving truth. It has lost none of its power.

Centuries passed and the advent movement came on the scene—through our Sabbathkeeping forebears who were the first to live, as we do, in the period of Laodicea. People discovered the enduring relevance of God’s holy law of Ten Commandments. Preachers could prove it from the Bible so convincingly that eventually they grew quite proud of their ability to win an argument with anyone on the point—because after all, they were right. . . . **Dead**

right. . . . So, starting in the late 1880s, the Lord sent a special wake-up reminder that our righteousness is as filthy rags, and that Christ alone is the source of salvation and only by having a relationship with Him will we ever be strengthened to keep the law in spirit and in truth, from the heart. Yes, it was present truth, saving truth—and it has lost none of its power today. From the year 1890 we read:

“As a people, we have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa that had neither dew nor rain. We must preach Christ in the law, and there will be sap and nourishment in the preaching that will be as food to the famishing flock of God. We must not trust in our own merits at all, but in the merits of Jesus of Nazareth. . . . O that you may **go forth** as the disciples did after the day of Pentecost, **and then your testimony will have a living ring**, and souls will be converted to God.”<sup>2</sup>

Some stop here and declare, “This is our message. Period. End of story.” Again we must agree, it’s present truth, saving truth. It has lost none of its power.

But is this **all** we need to teach—or should perhaps some additional details also be provided? Jesus has bidden us to be “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). Are there various contexts in which the messenger of the Lord boldly declares, “This is our message”?

### **“This is our message.”**

#### **Three examples:**

##### **1. “Be Ready” (the year: 1896)**

“God gives no one authority to say that Christ delays His coming five years, ten years, or twenty years. **‘Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh’** (Matthew 24:44). **This is our message**, the very message that the three angels flying in the midst of heaven are proclaiming.”<sup>3</sup>

##### **2. “God’s Law and the Close of Probation” (the year: 1887)**

“Present before your hearers in simple language **the claims of God’s law upon men**, while your own heart is softened and subdued by His Spirit. **This is our message.** God has given to man His rule of life in His holy law, to guide and control his words and actions. **This law** permits no neutrality. It has a bearing upon every man’s life and **will not relax its hold until every case is decided** for life eternal or for perdition.”<sup>4</sup>

##### **3. “Christ Is Coming Soon, so Take Care of Your Health” (the year: 1903)**

“The first messengers of the gospel were sent forth with the word, **‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand’** (Matthew 10:7). **This is our message today.** . . .

“We are to present the principles of health reform, impressing our hearers with the thought that they have a part to act in keeping themselves in health.”<sup>5</sup>

### **The 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries: Dealing in an automatic world**

We need to realize that we live in a rather unique generation today—where more things are done instantly and invisibly without our direct intervention than at any other time in history (with the possible exception of the antediluvian age).

Even the English adjective “automatic” depicts a somewhat recent concept—meaning “self-acting, moving or acting on its own.” Interestingly, it is believed that this word was coined as late as 1812. The adjective was first used at an even later date in specific reference to types of machinery that imitate human-direct action. The year: 1940.

Most of us would agree that we who are living post-1940 have not only been exposed to automated machinery—at this point in time, our whole society and way of life could be virtually paralyzed without it. We’re living in an instant-gratification-based society with a constant expectation for things to happen automatically.

## We need to surrender all to Christ. How deep is this surrender to be?

We can't even repent without God's intervention (Romans 2:4), and the idea of surrendering may seem to be a very passive act. After all, when you see two dogs vying for dominance, the one who submits rolls on his back with his front paws passively curled up at the mercy of the other. In humans, the universal sign of surrender is a similar type of submissive motion with the hands, illustrating that you are officially posing no threat to the other person and have no weapon to brandish.

So, is full surrender to Christ this type of passive act? Let's look at this in a realistic, contemporary perspective:

"God has made provision that we may become like unto Him, and **He will accomplish this for all who do not interpose a perverse will** and thus frustrate His grace."<sup>6</sup>

So, Christ will energize us to be overcomers as long as we don't block the way with our perverse will. But many or even most of us can surely cite some aspects of our past experience that have been dysfunctional. What is going to remove all this perversity out of our will?

"Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). "Repent" is an action word. Jesus is telling us to do something. Yes, of course, He is the One that gives the idea and the power. But our life does not become "automatic" from that point onward! We're not like the Boeing 777 jet effortlessly soaring above land and sea in smooth autopilot mode.

"While God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, **no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ's righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties.** God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to **retain** justification, there must be

**continual obedience**, through active, living **faith that works by love and purifies the soul.** . . .

"[James 2:21–24 quoted.] In order for man to be justified by faith, faith must reach a point where **it** will control the affections and impulses of the heart; and **it is by obedience that faith itself is made perfect.**"<sup>7</sup>

But why can't we just sit back and relax with the "autopilot" switch on and let Christ do all the obeying for us? The answer is clear: Because that would actually deprive us of our moment-by-moment freedom of choice.

"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.**"<sup>8</sup> We're not robots, so this test of obedience was not limited to Eden. It continues daily, moment by moment.

## Repentance in action

"So run, that ye may obtain [the prize]" (1 Corinthians 9:24).

"Here the battle between self-control and selfish indulgence is set forth. There is work for us to do, stern, earnest work, to decide which shall obtain the mastery."<sup>9</sup>

"In giving ourselves to God, we must necessarily **give up all that would separate us from Him.** Hence the Saviour says, 'Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple' (Luke 14:33). Whatever shall draw away the heart from God must be given up."<sup>10</sup>

"There are those . . . [who] err in many ways, yet when the truth is believed by them from the heart, it will work an entire change in their life. **They will immediately commence the work of reformation.**"<sup>11</sup>

## Mortification

There is a work of mortification that has to take place. The root of this word means "death"—there's a putting to death. Is there any creature in this world that likes to be put to death?

No, such a procedure inevitably involves a struggle. "If ye through the Spirit do **mortify** the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13, emphasis supplied). (See also Colossians 3:4, 5).

## In summary

"Some will not make a right use of the doctrine of justification by faith. They will present it in a one-sided manner. Others will seize the ideas that have not been correctly presented, and will go clear over the mark, ignoring works altogether. Now, genuine faith always works by love. It supplies a motive power. **Faith is not an opiate but a stimulant. When you look to Calvary, it is not to quiet your soul in the non-performance of duty, not to compose yourself for sleep, but to create faith in Jesus, faith that will work, and purify the soul from all the slime of selfishness.**"<sup>12</sup>

"**This is our message** to the impenitent, our warning to the backslider—**Behold Jesus.**"<sup>13</sup> Does it require time out of our busy schedule to behold Jesus? Of course! Through Bible reading and meditation on it, we are to digest and absorb His Word. What about the 9 volumes of *Testimonies for the Church*? Those testimonies are specifically written "for the church"—for you, for me. Could any other message available to us be more relevant, more appropriate for right now in order for us to have "the right ring"?

Of course, the act of reading and praying does not save us in and of itself. But honestly now, without it, how else can we "behold" the character of Jesus intelligently? Our Lord is not some kind of cartoon poster on a wall. He is the living Word that has creative power to destroy our earthly, perverse, dysfunctional nature. Yet this occurs only as we invest the time, thought, and energy to train our minds to conform to His heavenly, pure, and holy nature by learning about it, thinking about it, and actively imitating it in our daily life—even when it doesn't come naturally or easily at first.



## Striking the balance

Let's pick up again that same passage from *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 10:

"The sinner sees Jesus as He is, full of compassion and tender love, and he becomes transformed by beholding this exhibition of suffering, because of the great love wherewith He hath loved fallen apostate man. 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure' (Philippians 2:12, 13). Man's working, as brought out in the text, is not an independent work he performs without God. His whole dependence is upon the power and grace of the Divine Worker. Many miss the mark here and claim that man must work his own individual self free from Divine Power. This is not in accordance with the text.

"Another argues that man is free from all obligation because God does it all, both the willing and the doing. The text means that **the salvation of the human soul requires the will power to be subject to the Divine Will power, which will can't be forced, but there must be cooperation of the human and divine agencies.**

**"Man cannot possibly work out his own salvation without the ordained divine power, and God will not do for man that which He requires man shall do for himself, through his own earnest willing cooperation. . . .**

"It is a united work, a union of the divine and human, dependent upon grace, and concurring with grace in willing obedience."<sup>14</sup>

So, two things are necessary here:

1. The sinner's consent.

2. The sinner's cooperation put into action by obedience.

Have you ever felt as if your Christian walk was waning, as the quote above mentions, becoming "ineffectual and powerless"? The problem might be too much passivity, too much waiting for some kind of 21<sup>st</sup>-century "automatic" miracle to kick in somehow.

"When there is a determined purpose born in your heart to

overcome, you will have a disposition to overcome and will cultivate those traits of character that are desirable and will engage in the conflict with steady, persevering effort. You will exercise a ceaseless watchfulness over your defects of character."<sup>15</sup>

"Christ has given us no assurance that to attain perfection of character is an easy matter. A noble, all-around character is not inherited. It does not come to us by accident. A noble character is earned by individual effort through the merits and grace

of Christ. **God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character.** It is formed by hard, stern battles with self. Conflict after conflict must be waged against hereditary tendencies. We shall have to criticize ourselves closely and allow not one unfavorable trait to remain uncorrected."<sup>16</sup>

"To follow Christ means stern battles, active labor, warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil."<sup>17</sup>

"We are labourers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9).

"God wants no idlers in His field . . . It is not wealth or intellect that gives happiness; it is true moral worth, and a sense of duty performed."<sup>18</sup> A sense of duty performed? Yes, you performed it—actively, not passively. But no, you can't take credit for it, because it was a "duty." For "when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10), that refreshing humility may finally have "the right ring."

"If we sink into cheap habits and common talk, we . . . have not **the right ring.** Self may pretend a great many things, and yet be untrue to the position it should occupy. But self may be lost in Christ, and Christ's character appear."<sup>19</sup>

So, may God help us—and may we actively, harmoniously accept His help—to have the right ring! Amen. *R*

## References

- <sup>1</sup> *In Heavenly Places*, p. 293.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Review and Herald*, March 11, 1890.
- <sup>3</sup> *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, pp. 113, 114.
- <sup>4</sup> *The Review and Herald*, February 22, 1887.
- <sup>5</sup> *This Day With God*, p. 185.
- <sup>6</sup> *Reflecting Christ*, p. 73.
- <sup>7</sup> *The Review and Herald*, November 4, 1890.
- <sup>8</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 331, 332.
- <sup>9</sup> *The Signs of the Times*, September 1, 1887.
- <sup>10</sup> *Steps to Christ*, p. 44.
- <sup>11</sup> *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4b, p. 156.
- <sup>12</sup> *Special Testimonies*, Series A, No. 1b, p. 36.
- <sup>13</sup> *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 10, p. 331.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 331, 332.
- <sup>15</sup> *The Youth's Instructor*, September 7, 1893.
- <sup>16</sup> *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 331.
- <sup>17</sup> *The Upward Look*, p. 217.
- <sup>18</sup> *The Review and Herald*, January 9, 1883.
- <sup>19</sup> *Bible Training School*, November 1, 1916.



# How Was Christ Tempted?

*By G. Robles*



“Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14, 15).

## **Does this verse apply to Jesus Christ?**

Some people conclude that since Christ was tempted in all points like as we are, then this Scripture, in as far as it describes the source of temptation, must also apply to Him. I don’t believe James 1:14, 15 can be applied to Christ, and let me try and show you

why this Scripture reveals instead the saving power of God.

Look at verse 14; it says that “every man is tempted.” It’s true. Everyone knows what it’s like to be tempted. There is not a soul on earth that has not experienced it. That’s because temptation is “common to man” (1 Corinthians 10:13). Nobody is exempt. How, then, can this not apply to Christ? He “suffered being tempted” (Hebrews 2:18), and Paul writes that He “was in all points tempted like as we are” (Hebrews 4:15). How can it then not possibly apply to Christ?

Let’s investigate this. In James 1:2–12, he writes that we are to “count it all joy” when we are tempted. In these verses, James describes the blessedness of the man that “endures” temptation and trial, for he will receive the end result of a crown of life. In this case, temptation and trial serve to show forth the purity of this man’s faith in God to save him. This can certainly apply to Christ, for He was proved by trial and temptation, and His faith was perfected through sufferings.

From verses 13–15, James describes temptation under a different



scenario. The scenario is of people tempted from within the evil of their own hearts. He describes how this temptation overcomes a person and the end result of certain death. In this case, temptation has served only to prove that this individual is in captivity to sin, unconverted, lacking faith in God's saving power. This cannot apply to Christ because Christ was never tempted from evil within His own heart—because there was never any evil in His heart.

It is evident that verse 14 describes “every man” in an unconverted, captive-to-sin state. A clue to the state of these men is found in verse 13:

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.”

Fallen humans ultimately like to blame God for evil or for their own sinfulness. Adam and Eve did it and this tendency was passed down to us. We naturally like to shirk our guilt and cast the blame upon somebody else.

When we find ourselves overwhelmed by sin in us and surrounding us—whose fault is it? If it weren't for my circumstances . . . If it weren't for my parents . . . If God hadn't . . . and there the blame is laid.

In verse 13, it appears that James was writing to people who were suggesting that God was somehow responsible for the evil in their life. They weren't suggesting that God was directly tempting them, but that He was somehow remotely responsible. In this way, we often cast blame upon God by not taking responsibility for our sins and by not understanding the real nature of our problems.

However, James tells them that it is not God that is responsible for the temptations that prompted them to do evil, but the source of the temptation was in themselves—their own evil lusts.

“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

Clearly, the “every man” of verse 14 is in a state of captivity to sin, for he is dominated by lust. This is the natural inheritance of “every man” and is what we receive from Adam. Now, it could never be said of Christ, that He was dominated by lust.

### What is lust?

The word “lust” in James 1:14 is the plural of the Greek noun *epithumia*, which is translated 38 times in the New Testament. It is translated as follows:

- 32 times = lust
- 3 times = concupiscence
- 3 times = desire

Except for the 3 times that it is translated “desire,” the word is used to describe the sinful, corrupt, and perverted desires of the “flesh” or the “old man.” Needless to say that these are contrary to the will of God and not in harmony with the law of God.

To illustrate, Paul explained what lust was when compared to the law of God.

“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known **sin**, but by the law: for I had not known **lust**, except the law had said, Thou shalt not **covet**” (Romans 7:7).

Notice that the words “sin,” “lust,” and “covet” are all synonyms. All are contrary to the law of God and come under the heading of “sin.”

The overwhelming strength of the “every man” who is tempted in James 1:14 is found in the fact that he is controlled by sinful lusts, or lusts to sin. They dominate his soul. He has absolutely no hope, no power, no desire in himself to defeat the temptation since he has a far more powerful drive within him that holds him captive.

There are two Greek words in James 1:14 that illustrate this. They are translated as “drawn away” and “enticed.” The first one is “exelkō,” which means to be drawn by an internal power. The second is “deleazō,” which is used of an animal being lured into a trap. This language describes certain defeat. And this is

the inevitable reality of every person in whom lust is stronger than his or her will power.

Everyone has his or her own lusts that, unless remedied, eventually lead to sinful actions. Sooner or later, if we are unconverted, we will be drawn away of our own lust and be doing Satan's bidding in the end.

That is the law of sin that dwells in “every man” who is not connected vitally to Christ. It is a law that dominates the soul. It is another law that is contrary to the law of God and brings its victims into captivity to sin. That is the “enmity” (Romans 8:7) that exists in the “every man” of James 1:14. It is a state of lacking conformity to God's law. It is the tyrant of the fallen, corrupt nature enthroned and commanding the human, rather than the human controlling his or her lower nature.

People often point to this verse and say that sin did not commence until it was conceived. They have a point in the sense that there is a sin that is a result of yielding. But here, we should realize that there is a “law of sin” in the corrupt nature of human that is there before the mind eventually consents. If we are not vitally connected to God, we cannot resist that “law of sin” (see Romans 7:20–23) that is in our sinful natures. This is the very thing from which God desires to save us.

### Children of wrath

All this tells me that until someone accepts justification by faith, he or she is in a state of alienation from God. Not just alienation, but captivity to sin and at enmity with God. The term, “by nature the children of wrath” (Ephesians 2:3) looms more significant in the light of James 1:14.

We conclude therefore that when an unconverted person is driven and controlled by sinful tendencies, sinful lusts, and sinful desires, he or she **is** in a state of sin. They can do nothing but sin. People in such a state aren't sinners because they sin, they sin because they're slaves to sin—they need saving. I find that God deals with

the root of the problem (not the sinful action), but the root of sin; which is the thing that drives us to sin—the captivity to the sinful bent of our natures.

### What about Christ?

Christ did not have this fallen drive to sin. He did not have that “enmity” in Him. As He said, the devil comes and “finds nothing in me” (John 14:30). There was nothing within Christ that lured Him to evil. There was no lust for sin, there were no sinful inclinations in Him. No “enmity” against the law of God. This is why the apostle Paul qualifies that Christ was tempted **like** as we are in all points but “without sin.”

That qualification is the essential difference between Christ’s human nature and the nature of “every man” in James 1:14. I cannot believe that Jesus was tempted by being drawn away by His own “lusts,” or desires of the “old man” because this would then mean He had an evil heart—something He never had. It would mean that Christ would have possessed what the Spirit of Prophecy explains in the following statements that He never did have:

“Christ did not possess the same sinful, corrupt, fallen disloyalty we possess, for then He could not be a perfect offering.”<sup>1</sup>

“[Christ] was born without a taint of sin, but came into the world in like manner as the human family.”<sup>2</sup>

“[Christ] had not taken on Him even the nature of the angels, but humanity,

perfectly identical with our own nature, except without the taint of sin.”<sup>3</sup>

“Christ was the only one who walked the earth upon whom there rested no taint of sin.”<sup>4</sup>

Notice this one: “Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain a victory. . . . There was no sin in Him that Satan could triumph over, **no weakness or defect that he could use to his advantage. But we are sinful by nature**, and we have a work to do to cleanse the soul temple from every defilement.”<sup>5</sup>

### What are we to understand about this point?

What James 1:14, 15 shows us is not so much how and where temptation happens but **why** it achieves its purpose. The reason is because “every man” in an unconverted, captive-to-sin state cannot resist the sinful lusts within him. It is no wonder that the “every man” in James 1:14, 15 finds himself conceiving sin—he only conceived what was already in him and what was inevitably going to be revealed in the open.

By the way, there is another reason why this reference cannot be applied to Christ. James uses the figure of childbirth to illustrate this. There is a conception of sin and there is a birth of it. But what conceived it? Lust. Lust is the parent of sin. I cannot see how Christ would have had this type of lust within Him. There was nothing in him that would bring forth sin. Notice what He said: “A good tree cannot

bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:18–20).

The strength of the temptation in James 1:14 lies in the fact that without the aid of Christ, people are captivated by the sin that “dwells” in them. This “law of sin” is all we inherit by nature.

“We all had our conversation in times past in **the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind**; and were **by nature the children of wrath**, even as others” (Ephesians 2:3, emphasis supplied).

This is the defilement we naturally possess and which must be cleansed. And I praise God that the plan of redemption not only made provision for my sins to be forgiven, but God provided a remedy for me, that within myself this corruption may be taken away!

The Lord promises: **“I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh**, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will **put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes**, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Ezekiel 36:26, 27, emphasis supplied).

One final statement. This one is beautiful:

“[Christ] was to bear the penalty of the transgression of the law of God, not to give men liberty to continue in sin, **but to take away their inclination to sin, that they might not desire to transgress**. Those who receive Christ are obedient to His commands; for His mind is given to them. He imbues them with His spirit of obedience, and they return to their loyalty.”<sup>6</sup> R

### References

<sup>1</sup> *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 6, p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 925.

<sup>3</sup> *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 16, p. 182.

<sup>4</sup> *The Youth’s Instructor*, February 1, 1873.

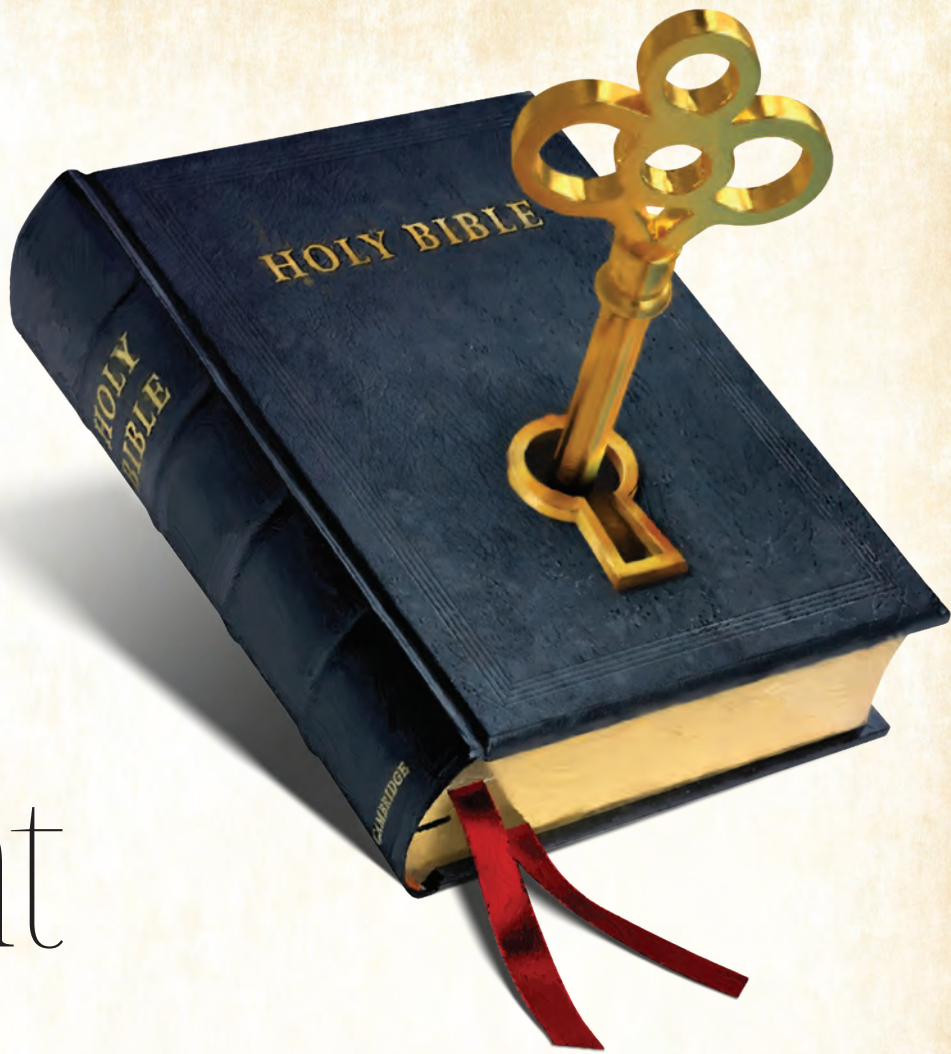
<sup>5</sup> *The Review and Herald*, May 27, 1884. [Emphasis added.]

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# Keys to Identify God's Remnant



*By J. Wiktorowski*

With so many churches in this world with high professions of piety, how can we find the real church of today?

## Led by the truth

### The measure of faith

The first qualification of God's true people is that they be led by His truth as revealed in Scripture. Where is the starting point?

The apostle Paul explains, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).

How is it that everyone has a measure of faith? The Lord gave a

prophetic promise in the Garden of Eden:

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

Who is the seed of the woman?

Physically, every person, because Eve was the mother of us all.

Spiritually, the first application is of Christ Himself (Galatians 3:16). Then it also involves everyone born again through Christ (Galatians 3:29).

We need to cultivate the measure of faith we have been given, not quench it.

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of

devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; **having their conscience seared with a hot iron**" (1 Timothy 4:1, 2, emphasis supplied).

Others improve it. How?

### The Word of God: Doctrine

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

How do we understand? Jesus assured His disciples, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come" (John 16:13).

Who is the truth?

Jesus explained, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).



As we are led into the truth, we are led to Jesus. What else does this involve?

### The church of God

The church is the pillar and ground of truth. The apostle affirmed to his son in the faith, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

"Very close and sacred is the relation between Christ and His church—He the bridegroom, and the church the bride; He the head, and the church the body. Connection with Christ, then, involves connection with His church."<sup>1</sup>

Remember faith? Where do we improve it?

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:14–17).

Who sends the right preachers? The church. Because of the essential need of faith, God is trying to draw everyone to hear the truth from His preachers in the church.

Jesus also declared, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

"Before ascending to heaven, Christ gave His disciples their commission. He told them that they were to be the executors of the will in which He bequeathed to the world the treasures of eternal life. You have been witnesses of My life of sacrifice in behalf of the world, He said to them. You have seen My labors for Israel. And although My people would

not come to Me that they might have life, although priests and rulers have done unto Me as they listed, although they have rejected Me, they shall have still another opportunity of accepting the Son of God. You have seen that all who come to Me confessing their sins, I freely receive. Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. To you, My disciples, I commit this message of mercy. It is to be given to both Jews and Gentiles—to Israel, first, and then to all nations, tongues, and peoples. **All who believe are to be gathered into one church.**"<sup>2</sup>

In light of this, it becomes very important that we understand where His church is.

### The test of truth

#### Clearer than the naked eye

We can believe the Gospels because they were eyewitness reports.

The apostle Peter testified, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven

we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Peter 1:16–18).

But what if we choose not to believe their account? Is there something more credible than human testimony?

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19).

To know that the Bible predicted events in history long before they happened, and did so with unerring accuracy, is a more sure affirmation of its divine origin. Not only that, but it gives us confidence that the things it predicts in the future will indeed come to pass.

### History and prophecy

#### The past: a confirmation of the future

"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is





done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

“There is a study of history that is not to be condemned. Sacred history was one of the studies in the schools of the prophets. In the record of His dealings with the nations were traced the footsteps of Jehovah. **So today we are to consider the dealings of God with the nations of the earth. We are to see in history the fulfillment of prophecy, to study the workings of Providence in the great reformatory movements, and to understand the progress of events in the marshaling of the nations for the final conflict of the great controversy.**”<sup>3</sup>

### The 2300 days

One of the points of the prophecy was to prove the end:

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness,

“The history which the great I AM has marked out in His word, uniting link after link in the prophetic chain, from eternity in the past to eternity in the future, tells us where we are today in the procession of the ages, and what may be expected in the time to come. **All that prophecy has foretold as coming to pass, until the present time, has been traced on the pages of history, and we may be assured that all which is yet to come will be fulfilled in its order.**”<sup>4</sup>

## The remnant church in prophecy

### Three angles

When navigating at sea, you look for 3 points of reference (triangulation). In light of this, in examining any church, we must examine it from 3 standpoints:

1. Doctrine
2. History
3. Prophecy

### The order of the angles

When we consider the study of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement, which point is usually studied first? Doctrine.

Then history is questioned, for example, “Where did you come from?”

Prophecy is usually not the first one, and sometimes it is not examined at all.

But then questions emerge . . . some old objections:

“No new organization.”

“Reformation within the SDA Church.”

“Sinners will be shaken out.”

“No eighth church.”

All these questions have to do with prophecy.

## The importance of prophecy as we study

The Advent Movement is based on prophecy, revolving around the year 1844. “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17).

Likewise, the SDA Reform Movement must also be based on prophecy. “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

### The remnant church

If the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement (SDARM) is God’s church, it must be based on prophecy. Seven churches showed God’s church through the ages, and each successive one has been shown throughout other prophecies as well. . . . Otherwise it has no right to exist. (This is the exact argument we hear—and many join and do not understand this point, so hence they are swept away.)

If we understand the doctrinal, historical, and prophetic points of our faith, we will not be swept away.

So, we have three points of reference (triangulation), “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; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:14, 15).

For those who have never thought of studying the remnant from the three angles of doctrine, history, and prophecy, we heartily encourage you to contact one of our Bible workers to get together in person and gain some interesting insights! May the Lord bless your study. *R*

## References

<sup>1</sup> *Education*, p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 27, 28. [Emphasis supplied.]

<sup>3</sup> *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 379, 380. [Emphasis supplied.]

<sup>4</sup> *Education*, p. 178. [Emphasis supplied.]



and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy” (Daniel 9:24, emphasis added).



“Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold.” According to Usher’s chronology it had been twenty-three years since the dream of this same Nebuchadnezzar as recorded in the second chapter of Daniel. As a result of the experience at that time, Daniel was made counselor, sitting in the gate of the king, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were appointed rulers in the province of Babylon. Many opportunities had presented themselves to these men of God, and they had kept the knowledge of their God before the people of Babylon. Jerusalem had in the

meantime been destroyed. The Jews as a nation, were scattered throughout the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar; their king, Jehoiachin, languished in one of the prisons of Babylon. It was a time of sorrow and mourning for the chosen people of God. Could it be that they were forgotten by Him who smote Egypt, and led the hosts across the Red Sea? As far as human eye could see, it was right to think so. Nebuchadnezzar had been humiliated when Daniel interpreted his dream, and he had then worshiped God. But as the years passed, he lost the spirit which characterized true worship, and while in the mind acknowledging the God of the Jews, in heart he was pagan still. So he made an image

of gold, patterning it as closely as possible after the image revealed to him in his dream, at the same time gratifying his own pride, for the entire figure was gold. There was no trace of the other kingdoms which were represented by the silver, the brass, the iron, and the clay in the dream. On the plain of Dura it stood, rising at least one hundred feet above the surrounding country, and visible for miles in every direction.

Then a decree was issued by Nebuchadnezzar calling to the capital the governors and rulers of provinces from all over the world. He, the ruler of kingdoms, thus showed his authority. It was a great occasion, and subject kings and governors dared



# True Freedom *in Worship*

*By S. N. Haskell*





not disobey the mandates of this universal king.

Heaven was watching with intense interest, for this was the occasion when the highest worldly authority was to meet the government of heaven.

Babylon was not only the greatest and most powerful government in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, but it is a symbol of earthly governments of all time, and for that reason we have the record as given in Daniel 3.

As a king, he had a perfect right to call his subjects together. As subjects, it was the duty of those who were called to obey.

As that great company gathered around the image on the broad plain, the voice of the herald was heard: "At what time ye hear the sound . . . of all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image. . . . Whoso falleth not down and worshipeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

"God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit." But of spiritual worship, paganism is entirely ignorant. Except there be some form, some image before which they can bow, there can be, to them, no worship. It was wholly in accordance with the religion, the education, and the government of Babylon, for the king to erect an image such as he did. It was wholly in harmony with the customs-educational, religious, and civil-for the people in general to respect a command to worship such an image.

While it was in harmony with worldly government, it was not, however, according to the principle of the heavenly government. Hence it is, that again, in the person of the Babylonian king, Satan is challenging the government of God. When Lucifer and his angels refused to bow before the throne of God, the Father would not then destroy them. They should live until death should come as a result of the course they pursued. The Babylonian king, however, threatened utter destruction to all who refused to worship his golden image. The motive

power in the heavenly government is love; human power when exercised becomes tyranny. All tyranny is a repetition of the Babylonian principles. We sometimes call it papal; it is likewise Babylonian. When the civil power enforces worship of any sort, be that worship true or false in itself, to obey is idolatry. The command must be backed by some form of punishment,-a fiery furnace,-and the conscience of man is no longer free. From a civil standpoint, such legislation is tyranny, and looked at from a religious point of view, it is persecution. The vast throng fell prostrate before the image, but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego remained erect. Then it was, certain Chaldeans-teachers in the realm, jealous of the position and power of these Hebrews,-having waited for a chance to accuse them, said to the king, "There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, . . . these men have not regarded thee."

Can it be, thought the king, that when the image is made after the pattern of the one shown me by the God of the Jews, that those men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, have failed to worship at my command? Can it be possible that when I have elevated those men, who were only slaves, to high positions in the government, that they disregard my laws? The thought rankled in the heart of the king. Self exaltation brooks no opposition, and the men were called forthwith into the presence of Nebuchadnezzar.

Can it be possible, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, after all that has been done for you, that ye do not serve my gods nor worship the image which I have set up. The reason for making the image was doubtless explained, and another opportunity offered them in which they might redeem the past offense. But if it was willful disregard of authority, the law of the land should be enforced. The furnace was pointed to by the king as awaiting traitors and rebels.

What a test of the fidelity of these three companions of Daniel!

They realized that they were in the presence of not only the richest monarch of earth, and that disobedience meant death, but before the assembled multitudes of the plain of Dura, and that they were a spectacle to God, to angels, and to the inhabitants of other worlds.

The whole universe was watching with inexpressible interest to see what these men would do. The controversy was not between man and Satan, but between Satan and Christ, and eternal principles were at stake. Men were actors in the contest. They could stand as witnesses either for Christ or for Satan in this time of decision. Would they allow an unsanctified emotion to have possession of their lives, and compromise their faith? What could a religion be worth which admitted of compromise? What can any religion be worth if it does not teach loyalty to the God of heaven? What is there of any real value in the world,-especially when on the very borders of eternity,-unless it be God's acknowledgment of us as his children?

These Hebrew youth had learned from the history of God's dealings with the Israelites in times past, that disobedience brought only dishonor, disaster, and ruin; and that the fear of the Lord was not only the beginning of wisdom, but the basis of all true prosperity. They therefore calmly and respectfully told the king that they would not worship his golden image, and that they had faith that their God was able to protect them.

The king was angry. His proud spirit could not tolerate this refusal to obey his decree. He ordered that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual, and that the most mighty men of his army bind these three Hebrews and throw them into the fire. This was done, but God in this act began to vindicate his worthies. The furnace was so exceedingly hot that the mighty men who cast the Hebrews into the fire were themselves destroyed by the intense heat.

God suffered not envy and hatred to prevail against his children. How often have the enemies of God united

their strength and wisdom to destroy the character and influence of a few humble, trusting persons! But nothing can prevail against those who are strong in the Lord. The promise is, "The wrath of man shall praise thee."

God preserved his servants in the midst of the flames, and the attempt to force them into idolatry resulted in bringing the knowledge of the true God before the assemblage of princes and rulers of the vast kingdom of Babylon. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." All things are possible to those who believe. "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." God may not always work deliverance in the way that we think best, but he who sees everything from the beginning, knows what will bring honor and praise to his name.

Suddenly the king became pale with terror. He looked intently into the midst of the fiery furnace, and turned to those near him with the words, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered, "True, O king." The king then said, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

How did the king recognize the form of the Son of God? Evidently by the teachings of the Jews in the court of Babylon and in remembrance of his vision. Daniel and his companions had ever sought to bring before the king, the princes, and the wise men of Babylon, a knowledge of the true God. These Hebrews, holding high positions in the government, had been associated with the king; and as they were not ashamed of their God, they had honored and given glory to the Lord whenever opportunity afforded. The king had heard from their lips descriptions of the glorious Being whom they served; and it was from this instruction that he was able to recognize the fourth person in the fire as the Son of God. The king also understood the ministry of angels, and now believed that they had interfered in behalf of these faithful

men who would yield their bodies to punishment rather than consent with their minds to serve or worship any God but their own. These men were true missionaries. They held honored positions in the government, and at the same time let the light of the gospel shine through their lives. This miracle was one of the results of their godly lives.

With bitter remorse and feelings of humility, the king approached the furnace, and exclaimed, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither." They did so, and all the hosts of the plain of Dura were witnesses to the fact that not even the smell of fire was upon their garments, and not a hair of their heads had been singed. God had triumphed through the constancy of his faithful servants. The magnificent image was forgotten by the people in their

wonder, and solemnity pervaded the assembly.

What the Jewish nation as a nation had failed to do in proclaiming the truth to the nations of the world, God accomplished under the most trying circumstances, with only three men. The story of the miraculous deliverance was told to the ends of the earth. The principles of religious liberty and freedom of conscience were made known. The history of the Jews was told from mouth to mouth as those unacquainted with the three Hebrews asked who they were and how they came into Babylon. The Sabbath was proclaimed. The story of Jewish education was made known. The glory of Babylon was for the time forgotten as the splendor of the heavenly kingdom and the principles of God's government became the absorbing theme.

Without doubt  
some men  
dated





their conversion from that day, and forces were set in operation which paved the way for the return of the Jews a few years later.

Again the heathen monarch is brought to acknowledge the power of heaven's King. When Daniel interpreted the dream, worldly wisdom and the learning of the Babylonian schools fell before the simple gospel teaching as carried out by faithful mothers in Israel. When the three Hebrews were saved from the heat of the furnace, the principles of God's government-true Protestantism, as it would be called today—were proclaimed before the nations of the earth.

It was only a partial appreciation of these principles which Nebuchadnezzar at first gained; nevertheless it led to the decree that throughout the whole dominion, wherever a Jew might be living, no man should speak against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. This gave freedom to every believer to worship unmolested. Satan, in attempting to destroy the Hebrews, had overstepped the bounds, and in place of the death of three, life was granted to thousands.

The trial on the plains of Dura was the crowning act in the lives of the three Hebrews. We are told that they were advanced to higher positions in the province of Babylon, but we hear nothing further of them. In the testing time they did not know that the Lord would deliver them from the furnace, but they had faith to believe that he had power to do it if it were his will to do so. In such times it takes more faith to trust that God will bring about his purposes in his own way than it does to believe in our own way. It is the absence of this faith and trust in critical times which brings perplexity, distress, fear, and surmising of evil. God is ever ready to do great things for his people when they put their trust in him. "Godliness with contentment is great gain."

Seldom are we placed in the same circumstances twice. Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Daniel, and others were sorely tried, even unto death, yet each

*The scenes portrayed  
in the third chapter of  
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God are coming as the end  
approaches.*

test came in a different way. Each one today has an experience peculiar to his character and circumstances. God has a work to accomplish in the life of each individual. Every act, however small, has its place in our life experience. God is more than willing to guide us in the right way. He has not closed the windows of heaven to prayer, but his ears are ever open to the cries of his children, and his eye watches every movement of Satan to counteract his work.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were men of like passions with ourselves. Their lives are given to show what man may become even in this life, if he will make God his strength and wisely improve the opportunities within his reach. Among the captives of the king who had similar advantages, only Daniel and his three companions bent all their energies to seek wisdom and knowledge from God as revealed in his Word and works. Although they afterward held high positions of trust, they were neither proud nor self-sufficient. They had a living connection with God, loving, fearing, and obeying him. They allowed their light to shine in undimmed luster, while occupying positions of responsibility. Amid all the temptations and fascinations of the court, they stood firm as a rock in adherence to principle.

A direct compliance with Bible requirements, and a faith in God, will bring strength to both the will and the body. The fruit of the Spirit is not only love, joy, and peace, but temperance also. If these youth had compromised with the heathen officers at first, and

yielded to the pressure of the occasion by eating and drinking according to the custom of the Babylonians, contrary to God's requirements, that one wrong step would undoubtedly have led to others, until their consciences would have become seared, and they would have been turned into wrong paths. Faithfulness in this one point prepared them to withstand greater temptations, until finally they stood firm in this crucial test on the plain of Dura.

The third chapter of Daniel may be studied with profit in connection with the message referred to in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation. The principles are the same in both. All the world was called to worship the image set up in the province of Babylon; refusing, they would suffer death. In Revelation there is brought to view an image to the beast—governments on earth which will frame laws contrary to the requirements of God. Life and power will be given to this image, and it shall both speak and decree that as many as will not worship it shall be put to death. All, small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, will be required to receive a mark in the right hand or in the forehead. Men will be disfranchised for not worshiping this image; for no one will be allowed to buy or sell who has not the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Who will be able to stand the test when this decree to worship the image to the beast is enforced? Who will choose rather to "suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season"? What children are now being trained and educated in these principles of integrity to God? From what homes will come the Daniels and the Meshachs? This will be the final test brought upon the servants of God. The scenes portrayed in the third chapter of Daniel are but a miniature representation of those trials into which the people of God are coming as the end approaches. *R*





## ← Australia

The Maranatha Building Project outlines the beginning of the new church building in Victoria, Australia. November 13, 2016.

## ↗ Honduras

Eben-ezer Missionary School—in Siguatopeque, Honduras. October 11, 2016.

## ↓ Italy

Lighthouse Missionary Bible School—the graduation conference. October 14–16, 2016.





## Colombia ➡

Beth-el Missionary School. Students are currently busy in the preparation of the grounds for January's National Conference.  
October 2016.

## Seychelles ↗

Baptism in the Seychelles.  
October 2016.

## U.S.A. ↓

The General Conference Annual Council took place from September 22–October 5, 2016.





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MOVING? Please let us know.

# Pathways

Have you ever been on a walk in the forest and gotten lost? With so many trees around, blocking your view of the rest of the world, it's very easy to lose your way. So, it's important to have a good, clear pathway. Sometimes little signs or a streak of paint marked on some of the trees are there to help you stay on the path and not get lost.

The Christian life has pathways, too. If we choose to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we find ourselves in the path that leads to eternal life in Heaven. But if, without thinking, we just follow along the easiest pathway, we will end up in the ways of death without any real hope for eternity.

There is only one way into the kingdom of Heaven—and everyone who will enter the pearly gates must follow Jesus there through the power and grace our Creator has given in His holy Word, the Bible.

Naturally, all of us have the same problem. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6). We tend to pick the easy path and that often leads to do wrong things. “There is a way which

seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12). This is not the Lord's way. His way is perfect, right, and true. So, the Lord says, “Let the wicked forsake his way” (Isaiah 55:7), “for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat” (Matthew 7:13).

Many people go the wrong way, often without thinking. They are blinded by Satan and are carried away by worldly pleasure and strife. Is there any way to fix this problem?

Yes, the door of mercy is still open. Jesus says, “Enter ye in at the strait [narrow] gate: . . . because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13, 14).

This path is narrow, but God has made it so plain and simple that even the weakest can find it. “Seek, and ye shall find” (Luke 11:9). Pray, as did the psalmist, “Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path” (Psalm 27:11). If we are willing to learn God's way and to humble ourselves to walk with Him, we shall find it. “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way” (Psalm 25:9).

“As for God, his way is perfect” (2 Samuel 22:31). No one needs to be lost.

So, let's choose His way, and allow Him to lead us in the path of life!—*BHM*

