

EXPLORATIONS IN PRESENT TRUTH

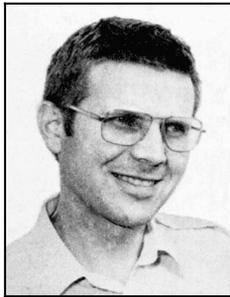
THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF
WOLFGANG MEYER

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The Man of Sin in contrast to The Man of Righteousness

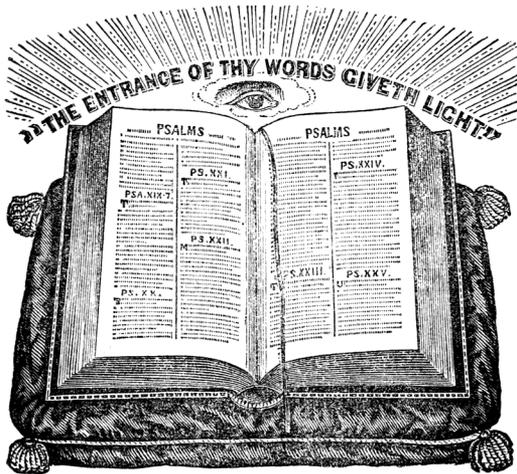
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Published Articles

1969 – 1979



1. What is Justification by Faith?

Messenger of Living Righteousness, June-July 1969

IT IS generally understood that Justification by Faith is the one and only way to find acceptance with God; and it is for this reason that we should have a clear notion of the fact that the powers of evil will do everything imaginable to keep this one and only way of salvation hidden. It is Satan's special concern to make all men walk in the "broad way," so that if it were possible, not a single soul should find even the beginning of the "narrow way."¹

We ought to expect then that Justification by Faith, as the central and most important theme of the Bible, to be subject above anything else, to the assaults of him who has always searched to obscure, distort and pervert the truth of God. It follows that the real truth of this doctrine must be little known and greatly misunderstood, that it is not as we may have thought, a point of belief which is held in common by most professed Christians.

At first we may not agree with this but let us think about it. If Justification by Faith is the one and only way, the beginning of the "narrow way," it could only really be understood by those real Christians who constitute that "little flock,"² which is actually walking in the narrow way. It is a sad but undeniable fact that the denominations of today are no longer that "little flock" of the narrow way, and it will be shown later in this article, that the doctrine of Justification by Faith is not at all understood by the Christian world today.

However if we have thought that Justification by Faith is something which is recognized and agreed to more or less by all denominations, let us think again a little more deeply and ask how

¹ **Matthew 7** ¹³ Enter in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: ¹⁴ Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it.

² *Luke 12:32.*

it could be that this most vital of all Bible doctrines seems to be so widely preached and so generally accepted by a Christendom that is in open apostasy.

It is obvious that Satan is out to destroy this foundation of the Christian faith. Certain it is too, that he won't have rest until he has taken that true foundation from under the feet of God's professed people. This he devises to do in a clever and imperceptible way, so that none would be aware of it and the people be still left to think:

“Justification by Faith? Of course! We have always preached that!”

Let us beware then! That which is generally accepted as the teaching of Justification by Faith could well be a very clever, but deceptive counterfeit of the real thing. Satan is seeking to deceive if it were possible, the very elect.

Contrary to the great majority of professed Christianity, God's “little flock” knows what Justification by Faith is. To these “few” of the “narrow way” as well as to everyone who wants to walk with them, it is all important that the clearest conception of this teaching be obtained. Without it, it is impossible to walk in the “narrow way.” For these reasons therefore, the question is raised:

What really is Justification by Faith?

To make it very plain, we will consider what the word “Justification” itself means, and make a comparison as to how man justifies man, and how God justifies man. Then we will study what it means to be justified “by faith.”

Definition of Justification

The original and also very obvious meaning of this Word is: “to be made just.” This can readily be seen by looking at some other words that have the same inflection and formation:

purify—to make pure;

purification—the act of making pure;

...and the same is true of justify, clarify, rectify, etc. The true and original meaning of the word “justification” however has been lost to the greatest extent in today’s usage, and the question in discussion is how do God and the Bible use and understand “justification”?

In modern speech it means not “to be made just” but rather “to be declared just.” There is a vast difference. To illustrate, let us imagine a court of law where somebody is accused of stealing, and the jury grants him acquittal. What does this mean to the accused? It means (and this is the modern usage of the word), justification. The accused is now regarded as being free from the illegal act, and furthermore he is declared not to have committed it. The accused is “justified” by what is also called a verdict of “non-guilty.” Now this in short is the meaning of “justification” as it is ordinarily understood today.

But let us consider as to how far, or whether at all, that man is justified in the sense of the original significance of the word. First of all, it is clear that the judge in making his verdict of non-guilty, could never have full and complete proof as to whether the accused was definitely innocent. But if it were at all possible that an earthly judge could have such an infallible proof, he still would not know whether that same person might not be fully persuaded in his mind to commit that very same illegal act again at the first opportunity. And if he thus bore and hid both root and cause of the crime in himself, could he then be justified? Certainly not!

Of course human judges cannot read the thoughts or know the hearts of men; if they could, then legislation in all the world would be entirely different from what it now is.

We can see though, that because human beings cannot look into a man’s heart, legislators can condemn neither thoughts nor intentions and even the very decision in the mind of a man to commit the crime is never regarded as the action itself. That is to

say, no human law condemns anybody for having a thieving character. Only actual deeds are punishable.

There is need for justification only and exactly so far as condemnation reaches. Where there is no condemnation there is no need of justification. As we continue now to study how God justifies, it is good to keep this simple concept in mind: justification and condemnation always and invariably have exactly the same scope and extent.

Heart Work

This thought brings us to a crucial point of the dispute. In man's judgment (condemnation and justification) only deeds are considered, whereas thoughts, character, intentions and decisions are greatly ignored. But in God's judgment (condemnation and justification) concerns mainly and primarily motives, intentions, thoughts, heart and character and secondarily it includes the actual deeds.

Here we can begin to see that the justification which God gives is vastly different from how man understands it to be. In fact the difference is as great as the difference between the human judges and the Divine Judge. Human beings are limited in their ability, superficial in their thinking, defective in their dealing and transient in their existence, whereas the Divine is unlimited, comprehensive, perfect and eternal.

It is beyond question that God judges differently from man. No human law would ever condemn a person for having a bad character or an evil heart. Yet God's judgment is just the reverse. As we read "he who hates his brother" is a murderer, and he who looks at a woman and lusts after her is condemned as an adulterer.³ No human judge would ever pronounce a sentence like this!

But God sees the character or the evil heart and He knows that that is the whole cause of the evil deed. He sees the seed or root

³ *Matthew* 5:21-22, 27-28.

and knows that they are just as offensive as the weeds that come forth from them. Therefore He condemns them both. This principle is emphasized repeatedly in the Scriptures.

However, we have seen that both Condemnation and Justification must cover exactly the same ground and scope. It follows then that God's judgment must differ from that of man precisely by as much as God's condemnation of evil does, and that it must be something so much more comprehensive, greater and deeper than that which we have hitherto understood it to be.

God justifies the truly repentant sinner just as thoroughly as He condemns sin, and if it is true that no human being has the power of judgment and discernment that God has, it is equally true that no human can justify as God justifies.

Professed Christianity in general sees in Justification by Faith, little more than a verdict of "non-guilty" which is pronounced on us when God forgives our sin. Thus the greatest theme of the Bible is reduced to a superficial concept, dealing only with the guilt of sin. Justification by Faith has actually been lost sight of. The prevailing ignorance of what God's justification constitutes is glaringly reflected in the lives of unconverted Christendom.

We have seen that justification strictly speaking, means "to be made just" and that of course such a literal justification is beyond the scope of a human judge. He can only pronounce us "right" or declare us "just". The power to "make just" he can never have and even the mere truthfulness of a verdict of non-guilty is at times dubious.

Does God then literally "make just" when He justifies? We shall see that He just cannot do otherwise. Yea, it is impossible for Him to do otherwise because...

God is Truth

When a sinner pleads with God for the gift of justification, the Omniscient sees his sinful heart and evil character, and knows

that his transgressions are but the natural outgrowth of that carnal nature within, for...

Luke 6

⁴⁵ A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings for that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings for that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

And because He sees the sinner as he really is, the Omniscient cannot justify him by merely declaring him free of guilt. How could God pronounce a verdict of non-guilty, knowing that the very cause of that sin still remains within that person? Can God declare us free of a sin of which in reality we are not free of, even though it may be hidden for a time? Such a declaration would not be true! Will God lie?

It is obvious that the justification which God gives must be vastly different, and this is so not only because Satan is ever accusing God to be unjust and untruthful, but much more because God is the embodiment of truth.

From this is derived one point in which God is bound: because of His nature of truth, the Almighty can never lie nor sin. The Unchangeable, being the embodiment of truth would first have to change His character in order to utter a lie. And furthermore by the very act of lying, or only sanctioning a lie, He would break up the foundation of His existence, for He is the Truth.

God is the truth and as that He remains forever and ever. He cannot lie for He can never cease to exist as that which He is. It is impossible then for God, being Truth, to justify a sinner, unless He justifies him truthfully. He cannot call just that which is unjust. He is a God of truth.

Salvation is Creative Power

But how then can a sinner be justified? Seeing he is unjust, seeing he can never make himself righteous, how can God justify him,

and at the same time still remain the everlasting Truth that He is? The answer is—through Salvation:

Romans 3

²⁴ Being justified freely by His grace through redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

The gracious God saves the sinner from sin, which really means that He saves him from his very nature and character. Salvation is the act of setting free. When God justifies He pronounces free. That is, He makes us free from sin that is in us and from that which we are.

With God, justification cannot mean anything else but to really *make* just. This He does by taking away from us the very sin itself, or that character which is the root of iniquity and giving us His own righteousness. When God has justified a sinner in this way, He can *call* him rightly just or righteous, because he now *is* righteous.

But how can this be? To explain how this is done is impossible, as this is a secret as great as the secret of life's origin. This must be experienced rather than explained. However in order to experience it, it is indispensable that we understand the fact that the Lord does do it, as well as to know exactly what He does when He justifies.

When a judge pronounces the verdict, his words carry authority with all those who are involved as well as the public at large. The same happens when God speaks. But His words carry a power inestimably and infinitely greater than those of a human being. God spoke:

Genesis 1

³ Let there be light: and there was light.

What a power there is in the living Word of God! When your heart is full of sin and the Lord speaks:

“Let there be righteousness,”

–then there is righteousness. When the Lord justifies you, He declares you just and His words carry such a power that they are enacted as soon as they are pronounced. The word of God is power. To be justified “through redemption” means then to be made righteous through deliverance from sin.

Romans 3

²⁴ Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Romans 1

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Matthew 1

²¹ And she shall bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.

Generally, Justification by Faith is falsely understood to be merely “forgiveness by faith.” This fallacious concept must be eliminated from our thinking before we are ready to receive that “Righteousness by Faith” which in the Scriptures so frequently stands for Justification by Faith. To be justified according to the Scriptural definition, means not just to be forgiven, but to be made righteous.

But we must also know what kind of a righteousness the sinner obtains by faith the moment God justifies him. Is it man’s righteousness, that so-called righteousness of ours by which we stagger and stumble and try and fail and which sometimes seems to disappear altogether? No! No! All this is but “filthy rags.”⁴

Isaiah 54

¹⁷ Their righteousness is of me, says the Lord.

It is the righteousness of God as it was revealed in Christ’s life on earth. After this righteousness, every repentant sinner longs from the depths of his heart. This righteousness is solid enough to

⁴ *Isaiah* 64:6.

make us stand, even in those temptations where our own righteousness always used to fail. The righteousness that comes from God is strong and reliable, no matter how trying the situation be. It stands firm in the face of provoking circumstances, it works patience in tribulation.⁵

When the Lord makes a man righteous by grace, He takes away from him his old sinful character and places in him the righteousness of Christ, and this righteousness is able to cope with every emergency. This reliable righteousness and nothing else, can satisfy man's desire to have peace with God.

This righteousness now becomes his very personal possession. It belongs to him, and more than that, it is part of him. It is so much a part of him as sin was a part of him before.

- Before, sin was his character, now righteousness is his character.
- Before, he sinned because sin was in him, now he does righteously because righteousness is in him.

Romans 6

⁶ 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.

⁷ For he that is dead is freed from sin.

¹⁸ Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness.

God justifies “from sin” by redeeming from sin, and simultaneously making an entirely new creature of man. Man is then...

2 Peter 1

⁴ ...partaker of the divine nature,

—so that he can really say,

Galatians 2

²⁰ Now not I live, but Christ in me.

⁵ *Romans 5:3.*

Wherever Christ lives, there lives also His righteousness, revealing itself in a man's life, so that His experience may be a continuous victory over every known sin. Knowing this, how wonderfully tastes the promise concerning our sin:

John 8

³⁶ If the Son therefore shall make you free you shall be free indeed.

How does He make us free? By saying we are free, by speaking us free. When God pronounces us non-guilty, we actually become free of guilt that very moment, and the only way to be free of guilt is to be free of sin. Oh how powerful is God's Word! When He pronounces us innocent, something great happens in us! We are made free of sin. This is justification indeed! Perhaps you may think:

"This seems to be all too wonderful to be true!"

"How does all this look in the ups and downs of everyday life?"

"Is it really be possible for man to obtain and maintain such a righteous life?"

"Have not so many tried and failed?"

"And in my own experience, how often have I prayed in sincerity and even with tears, knowing that I can do nothing out of myself!"

In short, does not the reality of life prove the very opposite of this theory to be true?

By Faith

These questions bring us into the last part of the dissertation: faith. Everything is possible by faith in the power of God—moving mountains, healing the sick, raising the dead; everything which is according to God's will. Above all these, the righteous life is possible first of all, because here we can always be most certain that it is in accordance with the will of God:

1 Thessalonians 4

³ For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication.

One ought not to take one's own experience, filled with defeat though it be, as a contrary argument. We can only take the Bible as a proof. If I and even the great majority of mankind have only made such negative experiences, then we must simply conclude that this experience has, notwithstanding sincerity, not been that real "walk with God."⁶

However, God lets us go through all this, waiting for us to get really tired of sin and then He gives us a deeper message with deeper truth to give us deeper experiences than ever before. In order to procure this however, we must absolutely believe that it can be so. As long as we doubt even the possibility of such a righteous life, so long it is indeed impossible.

And here is the reason why. Most of the professed people of God have a lukewarm, half-hearted experience. It is because of doubting. They have no real faith. Many do not even know and realize that a life of victory over every known sin is possible. It is unto man according to his faith.⁷ To believe the possibility of it, is the first prerequisite for the realization of it.

This faith is not founded on the loose fantasy of human speculation but on the immovable Word of God. A study of the experiences of Enoch, Noah, David, Elijah and Christ himself leaves no room for the thought that the life of righteousness was unobtainable for the rest of mankind. Look at the lives of these holy men of the Bible and you will have to admit it is possible. The lives of these men prove it.

If you then really believe this, much is accomplished. But notice this: To believe this is by no means the faith which gives justification and righteousness. There is many a person among the professed people of God who believes that such a life is possible,

⁶ Genesis 5:22.

⁷ Matthew 9:29.

without having attained to it. Even devils and demons believe it. They know exactly what righteousness is; for they have seen the lives of many men like Enoch, Daniel and Job. Although they have tried to tempt them to the utmost they could not move them into sin.

Therefore they cannot help but know and believe that this righteous life is possible. Yet in spite of all this evidence, they have remained forever what they were from the beginning: unjustified, unrighteous devils. We conclude therefore, that this sort of belief alone can help neither devil nor men.

The real faith which brings forth Justification and Righteousness is something other than most people think. About this faith the Bible speaks:

1 John 5

⁴ For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

Victory over sin!—Righteousness—“Our Faith!”—Is it your faith also? Oh, may it be! All else is deception! Let us learn what the real faith is.

“By faith” means by believing. To explain and describe faith, whole books could be filled, because it is as deep as justification. This does not mean though that it is complicated or hard to understand. On the contrary its practical simplicity is intelligible to a child. Deplorably, most people do not know how to believe like a child. It is just too simple. Many are in danger of thinking that they have the right faith when in reality they do not have the faith of a child.

What Faith is Not

In order to understand more clearly what real faith is it is expedient to investigate some of the most common but wrong concepts of what faith is.

- Justification by faith is not righteousness by holding good and regular church membership.
- Justification by faith is not righteousness by full acknowledgment of or complete agreement with a creed of believers or set of dogmas.
- “By faith” does not mean “by sincerity” nor does it mean “by heartfelt” prayer.

Let us not misunderstand here, for these things are absolutely indispensable to obtain Justification by Faith but righteousness does not come by them, for many people have prayed sincerely without obtaining it. Justification does not come to us because of any good qualities which we might have. It does not come by humility, meekness or patience. These attributes will come with the gift of justification as the fruit of that righteousness.

But many people seem to think that Justification does come somehow or other by these good things. They may talk about Justification by Faith often and eloquently and yet, to put it plainly, have Justification by Works. It would be a surprise for many professed Christians if they could see how much of Justification by Works they have among themselves. Yea, it is a fact of Bible teaching that everyone that is not really converted to Christ, has Justification by Works.

“But are not the most of us converted?”

Is there one in one hundred who really is? The fact that a church does not emphasize and preach the law unduly, must not be taken as proof that it is preaching Justification by Faith. It may even preach something similar to Justification by Faith and call it such, plus of course utterly condemning Justification by Works and still be preaching Justification by Works! Such is the perilous time in which we are living.

This we will not understand fully until we ourselves must personally investigate our thinking, for the wrong concept of Justification by Faith and with it the concept of Justification by Works

is something every human being tends to have. We all must learn and re-learn that Justification and Righteousness, which is love, meekness, humility patience etc., comes to us through nothing else than childlike faith.

“By Faith” means “By Believing”

“But what must I believe?”

- Justification does not come by believing in God, as commonly understood, even if this belief acknowledges God’s omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence.
- Neither does Justification come by believing that God loved the world and gave His only Son to die for the sinners and even for myself; we all do and most certainly must believe this to be saved, but Justification does not come from this belief, for there are millions of people who do believe all this, though they have still not obtained Justification by Faith.

Justification and Righteousness come to us only if we believe, and by believing that it is given to us. By believing that we do receive Righteousness it becomes our own. This is very simple. It is exactly the same as with all things we receive from the Lord:

Matthew 21

²² And all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.

If one asks God for something without really believing that He will actually obtain it,

James 1

⁶ ...let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord,

rather,

⁵ ...let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.

The peculiarity with us religious people of today is, that we may have realized the truth about receiving material blessings which the Lord wants to give us by faith alone, as is taught in these verses. Yet the most important of all things which the Lord is ready to give us, the righteousness without which we will be lost—we have not even thought of receiving in this only way of faith!

Then perhaps we come to the place where we do learn that we must come to the Lord and ask Him to take away the old character and give to us a new life altogether. We learn that the old way of simply asking for forgiveness is not enough and so we come and find that we still do not receive the precious gift. Why not? We do not because we still do not ask with true faith. We ask and then we wait to see the actual blessing before we are prepared to believe that we have actually received it.

But this is not the way of faith. We must come and ask for the blessing of the new life in the place of the old and while we are right there upon our knees we are to receive the blessing by faith and thank the Lord that we have actually received it right there and then. You might think that is presumption but it is exactly what the Word of God tells us to do.

The Desire of Ages, p. 200:

The nobleman wanted to see the fulfillment of his prayer before he should believe; but he had to accept the word of Jesus that his request was heard and the blessing granted. This lesson we also have to learn. Not because we see or feel that God hears us are we to believe. We are to trust in His promises. When we come to Him in faith, every petition enters the heart of God. When we have asked for His blessing, we should believe that we receive it, and thank Him that we have received it. Then we are to go about our duties, assured that the blessing will be realized when we need it most. When we have learned to do this, we shall know that our prayers are answered. God will do for us “exceeding abundantly,” “according to the riches of His glory,” and “the working of His mighty power.” *Ephesians 3:20, Ephesians 1:16, 19.*

This is but an illumination of the Scripture which reads,

Mark 11

²⁴ Therefore I say unto you, Whatsoever things you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them.

How often have we prayed in this way? Have we learned to come in such simple trusting faith as this and ask for the blessing and receive it by faith and thank the Lord for it right there and then? You will not realize the blessing then and there. It will be realized when it is needed most, but you possess it then and there. The difficulty is that because it is not realized right now, we are unable to believe that we have it, and if we cannot believe that we have it, then we do not have it, and that is all there is to it.

Righteousness by Faith then means to obtain and possess righteousness by believing that one does indeed obtain and possess it. If now someone has come to the belief and conviction that this is indeed the truth of it, does he then have Justification by Faith? Let us not be deceived. He must actually go to the Lord and ask for it:

John 16

²⁴ Ask and you shall receive.

Will he that knows what Justification by Faith is, but does not go and ask for it, ever receive it? No, only he that asks. So we all must take this most important step in life and go to the Lord, confessing our sin and asking to be delivered from it.

In doing this we must not, as before, be concerned only with our guilt, wanting to be delivered merely from our bad conscience. In the full realization of the truth that sin has its seat in the innermost part of our nature, bearing its unholy fruit in hatred, malice, jealousy, impatience, bitterness etc., we now come to God and ask Him to take that away. Sin is what we are, and we have to be delivered from what we are.

This the Lord wants to do for us, and then give us His own new character. When we ask this of the Lord, we truly receive Justification and Righteousness, not if we hope that this may be, but if we believe with childlike faith (nothing wavering) that it is so. It will not be so because we might feel it was (how utterly unreliable are human feelings!), but only because we rely and depend alone on the word of God.

Then, where there was before hatred, impatience etc., there are now the very opposite attributes of Christ in us, in such a way that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to take them away from us.⁸ We possess them.

Again it must be emphasized that we will never obtain this righteousness by believing that we *may* get it, or *perhaps* possess it when the next temptation comes. No! We can only get it by believing that we must receive it at the same instance, and that this mighty change is wrought in us at this very occasion of surrendering ourselves to God. While we are still kneeling, the Lord speaks to us through His spirit:

“My son, rise and walk in righteousness, go and sin no more,
Your faith has made you whole.”

At this point begins a new life. Here is the start of a narrow path of sanctification which leads to perfection. It is a path of constant watchfulness, regular prayer and Bible study, under which we must continue to put away sins which shall be revealed to us. In all, the God-given righteousness must be maintained and deepened by the same childlike faith through which it was first received.

Although there is the possibility that we would still sin knowingly, we have now something we had never had before: the pos-

⁸ *Romans 8:37-38.*

sibility, choice and power not to do it anymore. That you, dear reader, may belong to those who...

Philippians 4

¹³ ...can do all things through Christ

– is the purpose of this writing. With all the wonderful promises of God before you, can you still doubt? With the harmonious clarity of this truth, will you still hesitate? Go and make your election sure.

1 John 2

¹ These things write I unto you, that you sin not.

Summary

The justification of God means more than forgiveness of sin, it means the cleansing from sin; this must be so because:

1. God condemns sin to the very depths of it. He must also justify us from that same depth.
2. Sin is what man is. Condemnation of sin and justification from sin must be concerned with what man is, for both have exactly the same scope.
3. God is truth. His justification must be truthful. He can only pronounce a man just if that man is also made just.

Justification by Faith means to receive righteousness which includes love, meekness, humility and patience by believing that it is given immediately while asking for it.

2. The Voice in the Wilderness

Messenger of Living Righteousness, October-November 1969

WHEN Christ brought this message of Righteousness by Faith to the people of God 2,000 years ago, many sincere souls...

The Desire of Ages, p. 611:

...were charmed with His teaching but they were also greatly perplexed...and knew not what course to take.

Why were they perplexed? It certainly was not because of His teachings; with them they were “charmed.” Was it then because they had serious doubts as to whether it was from God? No! For we read

Matthew 21

¹¹ And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

⁹ And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

Why then were they still perplexed even though they believed in the divine origin of the message? The answer is:

The Desire of Ages, p. 611:

They marveled that the rulers would not believe in Jesus, when His teachings were so plain and simple.

Comparing this with the situation of today, we observe that the present truth of Righteousness by Faith is again embraced by the common people rather than the rulers of modern Israel, but we can also see that many of those who are “charmed” with the truth are also “greatly perplexed” because the organization and its leaders are just as opposed to the teachers of righteousness as were the rulers of ancient Israel.

So puzzled have some people been, that for quite awhile “they knew not what course to take.” In their minds they were tossed to and fro just as was Luther before he finally separated from Rome.

The Sure Word of Prophecy

The purpose of this article is to show that this perplexity need not be for,

2 Peter 1

¹⁹ We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts.

Perplexity comes through uncertainty which is caused by lack of knowledge. The purpose of the prophecy is to do away with perplexity for its light is extended unto us that we might emerge victoriously from the darkness of doubt and ignorance.

If the people in Christ’s time had only studied and heeded the sure word of prophecy, they would have been saved from many perplexities. Luther too, if he had known the prophecies then as he later did, would have known exactly what course to take. And also at this hour we must have a thorough understanding of prophecy to know how God deals with His people.

One of the plainest predictions of that which has begun to take place pertaining to the message of Righteousness by Faith, is found in:

Isaiah 40

³ The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

⁵ And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

Most Bible students are well acquainted with the fact that this prophecy has two fulfillments:

1. The first having taken place in the life and work of John the Baptist, and
2. The second to occur before Christ's soon coming.

Let us first of all reconsider the evidences that this is so. In ancient custom the preparation for the arrival of an earthly king involved the repair of the road over which he was to travel, so that he could proceed without hindrance. If that same king were to repeat his visit after a lapse of many years, it would again necessitate a work of preparation as before his previous visit.

So it is with the first and second comings of the Heavenly Monarch. The significant truth presently dawning upon us also is, that this Old Testament prophecy is still waiting for its greater and broader fulfillment in our day, this second coming involving directly every human being upon the face of the globe, presupposing most thorough and universal preparation even unto the perfection of the saints.

We find that the Word of God records that this work of preparation was actually done before the first coming of Jesus.

Matthew 3

¹ In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea,

² And saying, Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

³ For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.

That the life of John the Baptist was only the first fulfillment of the prophecy was also taught by Jesus himself as we read in:

Matthew 17

¹⁰ And His disciples asked Him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come?

¹¹ And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things.

¹² But I say unto you, That Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

The spirit of Elijah was to come both before the first and second coming of Christ. As Jesus said, he had “come already” and that he “shall” come. Here Jesus also gives us more light on the prophecy by referring us back to *Malachi* 4 which logically must be another prophecy concerning the same events as pictured in *Isaiah* 40. That *Malachi* has two fulfillments is also most evident: We have read that this prophecy *will be* fulfilled...

Malachi 4

⁵ ...before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord,

–and again we read that it *has been* fulfilled in the life of John the Baptist, as is plain from:

Luke 1

¹⁷ And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

By linking up these prophecies and studying the first fulfillment of it, we shall see a most clear and detailed prediction of what is happening before our eyes today. That which makes it easy for us to understand the prophecies of *Isaiah* and *Malachi* without being misled is the fact that we have but to look back into the past, recounting the life and work of John the Baptist and see in it all exactly what must happen in these later days.

Let us investigate this old time prophecy as it will answer our questions and be as a light which shines in a dark place.

From the Wilderness

Thus the Word of God introduces to us the message which will prepare His people. The peculiar and astonishing factor here is that the message comes from the wilderness.

- Why does the Lord declare it from out of the wilderness instead of the inhabited parts of Judea?
- Would it not be proper to sound this message from the temple court or at least from Jerusalem where the head of the work, which the God of order himself has established, is situated?
- What is the purpose of preaching the truth from out there as most of the people can only be reached here at Jerusalem?

These thoughts, logical though they sound, do obviously not agree with the Lord's reasoning. He has His own way and that is why it is always the better way. Instead of questioning as to why the Lord brings the message from out of the wilderness, let us simply accept His word as it is written there and...

Revelation 14

⁴ ...follow Him whithersoever He goes,

—even if that means to leave the cities of Judea for the wilderness of Judea. This may sound like a hard saying for many, but the Word of God cannot be broken.

Oh, if it were only followed instead of broken there would be a real blessing in it. The result would be that all the sincere people would come out into the wilderness and gather themselves around the message of righteousness. In doing this they would make a real stir in Israel. People would ask questions and they could testify to the truth which they follow. Even those who, in spite of many years of preaching and urging have not been aroused out of their dangerous indifference and stupor, might then, by the Grace of God, be wakened.

There would be deep and searching Bible studies and people would be brought to make decisions which, under normal circumstances, could not be made. Through all this agitation, knowledge would be increased and the truth would at last appear in its clear

undeniable logic and beauty. To the indifferent multitude the message would sound ringing in their ears,

1 Kings 18

²¹ How long do you halt between two opinions? if the Lord be God follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him.

Thus the intent and purpose of God's saving truth would be effected: The message could be no longer listened to, spoken about and treated as though it were of no consequence. This is one reason why it comes as it does.

When the prophecy was fulfilled the first time, the message came as was predicted. John the Baptist preached in the "wilderness of Judea" which was situated just around the northern part of the Dead Sea. Incredible though it sounds, from this sequestered arid region, John's influence penetrated the whole of Palestine.

All this was out of the common order of things, contrary to any human planning⁹ and yet God's purpose was irresistibly accomplished without the help of, and even against men and synagogues, institutions and organizations. It was...

Romans 9

²⁸ ...cut short in righteousness.

And as it was then, so it will be now for prophecy must be fulfilled. Before the great and dreadful day of the coming of the Lord, the last message will again come from the wilderness. It will not come as men may plan and expect, from some headquarters nor directly from their Church organization, but, from whence it has been predicted.

However the "wilderness" cannot mean something altogether remote or unrelated to God's professed people. It was not the desert of Egypt nor the wasteland of Babylon, but the "wilderness of Judea" from whence the message came. It was not an Egyptian nor a Babylonian who preached it, but a Jew from the Jews. So in

⁹ Ellen White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 300.

these last days, the messengers who shall prepare the way before Him will be and could never be anything else but Seventh-day Adventists, wholly and truly, standing in the Adventist wilderness.

Some of their brethren may not regard them as Adventists because they are not standing with them in their organization, but let us ask a question: Which of the SDA organizations which exist in the world today, would John the Baptist or Elijah join if they were to come among us again? They would not join any of them but would preach a very needful message to all of them, turning the heart of the children to their fathers, reuniting all true, sincere Advent people.

And indeed could these two men, keeping the commandments of God and having the faith of Jesus, be counted as non-Adventists? We need not repeat the mistake that the Jews made saying,

“Can there any good thing come from the wilderness?”

or,

“The revival comes from within the church not from outside.”

We must now learn to look at things as God does. He has a much broader view. That which we think to be “outside,” He may regard as being well and truly within the congregation of His professed people.

How did the Lord see the professed people of John’s time. Did He only see Pharisees and Scribes? No! He saw also the lowly and the neglected. Did His church then consist only of the people of Judea proper? No! Although it was here where the great majority of His professed people dwelt, the despised Galileans and even the hated Samaritans also belonged to His church.

The Jews thought that a prophet could never come from “outside,” for instance from Galilee; but that which in their minds was “outside” was in God’s mind well and truly “inside.” Prophets did

in actual fact come from Galilee, and one of their greatest religious revivals did even come from the wilderness.

Let us wary of becoming prejudiced against a heaven-sent message only because it comes from the wilderness. We should be very grateful that the Lord sends this message at all, for terrible it would be if it did not come, as we read in:

Malachi 4

⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

⁶ And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

May the Lord be gracious unto us.

The Review and Herald, March 29, 1898:

We feel as if we must belong to some organization if we would accomplish good. But John the Baptist did not work on this plan. His mission was to prepare the way for the Messiah by his God-given message; and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit he did the work appointed him without calling to his aid priest or rabbi.

...

They [the apostles] were few in numbers, but under the guidance of the Holy Spirit they did more for the conversion of those in Jerusalem than the large religious organization had ever done.

...

No one is to seek to bind the hands of God's instrumentalities. God has given to every man his work and if His children will consecrate themselves to Him, no one has a right to specify who is to work, or who is not to work. Let God work through whomsoever He will.

In studying the history of the Jewish nation it may readily be observed that their rejection of John the Baptist's preparatory message inevitably entailed their rejection of the Messiah. The reason why this highly favoured people rejected Christ was their failure to receive the message of the one "crying in the wilder-

ness.” In this fact there is a lesson of the utmost significance for us...

1 Corinthians 10

¹¹ ...upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 728:

Their history should be a solemn warning to us [lest] we should as a people be in no better condition to receive Christ at His second advent than were the Jewish people to receive Him at His first advent.

According to this, the destiny of the modern church in the finishing of the work is not at all as surely fixed and anchored as many tend to think, not even when this statement was written.

The church's danger then to be deceived and lost is just as great as that of the Jewish church 2,000 years ago! But this danger is scarcely warned against, if not universally ignored. Is not an unknown danger all the more dangerous? Let us therefore reinvestigate why, having obtained so many blessings and promises, it might after all still...

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 728:

...be said of this highly favoured people, as of the Jews when the good news of the kingdom was preached to them, “you entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in you hindered.”

Paul, as the inspired prophet of God evaluated the situation in Israel of his time in these words:

Romans 10

³ For they being ignorant of God's righteousness...

² ...have a zeal of God; but not according to knowledge.

This was the truth of it. Bear in mind that the fact that the Jews could not see it did not alter the truth of it nor save them from the consequences of not knowing the truth of it. This should be a warning to us today.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 79

The great leaders of religious thought in this generation sound the praises and build the monuments of those who planted the seed of truth centuries ago. Do not many turn from this work to trample down the growth springing from the same seed today? The old cry is repeated,

John 9

²⁹ We know that God spoke unto Moses; as for this fellow [Christ in the messenger He sends], we know not from whence he is.

As in earlier ages, the special truths for this time are found, not with the ecclesiastical authorities, but with men and women who are not too learned or too wise to believe the word of God.

The Main Obstacle: Ignorance

The preaching of John the Baptist was to...

Isaiah 40

³ ...make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

⁵ And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

The valleys and mountains are the obstacles which hindered Christ's reception by ancient Israel when He came first, and again by spiritual Israel when He comes to us today. The very same obstacles have to be removed from us as a people as in the case of the Jews. What these obstacles are can be seen from:

Luke 1

⁷⁶ And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Highest: for you shall go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways;

⁷⁷ To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins,

⁷⁹ To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

How was John to prepare the way or to remove the obstacles? What was he to do? He was “to give knowledge of salvation” and “light.” Now if that was his mission, then the greatest obstacle to be removed must have been ignorance of salvation and darkness.

One reason why the people were ignorant of such a highly important matter was of course, that they just were not taught about it in the synagogues as it ought to have been, and therefore John the Baptist was called to make up for this lack, though he did it in a seemingly strange way. Had the Jewish nation responded, she would have been taught what salvation is and would thus have been in a far better position to receive their King.

If it is true now that all this happened to be a warning to us and further, that it will happen again in order to set the stage for the final fulfillment of *Isaiah* 40, then it must be a fact that we as a people are also ignorant of salvation, that we are also not taught what salvation really is, that, because of the entire absence of this all important fundamental, we as a people should repeat the history of the Jews being in no better condition than they were to receive Christ.

Israel Knows It Not

In this section an attempt will be made to show that modern Israel has indeed lost the truth of salvation and does not know it. To the unversed reader, this task may seem somewhat unpleasant, therefore it is asked that we meditate just for a moment to see the unavoidable necessity of it from the words of Jesus:

Matthew 9

¹² They that be whole need not a physician.

Most definite it is that we need not advance one step further discussing the message of the voice in the wilderness if we do not first see our utter destitution of the truth which it is supposed to bring us. To say,

“We have already got the message,”

–is but to deny the necessity of the spirit of Elijah to come to us today! For this reason the following thoughts just have to be dealt with. Let it be borne in mind that words of cutting poignancy, as were spoken by John the Baptist to the church of his day, originated from the Divine principle:

Job 5 [paraphrase]

¹⁸ He that wounds, also heals.

Even the most conservative can see that the standing of the professed church today is not what it should be, but peculiar as it is, few are prepared to admit that the church is ignorant of the plan of salvation or that the people are not taught what salvation is. Nevertheless inspiration tells us plainly that we are...

Revelation 3

¹⁷ ...blind, and naked,

–which means that we do not have, and cannot see, the truth. And again we are told:

The Review and Herald, Sept. 3, 1889:

There is not one in one hundred who understands for himself the Bible truth on this subject [justification by faith] that is so necessary to our present and eternal welfare.

The Review and Herald, March 25, 1890:

This I do know, that our churches are dying for the want of teaching on the subject of righteousness by faith in Christ, and on kindred truths.

Now there will be no salvation without righteousness by faith, and if these words mean anything then it is that we are ignorant of salvation. This may be surprising to us, but if we really had a knowledge of the truth for all these years, should it not by now have healed us from our continuous backslidings (?) as Jesus says in:

John 8

³² And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

The deep and real cause of the sins of Laodicea lies not simply in the fact that she somehow or other does not live up to the light. It is worse than that. The light just has not been there. Gross darkness covers the people. Our churches are dying because of the want of the knowledge of salvation.

This surely comes as a surprise but we must perceive that the multitude of voices in the denomination, asserting the presence of the righteousness message in it, are but unconscious and unintentional witnesses to the striking pertinence of the word,

Revelation 3

¹⁷ ...and [you] know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

The whole object of the return of John the Baptist's spirit can herefrom be clearly discerned as to give that knowledge of salvation, so greatly needed. Upon the acceptance of this knowledge depends the destiny of the church as a whole, upon living and practicing that knowledge depends the destiny of the individual. Without it none can be saved and if it would not come to us then the whole earth will have to be smitten with a curse.

What must the church do? What must we do to evade that terrible fate? Humbling though it be, Laodicea must first of all come to see and admit that she does not have the truth of righteousness by faith. As long as it is continued to argue that she has it and preaches it, or has always had it, she is moving directly contrary to the true witness's testimony.

The true witness not only testifies to the entire absence of the truth:

Revelation 3

¹⁷ ...you are...poor,

–but even goes as far as to say that we as a people (Laodicea) do not even know what truth is:

¹⁷ ...you are...blind!

It is not the accuser of the brethren who has spoken here, it is the Divine Physician who knows our need. Will we contradict His infallible diagnosis by maintaining,

“We have this truth, we must only try better to live to it”?

Surely with this attitude the church could never come to accept the message. Laodicea must first see her utter destitution ere she can obtain the gold which the Lord offers her through the voice in the wilderness. To those who will accept it truly,

Malachi 4

² ...shall the Son of righteousness arise with healing in His wings.

The Lord's Glory

The preparation which makes...

Isaiah 40

⁴ ...the rough places plain,

-and gives...

Luke 1

⁷⁷ ...knowledge of salvation,

-results therein that:

Isaiah 40

⁵ The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This doubtless is the announcement of the King's coming; however there is more implied in it than only His coming in the clouds of heaven. Before He thus can come He must come into the hearts of His people and be firmly established there. No human being will be able to face that glory when He comes in the clouds, who has not already become a partaker of it.

His coming will be as a consuming fire, if He has not in the time of probation already come to us. Men must have the divine glory within themselves or else...

Isaiah 2

¹⁹ They shall go into the holes of the rocks and into the caves of the earth for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty when He arises to shake terribly the earth.

What exactly is the Lord's Glory? The real glory of the Lord is in His character and it is this divine character which must be, and will be, revealed fully in the children of God.

The glory of an earthly king is usually seen in his splendid outward adornments and environment but God's glory climaxes in the beauty of character. This explains why the glory of the latter Jewish temple exceeded the glory of the Solomonian temple; the wonderful attributes of divine character were made manifest in it when Jesus taught and healed in the sacred courts.

When Moses wanted to see the Lord's glory, God answered:

Exodus 33

¹⁹ I will make all my goodness pass before you; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

The things wherein God glories are: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Human partakers of this glory do manifest these very attributes in their everyday life, being perfect therein as their Father in heaven whose character they have.

But because there has been no "knowledge of salvation," these fruits of salvation could scarcely be seen hitherto. So rare were they that many have even doubted whether this high standard is at all attainable for humans.

But prophecy will yet be fulfilled and is being fulfilled already,

Isaiah 40

⁵ For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

The spirit of Elijah brings about the work of conversion and character perfection and if you or I would have no part in it, the Lord could raise witnesses to the feasibility of His perfect will, maybe from a weaker and even more degraded sort than ourselves, as John said, even from the stones.

A true distinguishing mark of the message of the voice in the wilderness then, is the teaching that men can and must be partakers of the Divine nature which is God's Glory: not at some future point, but today. Another distinguishing mark as we learned previously, was that the voice comes from the wilderness. But we now come to the most important and outstanding one:

The Eradication of the Old Nature

Verily, without this characteristic feature of the true message, the other two points would diminish into total insignificance. There will be and are voices in the wilderness preaching a message of conversion and character perfection but if they do not teach the eradication of the sinful nature in this life, they are only counterfeits, for it is useless to teach conversion and perfection without this eradication. The evidences of this as briefly reconsidered are:

Before the Lord's glory can enter into us the devil's glory must leave us. Divine glory cannot dwell simultaneously in us with evil. Can God and the devil share the same temple? What has light to do with darkness? It must be either the Lord or Baal. No man can have two masters. Every christian must do and does do good: even keeping the commandments of God blamelessly, here and now.

But for us to do this while having an evil nature is just as impossible as for an evil tree to bring forth good fruit. Pertaining to this vitally important question we have the plainest declaration of Jesus:

Matthew 12

³⁴ How can you, being evil, speak good things?

Yet in spite of this inspired maxim, most people believe that the evil and the divine nature can co-exist in men and that the old nature is retained in Christians until the latter rain, or the judgment, or the resurrection, or some future point.

If the sinful nature is to be retained until later, it would in effect mean that men will continue to sin until later because the sinful nature is the root and cause of all sin and the only way to make an end of sin is to make an end of the sinful nature. Any teaching to the contrary is but a disguised attempt to make of none effect the power and purpose of the gospel, which destroys the work of the devil, and sets the soul free from sin.

To prepare the way before the Lord, the voice in the wilderness preaches definite and lasting eradication of sin by faith alone, and this is a sure and stable landmark when every wind of doctrine blows. As John the Baptist so powerfully taught:

Matthew 3

¹⁰ And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

John 1

²⁹ Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin [i.e. what we are—our old nature, our sinful character plus all the guilt] of the world.

Do you believe that He can and does really take it?...away? When the sinful nature is gone we may be filled with the glory of God, and His righteousness can be put into us as verily as the promises say:

Psalm 107

⁹ For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.

Matthew 5

⁶ Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

If you believe that God can do all this that means something. If you believe that God has done this for you, that means conversion, and if you believe that He does maintain and develop it moment by moment even unto perfection, that means sanctification.

In teaching this, the voice in the wilderness imparts knowledge of salvation to a people from which the Glory of the Lord has departed.

Isaiah 40

¹ Comfort you, comfort you my people.



John the Baptist alone in the Wilderness
(J. Londerselius after G. de Hondcoeter - Wellcome Collection)

3. Principles of the Judgment

Messenger of Living Righteousness, August & September 1974

God is Judge

THE first text that we shall study in connection with the subject of “Principles of the Judgment” is:

Psalm 50

¹ The mighty God, even the Lord, has spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.

² Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined.

³ Our God shall come and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him.

⁴ He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.

⁵ Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

⁶ And the heavens shall declare His righteousness: for God is judge himself Selah.

Here we have one of the well-known Old Testament scriptures depicting the judgment of God, and the question to ask here is, of whom is this text speaking?

⁶ And the heavens shall declare His righteousness: for God is judge himself.

It appears to be speaking about God the Father, and we need to establish whether or not this is so. This Bible text, as understood by Adventists, is not talking about God the Father, but about Jesus Christ. However, let us reestablish this fact, as it becomes very important later on as we proceed with this study.

Evidence that this text in the book of *Psalms* is speaking about Jesus, the Son of God, rather than God the Father, is found in:

Jeremiah 23

⁵ Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

Here we read that the “Branch,” the “Righteous Branch,” which is, of course, Jesus, the Son of David, would be the One who executes judgment and justice in the earth. Another text, a well-known one, is *John* 5:22, in which Jesus says that all judgment is given Him of the Father. It reads:

John 5

²² For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son.

Therefore, we can clearly see that here, in *Psalms* 50, when it says, “Our God shall come and not keep silence,” and so on, that it does not speak about God the Father, but Jesus himself when He is the Judge. Jesus, not the Father, will be the Judge.

Of course, further evidence from which we can see that this text is not speaking about the Father lies in the fact that when it says,

Psalms 50

⁵ Gather my saints together unto me: those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice,

—it can only be talking about Jesus and His second coming, because *Matthew* 24 tells us:

Matthew 24

³¹ And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

This is plainly talking about the second coming of Christ, when all the saints shall be gathered for the ascension into heaven.

So here, then, we have the picture of God the Father not taking the role of a Judge, but rather of giving the judgment and all that it concerns over to Jesus, a fact that is not very well known out-

side Adventist circles. However, in view of our Adventist background, we have known this for a long time.

Why is Christ the Judge?

But the question that we wish to study in this dissertation is:

- Why is it that God the Father does not judge, and that He will not sit in judgment over the people?
- Why is it that Christ must be, and will be, the Judge?

To some people this may not be a very important question; however, as we proceed we shall see that the whole gospel is revealed in this very fact that Jesus, and not the Father, will be the Judge. As we see the gospel revealed in this fact, we will be strengthened to continue on the narrow pathway and to worship and to love God because of His great justice which will be revealed in it all.

The Bible not only tells us that God will not judge, but also that He has given all judgment to the Son. Furthermore, to those who study the Bible carefully and diligently, it will reveal the reason why it is that Christ is the Judge, and why the Father does not judge at all. Let us study one or two texts that tell us that this is so.

Acts 17

³¹ Because He has appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He has ordained; whereof He has given assurance unto all men, in that He has raised Him from the dead.

Here it says that the world will be judged in righteousness by “that man,” so this guides the thoughts into the direction that the judge who will judge the world will be a man, and this is a very important thought for this study. Let us now read another text with a similar thought.

John 5

²⁷ And has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man.

Herein is revealed why it is that Jesus will have the authority to execute judgment, and it is because He is the Son of man. That is the extra reason for it that He has judgment. Of course, we might at this point ask:

- Why could not God the Father be the Judge for the judgment?
- Is He not all knowing and understanding to sit in judgment?
- Does He not understand the motives of the heart as to why certain deeds were done?
- Has He not enough compassion to be a good judge?

These are questions that the general mind will ask, and in this study we shall find out how they are to be answered. The thought here is that Jesus had to come and be a man before He could be a judge over mankind. This thought is further revealed in other texts which we shall now consider.

1 Corinthians 6

² Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

³ Know you not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

The previous text (*John 5:27*) said that Jesus will be the judge and execute judgment because He is the Son of man, and if that text shows why He would be the Judge, the text just quoted shows even more clearly, and underlines the fact, that He will be the Judge because He was the Son of man.

But it says here that *we* will judge the world and even the angels, therefore that must mean that not only Jesus will be the

Judge, but that He will be the Judge with other men, or mankind, and they will judge together. And so we read:

Matthew 19

²⁸ And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That you which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Here, then, we sum up what we have learnt from these texts:

1. We have found that when the Old Testament says that “God shall judge,” it means that it is Jesus Christ who shall judge.
2. Then we found that not only Jesus will be the judge, but that His people shall also judge, as in the case of the twelve apostles, as to who will or will not have eternal life.
3. We further found that the reason why the Father does not judge but gives all judgment to the Son is because Jesus was the Son of man, simply because Jesus was a man.
4. Now, as we have read, man will judge mankind. This is the main thought that I want to underline, it will be a man that will judge the world.

That God does not judge the world himself, but judges man by man, can be more clearly seen in other texts. If, at the conclusion of this study, we give careful thought to the evidence contained in these texts, and allow the Word of God to illuminate our minds, we will see that in this time of judgment it is not God who will judge, but that God will judge the world by man, and the justice and righteousness of God are revealed fully so that every knee will bow before that judgment and acknowledge that God is righteous.

The Woman Taken in Adultery

Let us now continue and turn to another text talking about Judgment although at first we may not recognize that this is the judgment that we have been studying. Nevertheless, we shall see that

this is a type of judgment from which we can gather several conclusions for this study.

John 8

¹ Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.

² And early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came unto Him; and He sat down, and taught them.

³ And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

⁴ They say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

⁵ Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what do you say?

⁶ This they said, tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not.

⁷ So when they continued asking Him, He lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

⁸ And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

⁹ And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

¹⁰ When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those your accusers? has no man condemned you?

¹¹ She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn you: go, and sin no more.

We will just sum up what it is talking about here. Some scribes and Pharisees brought a woman, caught in adultery, to Jesus in an endeavor to tempt Him that they might have something to accuse Him of, and they brought her and asked what should be done with her. According to the law of Moses she should be stoned for the sin that she had committed.

We all know the story of how Jesus knelt down and wrote in the sand, and as He wrote those who stood around became convicted of their own sins and, one by one, left the scene. Soon Jesus was left alone with the woman, and He said to her,

John 8

¹⁰ Woman, where are those your accusers? has no man condemned you?

¹¹ She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn you: go, and sin no more.

Now this is a kind of judgment on one side. Here we have the accusers on one side, who were also the judges, because they wanted to judge that woman and execute judgment on her after they had pronounced the judgment. The accused, of course, is the guilty sinner. This confrontation could have resulted in a judgment complete to the execution of it, if it had all come about.

However, this judgment was one that did not finish here, even though the woman was guilty, quite plainly so. The evidence was against her, and all the proof was there, yet, strangely enough, the judgment never could finalize, neither the sentence nor the execution. We ask the simple question, Why couldn't it?

When Jesus wrote in the sand He wrote the very sins committed by those who had taken it into their own hands to judge the woman. When Jesus revealed these things, the Pharisees were so shocked that they just could not stand there as judges any more seeing that they themselves were just as guilty. That is the reason why this judgment could not be finalized.

The first principle that we may later on lay open, and which in this text comes to light, is that the judge must not be guilty of sin as is the one being judged; he must be free of that. That is one principle. And, seeing that these judges, the scribes and Pharisees, were not free of that same sin, they were unable to sit as judges.

It is interesting to read a little further into this to see what happened to the woman, and in the book *The Desire of Ages* we find

further insight regarding this incident. Here, the picture is given of how the woman stood before Jesus, cowering in fear, and as this all happened she cast herself at Jesus' feet sobbing out her grateful love, confessing her sins. Then it says,

The Desire of Ages, p. 462:

This to her was the beginning of a new life.

So we have here the beginning of a new life, this was the conversion of this woman. The old life was given up and a new life began, and this new life was a life of purity and peace, devoted to the service of God.

In the uplifting of this fallen soul, Jesus performed a greater miracle than in healing the most grievous physical disease; He cured the spiritual malady which is unto death everlasting. This penitent woman became one of His most steadfast followers. With self-sacrificing love and devotion she repaid His forgiving mercy.

Today, of course, people cannot believe that if one has fallen to such low levels as some do, that any good can come of them, even though they may come in touch with some church or some Bible knowledge. However, when the truth of God comes to them, those souls, fallen and degraded, can be uplifted by the power of God and the living message. And as we have just read from the words of Inspiration, in the uplifting of this poor soul Jesus had performed a greater miracle than healing the most grievous physical diseases.

Think about it, what a miracle it really is when someone, who for years has been in the depths of sin, starts a new life completely and leaves the old life behind. This is nothing short of a miracle, and each time we witness such a thing we should think of it and thank God from the bottom of our hearts.

So He cured the spiritual malady which is unto death everlasting and gave her a new life. And when Jesus said to her, "go and

sin no more,” what this really meant to her is revealed in the sentence from the pen of Ellen G. White:

The Desire of Ages, p. 462:

This penitent woman became one of His most steadfast followers.

To sin no more means to be a steadfast follower of Jesus. Jesus did not go into the path of sin, and here was a very steadfast follower who did not go into that path, and that can only mean that she was cured of the malady.

The Judgment Scene Reversed

Now we want to continue this thought on the judgment in this incident and see what will happen, because this was only a type of judgment and will be reversed in the heavenly judgment when it finally comes. Let us picture the scene there, the scene on earth, then in the final reckoning.

Let us see how these Pharisees would stand before the judgment throne of God. They had all sinned, and Jesus wrote their sins in the sand, and so they went away shameful. We do not know whether or not they were converted; in fact we know of only two Pharisees who were converted, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea. There may be others we do not know of, but we have good reason to believe that none of them were converted at a later stage.

When they appear before the throne of God in judgment Jesus will be their judge, not only because He is the Son of God, but also, as we have seen, because He is the Son of man. We could more surely say that He has given all judgment to man, such a man as will have been sanctified and will have overcome sin, a man who has an understanding in this whole matter. So, God has given all judgment to such a kind of man in general, and God in the judgment will not judge in the way the scribes and Pharisees judged.

Who will judge those scribes and Pharisees? The first judge against them will be this woman whom they had accused and were going to execute judgment upon. She will have to be the first one who will have to stand up against these Pharisees. Their defense could very well be after this manner:

“Temptations made life very difficult. We tried hard to do the right things, but we were not able to because of the strength of those temptations which circumstances and environment made difficult to resist. How can we be blamed for things over which we had no control?”

They will make long speeches to justify their course. However, God will not have to make long speeches. He will not speak at all. Such voices as this woman’s will speak and they will justify God’s law because here, clearly, is an impeachment of God’s righteousness. It is like saying,

“Your law is too hard, we couldn’t keep it,”

–and so they actually accuse Him. God does not justify himself. He remains silent when He is accused and lets someone else justify Him, and this is an example for us. When we are attacked or accused by other people or by the devil himself, we should heed the admonition in the Spirit of Prophecy. Rather than attempt to defend ourselves and make long speeches, we are to leave the matter with God. In other words, we are justified by another, not by our own efforts.

God does not require this of us without putting himself under the same law or the same principle. He does not justify himself, He leaves this to other people. He leaves this to One who became a man and to other men who followed in His footsteps.

In the judgment God will keep silent, and the Son of God will speak, not because He is the Son of God, but much rather because He became the Son of man, and with Him will speak all the other men. In the case of the scribes and Pharisees let the woman speak:

“At the same time and under the same circumstances in the same land in which you lived I was even worse in sin than you were. For years and years I had followed that pathway and I know that it was not necessary for me to go there because I know how I was rescued from it. I was delivered out of the darkness and bondage of sin by the Redeemer, and you could have had the same experience and accepted Him and you had the right to do this, but you just did not follow it, and rejected it altogether. Therefore, you have no reason to accuse God or to impeach His judgment or His justice because it can be said that I followed Jesus all the way, and I became, as you have seen, one of His most steadfast followers.”

When Jesus said, “go, and sin no more,” this is what was meant by it. She stopped living the old life and became a new person, following in a new way of life altogether. So when this clear witness is spoken against those Pharisees in the judgment, they will have nothing to say because they will be speechless. It is so clear that they could have overcome.

And this is what it means to say that all knees will bow before the judgment of God and His righteousness,¹⁰ not because God has made a long speech and convinced them with divine power of His judgment, but because of His silence. He will be quiet and let those witnesses, whom He will then present, speak for His justice and judgment. Let those witnesses do the speaking for Him.

In the judgment God will not have to say anything because He is not going to judge, for all judgment is given into the hands of His Son, and all those who have followed Jesus and are His will constitute a cloud of witnesses against all sin and all unrighteousness. The only talking that will be done will be by this Son of man. This will very much establish God’s throne and God’s justice in the eyes of all the universe. And just as the accusing scribes and Pharisees will have nothing to say against the witness of the woman they had accused, so likewise will all those who have not overcome be left without excuse.

¹⁰ *Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10.*

Judgment of the Little Horn

Let us remember this. Let us now turn to the book of *Daniel* where the judgment is being prophesied and we will read there:

Daniel 7

²¹ I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;

²² Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

Here again we have the same picture as before, the judgment of the saints of the Most High. The text does not mention Jesus by name, but of course He was the foremost saint of the Most High, and judgment is given to those people who have fully lived out the righteousness of Jesus. And here we have a picture similar to that of the scribes and Pharisees and the woman who was taken in adultery.

On the one hand we have the little horn fighting against the saints and prevailing against them. On the other hand, in the judgment of the Most High the scene is reversed. Those people who have for so long been fought by the little horn, and the little horn prevailing against them, are now in the judgment prevailing over the very power that had been over them.

In *Daniel* 7:21 the saints are prevailed against by the little horn, but in *Daniel* 7:22 it is the saints who prevail, and so the roles are reversed. I want to emphasize these words,

²² ...and judgment was given to the saints.

Again, this thought is further amplified in:

²⁵ And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

²⁶ But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.

First of all we have the little horn speaking great things against the Most High and wearing out the saints, and then the roles are reversed in the judgment. But the judgment shall sit, and the



In the death of John Huss, the little horn prevailed against the saints, but the coming judgment will reverse all this.

saints will take away his dominion. I would rather like to think that the dominion of the man of sin will be taken away by God himself, but here it says that it will be taken away by the saints of the Most High, and once again we come to the principles of God's judgment.

The whole controversy between God and the man of sin is over the law of God. Can it or can it not be kept? God cannot and does not want to speak for himself, defend himself, or justify himself. He leaves that to those saints who are pictured here and they will speak for Him, and in their witness they will bring such a powerful proof of the judgment of God that by it the dominion of the man of sin will be utterly and completely destroyed unto the end. God will be justified, so that every knee will bow before Him and honor Him and declare His justice.

The Day of Atonement

The principles of God's judgment are further revealed to us in a study of the day of atonement. The day of atonement is in fact the antitype of the judgment of God and it is also a day of judgment. It is called the day of atonement because the sanctuary was being cleansed; it was being atoned, being made one with God, and was announced for ten days prior by the blowing of trumpets, all this being a symbol of the judgment. In the day of atonement we can also see the principles of the day of judgment. Let us turn, then, to:

Leviticus 16

²⁰ And when he had made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat:

²¹ And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:

²² And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited; and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

This is the final scene in the judgment on the day of atonement. The high priest's work is completed and the sins of the people placed on the scapegoat, which we all know represents the devil. In this act sin is returned to where it originated. Azazel, representing the devil, is now led away into the wilderness, and in this we see that the final destruction and all the sins that Satan has caused the true people of God to commit are on his own head and he carries them with him. It is a time for rejoicing for those gathered around the sanctuary knowing that their sins had been separated from them forever.

We do well to note that it is not the high priest who leads away the scapegoat, but, as it says, "a fit man." This seems to be very significant in the setting of this whole study because as previously emphasized it is a man who will judge and it will be the saints of God who will take away the dominion of the man of sin, the sin-power of the devil, and of course the first man to do this and to show how it could be done was Jesus Christ. It is only by following Christ and being overcomers that we can be instrumental in defeating this evil power in the judgment of God.

We repeat that it is not the high priest who leads the scapegoat away into the wilderness but a fit man. This fit man was any man fully suitable for this purpose. Likewise, Jesus, as the Son of man, is a "fit man," because as a man He overcame every temptation to sin. And in this man Jesus, all those who are His have followed Him in the same way.

In the judgment God will not disclaim the devil's arguments; rather, He will let fit men who have become fit through the power of God and through conversion and sanctification, fit in Jesus and in His power, show the way to walk and not sin any more. In this way they have become fit and they will defeat the little horn, the Pharisee, and the devil himself.

It could just as well have been the high priest doing the work because he also was a fit man, he had overcome sin. But God chose a man from the congregation of Israel. In witnessing this

act the congregation participated in the purpose of the fit man and rejoiced in the defeat of sin and evil.



Here again we see God's principles in the judgment. God will not defeat the devil by killing him, or speaking against him and then executing judgment, but rather by witnesses from men who will be fit to speak for God in the judgment, and in this way God will reveal His justice more satisfactorily than if He spoke about it himself. This is a more true and deeper meaning of the text that the Father will judge no man, but that He has given all judgment to Jesus, the Son of man. Therefore all those who have followed Jesus in overcoming temptation to sin are the ones who can judge in everlasting righteousness.

The Need of Witnesses

To sum up this study, then, we have two things revealed to us, or rather they are known to us as a people because we have the message of living righteously, but these two principles are further emphasized in this study.

First of all, for God's judgment to sit, God must have witnesses. God needs those witnesses who will stand up against sin and any claim that it cannot be overcome. Such witnesses God must have because the wicked will be full of arguments against God's laws, and God, not being able to answer because He does not judge, needs these witnesses, and therefore the final judgment cannot be until the saints are in heaven.

Therefore, it follows that to have these witnesses means that God must have a people who have actually overcome every sin, a people who have overcome every known and unknown sin. God needs a perfected people before every sin which is in the world can be perfectly and truly judged. The people themselves who are to be witnesses before God are to speak for Him.

God now has only a few witnesses who are fully witnessing against every sin that is known, these few being, perhaps, Enoch, Elijah, the apostle Paul, and others who have fully matured and have reached perfection, and of course Jesus the Son of man. But God wants a cloud of witnesses who are fully equipped to speak for the law and the judgment. These He has not yet found and this is where the present truth comes into the picture.

The judgment of God has been delayed just as the coming of Christ has also been delayed. This judgment cannot come until the children of God have truly reached perfection so that they can stand in the judgment as witnesses against sin. If there is any sin that we have not overcome then there is a ground where God cannot judge sin and sinners. And for that reason the controversy cannot be finished, the argument is not proved that we can overcome all things, and God cannot eliminate sin from the universe until we as a people have overcome everything so that we can judge all things.

So the first principle is that in the judgment God judges in those things which have been fully proved so that they can be proved by a people who have kept the area of the commandments. God needs perfection in the judgment.

Jesus and His Sons

The second very important thought in this study is that Jesus was the man, the Son of God, to whom judgment is given. It says that all judgment is given to Him, but of course as we have seen in this study Jesus will not be the only judge. Against the wicked will stand all this cloud of witnesses, for the Bible also says that we shall judge the world, Satan, and his evil angels.¹¹

Not all judgment is given to Jesus so that He will be the judge alone without His people sitting with Him in the judgment throne. Rather, the judgment is given to Jesus as the representative Son of man. So it will be that all sons of man who have acquired a divine nature, a mature Christianity, and have followed the pathway of overcoming, will also be with Him in the judgment of the world against sin.

However, for this to be possible Jesus had to become a son of man, the reason for this being that the judgment of God could never take place if Jesus had not become a son of man. If He had not, then nobody could ever reach perfection, nobody could stand in the judgment, nobody could follow in His way of overcoming sin, and then God could have no witnesses against sin, and the judgment could never take place. Therefore, Jesus must become the Son of man.

But if Jesus had come to the earth and died for us, not being the Son of man, but having some other kind of nature that so many people today teach, or having the nature of the father of man before sin came to the world, then Jesus could not be Judge in the judgment because in that case all the sinner would have to say is that His is a different case.

If He was like Adam before sin came, or like an angel, and not made like unto us, not having experienced the depth of our temptations, we cannot accept Him as a judge because He needs to have been where we are. In this case the argument would be very

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 6:2-3.

strong. All the intelligences of the universe, in view of their freedom of choice and not being compelled to follow God, might doubt His righteousness, and therefore God could never judge the world.

We see then that Jesus had to become the Son of man, which means coming down to this world to accept our earthly nature, our inclinations and everything to do with our sinful flesh, yet overcoming everything. Because of this He is able to judge all people who have sinned under the same circumstances and the same inclinations.

This is the reason why it had to be the Son of man who must be the Judge and Son. He had to be a perfect man, and He had to be the Son of man under the same disadvantages as all those living on this earth who have overcome sin, and thereby condemned sin and is the Judge against sin.

Those today who claim that perfection is not possible are actually very much denying the judgment of God. They may be preaching about it continually, yet they are the very ones who are denying the judgment of God. Again, those who do not believe that Christ had the very nature that we have in sinful flesh, as every other descendant of Adam has, and claim that He had the flesh of the father of the race before sin came, are also those who deny the judgment of God.

According to God's principle it is not possible to judge without having experienced a sinful nature in sinful flesh and having overcome. Jesus was the first, the Firstfruit, but He had to have other men, those who had lived as His followers. They had all been in this world of sin with the same body as every sinner who will be lost, and they had overcome sin—Jesus and the final people of God, the 144,000.

When God has these two things then the judgment can come according to His principles. Prior to that the judgment could come only on the ground of other principles, force and certain other principles which are not of God. When God's judgment

shall sit it will be clear to all minds that His righteousness is unquestionable and He will be justified before all eyes and ears so that even the evil angels and evil men will acknowledge His righteousness.

Therefore, once again we see how these two principles are important, the nature of Jesus, the Son of man, and the perfection that we have to reach. Let us dedicate our lives anew to God, fight for these two present-truth principles and put all our energy into spreading them so that we do not delay the judgment of God any longer, that we may be on His side in the great judgment.

How the Saints Overcome

We will now turn to:

Revelation 12

¹¹ And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.

John saw in vision that the people of God overcame the devil and overcame sin. Now, what John had seen was a full vision and he saw the truth as it was in reality. This is a wonderful thing for us to think about. John actually saw us overcome, and what he had seen was not anything that the devil had pointed out to him, but was revealed by the Lord who can show us the future, for God sees the future as though it were today; also, He sees the past as though it were this moment.

God had shown John the future and he saw that God's people were overcoming. Therefore, let us rejoice. Sometimes it is discouraging to see that so many of God's people are still sinning and these facts need to be pointed out, and we need to speak about them. But here is a picture which shows that God's people are overcoming just as John has already seen it. He has seen the fact of it as though it were happening back in those days and as it will happen now.

Revelation 12

¹¹ And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb,

–but then again we have the second word here, and they overcame...

¹¹ ...by the word of their testimony.

This fits right into the picture of the overcoming of Azazel and the Pharisee in the judgment, the overcoming of the little horn and of the man of sin in general by the word of their testimony. If the power of sin was just wiped out, its influence would spring up again, maybe in a million years.

But here we see that the judgment of God does a much more thorough work. It works on the principle that the judgment will be by the word of the testimony of a cloud of witnesses against all evil and unrighteousness so that the universe can forever be thoroughly cleansed of this evil thing.

May the Lord help us that we may stand on the right side in this matter. Amen.

4. Flee

Messenger of Living Righteousness, March 1975

A Word from the Editor [in the original]: For the second time in the history of the publication of this magazine, only one article appears in the whole issue. We have done this because we felt that to have broken the article, by Brother Wolfgang Meyer of Germany, into two parts would have destroyed some of the impact of the message which it contains.

There is need to understand very clearly the words of Christ when He said, "When you shall see...then...flee." Not only are those words the command of Christ, but they are the safeguard which He has given to His people to warn them of the danger of remaining where they were after a certain point of time.

Needed are eyes to see the sign, faith to believe that Christ knows best, courage to obey, and strength to do it.

Matthew 24

¹⁵ When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso reads, let him understand:)

¹⁶ Then...FLEE!

WHEN Jesus told His disciples of the destruction of Jerusalem, it was almost too much for them to take. The overthrow of the city, to the Jewish mind so much the center of national pride and religious feeling, could at that time only be imagined by them to be at the very end. That is why they associated Jerusalem's fall with the end of the world. They asked,

Matthew 24

³ Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?

Jesus mercifully veiled the future from His disciples leaving them, for the time being, in their beliefs. This He could truthfully do without obscuring the meaning of the prophetic outline which followed, because He knew that the circumstances in both events would be very similar. He could do this also because of the fact that as far as God is concerned, both events could have been one event; the time of the end could have been the time of Jerusalem's fall. Even the early church had the opportunity to finish the mys-

tery of God in this world and to witness Christ's glorious return in the clouds of heaven.

The Desire of Ages, p. 633-634:

Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would before this have been warned, and the Lord Jesus would have come to our earth in power and great glory.

The Signs: Dual Fulfillment

The signs of the end of the world, as they have been presaged by Christ and recorded especially in *Matthew 24*, have, in the past, been subject to much investigation and study. But there is one sign to which hitherto has been paid little attention although it is one of the utmost importance. In *Matthew 24* we read:

Matthew 24

¹⁵ When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso reads, let him understand:)

¹⁶ Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.

The reason why the significance of these words as pertaining to our time has largely been overlooked, lies in the fact that they were thought to have had their fulfilment already in the past and therefore to hold no more meaning for these latter days. It is true that this text was fulfilled at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, but the thought to be pondered is that there is not one of the actual signs given in the entire discourse which will not have a fulfilment before or at the second advent of Christ.

When studying this chapter again, let us note carefully that all and every one of the actual signs given must and will have a fulfilment at the end of time, whereas not all of the signs had, nor could have had a fulfilment at the time of Jerusalem's fall, this being only the smaller application. In other words, such signs as the tribulation, the darkening of the sun and moon, the falling of the stars, the shaking of the powers of heaven and the sign of the Son of man in heaven, are applicable solely to the time of the second

advent. This is obvious, but the truth is that all the signs given in *Matthew 24* are applicable to the latter days, even though many of them are not applicable *solely* to the latter days, seeing they were fulfilled in part, in and before 70 AD.

With this simple rule of interpretation in mind, we will be able to explain much more easily and fluently the significance of *Matthew 24*. We do not have to skip or sort out different signs explaining why this one should belong here, or that one there, but we simply understand that all the signs of *Matthew 24* do have a latter-day fulfilment notwithstanding the previous partial fulfilment of some of them. We read,

The Desire of Ages, p. 628:

This entire discourse [*Matthew 24*] was given, not for the disciples only, but for those who should live in the last scenes of this earth's history.

So it is, as history records, that many came at the time of Jerusalem's destruction saying,

Matthew 24

⁵ ...I am Christ,

–deceiving many Jews, and in the last days again many are deceived by numerous false “Christs,” false “christian churches,” and false “revivals,” so that for both those signs only one prediction was needed. The same is true of...

⁶ ...wars and rumours of wars.

Though an unmistakable sign of our time, there were wars and rumours of wars at the time before 70 AD.

The Desire of Ages, p. 628:

Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, men wrestled for the supremacy. Emperors were murdered. Those supposed to be standing next the throne were slain. There were wars and rumours of wars.

Matthew 24

⁷ ...famines...

There were five major famines in early apostolic times and again today in many parts of the world.

⁷ ...earthquakes.

It is known that a number of major earthquakes occurred during the years before 70 AD. And again in these latter days, conspicuously many more earthquakes occur than ever before in history. Authorities speak of an average of some 30 times more major earthquakes during the last 100 years as compared with the 1,000 previous years.

What is true of these signs is true of the many false prophets, the abounding iniquity and the gospel spread throughout all the world. Paul's inspired statements said that the gospel was preached in his time to...

Colossians 1

²³ ...every creature which is under heaven.

These signs were fulfilled then, but there is not one of them which will not appear again in the last days, nor, as has been said before, is there any sign predicted in the whole chapter which is not applicable to the latter days.

With this view we come to the conclusion that the sign given in *Matthew 24:15* must also appear in our days just as do all the other signs. Further study of the book of *Daniel* will confirm that this text in *Matthew 24* cannot be taken as a lone exception.

The Abomination of Desolation

Let us investigate what this means for us. Two or three texts will suffice to teach that the Bible understands "abomination" to be sin or anything to do with sin.

Deuteronomy 25

¹⁶ For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord your God.

Proverbs 3

³² For the froward is abomination to the Lord: but His secret is with the righteous.

Proverbs 8

⁷ For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

If abomination is sin, what is the abomination of desolation? Daniel the prophet, speaking of this, calls it...

Daniel 11

³¹ ...the abomination that makes desolate,

–or in another place,

Daniel 8 [margin]

¹³ ...the transgression making desolate.

What does the transgression of desolation do? The latter text makes that clear;

¹³ ...the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden underfoot.

If that is what it does we can understand a little better what it is, and why it makes desolate. It must be something that wherever it stands casts the truth of God to the ground, and thereby brings the people of God to fall, leading them into captivity of sin. It must be something that effectively works, whenever accepted, directly against the Gospel bringing to naught its wonderful results of righteousness, making desolate everything to do with the true worship of God.

It is therefore obvious that the term, “abomination of desolation,” signifies sin in a very special way. Not just sin is meant, but sin embodied in deadly error which counteracts the truth of righteousness. And this can only be the very doctrine of Antichrist, a system of false worship, virtually teaching people to transgress the law of God.

The Pagan Roman Abomination

We shall now study some of the context connections of the expression “abomination of desolation” as it is used by Daniel the prophet and learn more of what it is and does in order to see how it has been and will be fulfilled. The first passage which speaks of the abomination of desolation which we will notice, is *Daniel* 9:26-27. To get the context we will read from verse 24:

Daniel 9

²⁴ Seventy weeks are determined upon your people and upon your 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, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

²⁵ Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

²⁶ And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

²⁷ And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

It is clear that the latter part of this passage is referring primarily to pagan Rome, for it was pagan Rome which, after literal Israel had its seventy weeks of opportunity, destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. It was then that this scripture was fulfilled.

The Great Controversy, p. 26:

Matthew 24

¹⁵ When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso

reads, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.

When the idolatrous standards of the Romans should be set up on the holy ground, which extended some furlongs outside the city walls, then the followers of Christ were to find safety in flight.



Jerusalem as Besieged by Titus
(Walks About Jerusalem, 1840)

The Christians who had been watching unto prayer were very quick to discern that the Roman flags bearing the symbols of idolatry were the predicted signs standing on holy ground. This they understood so clearly, that all of them took decided action, fleeing at the very next opportunity. Difficult though such a flight may have been to them, the result of their obedience to the Inspired Word was wonderful indeed and not one of them perished in the oncoming annihilation of the city.

We have carefully noted that the idolatrous standards of the Romans are identified as the abomination of desolation. We understand that a flag denotes the authority of a power. It stands for the authority of that power and is recognized as such. The Roman flags bore idolatrous symbols. Therefore, wherever they stood, be

it by consent or by force, they represented the power of a false religion such as is directly opposed to the truth of God. In this way the Roman flags were the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place.

Things would have turned out quite differently if the Jewish nation had only fulfilled God's purposes. Had they accepted God's way of solving their problems, they would have become the most prosperous nation of the world. It would neither have been possible for Roman standards of idolatry ever to stand on holy ground, nor for God's people to have been left in the hands of that God-opposing nation. But, because of their stubbornness, they were utterly desolated never to be God's people again, except for a small remnant which was saved.

Thus, because of the unwillingness of ancient Israel, truth lost a battle. The abomination of desolation stood where it ought not; but God's eternal purpose has not been frustrated because of that, for that war which originally started in heaven is still being waged on this earth. Although ancient Israel and ancient Rome have long since passed from the scene, God is still working towards that purpose. Other parties have taken the part of those who have gone and the controversy between everlasting righteousness and the abomination of desolation has yet to come to a final settlement. Your life and mine will play a role, as that same struggle will be, and is already being repeated.

The awful lesson to be learned by us from Jewish history is, that wherever God's purpose to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, is hampered or turned away from, there the power of the abomination of desolation comes in like a flood, establishes transgression, sets at naught reconciliation for iniquity and brings in everlasting sin, thus making desolate even until the consummation when the judgment determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

The Little Horn: Two Phases

One solid reason why we have to accept that the “abomination of desolation standing in the holy place” was not fully fulfilled in 70 AD is derived from the fact that prophecy pictures pagan and papal Rome bearing the same characteristics so that the very things which pagan Rome did to literal Israel, papal Rome does to spiritual Israel, the latter being virtually a continuation of the former. This explains why *Daniel 8* speaks of both powers as though they were one, using only one symbol—the little horn—to denote pagan as well as papal Rome. It is worthwhile to briefly reemphasize this truth from the outline of the chapter.

Only three main powers appear in *Daniel 8*. The ram, the goat and the little horn which waxed exceeding great. The first two are identified as Medo-Persia and Greece, the third as...

Daniel 8

²³ ...a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences.

This king clearly follows the four divisions of Greece and continues to do his evil work to the end of the “2,300 days”¹² (1844) and even on further to the very end of earth’s history when...

Daniel 8

²⁵ ...he shall be broken without hand.

Every other prophetic empire was broken by nations and kingdoms which followed, whereas this one continues until it is broken in the final judgment of God. It must be speaking here of papal Rome. Of it is said in *2 Thessalonians*:

2 Thessalonians 2

⁸ ...with the brightness of His [Christ’s] coming,

–it shall be destroyed. Just as clearly as the little horn of *Daniel 8* must represent papal Rome, it must also represent pagan Rome, for it was pagan Rome which followed on after the four Greek di-

¹² *Daniel 8:14*.

visions at a time when the papacy was still in the far future. Therefore the little horn must represent both these powers.

Why did inspiration put it this way? For the same reason as *Matthew 24* was put the way it was. In the latter case we have only one prophecy with two events because both these events are so similar. Likewise in *Daniel 8* only one symbol is given for two powers because both these powers have the same characteristics.

In this way the student of prophecy is guided to see that there is no difference at all between a persecuting, truth-fighting church disguised with a christian name, and the cruel, wicked pagan system of ancient Rome, a lesson easily understood by ourselves, but not by the many who have not yet seen what Catholicism really is. Catholicism is here seen to be casting down...

Daniel 8

¹¹ ...the place of His sanctuary,

–just as pagan Rome was seen to destroy the Temple. Papal Rome is...

²⁵ ...standing up against the Prince of princes,

–just as pagan Rome cut off the Messiah. What pagan Rome in the last verses of *Daniel 9* is shown to do, in *Daniel 8* pagan Rome and papal Rome are shown to do together, the latter only continuing the work of the former. Thus is revealed that they are both of the same origin, both bearing the standard of the abomination of desolation, which is phrased, “transgression of desolation” in *Daniel 8* and “overspreading of abomination” to make “desolate” in *Daniel 9*.

In passing it must be mentioned that some have held the idea that the little horn of *Daniel 8* was to be interpreted as a Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes. There are numerous proofs that this position is unscriptural and therefore untenable. In connection with this study, however, it is interesting to observe that Christ in *Matthew 24* pointed forward to Jerusalem’s fall and beyond that to the time of the end when the abomination of desolation would

stand in the holy place, whereas Epiphanes ruled during the intertestament period about two centuries ere the divine prediction was uttered.

The Papal Roman Abomination

We have noted that the abomination of desolation spoken of in *Daniel* 9:26-27 refers to the work of pagan Rome, whereas the same term in *Daniel* 8 refers to the works of both Romes—pagan and papal. Let us now turn to an occurrence of that phrase in the book of *Daniel* where it refers to papal Rome as such. This scripture is found in *Daniel* 11:31-36, the context of which clearly delineates the work of the papacy.

Daniel 11

³¹ And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that makes desolate.

³² And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.

³³ And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.

³⁴ Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries.

³⁵ And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.

³⁶ And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.

There can be no doubt that the real spirit of the Papacy, as it has revealed itself during the dark ages, is here shown, as well as the work and endurance of God's people in that period. If the striking similarity of this description of papal power as compared

with other prophetic outlines is not obvious, the reader is invited to restudy such passages as *2 Thessalonians 2:3-12*, *Revelation 13:5*, *Daniel 8:24-25* for himself and see that all these texts, together with the one quoted, must refer to the papacy.

A crucial point of our investigation of this subject is this: If papal Rome bears the standard of the abomination of desolation as well as pagan Rome did, and the passages quoted prove that it does, then the abomination of desolation did not cease with ancient Rome. Rather, it lived on in the papacy as an inseparable part of it, as any fair appraisal of that which Daniel says about this theme will acknowledge.

This entails a conclusion with even greater significance for our time. When papal power ended in 1798, as predicted by the prophetic symbol of the beast receiving a deadly wound,¹³ the abomination of desolation was cut down with it, just as a flag will come down when the standardbearer falls. Therefore what must we expect to see when the wound of the beast will be healed? The abomination of desolation will be set up with it again. Of this we can be sure.

As students of prophecy, we know that the healing of the wound will be revealed in the setting up of the image of the beast, an event that although imminently near, is yet future. However, does this mean that the abomination of desolation is also still a future event? Must we expect it to appear only when the image of the beast is actually set up? This important question brings us to the last text where *Daniel* speaks about the abomination of desolation:

Daniel 12

¹¹ And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.

¹³ *Revelation 13:3.*

The abomination of desolation is here shown in connection with the twelve hundred and ninety years, a period found nowhere else in all prophecy. It says that at the beginning of these twelve hundred and ninety years, the abomination of desolation shall be set up. The fact that inspiration has given neither the beginning nor the ending of this period can only mean that it is given indirectly, thus leaving it to the Bible student to search diligently and thereby understand and appreciate God's prophecy.

Seeing the abomination of desolation is closely connected with the papacy, the conclusion is that the 1,260 years (538 AD to 1798 AD) of papal power likewise are to be seen in close connection with the 1,290 years of the abomination of desolation. Both periods must run parallel, the latter either lasting 30 years longer or starting 30 years earlier than the former. That it should last 30 years longer (to 1828) must be ruled out, for the year 1828 holds no significance pertaining to the abomination of desolation whatsoever. We must therefore look at the year 508 AD which is 30 years before the 1,260 years started.

This is a most important and significant year in the development of the setting up of the abomination of desolation. With the decline of the Christian church, that which principally stood in the way of the establishment of the papacy, and therefore of the abomination of desolation, was the barbarian or atheistic forces of the Arian kingdoms.

With the fall of the pagan Roman Empire, the invasion of the barbarian tribes from the north threatened to establish their religion and to suppress the Roman Catholic or papal faith completely. Nowhere was this more apparent than in North Africa where the Vandals persecuted and suppressed the papists relentlessly until in 533 AD, they were wiped out by Justinian's general, Belisarius.

But this was not the turning of the tide. That occurred quite some time before in the year 508. Eight years before this in 496, Clovis, the powerful king of the Franks, had been baptized into

the papal church. From that moment on, the cause of the Arians was doomed. The others formed a league designed to protect them all from the advances of Clovis but this proved to be of no avail. In 507, Clovis called for the campaign against the other Arian forces and in the spring of the same year totally defeated the Visigoths. In the following year, 508, the resistance of the Arian powers came to an end with the making of peace between Theodoric and Clovis.

From this point on, the Roman Church was free to establish herself as the religion of the world. She set up her banners and exalted her religion. In short the abomination of desolation was set up unrestricted and unresisted, but rather supported by the political powers of the day.

Like the Jewish Church as it was in the days of Jerusalem, so the Christian Church of this time had fallen into deep apostasy and there remained but the small faithful remnant, too scattered and too few in numbers to offer any resistance to the setting up of this terrible church system of hatred and rebellion against God—the abomination of desolation.

To extend 30 extra years on from 1798 to 1828 must be ruled out because of the fact that nothing pertaining to the abomination of desolation happened at that time. It is also unreasonable to think that the abomination of desolation should be there until 1828, and in that year be cut down, when the papacy, which upholds the abomination of desolation, had already been put down in 1798. Far more agreeable it is to think that the abomination of desolation, as a sign or a foreshadow of Romanism, was set up a little before the 1,260 year reign of the beast.

The distinct parallel of this picture is found in the years 66 and 70 AD. First the Romans came and placed their standards, bearing idolatrous symbols of paganism, on holy ground. This was to be understood by the Christians as a sign for flight. However, we fall far short from seeing all that is implied in their action if we merely see them as fleeing from the Romans. Their flight was also

a very real and final separation from the Jewish people and church.

True, a separation should have been, and had been, at least ever since 34 AD, but we must not overlook the fact that many Christians did not fully understand God's rejection of the Jewish nation as such. Many, because of ignorance, still sympathized with that apostate body. They were still impressed with the outward beauty of the temple and its services.

From Paul's letter to the Hebrews, in which the greater glory of a heavenly sanctuary and the better service of a heavenly High Priest is emphasized, and from his writing to the Galatians, where Judaism still had to be met and fought, we know how desperate a struggle it was, for early christendom to separate completely from the Jewish system.

Then, in the year 66 AD, God gave a sign by which those sincere ones who were still sympathizing with earthly Jerusalem, could once and for all know that she was irrevocably doomed to continue under the standards of the enemy of God. When the Roman army for some reason or other had to retreat, the Christians fled. Then the Romans returned and finally, in 70 AD, not before, they achieved full conquest of the city.

Again, the abomination of desolation as a sign of papal Romanism, was set up in 508 AD. This must have been a last warning signal to those sincere Christians who, because of ignorance, were still sympathizing with the apostate church. Now a time had come when anybody who loved the truth could, if he wanted to, perceive that the professed church was irrevocably doomed to continue under the banner of the enemy of God. Seeing and understanding this they, each and every one of them, had to decide either to continue in that apostate body or flee from it into separation.

Ever since the church had fallen into the spirit of compromise, during the time of Emperor Constantine, others had separated from the church which once had been holy and clean. Others

again had not yet done this, but according to *Daniel* 12:11, by the year 508 AD they could see the abomination of desolation standing on holy ground, and the sincere, cost what it may, took their stand with the rest.

Thus the “man of sin” has developed and has delayed God’s plans of everlasting righteousness, by taking away the daily and treading God’s sanctuary underfoot, till he received his deadly wound in 1798. Those who have been blessed with the spirit of such prophecies are presently in the wonderful and fortunate position to see and understand these things as an overall picture.

The Abomination in Our Day

Since the abomination of desolation has been put out of the way in 1798, God could again prepare to restore the sanctuary truth with His purpose of bringing in everlasting righteousness into the hearts of men. For 1,290 years, during which the abomination of desolation lasted, it was impossible to do this. But, then the very next text in this connection tells us about another definite date when something wonderful and highly important should be.

Daniel 12

¹² Blessed is he that waits, and comes to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.

Adding 1,335 to 508 we come to the year 1843, the very last year before God’s sanctuary truth was brought back to his people. Indeed, “Blessed is he that waits and comes” to understand what that means, not only to his own soul, but to the cause of God at large.

In the meanwhile the mystery of iniquity has been working hard ever since 1798. A restored sanctuary and everlasting righteousness it hates. Prophecy informs us that there will be a last and final struggle on its part for mastery to put it all underfoot once more. This conflict is coming, not for 1,260 years again, but for an indefinite but very short and nonetheless horrible period.

The deadly wound of the beast will fully heal, the image of the beast be set up.

However, we have learned some very vital lessons from the great parallels of history, which are a benefit to us as all this approaches. The image of the beast is like the beast. As it developed and came into being back then, so the image will today. As this draws near, God will permit that abomination of desolation to stand on holy ground as a warning for flight.

When Jesus looked into the events of the future, He saw the great peril into which His people would come. He saw their need to recognize a certain sign and to obey the warning contained in that sign. To them He said,

Matthew 24

¹⁵ When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (Whose reads let him understand:)

¹⁶ Then...flee.

The time came when they did see the abomination of desolation stand in the holy place, and when they saw it, they fled. The result of obedience to that command was that:

The Great Controversy, p. 30:

Not one Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem.

As this whole study has been written to show, that was not the only time in the history of the church when this sign should appear before the eyes of the Christians. Again in 508 AD, the abomination of desolation was set up in the holy place, and when it was, again the true Christians saw it—and fled.

But neither of these occasions was the full and final fulfilment of the signs and warnings given by Christ at that time. The final fulfilment is to take place at the very end of time, and this is the time today. These are the days when all of these things of which Christ spoke as being the signs of His coming and of the end of the world, are taking place. These are the days when, through the

final restoration of the sanctuary truth and service to the people of God, the finishing of transgression, the making an end of sin, the reconciliation for iniquity, and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness shall be accomplished.

In these days again then, the abomination of desolation will stand in the holy place and, when it does, then those who read and understand will see it and flee. Therefore, the time is when each and every one who will escape the destruction which follows the setting up of the abomination, be aware of the threatened danger, watch for the sign and be prepared to flee without delay or question the moment that they see it. Let none go down into the house to collect coat, mantel or money. See it—and flee, separate yourself from the place, which had been set up as holy, and escape for your very life.

Determine from the witness of the Word of God as to what the Holy place is today, for, when that is determined, then it will be known as to where the abomination will be set up. There is no room for any question in the words of Christ as to whether or not the abomination would be set up nor any question that it would stand in the holy place. Christ, seeing the certainty of all this, simply said,

“When it stands there, then flee.”

So there is nothing more certain but that the abomination of desolation will stand in the holy place. Then, see what the holy place is today, and know then where the abomination will stand. When you see it stand there, then flee.

The determination of what the holy place is today is not difficult. We have but to find that which is the direct counterpart in our day of what the Jewish temple was in the days of Christ. That counterpart is stated in:

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 455:

God has called His church in this day, as He called ancient Israel, to stand as a light in the earth. By the mighty cleaver of

truth, the messages of the first, second, and third angels, He has separated them from the churches and from the world to bring them into a sacred nearness to himself. He has made them the depositories of His law and has committed to them the great truths of prophecy for this time. Like the holy oracles committed to ancient Israel, these are a sacred trust to be communicated to the world.

As the Jewish people then were given the responsibility of shedding the light to the world, so were the Adventist people back in 1844. In both systems, the Sanctuary was the great center of religious belief and activity. It was the holy place in the midst of the camp.

But as Israel apostatized, so has modern Israel done the same, only worse.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 456:

The same disobedience and failure which were seen in the Jewish church have characterized in a greater degree the people who have had this great light from heaven in the last messages of warning.

Thus the sad tragedy of the past has been repeated as the enemy of righteousness has been able to infiltrate into the church and to corrupt the people of God by “flatteries,”¹⁴ so bringing in lukewarmness; and deep apostasy to the once “mighty and holy people,”¹⁵ to effect their destruction through “peace.”¹⁶

As the Lord sent special messengers to the Jews and in the end His Son, to save them from their impending fate, so He sent to the Adventists warning after warning, and finally the glorious truths of the message of righteousness by faith as delivered by Elders Waggoner and Jones in 1888-1893. But as the Jews rejected Christ and the apostles in that day, so the Adventists rejected this message in this day.

¹⁴ *Daniel* 11:21.

¹⁵ *Daniel* 8:24.

¹⁶ *Daniel* 8:25.

But even yet, the Lord would give to them another opportunity. So it was that in 1950, through the appeals of Elders Wieland and Short and the general stirrings in the Adventist Church calling for a return to the lost message, the Lord came again to His people with the effort and desire to see them victorious over the enemy of righteousness.

But again, then, the appeal was refused, and no sooner was this second refusal made, than certain leaders of the Babylonian churches visited with the Adventist leaders. The result of that visit was that the very doctrine of antichrist was written into the theology of the Adventist Church and became the declared position of the church.

That theology is the teaching that Christ came to this world in the same sinless fleshly nature which Adam had before the fall. It was the denial that Jesus Christ came in the same flesh and blood as the children whom He came to save. According to *1 John* 4:1-3, this is the very sign by which the antichrist is to be recognized.

It is for very good reason indeed that the Lord chose this as the sign whereby we could recognize the antichrist, for this doctrine takes away from the gospel any power to save from sin. If Jesus Christ does not come into sinful flesh either in His own day upon this earth, or at any other time, then we can never have the divine life of God in the flesh and can never overcome sin at all. Everlasting righteousness and the making of an end of sins would thus be a total impossibility.

Testimonies to the Church, vol. 5, p. 464-465:

As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us. It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains.

Some may feel that they can wait till that day and then flee, but this is a fatal delusion. The word of Christ is,

Matthew 24

¹⁵ When you shall see the abomination of desolation stand in the holy place,

¹⁶ Then...flee.

If the early Christians had been possessed of a life span of two thousand years, then they would have fled as they did in 70 AD when they saw the abomination of desolation stand in the holy place then. The very same Christians would have fled again when they saw the abomination of desolation stand in the holy place in 508 AD. They would have again fled when the Protestant Churches, by rejecting the message of the first angel accepted the delusions of darkness.

They would flee again today from that place where the abomination of desolation stands, to make the final flight when the Sunday law is passed. When that abomination is set up, be it yesterday or today, the command is to flee. If it is set up today, then flee today. If it is set up again tomorrow, then flee again, for Jesus said,

“When you shall see it set up then flee.”

It could well be, dear Reader, that heretofore you have not seen these things as clearly as they have been set out in this study. But God is anxious for your sake that you see the sign, and heed the warning to flee while there is still time to escape. The sign is there—openly. Investigate these things. Read and understand and then flee for your life.

May the Lord open your eyes to see before it is forever too late. Not one Christian perished in the fall of Jerusalem and none need perish today.

- This is again the casting down of the sanctuary.
- It is the removal of the work of the Messiah.
- It is the desolation of all practical Christian faith.
- It is the setting in the place of a Saviour, who could and did come right down to be a man with men, having the same

flesh and blood as we have, enduring the same temptations as we have to face exactly as we have to face them, as a demonstration that we, too, could overcome; it is setting in His place, a christ who could only be a fake and an imposter. Such a teaching and such a christ could and do only leave the seeker for life and salvation desolate.

For those who can see it, this is the abomination of desolation in the clearest and fullest sense. This sign today, at this very time, stands in the holy place. In carefully worded terms it was first declared to be so by the Adventist leaders through the pages of *Questions on Doctrine*.

The Command to Flee

Many of the true Christians saw this to be what it was, the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. They saw it and they obeyed the words of Christ, and fled. But there were others who could not see it so clearly. They were troubled, but unsure.

Just as there were many Christians who did not leave the Church as they should have done after 34 AD, but stayed with the organization because they were impressed with the grandeur of the organization and were persuaded by the misinterpretation of the Old Testament prophecies into believing that the Jewish Church was to be the church of God forever, so there have been so many sincere Adventists who have stayed on with the organization because of the same things. There is the belief that things will right themselves even yet. So they remained in the church hoping and waiting for this.

But what says the word of Christ?

Matthew 24

¹⁵ When you shall see the abomination of desolation stand in the holy place,

¹⁶ Then...flee.

The abomination of desolation is there. It is standing in the holy place once again. As surely as it is, the destruction will follow as

it fell upon ancient Jerusalem and is prophesied to fall again on the church in the last days. History shows that the setting up of the abomination of desolation in the holy place precedes the destruction by a little time. So it is that we still have time to flee if we do it at once.

If any true child of God could not see and understand that the abomination of desolation is standing in the holy place from the evidence contained in *Questions on Doctrine*, then he has but to read the outright declarations in the later book *Movement of Destiny*. There, in the boldest and plainest of terms it is stated by the leading historian of the Adventist Church, in a book published by its leading press, endorsed as a must for every Adventist student by the General Conference president himself and accepted without protest by the Adventist world at large, that the present belief and teaching of the Adventist Church in regard to the test question of the nature of Christ is identical with that of the Babylonian Churches. This evidence is so plain that there is not a person who can be excused for not seeing it now.

The abomination of desolation stands in the holy place. When it does, what did Christ say to do? Flee. Flee without hesitation. Flee without going down to take money or coat, or anything with you. Flee, only flee. To flee is to live. To remain is to die.

No one can make you flee. The warning is there. The promised sign is here. Can you see it? Then flee. Separate from this system which has become corrupted by Babylon and in which the Lord is no longer to be found.

The setting up of the abomination of desolation in the holy place of the Adventist Church is but the preliminary to the full and final universal setting up of the abomination in the holy place of the Sabbath. Soon the universal Sunday law shall be instituted and this will be the final sign to flee right out of all human society.

5. Flee the Church?

News Review, October 1975

By F. T. Wright – included because it makes reference to the previous article by Wolfgang.

LIVING as closely as we do to the end of time, every day is a day of preparation for the coming crisis. Therefore, what we do today, the decisions we make and the positions we occupy, will have a profound influence upon our future destiny. The results of today's decisions, either for good or for bad, are as far-reaching as eternity.

The human agent has always found it difficult to foresee the full effect of the decision we make today. Very often, that which appears to be the best way, is, in fact, the very worst way. Satan is of course ever to hand to make the wrong way appear to be the better way. He works unceasingly to lead us into making moves today which appear to be both harmless and desirable, so that he can firmly hold us in his snares tomorrow.

There is only one place where such answers can be found and that is in the Word of God. As those answers are found there, it may well be that they will be contrary to human reasoning with the result that we will tend to go the way of our own thinking and not the way of the word of God. Let no such mistake be made.

The whole of history is the story of men who for the most part, went their own way instead of obeying very strictly what the Word of God had to say. The result has always been a disaster for them. Only the obedient have prospered in the end.

According to the written word of God then, where does God desire us to be today and, in turn, where does the devil want us to be? There are many answers to this question, because there are many such places. God does not, but Satan does want us in labour unions, military service, gambling dens and such like.

We might deal with each of these subjects but we will confine ourselves to one place and that is in respect to the church which has but recently denied the great truths of the everlasting gospel, namely the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Satan wants you in that church. God wants you out of it.

We are not able to give in this short article, all the reasons as to why this is so. But we can give sufficient to make the point quite clear. Firstly we would remind you that some months back,¹⁷ we published in the *Messenger*, a study by Brother Wolfgang Meyer entitled “Flee.” The central argument of that study was simply this:

When the time comes that the abomination of desolation stands in the holy place then flee from the fallen organization.

This is the plain command of Jesus Christ and those who obeyed it without question were saved while every other one perished. Today, the abomination of desolation is firmly planted in the Adventist Church in the form of the Babylonian teaching on the incarnation of Christ. As surely as it is, the time is come to obey the command of Christ to flee.

What happens to those who do not obey the command to come out? I think that many will be surprised to learn to what degree they put themselves in the power of Satan when they do fail to obey that command. In *Early Writings*, p. 123-125, is a chapter entitled “False Shepherds.” Originally this chapter was written to describe conditions as they were shortly after the great rejection of the message by the Protestant Churches in 1844, when the Sabbath was the great point of issue.

But, inasmuch as the experience of the church in the past is a parallel to experiences of the present as we are told in *The Great Controversy*, p. 343, the counsel in this chapter must not be limited to that period back there. Nor is it to be applied carelessly to

¹⁷ See the previous article, “Flee,” from *The Messenger of Living Righteousness*, March 1975.

any given situation. The situation to which it is applied must be a true parallel.

Today an exact parallel is found in the situation and condition of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. To this church as to the church back there the gospel call came for the last time. We know this from the study of the prophecy of *Matthew 22:1-14*.¹⁸

The ministry of the churches back then opposed the message sent from heaven and thus they were false shepherds indeed. So, in like manner, the ministry of the present denomination has opposed the very message sent from heaven and thus they have become false shepherds in fact. Everyone who knows the truth of this message and therefore knows the errors of the present position of the church, must know that the ministers have become false shepherds. One has but to compare the specifications for false shepherds as given in this chapter from *Early Writings* to see that they apply with equal force today.

Early Writings, p. 123:

The truth of God is sealed up to them; they cannot read it...

With these words begin a long list of things about these shepherds which plainly show their position and character today. Without a question, the general run of Adventist ministers today fall into this category. If they did not, then they would not be still where they are for those who do advance with the light are not permitted to remain in the church to preach that truth. Please read your *Early Writings*, p. 123, carefully.

But now we turn to the next page to study two very important paragraphs there. Firstly recognition is made of the fact that...

Early Writings, p. 124:

The different parties of professed Advent believers have each a little truth...

¹⁸ See the book, *Last Day Events*, chapter 6 “The Marriage Prophecy,” by F. T. Wright.

Look around you and see the truth of this today. Every one of the different groups who profess the advent faith have some truth or the other. But this does not make them to be the people whom God is preparing for the great day which is coming. There are two specifications as given in this chapter which do identify such a group however. The first is that...

...God has given all these truths to His children who are being prepared for the day of God.

This then is to say that when you have found the group which has the truths which the other groups only hold collectively among themselves, then you have found the group which the Lord is preparing for the day of judgment. Dismiss forever from the mind any idea that the Lord is preparing a people here and a people there in this group and that different one over here. This is not true. He is not preparing the groups which have this particular facet of truth or that particular facet of truth, but the group which has all these truths. But this is not all.

He has also given them truths which none of these know, neither will they understand. Things which are sealed up to them, the Lord has opened to those who will see and are ready to understand.

Therefore, we are to look for that group of people who not only hold all the truths which all the others collectively hold, but who hold truths which none of the others know or can understand at all. I do not need to tell any of you who that group is at the present time for you know this perfectly well.

From these facts two very important further facts are drawn. They are firstly this:

Early Writings, p. 124:

If God has any new light to communicate, He will let His chosen and beloved understand it, without their going to have their minds enlightened by hearing those who are in darkness and error.

This first fact then is that the channel of light is not opened to any but the true people of God. To them alone the Lord is communicating the essential light which will fit and prepare a final people for the last struggles. The rest may think that the Lord is speaking to them, but He is not.

At this point, one may conclude that there is no particular value in going then to their meetings, but that there is no particular harm either, that it will not particularly displease the Lord if we do. No graver or more serious mistake could be made than this.

Early Writings, p. 124-125:

I was shown the necessity of those who believe that we are having the last message of mercy, being separate from those who are daily imbibing new errors. I saw that neither young nor old should attend their meetings; for it is wrong to thus encourage them while they teach error that is a deadly poison to the soul and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. The influence of such gatherings is not good. If God has delivered us from such darkness and error, we should stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has set us free and rejoice in the truth.

Those words are surely plain. The Lord showed to Sister White, not merely the advisability of being separate from the fallen churches but the necessity of it. The necessity is there because our presence there is an encouragement to them in their evil course and because the influence of such meetings upon ourselves is not good. God could never be pleased with us when we do go to such meetings for it is an act of treason to believe His truth and then be present at the meetings of His enemies. So then it is that...

Early Writings, p. 125:

God is displeased with us when we go to listen to error, without being obliged to go; for unless He sends us to those meetings where error is forced home to the people by the power of the will, He will not keep us. The angels cease their watchful care over us, and we are left to the buffetings of the enemy, to be

darkened and weakened by him and the power of his evil angels; and the light around us becomes contaminated with the darkness.

Satan is so specious and cunning in his arguments. He says to us,

“But you must have some fellowship. It is too lonesome to stay at home all day on Sabbath.”

Then, when he has filled our minds with this thought, then he cunningly appeals to our sense of missionary responsibility and says,

“The church needs your ministry. You can speak up in the Sabbath School lesson and maybe some soul will thus be led to accept the message too.”

This happy thought often proves to be the last persuader and with a relieved and almost eager step we set out for the church. We are surprised and charmed by the nice welcome we receive. It is not long before the recognition of our talents gives us a place as a Sabbath School teacher or the like. We are constantly assured that we are of great value in the church and the hope is frequently expressed that we will not leave it.

All this is very nice and serves to justify in the mind the fact that we have gone there. It is very comfortable and easy to sit in a church again every Sabbath day. But this comfort must be seriously jarred into reality when it is realized that it is the devil who is smiling over it and not the Lord. The devil is smiling for he has you where he has separated you from the care of the angels and therefore is left free to weaken and darken your mind by his power and the power of his evil angels.

Some argue that they must go for the sake of their children. But let all such realize that if the parents are in grave danger when the protecting care of the angels is removed when they enter the fallen church, then in how much greater danger are the still developing minds of the children. Who of us who value our soul's

salvation can afford to be in a place where we lose the special protection of the angels of God and are left to the weakening effect of the Satan's power?

Let us spend the priceless hours of the Sabbath in listening to tapes, and studying the Word of God, and for fellowship with the Lord in quiet walks in nature. We shall see a vast improvement in our spiritual experience if we will do this.



6. God's Vengeance in the Trumpets and Plagues

Messenger and News Review, May to June 1976

A Word from the Editor [from the original]: In this month's study article we have another contribution from Brother Wolfgang Meyer, of West Germany. Brother Meyer has a deep interest in the study of the character of God and has come up with some fine thoughts on this subject. In this issue we present his comparison between the outpouring of the terrible scourges symbolized by the seven trumpets and by the seven last plagues.

The arguments presented in this study further confirm the wonderful truth that God is not the destroyer, but that this role is confined to the enemy of God and man, namely the devil.

God is the Saviour and nothing else but that. This is confirmed in this statement from *My Life Today*, p. 300:

"In Christ the character of the Father was revealed...He came but for one purpose, and that was the salvation of the lost."

If Christ revealed the character of the Father and in that work of revealing came with one purpose and one only, namely to save the lost, then He did not also come to destroy. In fact He states that He did not come to destroy men's lives in these words:

"For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

Luke 9:56.

If in doing this He revealed the character of the Father, then the Father deals with men as a saviour and a saviour only. He does not come to man to destroy some and to save others. No! He comes to save and it is the devil who comes to destroy.

This is not how the devil would have us to believe it and he works with every device he knows to convince us that it is God who does destroy the guilty and unrepentant sinner.

We need to appreciate far better than we do the way in which the love and justice of God work so that while on the one hand He destroys no one, yet on the other He will not and cannot stand in the way of that destruction when the sinner refuses to accept the mercy and forgiveness of God.

Revelation 6

⁹ And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

¹⁰ And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

¹¹ And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

The Martyrs

THE people here described are the martyrs who died during the time of the fourth seal. It was during the Dark Ages that men were killed because of their faith,

Revelation 6

⁸ ...with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth,

–by him that sat on the pale horse whose name was...

⁸ ...Death, and Hell.

The medieval church was that persecuting power. Terrible were the sufferings inflicted upon some estimated 100 million martyrs by the Catholic Church. Is it a wonder that their souls are seen in this particular symbolic vision, crying to God for a vengeance as the blood of Abel cried to the Lord? They have put all on the altar of sacrifice in order to obey God more than man, and yet, universally they were regarded as dissenters, fanatics, deluded extremists, unbalanced, “unchristian” and the curse of the earth. As such the world would not suffer them and persecuted them to death. How long ere God would justify all this and avenge them?

Revelation 8

² And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

Trumpets signify judgments.

Joel 2

¹ Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord comes, for it is nigh at hand.

The terrible and divine judgments pictured in the symbols of the seven trumpets in *Revelation* 8 and 9 are nothing but God's answer to the prayer of the souls of the martyrs.

Revelation 6

¹⁰ How long, O Lord...do You not judge and avenge our blood?

Later in history, after these faithful ones were at...

¹¹ ...rest for a little season,...their fellow servants also and their brethren,

—that is, the last people of God at the end of time, would suffer the same persecution. They too, cry out to God day and night, “How long, O Lord...?” God's answer will be the outpouring of His wrath in the seven last plagues.

This is God's vengeance: The seven trumpets against them that slew the martyrs in the medieval ages because of the testimony they held. The seven last plagues against those who worship the image of the beast because...

Revelation 16

⁶ ...they have shed the blood of saints and prophets.

Even though they will, in general, not achieve their wicked aim,

The Great Controversy, p. 628:

...by condemning the people of God to death, they have as truly incurred the guilt of their blood as if it had been shed by their hands.

A Prayer for Vengeance?

A fundamental question arises. In what way can this prayer of God's persecuted people be brought into harmony with the prayer of God's persecuted and only begotten Son when hanging on the cross He said:

Luke 23

³⁴ Father forgive them, for they know not what they do,

–and with the highest rule of God’s kingdom on earth and in heaven:

Matthew 5

⁴⁴ Love your enemies, bless them that curse you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you;

⁴⁵ That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

God’s church in heaven and on earth is animated by the same spirit of their heavenly father. The persecuted Christian has the spirit of revenge as little as is found in the sermon on the Mount and in the Lord’s Prayer. Study and compare *Matthew* 5:44 with *Matthew* 5:48. The superficial reader may be tempted to explain the words in *Revelation* 6:10 as not meaning what they say. This would never satisfy the deep searcher. Every word in Scripture must carry weight, be left as it stands and be brought into harmony with the rest of the Bible.

When text with text is compared, it will be seen that the divine attribute of wrath and vengeance is something very real indeed, but it is an attribute which the natural man finds impossible to understand. God’s holy anger is a characteristic which man does not have. To him it is strange and unsearchable. How many “Christians” have taken hold of Scriptures dealing with holy anger and used them to justify their own evil passions!

At this time of earth’s history it is most important that we begin to learn the difference between the true and the false, the divine and the human, between the sinless and the sinful “holy anger.” “Unsearchable” though they be, the character of God’s judgments and vengeance can be seen in the history of the universe in one place in particular: at the cross of Calvary; here all mysteries are explained. We see that God’s anger is something far different from that human stirring of feelings. At the foot of the cross we must confess that we thought that He, who changes never,

Psalm 50

²¹ ...was altogether such a one...

–as we ourselves. With this thought we look at the seven trumpets through the light which streams from the cross of Calvary, where the substitute for man, the victim of our sins, suffered in the fullest and most ultimate sense, the vengeance and judgments of God.

Parallels between Trumpets and Plagues

Both the seven trumpets and the seven last plagues are:

1. God's judgments
2. Upon an apostate church,
3. That persecutes and kills God's commandment-keeping people.

For this reason it is to be expected that the trumpets and plagues have very much in common. Even a quick comparison reveals that this is so.

Trumpets	Plagues
"...cast upon the earth". <i>Revelation</i> 8:7	"...poured...upon the earth." <i>Revelation</i> 16:2.
"...cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures ... died." <i>Revelation</i> 8:8-9.	"...upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea." <i>Revelation</i> 16:3.
"...fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters...and the third part of the waters became wormwood." <i>Revelation</i> 8:10-11.	"...upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood." <i>Revelation</i> 16:4.
"...the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars." <i>Revelation</i> 8:12.	"...upon the sun." <i>Revelation</i> 16:8.
"...the sun and the air were darkened." <i>Revelation</i> 9:2.	"...upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness." <i>Revelation</i> 16:10.

	<i>lation 16:10.</i>
“...Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates ... for to slay the third part of men.” <i>Revelation 9:14-15.</i>	“...upon the great River Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up.” <i>Revelation 16:12.</i>
The seventh trumpet begins at the end of probation when the mystery of God “should be finished.” <i>Revelation 10:7.</i> Lightnings, voices, thunderings, earthquake, hail. <i>Revelation 11:19.</i>	“It is done.” Voices, thunders, lightnings, great earthquakes, hail. <i>Revelation 16:17-18.</i>

What a striking similarity! Not only in the nature of the different events but also in the fact that both the trumpets and the plagues have exactly the same sequence. This already shows that the seven plagues of *Revelation 16* are in *Revelation 15:1*, rightly called the “last” plagues, for there were other plagues before.¹⁹

There are further astonishing parallels still. The first four trumpets are different from the last three trumpets. Obviously they are not as severe. The last three trumpets are called those three terrible woes.

Revelation 8

¹³ And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

The same feature can be observed with the seven last plagues. About the first four plagues we read:

The Great Controversy, p. 628:

These plagues are not universal...

The last three plagues are. The seat of the beast inflicted with an impenetrable darkness in the fifth plague and the river Euphrates drying up in the sixth plague, symbolizing all the kindred, tongues and people supporting Babylon, will be upon the whole

¹⁹ **Revelation 9** ²⁰ And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues...

earth. These two plagues are universal. So is the seventh plague which will not cease until the whole earth is destroyed. It is clear that the three trumpets, or the three woes, are parallels with the last three of the judgments of God's plagues in *Revelation* 16. So it is that in *Revelation* 9:20 the former are called by the same name as the latter, "plagues." And the servant of the Lord referring to the seven last plagues speaks of them as of trumpets:

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 982:

Trumpet after trumpet is to be sounded, vial after vial poured out...

Another significant feature in the comparison between the two, is that both the judgments of the trumpets and the seven last plagues fall on those who do not have the seal of God.

Revelation 9

⁴ And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

There are two different seals which man can receive in the Christian experience:

1. The first one, when through the grace of Christ, sin is sealed out of and away from the heart and transferred to the heavenly sanctuary.
2. The second one is for the Christians living right at the end. They are the 144,000 who are alive when their sin is sealed out and away from the sanctuary and out onto its originator, the devil.

The seal referred to in the trumpets can only be the first seal administered through the Holy Spirit,²⁰ because at that time God's true people could, through Jesus, seal out sin from their hearts, but the time for the sealing in the sanctuary was not and has not yet come for any living person.

²⁰ *Ephesians* 2:13.

However, the second and final seal against sin referred to in *Revelation* 7:3 and 14:1-2, will be just as much a protection against the seven last plagues as was the former seal against the plagues falling in the time of the trumpets. The protection of the second seal will be much stronger and final as are the seven last plagues in comparison with the judgments under the trumpets.

And the terrible counterpart to this, the mark of “that man of sin” likewise is stated by inspiration both in the trumpets and the seven last plagues. It is that willful continuance in sin by men possessed of the spirit of persecution described in the trumpets:

Revelation 9

²⁰ And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

²¹ Neither repented they of their murders nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Again these words referring to the seven trumpets have their parallel in the seven plagues.

Revelation 16

⁹ And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which has power over these plagues: and they repented not to give Him glory.

¹¹ And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

²¹ ...and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

In both cases men have gone too far. They cannot turn back—not because God has set an arbitrary limit, but rather because the nature of the sinner has reached the point of no return. Doubtless there were many such ones at the time of the trumpets.

At the time of the seven last plagues, all mankind, except those that have the seal of God, will have reached the point of no return. Having rejected the much greater light of the gospel pro-

claimed during the latter rain, they will go out in that much greater darkness and receive...

Revelation 13

¹⁷ ...the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

In the trumpets they are the murderers,²¹ and in the plagues those who...

Revelation 16

⁶ ...shed the blood of saints and prophets.

All this makes the connection and similarity between the two lots of plagues at different times in history, most obvious and meaningful.

The Relationship to God's Character

In studying and comparing trumpets and plagues, we are not merely looking at the events themselves in order to determine what each of these prophetic happenings has been or will be. That has been quite successfully done by other people and need not to be repeated, except for the purpose of getting further and clearer light on the subject.

Today we know what each trumpet and each plague means, but gross darkness still covers our minds concerning their nature and their relationship to the character of God. Heretofore we have not understood the divine attribute of God's wrath, His holy anger, nor His vengeance. When we are explicitly told that:

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 120:

God destroys no one,

–we try and interpret that to mean that God does not destroy His friends, those who are still for Him or those who can still be saved. But the fact remains that God did not destroy Pharaoh even though he was one of His worst enemies and had no more

²¹ *Revelation 9:21.*

chance of salvation.²² According to the Sermon on the Mount, that grand declaration of the eternal principles of the government of God in heaven and on earth, God is no destroyer at all.

Yet the seven last plagues will come exactly as predicted, as the judgments of God, and we as God's people will be and indeed are already proclaiming God's vengeance. To learn to understand the nature of the plagues and trumpets in the light of God's character is the purpose of our study.

Prophecy is never understood in the fullest sense until the time of its fulfillment has arrived or is already past. But a lot of it and at least the outlines can and must be understood before this, especially at the time when God's people have to prepare to fit their lives according to the predicted event. We are admonished,

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 983:

We need to study the outpouring of the seventh vial,

—which is the climax of all the judgments of God. A safe way to study prophecy is to look at prophecies already fulfilled and get acquainted with God's dealing with mankind in the past.

Education, p. 123-124:

Every prophecy is an explanation of another.

We can view the future from the past. The early rain sheds light on the latter rain, the ten virgins in 1844 explain the ten virgins in the end, the voice in the wilderness (John the Baptist), points forward to the voice in the wilderness previous to the second Advent, and only he who studies the vision of *Daniel 2* can rightly understand the vision of *Daniel 7 & 8*.

The Great Controversy, p. 343:

The principles of God's dealing with men are ever the same. The important movements of the present have their parallel in those of the past, and the experience of the church in former ages has lessons of great value for our own time.

²² For proof read *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 84-85.

These are all valid reasons why we should first study the nature of the previous plagues in the seven trumpets,²³ in order to understand the nature of the seven last plagues. This will be a great help in understanding what the wrath of God is, for it is seen much clearer in the past than in the future.

The Fifth and Sixth Trumpets

All we have to do to find the explanation for the trumpets is to listen to our spiritual forefathers who, living at the actual time of fulfillment, expounded upon them extensively. The fifth and sixth trumpets are bound up with prophetic time.

Revelation 9

¹ And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth; and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

² And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

³ And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

⁴ And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

⁵ And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented *five months*: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he strikes a man.

¹⁴ Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

¹⁵ And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for *an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year*, for to slay the third part of men.

The Spirit of Prophecy states exactly when the last of these prophetic periods ended. We want to study on from that point.

²³ Revelation 9:20.

The Great Controversy [1888], p. 334-335:

In the year 1840, another remarkable fulfillment of prophecy excited widespread interest. Two years before, Josiah Litch, one of the leading ministers preaching the second advent, published an exposition of *Revelation 9*, predicting the fall of the Ottoman empire, and specifying not only the year but the very day on which this would take place.

According to this exposition, which was purely a matter of calculation on the prophetic periods of Scripture, the Turkish government would surrender its independence on the eleventh day of August, 1840. The prediction was widely published, and thousands watched the course of events with eager interest.

At the very time specified, Turkey, through her ambassadors, accepted the protection of the allied powers of Europe, and thus placed herself under the control of Christian nations. *The event exactly fulfilled the prediction.* When it became known, multitudes were convinced of the correctness of the principles of prophetic interpretation adopted by Miller and his associates, and a wonderful impetus was given to the Advent movement. Men of learning and position united with Miller, both in preaching and publishing his views, and from 1840 to 1844 the work rapidly extended.

“The event exactly fulfilled the prediction.” Any Bible student can calculate it for himself and find that the predicted event actually came to pass at the end of the prophetic time of “an hour, a day, and a month, and a year.” How did Josiah Litch arrive at this astonishing conclusion concerning the ending of the sixth trumpet? He had studied the five earlier trumpets and built up from them until he came to a sure understanding of the sixth.

The Seventh Trumpet

When Josiah Litch interpreted the fifth and the sixth trumpets, the seventh trumpet, or the third woe, was still future. The following considerations show that it coincides with nothing else but the seven last plagues.

Revelation 10

⁷ But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as He has declared to His servants the prophets.

The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection, p. 117:

The finishing of the mystery of God is the ending of the work of the gospel. And the ending of the work of the gospel is, first, the taking away of all vestige of sin and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness. Christ fully formed-within each believer, God alone manifest in the flesh of each believer in Jesus; and, secondly, on the other hand, the work of the gospel being finished means only the destruction of all who then shall not have received the gospel (*2 Thessalonians* 1:7-10): for it is not the way of the Lord to continue men in life when the only possible use they will make of life is to heap up more misery for themselves.

Again, in the service of the earthly sanctuary, we have seen that when the work of the gospel in the annual course was finished in behalf of those who had taken part in it, then all those who had taken no part in it were cut off. "Which was a figure for the time then present," and which plainly teaches that in the service of the true sanctuary when the work of the gospel shall have been finished for all those who have a part in it, then all those who do not have a part in it will be cut off. Thus, in both respects, the finishing of the mystery of God is the final ending of sin.

The seventh trumpet, which is just as much a plague as the other trumpets, will start when "the mystery of God should be finished." That is, when Christ is fully formed in each of the 144,000 and through the expunging of all sin, known and unknown, God and man are combined in the fullest sense, as it was in our great example, Jesus Christ.

When the mystery of God is finished, the saints are sealed with the second and final seal. Thus will they be protected from the judgments symbolized by the seventh trumpet which will sound at that time.

Here we are reminded of the previous people of God who were a parallel to the first seal. In them, the work of revealing and finishing the mystery of God had at least been started. They were protected, as we are told in at least one case (the fifth trumpet), against the judgments of earlier times. Before the seventh trumpet sounds, the mystery of God must not only be started or partially revealed, but totally finished. God's character must be fully revealed in each believer, then will they stand through the judgments of the seventh angel, or the seven last plagues.

As we read from A. T. Jones, the sanctuary teaches that the mystery of God will, after it has been finished in the righteous, be finished through the destruction of the wicked. But when will the wicked be finally destroyed? In the seven last plagues which fall at the time of the seventh angel. Why then does inspiration link the seventh trumpet so closely with the seven last plagues that start to fall at exactly the same point of time, after the 144,000 are all perfected and sealed? Both are identical. The seven last plagues are only a detailed description of the seventh trumpet.

There are other evidences which ascertain the correctness of this conclusion.

Revelation 11

¹⁴ The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe comes quickly.

¹⁵ And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever.

First the seventh angel sounds, then the kingdoms of Christ which, as can be seen from the following statement, is at the time of the second coming of Christ.

The Great Controversy, p. 301:

About His coming cluster the glories of that "restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." *Acts 3:21*. Then the long-contin-

ued rule of evil shall be broken; “the kingdoms of this world” will become “the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever.” *Revelation* 11:15.

Revelation 11

¹⁸ And the nations were angry, and your wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should give reward unto your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear your name, small and great; and should destroy them which destroy the earth.

This text is still dealing with the time of the seventh trumpet. At the time of the seven plagues it can truly be said, “The nations were angry” (past tense) and “Your wrath is come” (present tense) and then the time of the dead, (the unrighteous dead) is come, that they should be judged (during the millenium). The following statement shows as to which time only this text can refer:

Early Writings, p. 36:

I saw that the anger of the nations, the wrath of God, and the time to judge the dead, were separate and distinct, one following the other, also that Michael had not stood up, and that the time of trouble, such as never was, had not yet commenced. The nations are now getting angry, but when our High Priest has finished His work in the sanctuary, He will stand up, put on the garments of vengeance, and then the seven last plagues will be poured out.

The last text given in relation to the seventh trumpet says:

Revelation 11

¹⁹ And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Some may suggest that the opening of the temple was in 1844, and seeing this statement is directly connected with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the seventh trumpet also must start in that year. It is obvious that this argument would nullify all other

firmly established facts which show that the seventh trumpet sounds right at the end of human probation.

Nevertheless it is true that the temple of God and the ark of His testimony was seen in heaven in 1844, when Christ went into the most Holy. Then it was that the sanctuary teaching was first embraced by God's people. The ten commandments with the Sabbath enshrined in the ark of the testimony were then seen in the right light. Obviously *Revelation* 11:19 can be applied to that time too.

The main application though, is still future and refers to that point of time when the judgment of the living, and not only the judgment of the dead, as it has been going on since 1844, will be. Then, for we who are alive, the temple of God will be opened to the most holy place, so that the ark of His testimony can be seen. Then in the truest sense ever, will God's people, the living righteous, gather around the sanctuary that their sins may be forever blotted out through their true High priest and transferred onto the scapegoat. Directly after that comes the wrath of God.

Revelation 11

¹⁹ ...and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

This can be further established by a number of statements. The Spirit of Prophecy in the year 1902 points forward to the fulfillment of this Scripture:

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 972:

When God's temple in heaven is opened, what a triumphant time that will be for all who have been faithful and true! In the temple will be seen the ark of the testament in which were placed the two tables of stone, on which are written God's law. These tables of stone will be brought forth from their hiding place, and on them will be seen the Ten Commandments engraved by the finger of God. These tables of stone now lying in the ark of the testament will be a convincing testimony to the truth and binding claims of God's law.

The latter part of this statement is explained further showing that as far as the ten commandments taken from the ark are concerned, they will be seen by the wicked during the seven last plagues.

The Great Controversy, p. 639:

Then there appears against the sky a hand holding two tables of stone folded together. Says the prophet,

Psalm 50

⁶ The heavens shall declare His righteousness: for God is judge himself.

That holy law, God's righteousness, that amid thunder and flame was proclaimed from Sinai as the guide of life, is now revealed to men as the rule of judgment. The hand opens the tables, and there are seen the precepts of the decalogue, traced as with a pen of fire. The words are so plain that all can read them. Memory is aroused, the darkness of superstition and heresy is swept from every mind, and God's ten words, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, are presented to the view of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Here is the remarkable parallel between the trumpets and seven last plagues once more. In connection with the seventh trumpet:

Revelation 15

⁵ And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

⁶ And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues.

Let us recapitulate the evidences of one important point that we should learn from all this. Both the seven trumpets and the seven last plagues are God's judgments upon the apostate churches and those supporting them. Today we are living between the sixth and seventh trumpet. The seven last plagues are a detailed description of the seventh trumpet, or the third woe.

The Nature of God's Judgments

We are now ready to draw some significant conclusions concerning the nature of God's judgments in the seven last plagues by studying briefly the nature of God's judgments in the six trumpets that have been. Thus the safe biblical principle is followed, that the past shall illuminate the future. It will help us to understand that despite that fact that the seven last plagues will fall exactly as predicted, God is not the destroyer.

Under the happenings portrayed in the seals of *Revelation 6*, God's people are heavily persecuted. As the souls of the martyrs slain symbolically cry to God for vengeance, the judgments of God are poured out upon that persecuting church pictured in the trumpets and woes.

Revelation 8

² And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

Inspiration then puts three verses in parentheses. Then it goes on with the detailed description of the trumpets. This parenthesis must be closely studied in order to understand God's character in the judgments. We read it together with the preceding and following texts to keep the context.

Revelation 8

² And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

³ And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

⁴ And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

⁵ And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

⁶ And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

It is clear that verses 3-5 are a summary of the judgments of God described in the rest of the chapters 8 and 9, and as we now see, in *Revelation* 16 under the seven last plagues or the seventh trumpet.

The angel at the altar represents Christ's work in the sanctuary on behalf of His people. A misreading of the parallel Scripture has led some to believe that the incense represents the prayers of the saints:

Revelation 5

⁸ ...four and twenty elders...having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints.

Textual evidence however, favors that not the odors (marginal reading "incense") represents the prayers of the saints, but the vials. The incense represents the merits of Christ.

Ephesians 5

² ...and has given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.

How fitting! The vial or, as called in *Revelation* 8, the censer, represents the prayers of God's children brought before His throne through this heavenly ministry. What do these vials contain? Incense, representing the merits of our redeemer. Our prayers are acceptable to the Father only in one way and that is through the merits of Jesus Christ, who stands on our behalf. Whenever we pray, we ought to have His sufferings constantly before us, for they are mixed with the prayer that goes before God.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 970:

...while we confess our sins and plead the efficacy of Christ's atoning blood, our prayers are to ascend to heaven, fragrant with the merits of our Saviour's character.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 1075:

All who come to Christ today are to remember that His merit is the incense that mingles with the prayers of those who repent

of their sins and receive pardon and mercy and grace. Our need of Christ's intercession is constant.

Before the incense could be mingled with the prayers of the saints it had to be burnt with fire. There is no better symbol than fire to describe in which way the Saviour acquired the merits that alone make our prayers acceptable to God. The fire burning the incense represents the sufferings and the death through which He merited our acceptance with God.

The scene changes drastically from grace to judgment. No other symbols are used to make this change. The same wonderful things are being used: the same angel takes the same censer as before and fills it with the same fire from the same altar and casts it onto the earth,

Revelation 8

⁵ ...and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings and an earthquake.

He does the same as the seven angels of *Revelation* 15 and 16 who pour out their vials of the wrath of God during the seven last plagues. Note especially where these seven angels come from:

Revelation 15

⁶ And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues.

They come from the same altar having the same vials full of the same fire as did the angel of *Revelation* 8:3; and they too, cast it upon the earth. This whole picture seems to represent God as one who directly sends fire and destruction upon the rejecters of His truth.

God, in reality, sent the Goths, and Vandals, the Huns, Herulis, Saracens and the Turks as little as He sent the fiery serpents against the murmuring and rebellious people of Israel in the wilderness. These terrible, cruel, godless and destructive hordes had as little to do with the character of God as have the delusions

which God is said to have sent against those who do not receive the love of the truth.

James 1

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Can any bad thing come from Him who gives all good things and who never changes in the least degree? Again we take the above mentioned examples. Inspiration tells us:

Numbers 21

⁶ And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people: and much people of Israel died.

Inspiration does not always interpret itself there and then—that is not the purpose of the Bible. Sometimes it must be searched for often somewhere else. Sometimes it may not be interpreted at all if the same principle has already been made clear elsewhere. In this case, however, the interpretation is directly given:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 428-429:

Moses faithfully set before the people their great sin. It was God's power alone that had preserved them in "that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water." *Deuteronomy* 8:15.

Every day of their travels they had been kept by a miracle of divine mercy. In all the way of God's leading they had found water to refresh the thirsty, bread from heaven to satisfy their hunger, and peace and safety under the shadowy cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Angels had ministered to them as they climbed the rocky heights or threaded the rugged paths of the wilderness.

Notwithstanding the hardships they had endured, there was not a feeble one in all their ranks. Their feet had not swollen in their long journeys, neither had their clothes grown old. God had subdued before them the fierce beasts of prey and the venomous reptiles of the forest and the desert. If with all these tokens of His love the people still continued to complain, the Lord would

withdraw His protection until they should be led to appreciate His merciful care, and return to Him with repentance and humiliation.

Because they had been shielded by divine power, they had not realized the countless dangers by which they were continually surrounded. In their ingratitude and unbelief they had anticipated death, and now the Lord permitted death to come upon them. The poisonous serpents that infested the wilderness were called fiery serpents, on account of the terrible effects produced by their sting, it causing violent inflammation and speedy death. As the protecting hand of God was removed from Israel, great numbers of the people were attacked by these venomous creatures.

As we see, God sending fiery serpents means that God withdrew His protection and allowed the evil to come.

2 Thessalonians 2

¹⁰ ...because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

¹¹ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

¹² That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Having quoted this text the Spirit of Prophecy says:

The Great Controversy, p. 431:

As they reject the teachings of His Word, God withdraws His Spirit, and leaves them to the deceptions which they love.

James 1

¹⁷ Every good gift,

—does indeed come directly from...

¹⁷ ...the Father of lights with whom is no variableness.

Not so with darkness, death, destruction, etc. Here are another few examples of this principle:

John 12

⁴⁰ He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

Hebrews 3

⁸ Harden not your hearts, [in other words, one hardens his own heart] as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness,

–and,

The Review and Herald, October 21, 1890:

It is not God that puts the blinder before the eyes of men or makes their hearts hard.

In *Job* 2:3 we read:

Job 2

³ And the Lord said unto Satan, Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil? and still he holds fast his integrity, although you moved me against him, to destroy him without cause.

After he has lost his children and everything else, Job himself says:

Job 1

²¹ Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there: the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

The direct and apparently active part played by God in this story is plainly interpreted by the Bible itself, and despite the undeniably strong words to the contrary, we can all read and see for certain, that it was not God who destroyed.

One more example must suffice.

Malachi 4

⁶ And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

This coming and smiting the earth with a curse, has a far different meaning than humans think:

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 388-389:

How dare they disobey God when obedience to His requirements means His blessing in both temporal and spiritual things, and disobedience means the curse of God? Satan is the destroyer. God cannot bless those who refuse to be faithful stewards. All He can do is to *permit Satan to accomplish his destroying work.*

We see calamities of every kind and in every degree coming upon the earth, and why? The Lord's restraining power is not exercised. The world has disregarded the word of God. They live as though there were no God. Like the inhabitants of the Noachic world, they refuse to have any thought of God. Wickedness prevails to an alarming extent, and the earth is ripe for the harvest.

The greatest example of all is the cross of Calvary. Here one can see for a surety the nature of God's curse and wrath, a theme which extends far beyond the limits of this little study.

It does not matter how strongly the Bible declares that God does, or sends, something negative, we can know from other sources where the Bible interprets itself, that it is not from God after all. He sends no destruction, physical disease, spiritual darkness or death. Why do we change the word "destroy" to mean something else then? We do not and must not do that. The Bible does it in its own interpretation as we have seen in the heretofore examples.

Notice however, that the Bible does not do this in each and every case; once the principle is well established that "waters" in prophecy mean "peoples" or "justification" includes "cleansing," it is left to us to understand it in the same way each time we read these terms, be they explainable or otherwise.

But why does it say “God destroys” at all? The answer is found in a truth that is understood by one and all. Unfortunately it is not appreciated by us, as God’s creatures, at all. It is well stated in the following excerpts from a book written by E. J. Waggoner:

Christ and His Righteousness, p. 16-17:

Speaking of Christ as the One through whom we have redemption, he describes Him as the One...

Colossians 1

¹⁵ Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature;

¹⁶ For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him:

¹⁷ And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.

This wonderful text should be carefully studied and often contemplated. It leaves not a thing in the universe that Christ did not create. He made everything in heaven, and everything on earth; He made everything that can be seen; and everything that cannot be seen; the thrones and dominions, and the principalities and the powers in heaven, all depend upon Him for existence.

And as He is before all things, and their Creator, so by Him do all things consist, or hold together. This is equivalent to what is said in *Hebrews* 1:3, that He upholds all things by the word of His power. It was by a word that the heavens were made; and that same word holds them in their place, and preserves them from destruction.

If we really understood the destructive power of sin, and if we could at least understand the fact that it is abnormal for things to still hold together and exist in this world of sin; if we could understand that the components things are made of are being stayed from dissolving or flying apart only and alone by the Word of God, then we would understand the statements which say that God destroys, just as they are meant and could harmonize them with God’s real character as upholder and Saviour.

Destruction comes when God lets go when He permits or allows. But for God to do this is a “strange act.”²⁴ According to the Sermon on the Mount it is His nature only to save and uphold, even His worst enemies. When men finally pass the limit—grieving His Spirit and driving Him away—God, because He always respects free choice, is unable to save them any more from the wages of evil, the seed of which they themselves have sown.

God’s anger, vengeance and wrath are the action of His turning away from the sinner with utter anguish of soul, having to leave them to reap that destruction etc., which He alone had the power to hold back.

Applied to the Seven Trumpets

Observe this principle in the divine judgments of the seven trumpets. The church had left the truth and was falling deeper and deeper into apostasy. But God did not leave them. Rather, He sent them messages of warning and fought against them only with the sword of His mouth.²⁵ But they would not repent and continued their course and committed spiritual adultery by placing themselves under the protection of the State powers instead of the protection of God.

The State, with which the bishops had compromised the truth, was invaded by the Goths, Herulis, Huns, Vandals and later by the Mohammedans. The State could not save the church from these terrible plagues and God’s salvation had been rejected. By no means did God send these plagues,

2 Corinthians 6

¹⁴ For what has light to do with darkness and what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness?

In the fifth trumpet, for instance, God has as little to do with that “star fallen from heaven” (original) whose name is “Apol-lyon” (that means “destruction”), and with the bottomless pit, as

²⁴ *Isaiah 28:21.*

²⁵ *Revelation 2:16.*

“Christ with Belial.” The key that was given him was nothing else than the beginning of the loosening of the protecting angels,

Revelation 9

¹⁴ ...bound in the great river Euphrates,

–the people of mystical Babylon. Terrible was the “woe” which the cruel Mohammedan hordes were allowed to inflict upon medieval Christianity.

The last three trumpets were all the more severe because the Church had by that time, not only cast off the truth and compromised with the State, but were now persecuting all those who would not go along with her pernicious course.

She began the persecution just before the Saracens began plaguing Europe. At first of course, the sword was wielded mostly against such heathens as the Saxons who did not want to accept this sort of Christianity. At that time 4,000 Saxon leaders and aristocrats were beheaded in one day near the city of Verden in northern Germany, all in the name of Christ!

The reason for the first woe was that God’s Spirit could no longer strive with these men. Because they rejected and drove away Him who alone can hold back the winds of strife, the terrible woe came upon them. But they repented not.

When such heralds of God, forerunners of the Reformation such as Wycliffe and the Bohemian Dissenters who were denouncing the sins of Babylon, were rejected and persecuted, more trouble had to come—the second woe. The three last plagues of *Revelation 16* are universal and more terrible than the first, because man is then so hardened in his rejection of the Creator and sustainer of the world, that all plans are firmly laid and generally approved to kill God’s servants of righteousness, and the whole world is left to reap what they have sown.

God is avenging the blood of those slain under the alter. He is not sending those troubles, but permitting them. He does not permit them because His mercy is finished, but because man is fin-

ished with God's mercy. God will remain the same merciful God forever and ever. He does not change. Man is the one who changes.

Man will reach the point of no return. God, who knows the nature of sinful man predicts that point, but He does not determine it. When this point is reached, God's grace is finished for them, but God has not finished with mercy. This is the true meaning of the end of probation.

If it were possible to save man or to do something for man even after the end of probation, the ever merciful God would do it. He would wait for that opportunity just as the father in the parable of the wayward son, given by Christ to show God's character. If the son had come even later, the father would still have waited.

But the Father in heaven knows a time in the heart of man; when man will not and cannot return anymore. That lies in the nature of sin, and that is the end of probation and beginning of God's wrath unmingled with grace.

Because of His responsibility and power to uphold everything, God has become the most misunderstood person in the universe. When, in the course of sin and rebellion, the time comes where God cannot uphold any longer, without violating the divine principle of granting free choice to man, and destruction results, the creature not realizing what is involved, bluntly says that God destroys, not appreciating and believing that He is the Upholder all in all. As long as man stays in his blindness this is the only thing he can see and say.

True, the Bible says that God destroys, but haven't we read in so many places of the reluctant and sad withdrawal of the glad Upholder when man rejects Him fully? Man misinterprets God's character by saying that God destroys, unless he explains how destruction comes, as does Inspiration. That is the vital difference.

Just as the Bible states that God destroys, it states that God's persecuted people cry for vengeance. Both these statements need

to be understood and explained in the right way and that is through the Bible itself. There will come strong delusions instead of light to the reader who is not willing to do this.

The vengeance the persecuted are praying for is the divine kind as is in harmony with the Sermon on the Mount. The more man rejects the truth, the more it is in the heart and character of God to save him from the deadly result of the course he has taken. God's only means of doing this is by way of the truth. Thus He is able to save some like Saul of Tarsus and heaven rejoices.

This process is sped up by the power of the prayers of the saints slain under the altar. Most of mankind will harden their hearts and finally cast off every restraint which God's Spirit has placed upon them, with the terrible result that they will all the sooner reap what they have sown and be left to destruction, for:

The Desire of Ages, p. 587-588:

The very means He uses for their recovery becomes to them a stone for stumbling...And every evidence of the grace of God, every ray of divine light, is either melting and subduing the soul, or confirming it in hopeless impenitence.

Christ foresaw that Jerusalem would remain obdurate and impenitent; yet all the guilt, all the consequences of rejected mercy, lay at her own door. Thus it will be with every soul who is following the same course. The Lord declares,

Hosea 13

⁹ O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.

Jeremiah 6

¹⁹ Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.

John 9

³⁹ For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

This is...

The Desire of Ages, p. 475:

...the contrast ever manifest in the effect of His words and works.

The Desire of Ages, p. 600:

And what was it that destroyed the Jews? It was the rock which, had they built upon it, would have been their security. It was the goodness of God despised, the righteousness spurned, the mercy slighted. Men set themselves in opposition to God, and all that would have been their salvation was turned to their destruction. All that God ordained unto life they found to be unto death. In the Jews' crucifixion of Christ was involved the destruction of Jerusalem.

The blood they shed did come again. The coal on the altar representing the suffering and tribulation by which He merited our salvation will either save or destroy. Mind you, when we say it will destroy, we do, as does inspiration, explain how: "God's goodness rejected," men brought to a decision, God's spirit withdrawn.

The prayer of Medieval martyrs should be the prayer of all persecuted children of God:

"Avenge our blood, by letting them see the truth, so that we, that is the message we represent [for we ourselves are dead in Christ. It is not we who live, but Christ in us], may be justified."

Revelation 6

¹¹ And white robes were given unto every one of them.

As the sufferings of Christ were represented again and again through the Reformation and thereafter, many accepted the truth, and the martyrs, hitherto regarded as the curse of the earth, were seen as heroes and examples of a faith to be imitated. The contrast though, ever manifest in the effects of a preaching of truth was very manifest in the Reformation and counter-Reformation. Men were brought to decide between life and death.

If sin were to go on unchecked, there would be none in the end to be saved. How thankful we may be, that God does something against it. He shortens the time, He cuts it short “in righteousness,”²⁶ by sending the latter rain in. The contrast of the effect of the loud cry will be manifest as never before. While the hearts of the acceptors will be really softened, the hearts of the rejecters will be ever so hardened. The Holy Spirit and His upholding and restraining power will be forced to turn away and leave them to reap a terrible harvest.

The seventh trumpet will sound, the seven last plagues will be poured out, exactly as predicted. The only thing God could do to hold it back is not to send the latter rain message. Time would continue and man would live for a while longer, but in the end none would be saved.

How thankful we should be that He is sending a message to prevent this.

²⁶ *Romans 9:28.*

**“FORCE IS THE LAST RESORT OF
EVERY
FALSE RELIGION.”**

SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 976

Therefore: True Religion Does Not Resort to
the Use of Force

Therefore: The Use of Force is a Mark of
False Religion

Therefore: The Absence of the Use of Force
is a Mark of True Religion

Therefore: If God Should Use Force as a Last
or Any Resort,

THEN

HIS IS A FALSE RELIGION.

“There can be no more conclusive evidence
that we possess the spirit of Satan
than the disposition to hurt and destroy
those who do not appreciate our work,
or who act contrary to our ideas.”

“Compelling power is found
ONLY
under Satan’s government.”

The Desire of Ages, p. 487, 759

7. Too Late!

Messenger and News Review, January 1977

A study of the end of probation in the light of God's character

Psalm 118

¹ O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: because His mercy endures forever.

² Let Israel now say, that His mercy endures forever.

³ Let the house of Aaron now say, that His mercy endures forever.

⁴ Let them now that fear the Lord say, that His mercy endures forever.

THIS everlasting mercy is an attribute of divinity impossible for natural man to grasp, unless his mind becomes enlightened by the Holy Spirit through reading the Word of God. The Bible requires us to contemplate God's mercy and the whole house of Israel is commanded to say,

² His mercy endures forever.

False Concepts

Of course, professed Christians will always pay at least lip service to this truth, but to say with all one's heart that God's mercy lasts forever, is something else. The house of Israel has never done this. Man cannot believe that mercy lasts forever. Man can be merciful; but there are limits. So he thinks that it is the same with God.

Even the whole house of Israel (the writer humbly includes himself), the superficial assent to *Psalm* 118:1-4 notwithstanding, hitherto has thought that God's mercy would one day come to a sudden end. We have taught and propagated this, especially in our teaching of the end of probation.

According to this view of the end of probation, God is merciful today, but sometime in the future His mercy changes to wrath. There are three ways in which probation can close for a person:

1. At death,

2. When committing the sin against the Holy Spirit, and
3. At the general end of human probation after the latter rain, just before the seven last plagues.

In each of these possibilities the attitude of God toward the sinner is supposed to be the same—the sinner who is invited to be reconciled today is utterly refused if he comes again. God is supposed to have set a certain date, an hour known only to the Father. Any man who passes that line without having been reconciled to Him will never receive mercy at any future time no matter how sincerely he might come to God with repentance. God has shut the door. He now says to the sinner:

“I am sorry but you have come just that much too late.”

The usual Bible text with which people have tried to support this misconception of God’s character is found in:

Revelation 22

¹¹ He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

In the light of God’s character we now have to reconsider such texts and the teaching of the end of probation connected with them. God’s character is fully revealed in the life and death of Christ.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1137:

In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from *Genesis* to *Revelation*, must be studied in the light which streams from the cross of Calvary, and in connection with the wondrous, central truth of the Saviour’s atonement.

The teaching of the end of probation has not been rightly understood and appreciated. We have not seen it in the light of the revelation of God’s character as revealed in Jesus Christ.

One great contradiction in our thinking on the subject of the end of probation is obvious. How can God's mercy come to an end when in the other text it says it lasts forever? How can God ever refuse to accept the sinner when the other text says,

John 6

³⁷ Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out.

How can God change when He says,

Malachi 3

⁶ I am the Lord, I change not.

The Thief and the Prodigal

In the light of the cross of Calvary we see a thief, who according to human thinking, came altogether too late. He was still accepted by God. The other criminal would also have been accepted if he had wanted to have mercy, because God's mercy endures forever. He never closes the door. If a sinner would come to Him a million years after the end of probation, God would in no wise cast him out.

A father had two sons. Both went astray into the world. But one came back after a reasonable time. The father whose heart had been longing for him to return, accepted him with great joy. He also waited for his second son who did not return. Years passed and he still waited. His heart was still full of mercy toward the second son, but he did not return. How long would the father be graciously disposed toward him? Would a time come when he would draw the line? Would he set a date, and if the son did not return by then, would he decide not to receive him any more?

Let us suppose that the lost son did return one day. He is sincerely sorry for all the worry and grief he has caused his parents. He would like to be forgiven and reaccepted.

"I am sorry," says the father, "you have come too late. If you had come just so much earlier I could have granted your wish, but now I cannot. It is too late, I have made up my mind."

If a human father would not do this, how much less our heavenly Father, who is infinite love, and whose mercy and compassion endures forever.

The reason that Jesus gave the parable of the prodigal son was to show the mercy of the heavenly Father. The Jews had lost sight of God's character. We have too. Many people are plagued with the thought insinuated by the enemy of God's merciful character, that they have gone too far, that their guilt is too great and God cannot accept them any more because their sins are as red as crimson, God has drawn the line. This is how the enemy pictures God.

May all sin-burdened souls rejoice! The truth of that parable is that the father would have accepted the lost son at any time, forever and ever, with great gladness.

Someone may take offence at this teaching of God's character of everlasting mercy. Some may think I am teaching error. But I must take the risk, rather than to join the enemy in misinterpreting God's character of love.

What Causes the End of Probation?

However, there is an end of probation. There is a limit, a set date which only the Father knows. There is a time when the sinner can never return to God. But the accent must be on a different syllable altogether in order to have perfect harmony between the attribute of God's character of love and Biblical eschatology.

The end of probation does come as predicted, and at the very time which the Father has foreknown. But this end of probation is not an arbitrary line, as man imagines that God has drawn. God foresees that it will surely come, but it does not come because of Him. It comes because man himself makes it. It is not God who literally shuts the door, but man. It is not God who changes, but man.

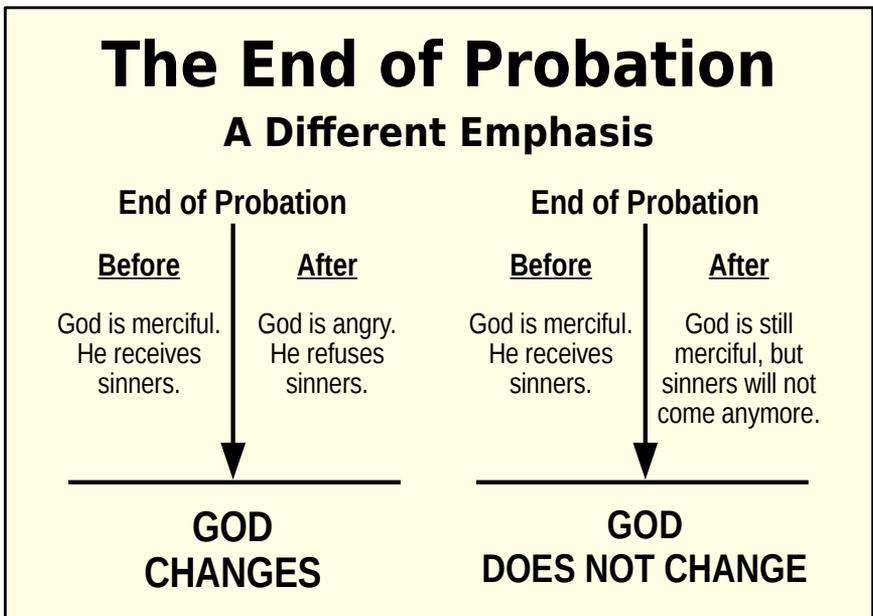
He receives sinful men now, and He would receive them after the end of probation too, but there is a change in the sinner and

when that has taken place—probation ends. This is something which lies only in the nature of sin and not in the nature of God. That is where the emphasis must be, or else our teaching is a terrible accusation against God’s character.

The time when the angel of mercy flies away never to return, the time when mercy has made her last plea, is the time when sinners have become so hardened against the truth and God’s spirit that it is impossible for them to ever be converted. Sin has done its work to the uttermost. It has driven them to the point of no return.

If they still could and would want to return, God would gladly and mercifully accept them. But there is a definite limit to God’s forbearance, a limit which is reached not because God’s character would suddenly no longer be forbearing, no, never, but rather because man’s character is so totally changed into the image of Satan, that he would never ever want to have God’s mercy.

That and nothing else is the limit of God’s forbearance. This is when mercy has made her last plea, and it would then be useless



to make any more; any further pleas at that time would also be contrary to that attribute of God's character which would never allow Him to force His presence where it is not wanted.

The final decision lies with man. God respects that decision. Man can go too far. It lies in the nature of sin that he eventually will go too far unless sin is totally given up. It is not because God will not save them anymore, but that He cannot, unless He uses force.

In short, the end of probation is the end of God's grace in such a way that grace is not available anymore only because they do not want it anymore, even though God would still impart it if they wanted it.

In the Light of the Sanctuary

All teaching must be tested by the sanctuary truths. Does not the heavenly High Priest lay off His priestly garments, and does He not put on the garments of vengeance, and does that not mean that the door is shut to all who have sin in their eyes at that moment? Are not all cases forever fixed when Christ ceases His work as mediator?

Early Writings, p. 38:

I saw four angels who had a work to do on the earth, and were on their way to accomplish it. Jesus was clothed with priestly garments. He gazed in pity on the remnant, then raised His hands, and with a voice of deep pity cried, "My blood, Father, My blood, My blood, My blood!" Then I saw an exceeding bright light come from God, who sat upon the great white throne, and was shed all about Jesus. Then I saw an angel with a commission from Jesus, swiftly flying to the four angels who had a work to do on the earth, and waving something up and down in his hand, and crying with a loud voice, "Hold! Hold! Hold! Hold! until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads."

This statement shows the character of God in connection with the closing of the sanctuary service altogether differently from what we have known in the past. There is a certain fixed line, a

date by which man must either be sealed in the righteousness of God or lost in sin forever. But here we see that instead of God arbitrarily drawing the line himself, He mercifully delays that moment until all those who can be saved, are sealed in their foreheads. O how infinite and everlasting is God's mercy! Instead of finishing it all off as He could have done, He actually waited for us all this time and is still waiting today.

The close of probation is God's recognition that all that can be done has been done and that unrepentant man has passed forever beyond any hope of salvation. God has not withdrawn His mercy for it endures forever. Man has placed himself outside of that mercy.

May the house of Israel know that it is not God, but sin that brings us to a definite point of time, as predicted by God in His mercy—the point of no return and certain death.

Psalm 118

² May all the house of Israel now say, His mercy endures forever.

May all the house of Israel know from the light of God's character the terrible nature and result of sin.

Deuteronomy 30

¹⁵ See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil;

Joshua 24

¹⁵ Choose you this day.

8. Holy Anger

Messenger and News Review, May 1977

A RELIGIOUS leader had vainly been working to straighten out some strayed souls, but they were a stubborn lot and would not see eye-to-eye with him. He had really done his very best to make them see their error, but now that all his means were exhausted, he finally lost his patience.

Many of us have witnessed and experienced situations like this. Most people think that to get angry is quite Christlike, for is there not a limit even to God's patience? For most Christians to get angry once in a while is quite legitimate if it is for a righteous cause. To them, it is that "holy anger" which God also expresses at times.

The long stream of evil that has flowed down through the centuries from this corrupt source—a false concept of God's wrath—has had an intrinsic effect on mankind in general and God's people in particular. Now is the time to cleanse this corrupt fountain. Truth makes free.²⁷ It is the truth of the understanding of God's holy anger which will set God's people free from the last traces of intolerance and which will also unmask the false claims of a holy anger where it is used to excuse and disguise unchristian tempers.

There is such a thing as righteous wrath. It is an attribute of God's character which natural man is unable to comprehend unless it is revealed in the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit. To those who have accepted the message of Christ's righteousness and a life of victory, one thing is certain: Holy anger cannot be that emotional display of strong feeling nor that irrational temper to which we were all subject in times past when we...

Ephesians 2

² ...walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, [the devil],...

³ ...[when we]...were by nature [still] the children of wrath.

²⁷ **John 8** ³² You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Seeing that there is an indignation that is righteous, an anger born of sensitive morals which is not sinful,²⁸ and above all, seeing that the glorious attributes of God's character, including divine anger, have never been fully understood, we ask the question:

What is holy anger?

This is not a vain question as it may seem to some who, by looking to the evil temper of their own unstable experience, think they know what God's anger is. "Anger is anger," they simplify, forgetting that God is not man, forgetting that God's word, and not the life of sinful man, must tell us what God's anger is.

All Flesh is Grass

Isaiah 40:5 speaks of God's last message to the world:

Isaiah 40

⁵ And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

What does this mean exactly? The next verses tell us:

⁶ The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field:

⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades: because the spirit of the Lord blows upon it: surely the people is grass.

⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades: but the word of our God shall stand forever.

We can know from verses 3-5 that this "voice in the wilderness" preaches the gospel message of the glory of God's character as seen in Christ's character. From verses 6-8 where man is symbolized as grass that withers away under the Spirit of God, we can see that this message is also one of judgment.

We are to be the proclaimers of God's terrible judgments. We are to be that voice in the wilderness, therefore we must be thor-

²⁸ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 310; *Psalms* 103:8; *Jonah* 4:2.

oughly acquainted with the true nature of these judgments. This is why we are studying the nature of God's wrath.

There is another place in the Bible where withering grass is used as a fitting symbol to describe the life of man. Here we find very valuable information as to the nature of God's wrath. We begin reading in:

Psalm 90

³ You turn man to destruction; and say, Return, you children of men.

⁴ For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

⁵ You carry them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which grows up.

⁶ In the morning it flourishes, and grows up; in the evening it is cut down, and withers.

Here in one passage we have both the destruction of man and God's anger:

³ You turn man to destruction.

⁷ We are consumed by your anger.

All Scripture Must Be Considered

Two schools of thought are ever present in the controversy between error and truth. The perplexing thing to those who do not personally investigate the Scriptures, is that both sides build upon the Scriptures. The enemy of truth has always used the Bible to further his cause. How is one supposed to know who is in the right under such confusing circumstances? By this principle: The enemy of truth will only use some texts to explain his theology while the defenders of truth will use all the texts they can find to mould the understanding of their theology.

A typical example of this is found in:

Psalm 90

³ You turn man to destruction; and say, Return, you children of men.

⁴ For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

⁵ You carry them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which grows up.

⁶ In the morning it flourishes, and grows up; in the evening it is cut down, and withers.

⁷ For we are consumed by your anger, and by your wrath are we troubled.

The controversial question to be answered is: Does God destroy man in His holy anger? Pointing to verses 3 and 7, Satan claims that God certainly does. Most people believe it because the claim is based on Scripture. They overlook the fact that the enemy, as when he tempted Christ in the wilderness, only uses some but never all of the Scriptures.

In order to fight truth, some important word, words, or texts are left out of the presentation. If one reads only *Psalm* 90:3-7, one would certainly think of God's anger and the destruction of man in the satanic way. This will never happen, if we study not only the texts which seem to support our own preconceived ideas, but all the texts that we can find pertaining to the subject.

Allowing the Consequences

Psalm 90:9 repeats the thought on God's wrath:

Psalm 90

⁹ For all our days are passed away in your wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.

Then come the well-known words in:

¹⁰ The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

How astonishing! The Bible is its own interpreter. It explains how God turns man to destruction and how we are consumed by God's anger. Unless we insist on keeping our own interpretation, these words are a description of God's anger and destruction: He

lets us die after threescore years and ten or fourscore years. He lets us die, He does not kill us, for “by reason of strength,” some may become fourscore years old and then the Lord lets them die too.

If God is angry (and is a destroyer) in the unscriptural way in which man supposes Him to be, this “strength” of men by reason of which they continue to live, would have to be so great that man could prevail a considerable length of time against the fury of an angry, but nonetheless, weak God. This is an impossible theology, therefore we must return to the Word of truth, wherein is the only accurate interpretation of divine wrath.

In the whole context of *Psalm 90*, this is God’s wrath: He permits the evil, He lets man die. But who believes that this is God’s wrath?

Psalm 90

¹¹ Who knows the power of your anger?

Hardly anyone on earth. Man has made himself a different god. Man’s god is formed according to his own image. One that rages like the devil when he is wrath, not One as is pictured in this Scripture whose wrath is something quite different.

¹² So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

⁹ For all our days are passed away in your wrath.

God’s anger must be that divine disposition wherewith He permits evil—not happily, scornfully, revengefully or resentfully, but sadly—knowing that all has been done that could be done to prevent it. There is no other way and He, the only One who can prevent all evil, lets it come.

Other Examples

As we study the way in which the Bible interprets God’s wrath, we find many fine examples showing that it is always the same.

The Bible speaks of the Israelites during Nebuchadnezzar's reign as being slain in God's anger:

Jeremiah 32

³¹ For this city has been to me as a provocation of my anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day, that I should remove it from before my face.

³² Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 33

⁴ For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, which are thrown down by the mounts, and by the sword;

⁵ They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but it is to fill them with the dead bodies of men, whom I have slain in my anger and in my fury, and for all whose wickedness I have hid my face from this city.

God permitted the cruel Babylonians to destroy the Israelites in turning His face from them. This is God's anger. This is how He slew them. Exactly the same thing happened to King Saul:

1 Chronicles 10

¹³ So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it;

¹⁴ And inquired not of the Lord: therefore He slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.

How can we know for sure, that God slew Saul only by turning away from him? In the same way in which the Bible interprets itself. The Word of God tells us that Saul killed himself:

1 Chronicles 10

⁴ Then said Saul to his armour bearer, Draw your sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and

abuse me. But his armour bearer would not; for he was sore afraid. So Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

Again, God only permitted it. As in these two examples, so it is with all sinners at all times.

Sin is the cause of all disease and of man's death whether he lives to be seventy, or eighty years of age. God would like to prevent death, but He can only do it by going to the root of the trouble and that is by redeeming man from sin. Only when this has been completely done, can He prevent disease and death.

An End of Sin

If Christians would fully accept the righteousness of Christ by faith and stop sinning altogether, God would take them into eternity. They would be translated as was Enoch who walked with God. The trouble is that God's people in general, have fallen short of this high aim. They have been slow to put away known sin and consequently have not recognized their unknown sins which also have to be put away. This is the reason for God's anger—the reason why God cannot prevent death.

Note the words:

Psalm 90

⁷ For we are consumed by your anger, and by your wrath are we troubled.

⁸ You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of your countenance.

⁹ For all our days are passed away in your wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.

Luther translates "secret sins" as *unerkannte Sunde*—unknown sin. When all known and unknown sins are realized and put away by faith, God's people will be translated without seeing death. As long as unknown sin is present there is an equal amount of God's anger present;

¹² So teach us to number our days.

Psalm 90 speaks of God's people in particular: "We are consumed," "our iniquities," "our days are passed away," "teach us," "O satisfy us early with your mercies," "make us glad," and "let your work appear unto your servants."

In what way can it be said that the children of God are consumed by God's anger? Does this not contradict the following:

Romans 8

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...

There is no condemnation because all their known sins and sinfulness are covered by Christ's imputed righteousness and correspondingly Christ's righteousness is imparted to them, to keep them from falling back into their old ways.

Their unknown sins and sinfulness incur no condemnation by reason of Christ's imputed righteousness. But God's anger or wrath, in the sense as in *Psalm* 90, permits us to die at the given age and will last as long as sin,—whether known or unknown,—is present. He permits death, not because He wishes it, but as we have seen from the study of the first fruits and the resurrection, there is no other way; they have to wait in their graves until the 144,000, the first fruits with Christ, are perfected and are without sin—both known and unknown. They are not perfect of their own strength, but through the truth.²⁹

And what is the last message of truth given to the world to bring God's children to perfection?

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 415:

The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love.

This is exactly what we read in:

²⁹ *John* 17:17.

Psalm 90

¹⁶ Let your work appear unto your servants, and your glory unto their children.

When the “light of His glory,”—His character,—shines fully in His followers, there will be no more “secret (unknown) sin,” no more wrath, no more death. Oh, may that condition be acquired soon by God’s servants!

¹⁴ O satisfy us early with your mercy,

—that tears, disease and death may be no more,

¹⁴ ...that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

¹⁵ Make us glad according to the days wherein You have afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.

We want to get out of this evil valley of death now. By the light of God’s character, all sin still holding God’s people here, no matter how unknown it may be, will be revealed and put away. Therefore,

¹⁷ Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.

In Harmony with the Cross

This view of God’s anger is the only view that harmonizes perfectly with the greatest revelation of God’s character ever given to man—the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. Everybody understands these words:

Isaiah 53

⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.

¹⁰ Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He has put Him to grief.

The Desire of Ages, p. 756:

He, the Sin Bearer, endures the wrath of divine justice...

Is there anybody fallen so low as to understand God’s wrath in these instances as the fury of the Father turning against the Son?

No, never! At the cross, even the weakest of us can learn to understand God and His wrath in a different way. God's holy anger here, is the same as pictured in *Psalm 90*. He permits the evil. That is His anger, but,

Isaiah 53

¹ Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

And,

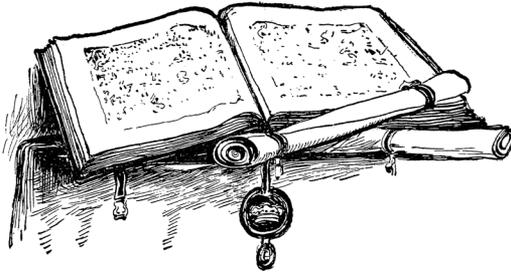
Psalms 90

¹¹ Who knows the power of your anger?

May God's people believe it now. May they know it and make it known to the world so that...

Isaiah 40

⁵ The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.



9. Do We Destroy?

Messenger and News Review, October 1977

ONE of the most comforting promises of the Old Testament to sin-stricken man, may well be *Psalms* 118:1-3. Though our sins be as crimson, God's mercy "endures forever." Even if a man overcome by evil is ready to despair, this text inspires him with comfort anew: God will still accept him. Return to Him now for...

Psalm 118

¹ His mercy endures forever.

We will never know in this life how many souls have been saved through these words from the terrible satanic delusion that God had given them up.

There is though, an apparent contradiction to this life-saving statement on God's character of everlasting mercy. A rather difficult one too, for just a few sentences further the reader is confronted with this altogether "disillusioning" statement:

¹⁰ All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them.

This is not all. Our difficulties increase immensely when reading on to...

¹¹ They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.

¹² They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.

O, astonishing word of God! We want to believe that man must live by each word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (including these words) but surely the truth does not lie uncovered on the surface. Give us your spirit to understand.

How could David begin and end this *Psalms* on the high note of God's everlasting mercy?—for the last verse reiterates,

Psalm 118

²⁹ O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endures forever,

–and yet emphasize thrice: “in the name of the Lord I will destroy my enemies.” (verses 10-12). At first I reasoned that David, who of course did not have the full light on the character of the Messiah, was just expressing his own feelings about his enemies at a time when war was still “allowed.” However, I found this view incompatible, for I knew that in reality, wars were never allowed.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 392:

The Lord had never commanded them to “go up and fight.” It was not His purpose that they should gain the land by warfare, but by strict obedience to His commands.

The Harness of Their Hearts

God’s attitude towards war in the Old Testament must be compared with His attitude towards the polygamy of Abraham and certain other men of God, or towards Israel having a king and Moses wanting the seventy elders, etc. In the case of polygamy all professed Christians know that it must have been just as wrong in the Old Testament as in the New. However, it is rather hard to find a place where God rebuked the Patriarchs and other men of God who practiced it.

The same goes for the kings of Israel. We are sure that God never wanted them,³⁰ but only once or twice God really expressed His displeasure on having a king. In the rest of the Old Testament, unless of course in the case of a bad king, He anointed them, instructed and blessed them despite the fact that He did not want a king in the first place.

A similar situation can be seen in the case of the seventy elders. God did not want to institute this office, although there is only one text in all inspirational writings which tells us so. This is as-

³⁰ **Hosea 13** ¹¹ I gave you a king in my anger, and took him away in my wrath.

tonishing because this office, called the Sanhedrin, lasted almost 1500 years until the time of Christ, and God seemed to acknowledge and bless it just as much as the kings. About this institution we read:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 380:

The Lord permitted Moses to choose for himself the most faithful and efficient men to share the responsibility with him. Their influence would assist in holding in check the violence of the people, and quelling insurrection; yet serious evils would eventually result from their promotion. They would never have been chosen had Moses manifested faith corresponding to the evidences he had witnessed of God's power and goodness, but he had magnified his own burdens and services, almost losing sight of the fact that he was only the instrument by which God had wrought. He was not excusable in indulging, in the slightest degree, the spirit of murmuring that was the curse of Israel. Had he relied fully upon God, the Lord would have guided him continual, and would have given him strength for every emergency.

God accepted the kings and elders, not as a compromise with wrong, but as far as possible, to direct, bless and minimize the evil effect resulting. There are other examples of things God gave them because of the hardness of their hearts.

ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

Deuteronomy 14

²⁶ And you shall bestow that money for whatsoever your soul lusts after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever your soul desires.

Unlike the kings and elders, we know of many other Bible texts which tell us that this nerve-deadening poison was never in harmony with God's will.

SLAVE-LAWS

Read *Exodus* 21:1-6, compare with:

2 Corinthians 3

¹⁷ Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

MEAT IN THE WILDERNESS

Numbers 11

³¹ And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth.

WARS

In all these things where God...

Psalm 78

²⁹ ...gave them their own desire,

–His attitude is similar as it was towards wars in the Old Testament. He was always against them, but because of the hardness of their hearts He allowed them to go to war—however, without forsaking them. He still directed the people, accompanied and blessed them in order to minimize the evil effects. He continued to do this until they had the opportunity to accept or reject the greatest light and revelation of His character in the coming of the Messiah in whom all wars forever ceased.

John 18

³⁶ Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Matthew 5

⁴⁴ But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

⁴⁵ That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

To interpret God's attitude in this way is not an idea which stems from sinful human beings: the Bible itself says it like that, and therefore it leaves us no option. Is man so proud and confi-

dent as to think that he can interpret these things himself? Our only safety is “thus says the Lord.” He speaks His own interpretation:

Luke 22

³⁶ He that has no sword...buy one.

Ezekiel 20

²⁵ I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live.

We have gone to some length to show that Israel’s wars in the Old Testament as compared with the life of Christ and the Sermon on the Mount, must be counted with polygamy, slavery, alcohol, the kings, the Sanhedrin, and to mention one more, the letter of divorce. Of such things Christ said:

Matthew 19

⁸ ...from the beginning it was not so.

As in the case of polygamy and the kings, there may not be many texts to prove this, but nevertheless there are some.

Luke 22

³⁸ It is enough.

Psalm 118 Reconsidered

We turn to *Psalm* 118:10-12 once more. We have seen that wars were never right, nevertheless we will now take this passage as a part of a Gospel song inspired by the Holy Spirit for all ages including ours, and will take this part especially where David (a representative of God’s children at all times) speaks about destroying his enemies. In the light of other statements of Holy Scripture we will apply this passage to ourselves today. This may perplex us at first, but in the end it will help and save us from a fateful misunderstanding and open up the truth on God’s character.

The perplexing part first: How can killing be right in a gospel song, if ever?

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 392:

The Lord had *never commanded* them to “go up and fight.” *It was not His purpose* that they should gain the land by warfare, but by strict obedience to His commands.

“It was not His purpose” that wars should be fought. Fighting is something which God “never commanded.” How can the gospel teach us...

Psalm 118

¹⁰ ...in the name of the Lord will I destroy them,

—and how can it emphasize this by saying,

¹³ ...but the Lord helped me.

¹⁴ The Lord is my strength and song?

Considering the context that would mean that the Lord helps me to destroy my enemies and to do it in His name.

I am a conscientious objector. For many years I have believed in the absolute authority of the sixth commandment under all circumstances, for God, for all men and all times. In a gospel song of inspiration, *Psalm 118*, I am now told something altogether contrary, or so it seems. This puts me into a predicament far worse than when I read that God destroys. Here it does not say that God destroys, but that *I destroy*. Here I read that I, the man of non-force, the conscientious objector, the convinced follower of Christ the Lamb, may destroy my enemies in the name of the Lord.

Of course it is human to wriggle our way out of this vexing question by insisting against better knowledge—that this was only David speaking at a time when wars were still “allowed.” We will certainly deprive ourselves of the truth God has in store for us if we try to do this. In order to make it quite impossible for all honest searchers of truth we will now read a parallel passage, not written by David but by Malachi speaking of no other time than our own.

Malachi 4

³ And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, says the Lord of hosts.

Here again is depicted a scene at the end of time, where we, the last generation of God's people on earth and to whom beyond all doubt, wars are not allowed, "shall tread down the wicked."

In *Daniel 7* is a prophecy expressing similar thoughts. Not speaking in symbols (for proof, read *Daniel 7:16*: "this is the interpretation...") it says in:

Daniel 7

²⁶ But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.

Who is said to consume and to destroy in this passage? "They." Checking the context, they are the saints with whom the little horn made war on earth. Read *Daniel 7:25-26*, and *Daniel 8:10*. That the Papacy makes wars, doesn't surprise us. But here it is said that the saints do the same thing. They destroy and consume too!

That is plain language, just as plain as when it says, "God destroys." So the question is no longer simply, "Does God destroy?" It is also, "Do we destroy?"

Numbers 23

²⁴ Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.

The crux of this study is that the very least of the saints know perfectly well that God's people in the end will never destroy in the sense as the word is understood by man. They will not even destroy their worst enemies. What then does the Bible mean when it says, "we destroy"? Let the Bible interpret itself.

It speaks in one place about us, God's children, heaping coals of fire upon our enemies' heads, and then it goes on to promise us

the Lord's reward if we do so. If a man would act upon these words according to the dark sentences of his understanding, without humbling himself to accept the altogether different Bible understanding of these divine words describing godly actions, he would do the very thing so strictly forbidden by the sixth commandment, namely—kill. Those fiery coals would burn them up.

By reading the Bible in this way, men, in the medieval ages, actually became persecutors, inquisitors and executioners of their spiritual enemies. There is absolutely no excuse for reading the Bible like this. God has warned men specifically that...

2 Peter 1

²⁰ ...there is no private interpretation.

The Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible can interpret the Bible. Thanks be to God that He has not left it up to sinful man to interpret biblical words like these, that God's people destroy or that God destroys. The context itself proves what God means with these words:

Proverbs 25

²¹ If your enemy be hungry give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

²² For you shall heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward you.

It is true that the context does not always explain itself as in this text, but neither is it necessary. If we believe that the Bible is one inspired system of truth and does not contradict itself, then the texts found elsewhere, will give us the explanation for the others.

Here we have the explanation of the Bible texts where it says that we destroy. This explanation stands for the other related texts in the Bible too.

If Christians would follow the instruction of *Proverbs 25:21-22* according to divine interpretation, they would destroy their enemies—not in the way in which the little horn destroys and con-

sumes, but in the gospel way. They would not understand these words in the natural, human, satanic way, they would not conquer and destroy by using force, but by strict obedience to the commandments of God—the same way in which Israel ought to have conquered Canaan.³¹

How can this be? By giving the enemy the treatment described in *Proverbs 25:21* his heart would become so softened that he would eventually become converted, his old nature would be eradicated and he would become a new person altogether, a friend now, not an enemy. A brother would be won. This is the only aim we will have in mind with anybody unto whom these good deeds may be done. We want him to be saved, and we want him to have eternal life. This is what *Psalms 118* means when it repeatedly says, “I will destroy my enemies.” Note the words:

Psalm 118

⁷ Therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me.

If the destruction of his enemies in verses 10-12 is to be interpreted according to man’s perverted understanding of destroying enemies, then, on the grounds of contextual reading and plain logic, his desire upon them that hate him, in *Psalms 118:7*, must be the desire to literally kill them.

Christ’s Way of Destroying

Looking at the whole Bible and the example of the life and character of the Messiah and the Sermon on the Mount as the declaration of the principles of the messianic government, such desires and notions are absolutely forbidden. Rather, the Christian’s desire upon those who hate him should be as is expressed in:

Matthew 5

⁴⁴ But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

³¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 392.

According to the biblical interpretation, the Christian's desire toward those who hate him should be to do good unto them and to lead them into life everlasting. Therefore it can never be the Christian's desire to literally destroy them.

However, that which in the hearts of God's people is ordained unto life everlasting, may actually work out to be death to them.³² Should these enemies decide to turn against this demonstration of gospel love by rejecting the message of mercy, those "coals of fire" will in a certain literal sense, destroy them yet. In such a case, their hearts will not be softened as is the only desire of God and His people for them, rather, they will be hardened. Thus they grieve and sin away God's spirit and are left helpless without God's protection. Destruction cannot be held back any longer. That which was desired and ordained to be eternal life unto them now becomes death.

This alone is the biblical way of destroying our enemies and likewise for God. God's children have the same character as their heavenly Father.

Hosea 6

⁵ Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and your judgments are as the light that goes forth.

Matthew 5

⁴⁸ Be you therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Both treat their enemies in the same way. The interpretation set forth in this study is clearly seen from a significant comment made by Paul after quoting the Old Testament text of the coals of fire:

Romans 12

²⁰ ...you shall heap coals of fire on his head.

²¹ Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

³² *Romans 7:10.*

Start reading from verse 18. Yes, evil has to be overcome, has to be conquered and destroyed, but only in the sense of the following important statements:

Genesis 3

¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

How would Christ, the seed, do it? By which means would He destroy the enemy?

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 924:

Christ was nailed to the cross, but He gained the victory. The whole force of evil gathered itself together in an effort to destroy Him who was the Light of the world, the Truth that makes men wise unto salvation. But no advantage was gained by this confederacy. With every advance move, Satan was bringing nearer his eternal ruin. Christ was indeed enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself. But every pang of suffering that He bore helped tear away the foundation of the enemy's kingdom. Satan bruised Christ's heel, but Christ bruised Satan's head. Through death the Saviour destroyed him that had the power of death.

The Great Controversy, p. 502:

...Christ had, in order to destroy sin, humbled himself, and become obedient unto death.

Hebrews 2

¹⁴ Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

If the words, such as God destroys, or we as God's children destroy, are freed from the old medieval notion, then the following statements are seen in their true significance:

The Desire of Ages, p. 475:

A group of Pharisees had gathered near, and the sight of them brought to the mind of Jesus the contrast ever manifest in the effect of His words and works. He said,

John 9

³⁹ For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

Christ had come to open the blind eyes, to give light to them that sit in darkness. He had declared himself to be the light of the world, and the miracle just performed was in attestation of His mission. The people who beheld the Saviour at His advent were favored with a fuller manifestation of the divine presence than the world had ever enjoyed before. The knowledge of God was revealed more perfectly. But in this very revelation, judgment was passing upon men. Their character was tested, their destiny determined.

The Desire of Ages, p. 600:

And on “whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.” The people who rejected Christ were soon to see their city and their nation destroyed. Their glory would be broken, and scattered as the dust before the wind. And what was it that destroyed the Jews? It was the rock which, had they built upon it, would have been their security. It was the goodness of God despised, the righteousness spurned, the mercy slighted.

Men set themselves in opposition to God, and all that would have been their salvation was turned to their destruction. All that God ordained unto life they found to be unto death. In the Jews’ crucifixion of Christ was involved the destruction of Jerusalem. The blood shed upon Calvary was the weight that sank them to ruin for this world and for the world to come. So it will be in the great final day, when judgment shall fall upon the rejecters of God’s grace.

The Desire of Ages, p. 587:

The very means He uses for their recovery becomes to them a stone of stumbling.

All this is very clear. Christ did destroy His enemies “in the name of the Lord.” That name signifies God’s character of everlasting mercy as declared in the very same *Psalms*. To truly destroy in the name and character of the Lord means something altogether different than to destroy in the name and character of the little horn.

Daniel 2: Breaking in Pieces

Christ is the stone “cut out of the mountain without hands,”³³ that breaks in pieces and consumes all other kingdoms. When reading the gospel of *Daniel 2* superficially, one could get the impression that the God of heaven uses the same means to set up His kingdom as all the other kingdoms before—force. All the others had to first destroy the previous kingdom in order to set up theirs. But none of them lasted. All of them used the sword to come to power; but all perished by the sword too.

Revelation 13

¹⁰ He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity: he that kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Finally God sets up a kingdom “which shall never be destroyed.”³⁴ How does He do it? Does He simply use more of the sword, more force than all the others used before? Does He annihilate them so thoroughly with the sword, that they will never have a chance to rise up again, so that His kingdom is enabled to last forever? Honestly, from the words used in *Daniel 2:44* it would seem just like that, unless we understand that *Daniel 2* is preaching the cross of Calvary. For proof, read:

1 Corinthians 2

² For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

³³ *Daniel 2:45.*

³⁴ *Daniel 2:44.*

In the light of the Cross these words to “break in pieces and consume”³⁵ when applied to God and godly actions, have an altogether different meaning. To us, the meaning of *Daniel 2* should be obvious. The stone coming from heaven pictures Christ’s humiliation and condescension in order to save His enemies on earth. At the cross of Calvary the stone hit the lowest point that it could ever reach. Through His death, Christ destroyed all the dark kingdoms of the world. Through His death we also have life.

To those enemies which are not softened but hardened through this gospel, their salvation is turned to their destruction. All that God ordained unto them for life, they find to be unto death. The blood shed on Calvary is the weight that sinks them into eternal ruin.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 924:

...every pang of suffering...destroyed him that had power of death.

The Bible says that Christ destroys in this way, therefore we are to do the same. The angel of *Revelation 14:17* represents God’s people in the last days. Their work of destruction is pictured in verses 19-20. God’s people will follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes, to the last. They will condescend, as did their Master to the lowest point. That will bring the world to a speedy and sudden end, for it is written:

Joel 3

¹⁶ The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake.

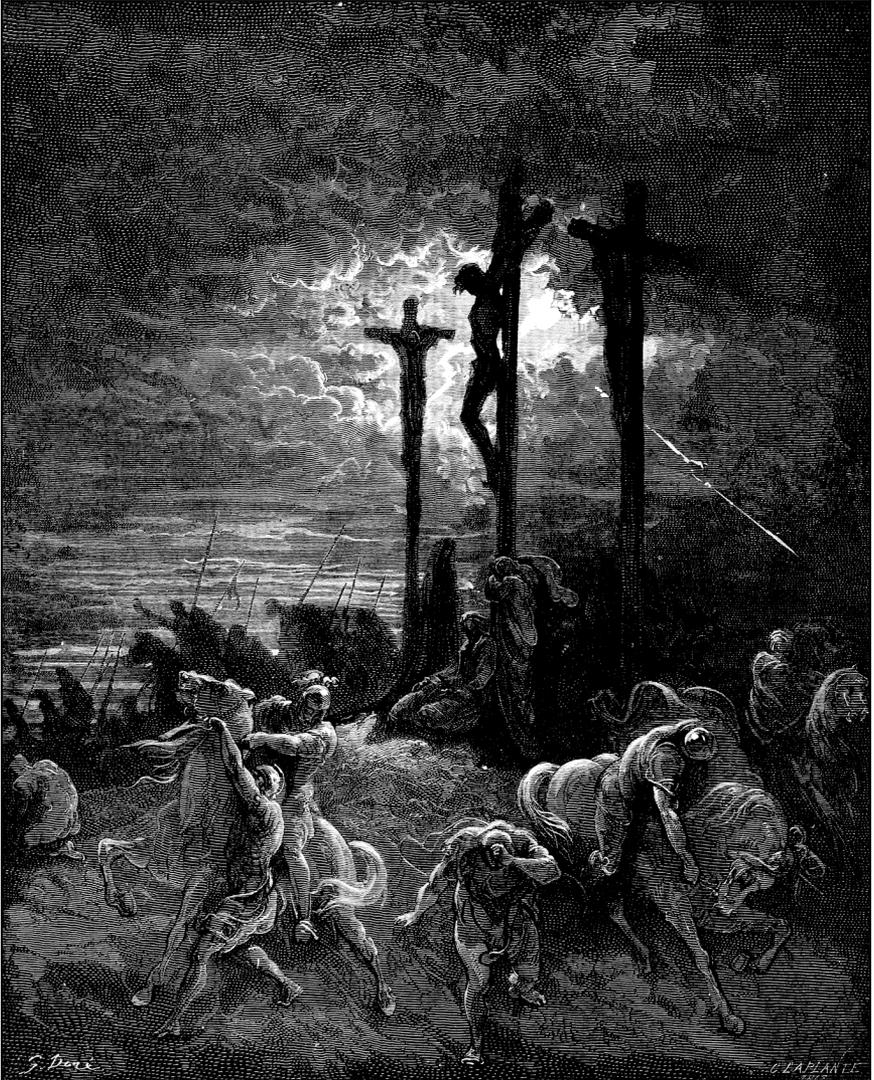
Jeremiah 1

¹⁰ See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

³⁵ *Daniel 2:44.*

Micah 5

⁸ And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treads down, and tears in pieces, and none can deliver.



10. Contradictions and New Light

Messenger and News Review, May 1978

“I have never found the slightest contradiction in the Scriptures.”

SO REMARKED the person before me, to whom I had been vainly trying to explain an important prophecy from *Daniel* 11 and *Revelation* 16. The statement struck me as being odd for I had frequently been confronted with what to me, at the time, were serious contradictions. Did this person have such a brilliant, spiritual mind that it enabled him to instantly perceive the depths of Scripture? Why had he found no serious problems, requiring days or even weeks of painstaking study and earnest prayer to solve them?

As I continued to talk with him, I came to see that his was a very superficial mind, incapable of holding a broad coverage of Bible truth at one time. The result was that his study of one part of the Word of God was always kept separate from every other part so that, in his mind, the two were never brought together. It was for this reason that he was unaware of seeming contradictions.

I was impressed as never before with the realization that anyone who digs deeply and consistently into the writings, will find problems with truths which seem to be direct contradictions of other truths. The genuine seeker for light will always come across apparent inconsistencies, especially when the Lord is bringing advanced messages to His people.

The contradictions will always be seeming, never real. It is because of spiritual blindness on one hand and the great depth in the revelations of God's mind on the other, that they will exist as they do. Even though confronted with what seem to be insoluble problems of interpretation, the true believer is firmly gripped by the unshakable conviction that there is not a single truth in the

Bible which is unaligned with any other truth. Because the Scriptures emanated from the one great mind of the one great God through various prophets and scribes, it can only contain a message consistent with itself. Disharmony is an impossibility, real contradictions nonexistent.

But to assert that the study of God's word had never brought any problem with seeming contradictions is either to claim that the human mind in this case is equal to the mind of God, or to admit that the study has been so superficial that no capacity has been developed for appreciating the depths in God's revelations.

Rather than this being a source of discouragement, the surfacing of problems in interpretation is an encouragement, for it demonstrates that the mind is reaching down to the depths and up to the heights, that truth is unfolding, and that the intellect, aided by the Spirit, is not merely scratching around the surface where only dust is to be found, while the rich veins of golden ore are deeper down.

The same faith in the true searcher which confirms him in the knowledge that contradictions are only seeming and never real, gladdens him with the assurance that the Lord will unfold the answers to the problems until what has previously been a serious difficulty will become instead a wonderful unfolding of vital truth.

Throughout the history of the church, believers have been troubled with this. It has resulted in the shaking out of many who lost faith in divine leadership because they were not able to endure the test of faith. But, for those who pressed forward with courage and determination, light opened up with a clarity and brilliance they had not seen before.

An example of such an experience is found in the statement of Christ prophesying the future of the Christian church. He said,

Matthew 16

¹⁸ ...the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

At first there was no problem. The church went forward conquering all opposition, planting the banner of truth in the very strongholds of Satan and gathering in vast numbers of warm-hearted believers. But gradually a change came. Stealthily but surely the invasion of worldly principles permeated the ranks until the dark shadow of apostasy clouded the church and its future. Eventually, the witness of sight and circumstances pressured every faithful one to believe that the gates of hell did prevail against the very church of which Christ said it would not.

Every visible evidence testified that the words of Christ were proven false. The church which had begun so brilliantly with such shining purity, had been turned instead into the agency of the devil. The mighty powers developed through association with the Omnipotent had been appropriated for the purpose of destroying the One who had given them.

The believers were thrown into serious perplexity. Their one desire was to serve God and thus to be found where He would have them be, no matter how great the cost. The evidences of their senses told them that separation was demanded by the situation which existed. In their hearts they found no fellowship with the powers of darkness in the church which were hostile to every principle they had so faithfully cherished.

But, on the other hand, Christ had said that the powers of darkness would never overcome this church.

“Therefore,” they reasoned, “it had to be the church of God still, even though it had every appearance of being otherwise.”

If this was so, they should dismiss any thought of separation from it, even though remaining there imposed upon them an unendurable spiritual burden. They surely found themselves with what seemed an insoluble contradiction and they did not know for a time what they should do. As never before, they searched and prayed for the answer. It was not without a severe struggle

that they finally made the break with the established church—the church which Christ himself had established.

The Great Controversy, p. 45:

After a long and severe conflict, the faithful few decided to dissolve all union with the apostate church if she still refused to free herself from falsehood and idolatry. They saw that separation was an absolute necessity if they would obey the word of God. They dared not tolerate errors fatal to their own souls, and set an example which would imperil the faith of their children and children's children. To secure peace and unity they were ready to make any concession consistent with fidelity to God; but they felt that even peace would be too dearly purchased at the sacrifice of principle. If unity could be secured only by the compromise of truth and righteousness, then let there be difference, and even war.

They made that separation in the end, not in spite of the statement by Christ that the gates of hell would never prevail against the church, but with its support. When they truly understood what Christ had said, then all contradiction disappeared and they found they could use the same text to justify their separation and not to condemn it.

As they searched, they did find that Christ's words were true, that the gates of hell had not prevailed against the church which Christ had established. They, and not the word of God, had been in error. Their error had been in their definition of what the church was which Christ had established. Like all humans, they had tended to think of the machinery of organization and buildings as being the temple. While they thought in these terms, of course they saw the church as having been overcome by the powers of darkness, but when they realized that this was not so, then they knew that the church was still unconquered.

We do not know today just which Scriptures unfolded this truth to them, but we do know many which could well have served to achieve such a purpose. There is the parable of the wheat and the tares in which it is revealed that God sowed the good seed in the

field and, as the grain sprang up, the church grew into shape and stature. But the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat until the whole field appeared to be filled with the nuisance plant. But the wheat did not die away. It remained and grew into the full head of harvest time. The wheat, not the tares, were the church of God so that, even though the organization had become filled with tares, thorns, and even thistles, the wheat still lived, and this was the church.

They recalled, no doubt, how the Lord had called the Jews to be His people, had endowed them with every facility and gift necessary for them to accomplish His divine will and had set them up in the land of promise. They saw how the enemy had perverted all to his ends but ever and always there were those who held faithfully to the divine statutes and principles and they were the church of God, not the apostates. They saw the difference between those who had, by faithfulness, remained as the church of God and those who, because of their apostasy, held only the hollow pretense of being His organization.

When they saw this, they knew that while one faithful soul remained, God still had His church on earth and the gates of hell had not prevailed. Only when there was not a single person remaining who was true to God, could it be said that the gates of hell had conquered.

When they saw this they rejoiced, as well we might today. The long annals of history have shown some very dark and dismal eras for the church when it seemed to be supported by so few. They were days when the devil mounted some tremendous massings of power to crush out what appeared to be but a flickering spark of remaining life. But he has never been successful.

Read *The Great Controversy* through. It will repeatedly appear that the enemy had triumphed. The church seemed to have disappeared entirely under the relentless pressure of persecution, while Rome appeared to have assumed an invincible strength. Then a few pages further on, the records tell the astonishing story

of the church arising from nowhere, it would seem, fresher, stronger, more vital and better equipped with light than before the persecution began. It becomes clear that the frantic measures adopted by the evil one have served to purify and empower the church, not overcome it.

It will be impossible to read the book through without being convinced that Christ's words are altogether true. Instead of the gates of hell prevailing over the church, their efforts to do so, serve to destroy themselves. Every attack against the truth and church of God deprived and weakened the attacker. So it will be forever. The gates of hell shall never prevail.

As the struggle continued, this Scripture became a most important weapon in the hands of the reformers to confirm and support their separation from the church of Rome. They knew that the statement applied only to those who fulfilled the conditions.

Examples Could Be Multiplied

It would require a complete book to examine all the seeming contradictions which have troubled God's people over the ages. There was the case of the two comings of Christ which confused the apostles prior to the crucifixion but which, once solved, gave them the balanced understanding of the purpose of Christ's first and second coming. They could praise God for what He had done in sending Christ the first time, and could look forward with eager anticipation to His second appearing in glory.

The earlier Adventists had great difficulty in reconciling *Matthew* 5:17-18, which speaks of the perpetuity of the law, with *Romans* 10:4 and other Scriptures which declare that it is to last only until Christ should come. It led to much controversy in the church between Elders Butler and Waggoner before and during the presentation of the 1888 messages. Only at the present time is the light on this problem becoming really clear.

Our situation today is no different. Be assured that if you are a deep and faithful searcher for truth, you will find yourself con-

fronted with seeming contradictions. It will appear at first that these cannot be solved. It will seem that there is no possible way out. This is a perfectly normal experience for us and should neither surprise nor dismay anyone. Instead, we should be cheered by the knowledge that this is evidence that we have not been mere surface readers on one hand, and, on the other, excited by the realization that the appearing of these problems is but the prelude to their solution.

The light is ever increasing and as surely as it does, it will un-earth problems in understanding. For instance, how shall we understand *1 Samuel* 16:14-15,³⁶ *Revelation* 20:9,³⁷ *Exodus* 10:1,³⁸ *Romans* 9:13,³⁹ *2 Thessalonians* 2:11,⁴⁰ *Matthew* 22:7,⁴¹ *Revelation* 8:5,⁴² and *Revelation* 16:2,⁴³ in the light of God's character as revealed by Christ and as we now know it?

The answer to every one of these problems is given in the Word of God, but finding those answer will require diligent study, earnest prayer and large faith. This will bring them to light.

Be of good cheer!

³⁶ **1 Samuel 16** ¹⁴ But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. ¹⁵ And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubles you.

³⁷ **Revelation 20** ⁹ And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

³⁸ **Exodus 10** ¹ And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might show these my signs before him.

³⁹ **Romans 9** ¹³ As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

⁴⁰ **2 Thessalonians 2** ¹¹ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.

⁴¹ **Matthew 22** ⁷ But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

⁴² **Revelation 8** ⁵ And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

⁴³ **Revelation 16** ² And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

When you have found a contradiction, be assured that you are on the verge of a wonderful new light if you wait in the true faith, on the Lord.



11. The Gospel of the Kingdom

Messenger and News Review, March 1979

Matthew 24

¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

WE ARE all waiting for the end to come. Many of us have waited for years, even decades, wondering why it is taking so long for this prophecy to be fulfilled. Some have become discouraged and have left the way of truth altogether. On looking into the above text, we find that there is a condition to the coming of the end, namely that:

¹⁴ This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.

As long as this specific gospel is not preached unto all nations the end cannot come. But has not this gospel been preached for years now? Obviously not. There is a message being preached, but it cannot be “this gospel of the kingdom.” How important it is then, to investigate and see exactly what this gospel of the kingdom is.

As already mentioned, Christ’s words “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached...” must refer to a specific gospel, different from all the other false gospels taught by other religions. We are not left to ourselves to find out what it is. The Bible is its own interpreter. Inspiration tells us what the gospel of the kingdom is.

This is most comforting and consoling to us at a time when every wind of doctrine is blowing. All we have to do is understand and we will have found the last message ever to be proclaimed. What a blessed assurance!

¹⁴ ...and then shall the end come.

Two Different Gospels

John the Baptist preached the gospel of the kingdom:

Matthew 3

² Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The twelve apostles preached it:

Matthew 10

⁷ The kingdom of heaven is at hand,

—and Christ himself preached the same.

The Desire of Ages, p. 233:

The burden of Christ's preaching was, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe the gospel." Thus the gospel message, as given by the Saviour himself, was based on the prophecies.

Christ's gospel of the kingdom was a most wonderful message, one so powerful that it could have wrought a great reformation among the Jews, such as the world had never witnessed before, if the priests and rabbis had not interposed and prevented it.

The Desire of Ages, p. 205:

The people were gathering to Christ. The sympathetic hearts of the multitude accepted lessons of love and benevolence in preference to the rigid ceremonies required by the priests. If the priests and rabbis had not interposed, His teaching would have wrought such a reformation as this world has never witnessed. But in order to maintain their own power, these leaders determined to break down the influence of Jesus.

How did they prevent the gospel of the kingdom as preached by Christ? When we understand the arguments of the priests in Christ's time, we will be better able to understand the arguments of the false teachers of our time.

In order to prevent the thorough revival and reformation which Christ's message of the kingdom would have brought, Satan inspired the Jewish leaders to also preach a message of the king-

dom. However, their message of the kingdom could never be “this gospel of the kingdom.” It was “another gospel,” the principles of which were distinctly opposed to the true gospel. We read:

The Desire of Ages, p. 238:

What a contrast between His teaching in regard to the new kingdom and that which they had heard from their elder!

Where was the difference between Christ’s teaching of the kingdom and that of the Pharisees? The next sentence shows us.

Jesus had said nothing of delivering them from the Romans.

How could He have established a kingdom without fighting the Roman Empire? The Romans would never have tolerated another independent kingdom as long as theirs existed. The only obvious way would have been to drive them out by force. But in His sermon on the mount, Jesus forbade force.

Matthew 5

³ Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁵ Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

³⁸ You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

³⁹ But I say unto you, That you resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.

⁴¹ And whosoever shall compel you to go a mile [the Jewish folk were compelled to carry loads for the Roman soldiers] go with him twain.

⁴⁴ But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

⁴⁵ That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

The Jewish people actually liked the idea of the coming kingdom of God. Christ would have gladly been accepted as king if He had complied with their conditions of force. This false conception was made plausible by manipulating a great number of Old Testament verses to suit the natural heart.

The Desire of Ages, p. 236:

In the regular service for the day, the elder read from the prophets, and exhorted the people still to hope for the Coming One, who would bring in a glorious reign, and banish all oppression. He sought to encourage his hearers by rehearsing the evidence that the Messiah's coming was near, He described the glory of His advent, keeping prominent the thought that He would appear at the head of armies to deliver Israel.

The contrast between Christ's teaching of the kingdom and the human conception of kingdoms, is accurately described in the visions of the prophets, where the kingdoms of the world are represented by fierce, cruel beasts of destruction, whereas Christ's kingdom is represented by a lamb which never destroys its enemies.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1171:

To Daniel was given a vision of fierce beasts, representing the powers of the earth. But the ensign of the Messiah's kingdom is a lamb. While earthly kingdoms rule by the ascendancy of physical power, Christ is to banish every carnal weapon, every instrument of coercion. His kingdom was to be established to uplift and ennoble fallen humanity.

The false gospel expounded by the contemporaries of Christ, that God's kingdom was established by fire and force, was the big argument which persuaded the masses to turn against the truth and the true Messiah. Because of their misunderstandings of the Old Testament, they believed that God actually used His enemies as a footstool (a practice carried out by the conquerors of antiquity), and that their Messiah and King would do the same. This of course, reflected their feelings towards their enemies.

To proudhearted humans, this message made sense. They considered that a kingdom which used no weapons and no force would be extremely weak and would not last. Such are the thoughts of those who forget that the foolishness and weakness of God are stronger than the carnal weapons of His enemies.

1 Corinthians 1

²³ But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

²⁴ But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

²⁵ Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

²⁶ For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

One must not suppose that Christ's antagonists had no Bible texts to support their teachings. Prophecy foretold that the Messiah would sit on the throne of David.

Isaiah 9

⁶ For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

The reigns of David and Solomon stood out as peak experiences in the Jewish history. They were the glorious times of a nation now oppressed and despised. The prophecies as taught daily in the synagogue, pointing to a time in their generation when Israel should be restored to even greater glory, were accepted with glee-

ful expectancy. David was great, but the new Messiah would be greater. Their enemies would be thoroughly destroyed and His kingdom would last forever. The time had come!

When the disciples preached in the towns and villages that the kingdom of God was at hand, spirits ran high. At first, Christ drew quite an enthusiastic crowd of followers. The people and rabbis alike, were sure that the new kingdom would be established with the edge of the sword. Even Christ's closest followers, as sincere as they were, could not understand otherwise.

Between Christ's followers and those who hated Him, was one difference. The former believed that He would make only just wars against His enemies. He would never tolerate fraud or bribery. He would give the underprivileged a fair chance. His righteous sword would guarantee peace to all Israel and bestow terrible fear upon her wicked enemies. This was the honest belief and expectancy of the poor and downtrodden in Israel.

This power-filled, miracle-working Rabbi of Nazareth, was just the man for them. They were not too proud to accept this humble carpenter's son of lowly origin and birth, as their leader. David had been a shepherd boy. If Jehovah's blessing and approval rested on this man, which it evidently did, He could be the predestined king.

The upper classes, the proud Pharisees and the aristocratic Sadducees, also believed that the Messiah would use force to establish His kingdom, but He had to have their education and their spirit. He had to hail their achievements, support their positions and sanction their methods of bribery and intrigue. Jesus did not fit into this picture, and even before it was clear to them that He would never use force, they rejected Him. Only a few of the great men accepted Him.

The multitude followed Him enthusiastically even though He seemed ever so slow in taking His rightful position at the head of the uprising movement. But do it He would, the prophecies said so, and they were soon to be fulfilled. The time was ripe.

Three years passed and nothing happened. Never once did Christ use His miraculous power to destroy even the least of His enemies or to force them into subjection. The people were disappointed and many left Him. Even His disciples were severely tried. Finally the day came, on which Christ rode victoriously into Jerusalem on an ass. Voices shouted,

Matthew 21

⁹ Hosanna to the Son of David!

Prophecy was fulfilled.

Zechariah 9

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

We know the rest of the story well. The people were sorely disappointed because Christ did not exercise His power and assert His right as king. Instead He was taken captive and led away to His trial without giving the least resistance. His most faithful followers fled for their lives. It was too much for them.

Carnal vs. Spiritual Interpretation

The Pharisees took all this as proof that Christ was not the true Messiah. They wanted a king who would fight for them. How else were the many Bible texts to be explained which said that the Messiah would reign like David? Most certainly He would have to use force against His enemies. Just read:

Isaiah 9

² The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined.

³ You have multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before You according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

⁴ For You have broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.

⁵ For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire.

⁶ For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Where did this Jesus of Nazareth break the rod of the oppressor, the Roman government? Where were the battles of the warriors, the noise, blood, etc.?

Let us take another prophecy concerning the first coming of Christ and try to understand the Jews. They were brought up and taught to understand these prophecies in a false way. It is easy to condemn them for having interpreted these texts in a human way, but would we have done any better at that time?

Micah 5

² But you, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

No doubt this text is a prophecy of the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom. The next sentences in context read:

³ Therefore will He give them up, until the time that she which travails has brought forth: then the remnant of His brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.

⁴ And He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.

⁵ And this Man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men.

⁶ And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall He deliver us from the Assyrian, when he comes into our land, and when he treads within our borders.

⁷ And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarries not for man, nor waits for the sons of men.

⁸ And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treads down, and tears in pieces, and none can deliver.

⁹ Your hand shall be lifted up upon your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off.

Imagine if you had lived at the time of Christ's first coming and had heard His Sermon on the Mount and other illustrations which He gave, telling how His servants would not fight but would be persecuted, and through this persecution would become the greatest in His kingdom. What would you have thought? Would not it have seemed that Christ was distorting the Scriptures?

When He mentioned the throne of David, He meant something quite different from that which we would have been taught.

- "A king" is a king of righteousness.
- "A battle" is the battle against the devil's temptations.
- "Spilled blood" is His sacrifice.
- "To fight with the sword" is the sword of truth.
- "Deliverance from oppression" is deliverance from sin.
- To destroy one's enemies is to destroy them through His humility and death.⁴⁴

Some said,

⁴⁴ See *Hebrews* 2:14.

“He is a good man.”

Others cried,

“He deceives the people! He distorts the Scriptures, He does not go by the written Word. He has a deluding way of interpreting all the prophecies of the Messiah’s kingdom. If He is right, then everything we have ever learned is wrong!”

When Christ interpreted the prophecies dealing with the messianic kingdom, He said nothing about smiting the Romans but about smiting sin, the true oppressor, on the cross.

The Desire of Ages, p. 237-238:

They had been addressed as prisoners to be delivered from the power of evil; as in darkness, and needing the light of truth. Their pride was offended, and their fears were roused. The words of Jesus indicated that His work for them was to be altogether different from what they desired....

What a contrast between His teaching in regard to the new kingdom and that which they had heard from their elder! Jesus had said nothing of delivering them from the Romans.

Zechariah 6

¹² Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the Lord:

¹³ Even He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

Matthew 2

⁶ And you Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of you shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Christ was not a deceiver and distorter of the Scriptures. He was the originator of them and knew best how to interpret them. The people’s interpretations were very logical to them because they knew of no kingdoms based on anything other than force.

Christ's interpretations had nothing to do with these traditional views. The "thus it is written" interpretation is clear and beautiful when studied systematically. The Word alone must stand, our traditional feelings of what things mean must go. Yes, Christ would judge in the land of Israel, not resting on the authority of a mighty army,

Isaiah 11

⁴ But with righteousness shall He judge.

He would smite His enemies, not according to the perverted traditional understanding, but:

⁴ ...with the rod of His mouth.

He would slay the wicked,

⁴ ...with the breath of His lips.

Surely flesh and blood could not inherit a kingdom built on principles banishing carnal weapons. The Jews ought to have understood the principles of biblical interpretation. It abounds throughout and is easy to grasp.

Jeremiah 1

¹⁰ See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

Nevertheless by God's own decree,

Daniel 12

¹⁰ ...none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.

The Bible is understood only by those who sincerely want to be partakers of God's kingdom. Before Christ's death, the prophecies concerning His kingdom were only dimly understood, but after His death His followers saw the prophetic words in a new light altogether. Realizing the time, meaning, and fulfilment of these prophecies, they at last became great preachers of the gospel of the kingdom. With surety they proclaimed:

John 1

⁴¹ We have found the Messiah!

For us to understand our present situation in the preaching of God's character as the principle of the gospel of the kingdom, it is important to understand that Christ and the apostles appeared, in the eyes of the Jews, as distorters of the Scriptures, because they interpreted the Bible in an entirely new way.

Today we are in the same situation. Our view on God's character is different from anything that has ever been preached. We are accused of distorting the Bible because we do not believe that God's kingdom uses force to destroy His enemies.

True enough, traditionally and humanly interpreted, any texts on Christ's first coming seem to indicate strongly that the Messiah would use force to establish His kingdom of grace. The same could be said of the texts concerning His second coming and the establishment of the kingdom of glory.

But the gospel of the kingdom derives its principles of interpretation from the written Word itself, not from the schools of learning and tradition. The interpretations of Christ and those of the apostles after they understood fulfilled prophecy, are the wonderful evidence that our present understanding of the gospel of the kingdom is correct.

John the Baptist

A most interesting example concerning this problem, is the relation to the kingdom in the life of John the Baptist. God's men of old saw the kingdom of Christ in prophetic vision. John was the first to see it in reality. Eight days after he was born,

Luke 1

⁶⁷ ...his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied,

—concerning the work of John.

⁷⁶ And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Highest: for you shall go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways;

⁷⁷ To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins,

⁷⁸ Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high has visited us,

⁷⁹ To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

By preaching the knowledge of sin and salvation, John was the direct preparer of the way for Christ. The term “prepare His ways” is derived from an ancient custom of preparation for the visit of an earthly king. The roads upon which he was to travel were repaired so that he could proceed without hindrance. This shows us how closely John is connected with the glad tidings of the new kingdom and its coming King. That is why he preached the message:

Matthew 3

² Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

At that time his teaching was present truth.

The Desire of Ages, p. 104:

With a new, strange power it moved the people. Prophets had foretold the coming of Christ as an event far in the future; but here was an announcement that it was at hand.

With prophetic foresight John recognized Jesus in the crowd as the King of his predicted kingdom, and at Christ’s request, he baptized Him.

The Desire of Ages, p. 112:

John had been deeply moved as he saw Jesus bowed as a suppliant, pleading with tears for the approval of the Father. As the glory of God encircled Him, and the voice from heaven was heard, John recognized the token which God had promised. He knew that it was the world’s Redeemer whom he had baptized. The Holy Spirit rested upon him, and with outstretched hand pointing to Jesus, he cried, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

John was the first person to recognize Christ's mission and announce it. That is why Christ valued his work so highly.

Matthew 11

⁷ And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went you out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

⁸ But what went you out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in king's houses.

⁹ But what went you out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

¹⁰ For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, which shall prepare your way before You.

¹¹ Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist...

But then Jesus said something strange about John.

¹¹ ...notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

The significance of these words can be clearly understood in the light of the principles of the kingdom. Even though John was the preacher closest to the true kingdom of God—closer than any others before him—he did not fully understand its principles.

The Desire of Ages, p. 103:

He looked for Israel to be delivered from her national foes; but the coming of a King in righteousness, and the establishment of Israel as a holy nation, was the great object of his hope. Thus he believed would be accomplished the prophecy given at his birth,

—

Luke 1

⁷² ...to remember His holy covenant;

⁷⁴ ...that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear,

⁷⁵ In holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life.

The prophecy given by John's father Zacharias, was interpreted wrongly by John. The Jews had a certain understanding of the

restoration of the kingdom, and John shared this view. Admittedly, it was very difficult to understand the words of Zacharias in any other way. To be...

⁷¹ ...saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us,

–meant to the Jews and to John, deliverance from the Romans by a king who uses force and oppression. The time for deliverance was at hand. Through the life and death of their King they would see how He would conquer all His enemies, but John would not live to see it.

Matthew 11

² Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,

³ And said unto Him, Are you He that should come, or do we look for another?

Here we have the well known incident of John through his disciples, asking Jesus if He was really the Messiah. Why did he ask after having preached it so convincingly? John had been imprisoned for some time. He had been waiting, as the prophecies declared, for Christ to free him. The Messiah would...

Luke 4

¹⁸ ...preach deliverance to the captives...to set at liberty them that are bruised.

Christ had been carrying out His mission for about two years, yet there was still no sign that He would dethrone the powers that were, and begin His own reign. Despondency and doubt crept over him.

The Desire of Ages, p. 215-216:

Like the Saviour's disciples, John the Baptist did not understand the nature of Christ's kingdom, He expected Jesus to take the throne of David; and as time passed, and the Saviour made no claim to kingly authority, John became perplexed and troubled.

He had declared to the people that in order for the way to be prepared before the Lord, the prophecy of Isaiah must be fulfilled; the mountains and hills must be brought low, the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain. He had looked for the high places of human pride and power to be cast down. He had pointed to the Messiah as the One whose fan was in His hand, and who would thoroughly purge His floor, who would gather the wheat into His garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Like the prophet Elijah, in whose spirit and power he had come to Israel, he looked for the Lord to reveal himself as a God that answers by fire. And now from his dungeon he watched for the Lion of the tribe of Judah to cast down the pride of the oppressor, and to deliver the poor and him that cried.

But Jesus seemed to content himself with gathering disciples about Him, and healing and teaching the people. He was eating at the tables of the publicans, while every day the Roman yoke rested more heavily upon Israel, while King Herod and his vile paramour worked their will, and the cries of the poor and suffering went up to heaven.

To the desert prophet all this seemed a mystery beyond his fathoming. There were hours when the whisperings of demons tortured his spirit, and the shadow of a terrible fear crept over him. Could it be that the long-hoped-for Deliverer had not yet appeared?

The temptation which John faced was not that he flinched at the thought of sacrificing his life. He was a good soldier of the kingdom, he was no reed shaken in the wind of circumstances. He would gladly give his life for his king. The reason for his and his disciples' doubts was their misconception of the nature of the kingdom. Was Christ the One they had waited for? He used no force, He did not fight.

To answer this question, Christ let John's two messengers witness His work of liberating the people from demons and disease. After observing these things, they had a better understanding of the nature of His kingdom and were convinced that He was the

Messiah. He would not destroy, but heal. They brought John the glad tidings and he died in full confidence and faith in the Messiah.

The Desire of Ages, p. 220, 218:

Yet Jesus said, "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

The principle of the Baptist's own life of self-abnegation was the principle of the Messiah's kingdom.

Why should the least in the kingdom of heaven be greater than he? Jesus explains:

Matthew 11

¹² And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.

Greater Than He

Almost three years had passed since John, the disciples and followers believed that the kingdom would be established by force. All who witnessed Christ's humiliations, trial and death, saw more of the true kingdom than John or any of the prophets had ever seen. At the time they did not realize this. On the contrary, Christ's death seemed to crush any hope forever.

But when He arose from the grave, the great truth dawned upon them. Providentially a new epoch of prophetic interpretation began. The Scriptures seemed new. Christ's life, sufferings, and death had established the kingdom! It had been accomplished. What a stumbling-block to the Jews. What foolishness to the Greeks. But what a power to those who believed it.

Therefore all those who lived after the death of John and believed in Christ's death and resurrection are greater in the kingdom than he, simply because they understood more of it than he.

In God's kingdom position is not allotted through favoritism or bribery as in worldly kingdoms. Rather each person serves happily in that position to which he is best suited. Our ability to

serve increases with our understanding of God's character and the nature of His kingdom.

Before the cross of Calvary, the kingdom of God suffered violence. Even John, the greatest exponent of the kingdom, saw it as a kingdom of force. Henceforth all who see and accept the Light of the cross will understand it differently. Thus will they be "greater than he."

An amazing parallel can be seen in our time. Not long ago we, like the apostles and John the Baptist, had serious misconceptions on the kingdom and God's character. Our view, like that of the apostles, was corrected through the cross. The cross shows us the only wrath, the only anger, the only judgment, and the only punishment against sinners that is biblical—all pressing upon the substitute for sinners, Jesus Christ.

All these things shown us in the light of the cross, are vastly different from anything which we have ever learned in connection with God's character. God does have wrath, anger, judgments, and punishments, but He did not destroy Christ nor does He destroy sinners. He withdraws from them.

What will be the next happening in last-day events? After the apostles understood God's kingdom, the early rain came. When we correctly understand the character of God's kingdom the latter rain will come. How could the apostles have preached the message with such serious misconceptions? And how can we, as long as we still believe as the Babylonians do, that God destroys, preach the gospel?

It is now that this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

12. The Law of Cohesion and the Cross

Messenger and News Review, April 1979

2 Peter 3

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

¹¹ Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness.

CONSIDERING these prophetic words pertaining to the end of the world, we may realize how many things we take for granted; the seasons still change as expected, the sun still gives us light and warmth and everything continues “as it ought.” We hardly give it thought as, day by day, we receive the blessings of the laws of nature.

The Spirit of Independence

True enough, according to *Matthew 24:32-33*, we watch for the increasing number of earthquakes and catastrophes in the world as signs of the times, but generally in the normal cycles of everyday life we tend to think it quite normal that...

2 Peter 3

⁴ ...all things continue as they were from the beginning.

This way of thinking that things naturally hold together of their own accord, is actually a deception and a curse. It strengthens the natural inclination of man to be self-reliant and independent from God.

Before God can have a people who rely entirely upon Him and His word, they will have to realize much more, that only by Him are all things held in place. Without His supernatural intervention this world and all that is on it, would long ere this, have passed “away with a great noise” and the very elements would

have melted with fervent heat and the earth burned up. If we truly realized that it is because of God's continual...

2 Peter 3

⁹ ...longsuffering toward us,

—that this cosmic calamity has been stayed, then...

¹¹ ...what manner of persons ought [we] to be in all holy conversation and godliness?

The last trace of the spirit of independence from God would be cut away from our characters and God's church would be clad in the garment of Christ's righteousness in which there is not one thread of human devising, and would be ready for the last great battle. If we believed that every blade of grass and every stone is held together only by His word, we would not look to ourselves nor to flesh for salvation and help. What manner of different persons we would be!

Christ Holds All Together

We as a people, have always believed that Christ, the Son of God, is the Creator:

John 1

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² The same was in the beginning with God.

³ All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.

However, in this study it is important to dwell upon the fact that Christ not only created the world, but He also holds it together.

Colossians 1

¹⁶ For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him:

¹⁷ And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.

Just as without Him nothing could have been created, so without Him continually upholding things, nothing could remain. Even the smallest and most insignificant matter continues to exist through His word only.

Psalm 33

⁹ For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

Psalm 119

⁸⁹ Forever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven.

⁹⁰ Your faithfulness is unto all generations: You have established the earth, and it abides.

⁹¹ They continue this day according to your ordinances: for all are your servants.

When I was a schoolboy, I vividly remember the teacher trying to explain to the class what atoms were. He used the example of the relation of the sun to the earth and the other planets. The earth and the planets move around the sun at a certain distance—so immense that we cannot imagine it—and yet all this holds together! Somehow this vast universe of things revolving around each other and yet holding together, could be seen in the realm of an atom.

The teacher then spoke about the core of an atom and its different parts, explaining how everything that exists, consists of such atoms and how the atoms and their parts are held together by a similar gravitational power to that which holds the planets in their position around the sun.

To impress upon the class the miraculous structure of an atom, the teacher referred to one of the largest things man has made—the battleship. This colossus of steel consists of atoms, their nuclei, electrons, and the space in between. If it were possible to squeeze these parts together into true solid matter so that there would be no space between them, the battleship would only be the size of a matchbox; however, that matchbox would still be as heavy as the battleship.

Thinking about the structure of the atoms and the power that is freed through their fission and the tremendous power holding their different parts in their appropriate orbital place, we can see something of the power of God, who through the same laws of nature, upholds the micro-cosmos as well as the macro-cosmos.

Isaiah 40

²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things, that brings out their host by number; He calls them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one fails.

Isaiah 48

¹³ My hand also has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together.

Luke 12

⁷ Fear not therefore...even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Acts 17

²⁸ For in Him we live, and move, and have our being.

Gratitude and Trust

Truly, what manner of persons would we be if we realized and gratefully contemplated this more fully—that even the hair of our head could not exist one moment longer without God’s law upholding it? How much more gratitude instead of grudging would fill the hearts of men towards the God who thus continually serves them! How much more would men remember the Sabbath day and keep it truly holy in remembrance of Him whom they ought to worship, who made heaven and earth and sea and who upholds them and all which is in them. Yes,

Education, p. 133:

He who studies most deeply into the mysteries of nature will realize most fully his own ignorance and weakness,

—and will accordingly depend upon Him who can uphold him.

The Desire of Ages, p. 207:

God could not for a moment stay His hand or man would faint and die.

The laws of consistency and gravity have much more to do with the gospel than first meets the eye.

The Gospel in Creation, p. 110-111:

It is “by the word of His power” that all things are upheld. Upon the existence of God depends the existence of the heavens and the earth. But He has pledged His own existence to the fulfilment of His promises. Therefore the existence of the heavens, yea, of the entire universe, depends upon the fulfilment of the promises of God to the believing sinner.

If a single sinner, no matter how unworthy, or insignificant, or obscure, should come to the Lord sincerely asking for pardon and holiness, and should fail to receive it, that instant the whole universe would become chaos, and vanish out of existence.

But the sun, moon, and stars still hold their places in the heavens, as a proof that God has never failed a single soul that put his trust in Him, and as a pledge that His mercies fail not. His faithfulness, therefore, is in the heavens. If we would let the sun, moon, and stars tell this story to us every time we see them, we should live better lives, and discouragement would be a thing unknown.

God’s Character Revealed

The heavens and earth, now standing “by the word of God”⁴⁵ will not always thus be “kept.”⁴⁶ God has not promised that His hand will maintain this fallen world forever.

2 Peter 3

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

⁴⁵ 2 Peter 3:5.

⁴⁶ 2 Peter 3:7.

If a person really believes that God, through His Word, is the One who holds all things, great and small together, then he can never believe that God destroys. Those who believe that God destroys, do not think enough about why it is that things still hold together. This is not normal in a sin cursed world. We all have sinned and actually should not be alive. The world should have fallen under the terrible judgments of God and have been totally annihilated. It would have been just if God had stopped upholding it after sin entered.

The belief that God destroys, does not consider the truth, full of power and mercy, stated in the texts quoted above, that God has to uphold even the very elements of which things consist, so that the world does not collapse and disintegrate. The more we study *Colossians 1:17*, the less we will see God as a destroyer.

If the great Creator removed His upholding hand from the least of things, such as the hair of our heads, there would be no need for destruction. It would vanish out of existence immediately. Terrible calamities are often seen as a destructive act of God only because the fact is greatly ignored that God is not only the Creator, but also the indispensable Upholder of even the most unimaginable things.

God does not destroy. On the contrary, as Waggoner well states, He preserves from destruction.

Christ and His Righteousness, p. 17:

He [Christ] made everything in heaven, and everything on earth; He made everything that can be seen, and everything that cannot be seen; the thrones and dominions, and the principalities and the powers in heaven, all depend upon Him for existence. And as He is before all things, and their Creator, so by Him do all things consist, or hold together. This is equivalent to what is said in *Hebrews 1:3*, that He upholds all things by the Word of His power. It was by a Word that the heavens were made; and that same Word holds them in their place, and preserves them from destruction.

It is His character to continually do so in this wicked world, as long as it is morally possible and His Spirit is not driven away. The means by which God holds all things together is the means by which He created them—by His Word—Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1

¹ God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

² Has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, who He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds;

³ Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the Word of His power, when He had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.

This is one of the most wonderful texts pertaining to the law of consistency and cohesion through Christ, the Word of God, the great and wonderful, reliable Upholder.

The Role of the Cross

This text also shows the secret of why it was possible for Him to uphold the world after sin entered. Did you notice that it said He upholds all things when He had purged our sins? A very reliable German translation (Elberfelder) uses the word *nachdem* which means after. This shows a wonderful connection between Christ's ability to uphold all things and the cross of Calvary.

If Christ had not come into our sinful flesh and had not lived and died for us, the world would have collapsed long ago. Why? The first and obvious reason is God's promise of the coming of the Messiah. A broken promise would have been a broken Word—the only Word which could have upheld the world. The broken Word would have lost its power. The world depended upon the fulfilment of the promise that Christ would come and live and die for us just as much as it depended upon Him for its creation.

Education, p. 132:

The hand that sustains the worlds in space, the hand that holds in their orderly arrangement and tireless activity all things

throughout the universe of God, is the hand that was nailed to the cross for us.

When Christ hung on the cross, He was holding a world, a universe, together which would otherwise have fallen apart at that very moment. In all His life, especially in His suffering upon the cross—the climax of His service to all created beings—it can truly be said that...

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1095:

[His] long human arm encircles the race, while with His divine arm He grasps the throne of the Infinite—the gulf is bridged with His own body, and this atom of a world which was separated from the continent of heaven by sin and became an island is again re-instated, because Christ bridged the gulf.

There is nothing that Satan wanted more than to disconnect this world from the rest of the universe and thus destroy it, thereby claiming that God had done it. In this way he hoped to gain more sympathy and support from the beings of the unfallen worlds against God and prevent the “eternal purpose” of God in Christ to gather together in one, all things in heaven and earth.⁴⁷ However Christ did fulfil God’s eternal purpose by accepting sinful flesh and dying, as we read in:

Hebrews 2

¹⁴ Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

Again, why did He take this kind of flesh? That through death He might destroy him who had the power of death—the devil. The devil has the power of death only as long as he can separate man from the source of life. When Christ took this flesh, lived a sinless life, and so became the perfect sacrifice for us, He united heaven and earth and thus joined it again with the source of life. Christ

⁴⁷ *Ephesians* 1:10.

destroyed death by putting together and holding together that which was far apart.

Ephesians 1

¹⁰ That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him.

Think of the incarnate Word of God hanging on the cross holding the world and the universe together! His human arm holding humanity, His divine arm holding the throne of heaven! At the same time, Satan trying his utmost to tear things apart and thus destroy all.

Why does Inspiration say, His “long” human arm? It is to stress the wonderful saving truth now being forsaken by many, that the human side of His nature extends to all humanity, not only as it existed in Paradise before sin entered but as it exists in the nature of fallen sinful flesh.

What a terrible consequence the teaching of Christ’s sinless flesh entails! It actually separates this atom of a world from God’s throne, thus destroying us. Thanks be to God that we have the truth. His arm is not too short to help us. In taking our sinful flesh He is holding and saving us.

What do we know of the terrible temptation and struggle He had, to let go His human arm by which He upheld the race fallen in sin. During all His life on earth there was an increasing temptation to become discouraged with men and to give up trying to redeem them. Even the few disciples who stayed with Him, were far from understanding His mission. This climax is seen in Gethsemane and the cross. The disciples were sleeping during His most severe struggle and at the cross most of them were not to be seen. Would they ever change for the better?

“Give them up, they are not worthy nor will they ever appreciate your great sacrifice!”

Thus it was that Satan tried with all his might to shake the arm of the Redeemer, to separate this atom of a world forever from the continent of heaven. In that extreme hour of trial, His arm was not slackened. It could not be moved, for...

Colossians 1

¹⁷ ...by Him all things consist.

When Satan failed in shaking Christ's human arm, he tried the other arm which held the throne of heaven.

“The Father has given You up; sin is too grievous for God: He cannot accept your sacrifice; give up and come down from the cross; your death is in vain!”

Such were Satan's insinuations to shake and break asunder that which Christ was gathering together.

Ephesians 2

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

¹⁵ Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.

¹⁶ And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.

Thus, through the life and death of Christ, the gulf was bridged. The ladder which Jacob saw in vision, which connected this world with heaven, was established with firm footing upon the earth.

We can see that without the science of the cross, man can never truly understand the laws of consistency and cohesion by which all things are held together and in place. It is Christ through the cross who upholds the law of nature and the law of morals—the ten commandments.

How thankful we ought to be that Christ was faithful in His mission and never let go. In working for the Lord in saving souls,

we will often be placed in similar situations. We may be tempted to give up some poor wavering souls while God is still holding them through the strong arm of Christ's humanity, not wanting them to be lost. We need to look to His example of holding those weak souls as He holds the world.

1 Corinthians 13

⁴ Charity...

⁷ ...hopes all things.

Often we may be called upon as peacemakers between quarrelling souls. Like Christ, we then stand between, holding them both, trying to put together that which Satan has torn apart. The work of a worker. He is the great peacemaker. In Him every member of God's church may live peacefully together. He holds the whole church to the throne of God as securely as He holds the members together, as grapes to the vine. We can have faith in His strength.

Satan endeavours to cut everything away from God. At times he seems to succeed as people choose to go his way. Death and destruction are the result. But the life and death of Christ have now made forever sure...

Ephesians 1

¹⁰ That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him.

Before the cross they were held together by the mere promise of it, but now they are held together by the achieved fact of it.

Hebrews 1

³ [He upholds] all things by the Word of His power, when [after] He had by himself purged our sins.

The Man of Sin
in contrast to
The Man of Righteousness
(1977)

Source:

Original booklet published by
The Judgment Hour Publishing Company,
Queensland, Australia

Original Announcement

The Man of Sin and of Righteousness,
is an excellent and penetrating study
of the heart of papal teaching
in respect to the nature of man.

It demonstrates the real nature of the deception
practiced against the truth of God
in every age of Babylon's existence.

It shows further the subtle way
in which the modern Protestant Churches
likewise are the purveyors of the same teaching.

It is an excellent booklet for your own study and for
missionary work distribution.

The Messenger and News Review, July 1977

Introduction

MEASURED from the human perspective, the great controversy has gone on for a long time and it does not seem to be coming to any speedy termination. There are those who even believe that the God of heaven has forgotten us and left us to our plight, but this is far from true.

The great controversy was permitted by God to achieve a purpose made necessary by the entry of the man of sin. He raised questions and threw a cloud over the character of God which in turn resulted in the outspring of rebellion. Those misrepresentations of the character of God being the very cause of the rebellion, it follows that it could never be ended until that cause is removed.

Therefore, not merely the exposure of the man of sin is required to set the universe back onto a basis of complete trust and support of God's righteousness. In addition to that there must also be the fullest and most perfect revelation of the character of God. Because the universe must choose between the two, they must be shown in direct contrast to each other.

From this it is understood that when Paul declared that the coming of the Son of God and man would not take place until the man of sin was revealed, there is implied that this involves also the manifestation of the Son of God. This must be so, for it is impossible for the man of sin to be fully revealed unless the hideous nature of his character concealed within the darkness surrounding him, is exposed in the illumination which shines from the revelation of God's character.

Everything about that evil character is designed to lead to rebellion against God which in turn is the fostering of sin. Just how that teaching is designed to effect this dreadful result needs to be understood by every one of the Lord's people as they enter into the final and finishing conflict with that arch-rebel.

This excellent study by Wolfgang Meyer of Germany, is well adapted to unveil the basic nature of papal teaching. It provides information needful to the understanding of those who are pledged to stand for the righteousness of God and Christ in the last great battle.

We heartily commend it to every reader who desires the fullest possible preparation for what is soon to burst upon the world as an overwhelming surprise.

Fred T. Wright

1. The Revelation of the Sons of God

2 Thessalonians 2

¹ Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him,

² That you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

³ Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

⁴ Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

⁶ And now you know what withholds that he might be revealed in his time.

⁷ For the mystery of iniquity does already work: only he who now lets will let, until he be taken out of the way.

⁸ And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming.

THE greatest event in earth's history will be the second coming of Christ. All men, even those who do not believe in it or who do not wish to calculate that long-predicted day into their lives, will bear its fateful consequences, either good or evil.

The Bible student has always looked forward to the second coming of Christ. God's people of all ages have often contemplated the blessed promise given by the angels on the day of Christ's ascension:

Acts 1

¹¹ You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven.

Since then 2,000 years have passed. The world has seen an unspeakable measure of misery and bloodshed. During many a tribulation the prayers of the faithful have gone up:

“Come soon, O Lord.”

Today, in this twentieth century, every man ought to be asking:

“Why has Christ not yet returned and put an end to all this misery? Why are we still waiting? What has to actually happen before He can come again?”

This questioning is justified. God does not arbitrarily determine a certain day as the end of the world. Because God is love, He cannot do that. As a father toward his children, He is infinitely compassionate with man. He wants to cut short woe and despair by as many centuries, decades, years and even days or hours as is possible. That is His nature. As truly as Christ came to reveal the character of the Father to man, He will come again as soon as possible, and not a moment later.

Only the Father knows the hour. He did not set the time arbitrarily, for it is dependent on the achievement of certain conditions. This objective has been realized. It involves making an end of sins and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness. Had Christ returned, say one thousand years ago, this plan could not have been realized. There is ample evidence in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy to warrant this conclusion.

From *2 Thessalonians* 2:1-8, it is clear that Paul knew that Christ would not return during his time and that He could not return until this prophecy had been fulfilled. But the question arises:

“Has not this prophecy been fulfilled already?”

Of course it has. These words refer to the papacy. The predicted “falling away” from the pure truth of early Christianity came after the death of Paul,

Acts 20

²⁹ ...after my departing,

—and its early beginnings were even then “already” at work.⁴⁸ In looking at church history during the first few centuries, it can be seen how quickly and yet stealthily the gospel church became the state church and even an ecclesiastical persecutor of dissenters and heretics! The lamb had become a beast of prey and the man of righteousness had changed into the man of sin. The Dark Ages revealed the...

2 Thessalonians 2

³ ...son of perdition,

⁴ Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God.

The fact is, that the man of sin had already been revealed during his time of incontestable dominance—that well-known prophetic span of 1260 years from 538 to 1798. Why then, has Christ still not come? According to Paul, this falling away and the man of sin had to come first, but after that, Christ would return. The man of sin has been revealed in the papacy, but still Christ has not returned. Why not?

In the search for the answer we will become deeply involved in the fundamentals of the gospel.

Romans 8

¹⁶ The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

¹⁸ For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which *shall be revealed in us*.

¹⁹ For the earnest expectations of the creature waits for *the manifestation of the Sons of God*.

²⁰ For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who has subjected the same in hope,

⁴⁸ 2 Thessalonians 2:7.

²¹ Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

²² For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.

This scripture shows that there has to be another revelation besides that of the man of sin in the person of the papacy, before the Second Advent of Christ: the revelation of the man of righteousness in the person of the child of God. "Creation" is suffering under the misery of sin. Not only man, but "the whole creation" is groaning and travailing and waiting for the day of redemption of the second coming of Christ.

However, that day cannot come until the sons of God are revealed. The man of sin has already been revealed, but how is it with the sons of God? The following texts show in which way the sons of God are to be revealed.

1 John 3

¹ Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not.

² Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.

³ And every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure.

⁴ Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

⁵ And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin.

⁶ Whosoever abides in Him sins not: whosoever sins has not seen Him, neither known Him.

⁷ Little children, let no man deceive you: he that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.

⁸ He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil sins from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

⁹ Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin; for His seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

¹⁰ In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother.

Ponder these words and you will come to the realization, that contrary to the man of sin, the sons of God have never been fully revealed. God has always had people who have believed in the attainability of this Christlike standard and who have striven with all their hearts for sinless perfection. But He has never had a whole people, purified from all sin “even as He is pure”—who have fully lived up to the requirements, not even during the laudable Ephesian period of the Apostle John, as we read:

1 John 3

² ...it does not yet appear what we shall be...that...we shall be like Him.

The revelation of the sons of God is the revelation of the character of God.

Matthew 5

⁴⁸ Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Jesus Christ revealed the character of God in the same sinful flesh we have, and lived a life without sinning. There have been individuals who, by faith, have reached this Christlike standard and lived His life perfectly, such as Enoch. But these texts do not refer so much to individuals here or there, but to the sons of God as a whole. A whole people, a whole generation, is to come and by faith, take hold of the righteousness of Christ and live His sinless life.

Revelation 14

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

What a message! To live without sinning? To be like Christ? Man automatically doubts the possibility of such a revelation of the sons of God. Having no experience in the righteousness that comes by faith in Christ, man has ignored the great truth that can make us free from sin.

John 8

³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Such a freedom from sin and transgression of God's law is not feasible to his mind.

The Great Controversy, p. 582:

From the very beginning of the great controversy in heaven, it has been Satan's purpose to overthrow the law of God.

The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God.

Righteousness by faith is the righteousness which God gives to the sinner in exchange for the sin and its nature. He takes it away from us in order to make an end of sin and bring everlasting righteousness⁴⁹ into the life of man so that he can keep the law of God. This is the revelation of the sons of God. This is how they can...

Revelation 14

⁴ ...follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes.

⁵ And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

God must and will have such a church before Christ returns. Therefore it is this gospel—the message of how God sets people free from all sin and sinning—which shall be preached in all the world as a witness unto all nations. Only then shall the end come.⁵⁰ The big argument raised in the beginning of the great

⁴⁹ *Daniel 9:24.*

⁵⁰ *Matthew 24:24.*

controversy, which must be settled in your life and mine first, is whether the law of God can be fully kept or not.

Matthew 28

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke unto them saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

¹⁹ Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

This great gospel commission has never really been fully carried through. Rather, it has often been misunderstood. This commission does not say:

“Go therefore and *tell* all nations...to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”

It says,

“Go therefore and *teach* all nations...to observe whatsoever I have commanded you.”

There is a significant difference! To tell people what to do is one thing, but to teach them how to do it presupposes that the teachers must first have these things in their own experience. What are the things which Jesus has “commanded”? Where do we find a comprehensive summary of them? No doubt they are to be found in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5

³⁸ You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

³⁹ But I say unto you, That you resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.

⁴⁰ And if any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also.

⁴¹ And whosoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him twain.

⁴² Give to him that asks you, and from him that would borrow of you, turn not away.

⁴³ You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.

⁴⁴ But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

⁴⁵ That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

⁴⁶ For if you love them which love you, what reward have you? do not even the publicans the same?

⁴⁷ And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? do not even the publicans so?

⁴⁸ Be you therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

This is “this gospel of the kingdom,” which is not just to be preached (told), but taught unto all people just as Christ preached and taught these things by setting an example in His own life. He taught what He himself actually had. This is “this gospel of the kingdom,” which is to be preached in all the world for a witness before the end can come.

But no greater mistake can be made than to suppose that this preaching involves only the telling of what is to be done; what standard is to be reached. This commission calls for the teaching of both what is to be achieved in the life and how to do it. Christ did this successfully because...

Education, p. 78-79:

What He taught, He was. His words were the expression, not only of His own life experience, but of His own character. Not only did He teach the truth, but He was the truth. It was this that gave His teaching, power.

When He was upon this earth, He literally showed to all mankind, by His declarations of truth and demonstrations of it in His life, how by faith, anyone who is truly born-again, can main-

tain the perfect sinless life as pictured in the Sermon on the Mount. Only those who accept these great principles and live them by faith, can preach the law of God, for how can anyone preach the law if they do not know how to keep the law in its power and truth? We are not in this world merely to be saved. We are here to participate in the work of God in gaining the victory in the great controversy.

Therefore, exactly as Christ did, so His children are to demonstrate the glory of the character of God which is made manifest in perfect obedience to the law of God. Until such a revelation of the sons of God is given prior to the second advent of the Lord, He cannot return.

This revelation of the sons of God is necessary in order that His coming achieve and maintain that which God intends it should. What is the purpose of the great controversy? First,

Revelation 12

⁷ There was war in heaven,

—where Satan tried...

The Great Controversy, p. 582:

...to overthrow the Law of God.

The law had been...

Romans 7

¹⁰ ...ordained unto life.

It was...

¹² ...holy and just and good.

God had put it into the hearts of His creatures. It was the foundation of order and happiness in the universe. God said, that transgression of the law, resulting from the teaching that one could sin with impunity, or that he must sin, would cause death. Satan opposed this. He asserted that the law of God was arbitrary and that one ought to change it or abolish it altogether. He said

that the law could not be kept and that heaven would be far better off without it. He claimed transgression and sin would bring progress and life, and that through sin, one would surely not die.

Of course God was in the right, but His nature did not allow Him to settle this question by force. Both sides were to prove their cases. Divine omniscience saw from the beginning what nominal Christianity today is not prepared to believe: Righteousness will be victorious—even under adverse circumstances. Even in this life, many can, through the power of God, live without sinning. *The sons of God can be revealed.* This is to be demonstrated. At the same time it is to be shown that sin does *not mean* progress and life, but perdition and death. The last great revelation of the man of sin will demonstrate that.

Through the fall of man, the earth became the battlefield of the war begun in heaven. In spite of the disadvantageous circumstances accompanying the spread of sin in this world, God has always had men, few though they were, who, living a life of perfect righteousness by faith, proved the truth of God’s case. Through redemption, Christ their example made it possible. They have overcome by the blood of the Lamb.

Satan could not and would not have this. It just cannot be, must not be.

“Nobody can keep God’s law. All must sin, even they.”

With such words he accuses the brethren day and night before God.⁵¹ This is an accusation against God’s law and against the Maker of that law. The lives of the brethren show that Satan is a liar and in the wrong. If he could only stop “the word of their testimony,” his victory would be assured. He persecutes them but even then he does not succeed.⁵² They hold on to that “righteousness of faith,” given them of God and make it manifest in their lives.

⁵¹ *Revelation* 12:7-11.

⁵² *Revelation* 12:15-16.

This demonstration of what man can do through “the power of his Christ”⁵³ in weak and sinful flesh, is not finished yet. That which was done in Christ will be repeated perfectly in a whole people before the end. when God’s sons are revealed as never before through the keeping of His commandments, there will be a repetition of the revelation of the son of sin.

Revelation 12

¹⁷ 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.

The contrast between good and evil will then be at its greatest. The imparted righteousness of Christ will be matured in the believers as it is in Christ and the evil in the wicked will be as it is in Satan. Sin is unmasked. God’s righteousness is confirmed throughout the whole universe. God’s people are healed from sin for all eternity. Their lives reflect the image of Christ fully.

The revelation of the sons of God and the last revelation of the man of sin are a spectacle for the universe and a testimony for all unfallen beings, an eternal safeguard against any revival of sin through all eternity. God must have this safeguard before Christ can return, and the moment He has it, the second Advent will take place—no sooner and no later.

The picture shows why the revelation of the son of perdition as predicted in *2 Thessalonians 2*, could not be the only prerequisite for the coming of Christ. Both the man of sin and the sons of God must be revealed simultaneously in contrast to each other.

⁵³ *Revelation 12:10.*

2. The Mystery of Iniquity

THE last conflict between the revelations of the sons of sin and the sons of God is at hand. Each one of us will have to partake in either revelation, on the good or evil side. There can be no neutrality in the last battle.

One of the most important preparations for that day is the study of the mystery of iniquity.

- Why does man sin?
- Why does he think he has to sin?
- How can we be redeemed from this terrible mystery?
- What is the best way to unmask the mystery of sin for the salvation of souls?

Testimonies to Ministers, p. 118:

All need wisdom carefully to search out the mystery of iniquity that figures so largely in the winding up of this earth's history...He has called them to expose the wickedness of the man of sin...

All who partake in the revelation of the sons of God will know exactly what constitutes the son of perdition. We who have studied only a little in the prophecies dealing with the great apostasy such as given in *2 Thessalonians 2*, *Revelation 13* and *Daniel 7* and 8, know very well that the mystery of iniquity, the man of sin whose early beginnings already worked at the time of Paul, is to be found in the papacy. It was revealed beyond doubt as such in the prophetic time of the 1260 years.

Why is the papacy that “man of sin” as these prophecies unmistakably point out? Is not any man who has fallen away from God, a man of sin, a son of perdition? The answer comes through the words of Christ:

Matthew 6

²³ If therefore the light that be in you be darkness, how great is that darkness.

The papacy developed from the early church of the apostles. The fact that Paul calls it a “falling away” is quite significant. It fell away—came off, deviated—from something it once stood for and believed. That leaves no room for speculation as to which power this prophecy denotes. The only religious power which came up shortly after Paul’s “departing”⁵⁴ and which continues right to the end of time⁵⁵ is the papal church. None other has the right starting point, and at the same time, the right ending point called for in prophecy.

The falling away of this church was a falling away from true Christianity. It fell away from a great light. This light became her darkness. How great must that darkness be? As great as the great light which was there before.

The history of Satan is a parallel to this. “That old serpent, called the devil, and Satan”⁵⁶ once occupied the highest position a creature can occupy in heaven.

Isaiah 14

¹² How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!...

¹¹ Your pomp is brought down.

That is how it was with the Catholic church. She comes from a great light. Through her apostasy this light was changed into great darkness. It is not just the case of a normal sinner groping in darkness. It is the case of the man of sin.

What is the difference between a normal sinner and the man of sin? The man of sin has identified himself with sin to such a degree, that he is *not merely in bondage to sin* like others, but *he teaches sin*. In this study of the mystery of iniquity we are not going to recount all the sins his power has committed. One can read all that in church history. Our investigation will concentrate rather on the causes of this tragic development.

⁵⁴ Acts 20:29; 1 Thessalonians 2:7.

⁵⁵ 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

⁵⁶ Revelation 12:9.

After looking at a certain fundamental teaching of Catholic theology we will see the difference between a normal sinner and the man of sin. Unbelief, weakness and ignorance of salvation are the marks of a sinner who could still be redeemed. But the mark of the man of sin is that he teaches—dogmatizes—sin, and thereby perpetuates it. This makes salvation impossible.

The Catholic view of the fall of man has worse consequences than most people realize. An investigation of her teaching on the beginning of sin in mankind, will lead us to a better understanding of the mystery of iniquity, because here we are dealing with a heresy in which sin is virtually taught and confirmed in mankind from generation to generation forever.

Scripture teaches that man was created on the sixth day of creation week with a perfect body, mind and soul.

Genesis 1

²⁷ So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him...

³¹ And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.

We do not know how long man continued in this happy state before that tragic day when he fell and sin started its course upon earth. But the Bible describes exactly the spiritual condition of, and the vast change in man after his fall:

Genesis 6

⁵ And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Isaiah 1

⁵ Why should you be stricken any more? you will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

⁶ From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

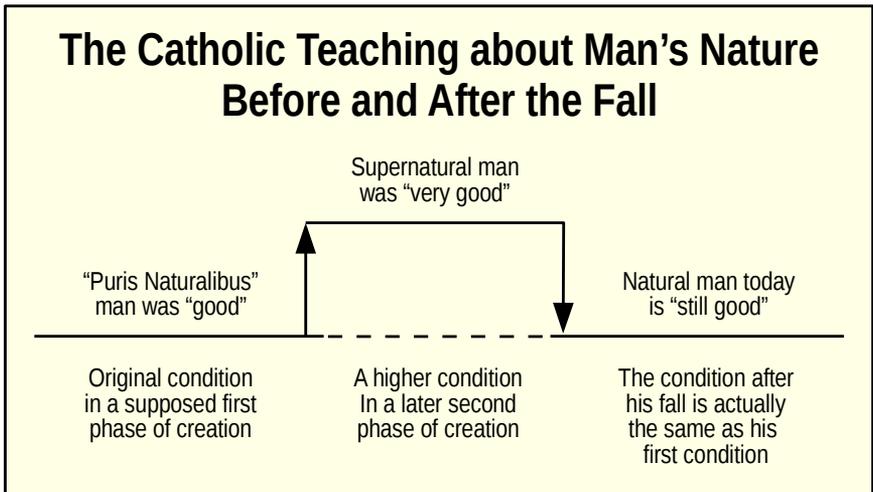
Romans 3

⁹ What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.

This is how God sees man in his fallen state. But how does man see himself? Does he see the change in his nature caused through his fall into sin? Does he really see himself so totally corrupt that only God can still help him? Or is man, as he sees himself, noble and good by nature, so that only his outward circumstances have to be changed and reformed?

The Catholic church teaches that man was created in two phases. In the first phase man was originally created good. Then he was raised to a still higher level known as “the supernatural state” of godliness. So, when man yielded to temptation and fell, he fell back into the first phase in which he was good. He has only lost “that supernatural” state of godliness.

According to this teaching, the loss man sustained through the fall, is greatly minimized and underrated. The consequences can only be that the significance and degree of redemption through Christ is lost, and simultaneously the idea is fostered that man has the ability to help save himself.



The well known church historian J. A. Wylie, frequently cited by E. G. White in the book *The Great Controversy* gives us an informative view of the Catholic teaching on man's fall, especially as it was propagated in the Council of Trent (1545-1568) as a Catholic attempt to refute the Protestant teaching of the corrupt condition of fallen man's nature.

We have examined the rock on which the Church of Rome professes to be built, and find that it is a quicksand. The infallibility is in the same unhappy predicament with the crocodile in the Indian fable,—it has not only to support itself, but all that is laid upon it to boot. Having disposed of it, we might be held, in point of form, as having disposed of the whole system. But our object being, first of all, to exhibit, and only indirectly to confute, the system of Popery, we proceed in our design, and accordingly now pass to the DOCTRINE of the Church. And, first, to her doctrine on the head of Original Sin.

The doctrine of original sin was one of the first points to be debated in the Council of Trent; and the discord and diversity of opinion that reigned among the fathers strikingly illustrates the sort of unity of which the Roman Catholic Church boasts. In discussing this doctrine, the council considered, first, the nature of original sin; second, its transmission; and, third, its remedy.

On its nature the fathers were unable to come to any agreement. Some maintained that it consists in the privation of original righteousness; others, that it lies in concupiscence; while another party held that in fallen man there are two kinds of rebellion,—one of the spirit against God; the other, of flesh against the spirit; that the former is unrighteousness, and the latter concupiscence, and that both together constitute sin.

After a lengthened debate, in which the fathers, not the Scriptures, were appealed to, and which gave abundant room for the display of that scholastic erudition which is so fruitful in casuistical subtleties and distinctions, the council wisely resolved to eschew the danger of a definition, and, despairing of harmonizing their views, promulgated their decree without defining its subject. "Whoever shall not confess," said the council, "that the first man, Adam, when he broke the commandment of God in Par-

adise, straitway fell from the holiness and righteousness in which he was formed, and by the offense of his prevarication incurred the wrath and indignation of God, and also the death with which God had threatened him...let him be accursed.”

The council was scarce less divided on the subject of the transmission of original sin. Wisely avoiding to determine the manner in which this sin is conveyed from Adam to his posterity, the council decreed as follows:—“Whoever shall affirm that the sin of Adam injured only himself, and not likewise his posterity; and that the holiness and justice which he received from God he lost for himself only, and not for us also; and that, becoming polluted by his disobedience, he transmitted to all mankind corporal death and punishment only, but not sin also, which is the death of the soul; let him be accursed.”

The council, then, were at one as regards the penalty of sin, which is death eternal; they were not less at one as regards the remedy, which is baptism. And so efficacious is this remedy, according to the Council of Trent, that in baptism—“the laver of regeneration,” as they termed it,—all sin is washed away. In the regenerate, that is, in the baptized, there remains no sin.

The council admitted that concupiscence dwells in all men, and in true Christians among the rest; but it also decided that “concupiscence, which is a certain commotion and impulse, of the mind, urging to the desire of pleasures which it does not actually enjoy,” is not sin. On this part of the subject the council decreed as follows:—“Whoever shall affirm that this sin of Adam...can be taken away, either by the strength of human nature, or by any other means than by the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one Mediator,...or shall deny that the merit of Jesus Christ is applied both to adults and infants by the sacrament of baptism, administered according to the rites of the Church, let him be accursed.” And again,—“Whoever shall deny that the guilt of original sin is remitted by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, bestowed in baptism, or shall affirm that that wherein sin truly and properly consists is not wholly rooted up, but is only cut down, or not imputed, let him be accursed.”

The doctrine of the Fall must necessarily be a fundamental one in every system of theology: it formed the starting point in those

meager systems which existed in the pagan world. But it is not enough that we give it a place in our scheme of truth:—it must be rightly and fully understood, otherwise all will be wrong in our system of religion. Should we fall into the mistake of supposing that the injury sustained by man when he fell was less than it really is, we will, in the same proportion, underrate the extent to which he must be dependent upon the atonement of Christ, and overestimate the extent to which he is able to help himself. It may be seen, then, that an error here will vitiate our whole scheme, and may lead to fatal consequences.

It becomes important, therefore, to state accurately, though succinctly, the opinions held by modern writers in the Church of Rome on the doctrines of the Fall and Divine Grace. The authors of those systems of theology which are used as text-books in the training of the priesthood have not very distinctly stated in what they conceive original sin to consist. In this they have followed the example of the Council of Trent. Dens defines it simply to be disobedience. Bailly cites the opinions which have been held on this question by various sects, and more especially the doctrine of the Standards of the Presbyterian Church, which make “the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell” to consist “in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin;” and though he condemns all these opinions, he offers no definition of his own, but takes farewell of the subject with some observations on its abstruseness, and the inutility of prying too curiously into the qualities of things.

We know of no writer of authority in the Roman Catholic Church, since the days of Bellarmine at least, who has spoken so frankly out on the doctrine of the Fall as the present occupant of the chair of theology in the University at Rome. We shall state the opinions of M. Perrone as clearly and accurately as we are able; and this will put the reader in possession of the Roman Catholic doctrine on this important subject.

M. Perrone, in his published prelections, teaches that the first man was exalted to a supernatural state by the sanctifying grace of his Creator; that this integrity or holiness of nature was not due to man, but was a gift freely conferred on him by the divine

bounty; so that God, had He pleased, might have created man without these endowments. Accordingly, man, by his sin, says M. Perrone, lost only those superadded gifts which flowed from the liberality of God; or, what is the same thing, man by his sin reduced himself to that state in which he would actually have been created had not God added other gifts, both for this life and for the other.

M. Perrone fortifies his statement by an appeal to the opinions of Cardinals Cajetan and Bellarmine, both of whom have expressed themselves on the subject of the Fall in terms very similar to those employed by the Professor in the Collegio Romano. The difference, says Cajetan, between fallen nature and pure nature,—not nature as it existed in the case of Adam, who was clothed with supernatural gifts, but nature, as the Romish divines phrase it,—*in puris naturalibus*,—may be expressed in one word. The difference is the same as that which exists between the man who has been despoiled of his clothing, and the man who never had any. “We do not distinguish between the two,” argues the Cardinal, “on the ground that the one is more nude than the other, for that is not the case. In like manner, a nature *in puris naturalibus*, and a nature despoiled of original grace and righteousness, do not differ in this, that the one is more destitute than the other; but the great difference lies here, that the defect in the one case is not a fault, or punishment, or injury; whereas in the other,—that of a fallen nature,— there is a corrupt condition, and the defect is to be regarded as both a fault and punishment.”

When the Cardinal uses the phrase, “a corrupt condition,” he means to express an idea we apprehend, which Protestants would more fittingly designate by the terms “denuded condition;” for certainly the Cardinal intends to teach that the constitution of man has not suffered more seriously by his fall than would the body of man by being stripped of its clothing. The same doctrine is taught by Bellarmine, who holds, that the nature of fallen man, the original fault excepted, is not inferior to a human nature *in puris naturalibus*.

This point is an important one, and we make no apology for dwelling a little longer upon it. We would fain present our readers, in a few words, with a view of what the Church of Rome

holds on the doctrine of grace as opposed to the sentiments of Protestant divines, premising that absolute accuracy is not easily attainable, Popish writers not having expressed themselves either very definitely or very consistently. In the following summary we take M. Perrone as our chief authority and guide, using almost his very words:

1st, The Roman Catholic Church teaches, in respect of the integrity of man, and the supernatural state to which he was raised, that he fell from that condition by sin, and lost his original righteousness, with all the gifts connected therewith.

2d, In respect to the supernatural state and the sanctifying grace bestowed on man, the Church of Rome teaches, that by his fall the soul of man came into a state of death, and that in respect of his integrity, both his soul and his body were changed for the worse.

3d, That by the fall the free will of man was weakened and biased.

4th, With respect to those privileges and gifts of grace which were added to man's nature, and which are accidental to it, the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church is, that fallen man has been denuded of these privileges and gifts, and has come into that state in which, not reckoning his fault, he would have been had God not willed to exalt him to a supernatural position, and to confer upon him uprightness and other endowments; and has, moreover, sunk into that state of feebleness which is incident to human nature of itself.

5th, Hence the Church teaches, says M. Perrone, that man is unable, by any strength, or effort, or wish of his, to raise himself to his former supernatural state; and that for his recovery the grace of the Saviour is altogether necessary.

6th, This grace is wholly free, and is conferred on man, by the goodness of God, on account of the merits of Christ.

7th, Since, however, in man fallen, the free will, such as human nature viewed in itself demands, has been preserved, nor otherwise debilitated but as respects that state of uprightness from which he was cut off, the Church teaches that man is able freely to co-operate, either in the way of complying with God, exciting

and calling Him by His grace, or in the way of resisting Him, if he chooses. The Church, therefore, rejects the doctrine of irresistible grace.

8th, From the same principle, that man by his fall has not become bereft of the power of will, flows the doctrine of the Church, that man is able to wish what is good, and to do works morally right, and that works performed without grace are not so many sins.

9th, The Roman Catholic Church teaches likewise, that in difficult duties, and when assailed by strong temptations, fallen man stands in need of “medicinal” grace, to enable him to fulfill the one and overcome the other, just as some assistance would have been necessary to unfallen man, had God not conferred upon him the faculty of uprightness, and elevated him to a supernatural condition.

Unless we greatly mistake, we have now reached the fountain-head of the errors of Popery. We stand here beside its infant source. Thence those waters of bitterness go forth to collect the tributaries of every region through which they flow, till at last, like the river seen by the prophet in vision, from being a narrow and shallow stream, which one might step across, they become “waters to swim in,—a river that could not be passed over.” How near to each other are situated the primal fountains of truth and error! Like twin sources on the summit of some Alpine chain, which a few yards only divide, yet lying on opposite sides of the summit, the flow of the one is determined towards the frozen shores of the north,—the current of the other to the aromatic climes and calm seas of the south: so between the Popish and the Protestant ideas on the doctrine of the Fall there is no very great or essential difference which strikes one at first sight. The sources of the two systems lie close beside each other; but the line that divides truth from error runs between them. From the first, therefore, they take opposite directions; and what was scarce perceptible at the outset becomes plain and palpable in the issue: the one results in the Roman papacy; the other is seen to be apostolic Christianity.

The divines of the Church of Rome conceive of humanity as existing, or capable of existing, in three states. The first is that of

fallen man, in which we now exist; the second is that of simple humanity, or, as they term it, *puris naturalibus*, in which man, they affirm, might have been made; the third is that of supernatural humanity, or man clothed with those special gifts with which God endowed Adam. By his fall man brought himself down from the third or highest state to the first or lowest.

But the theologians of the Roman school teach that man's condition now is in no respect worse than if he were in the middle state, or *in puris naturalibus*, except that he once was in a higher, and has fallen from it. His nature is not injured thereby: he has lost the advantages which he enjoyed in his higher condition; he is to blame for having thrown away these advantages; but as to any injury, or disorder, or ruin of nature, by the Fall, that he has not sustained;—he has come scathless out of the catastrophe of Eden.

Of two men totally destitute of clothing,—to use Cardinal Cajetan's illustration,—the one is not more nude than the other; but the difference lies here,—the one never had clothing,—the other had, but has lost it, and therefore suffers a want he did not feel originally, and has acted very foolishly, or, if you will, very sinfully, in stripping off his vestments. But the loss of raiment is one thing,—the injury of his person is another; and just as a man may be deprived of his raiment, and yet his body remain sound, vigorous, and active as ever, so our deprivation of the supernatural gifts we enjoyed in innocence, in consequence of the Fall, has left our mental and moral nature as whole and sound as before.

God might have made us *in puris naturalibus* at the beginning. And what has the Fall done? just brought us into that state in which God might have created us; except it be (and it is in this that original sin consists, according to the only consistent interpretation of the popish scheme) that it is our own fault that we are not in that higher state still. Whatever powers we would have had *in puris naturalibus* of loving God, of obeying His will, and resisting evil, we have in our fallen state. We need assisting grace in our more difficult duties and temptations now, and we would have needed it *in puris naturalibus*.

Thus we have fallen, and yet we have not fallen; for we are now what God might have made us at the beginning. On this point, as

on every other, Rome requires us to believe contradictions and absurdities: her doctrine of the Fall is a denial of the Fall.

God might have made man, say the divines of the Roman Church, in a state of simple nature. We will not answer for the idea which Romanists may attach to this state; but it is not difficult to determine what only that state can be. A state of positive corruption it cannot be; for Romanists refuse this in the case even of fallen man. Neither can it be a state of positive grace, for this is the supernatural condition to which God raised him. It can only be a state of indifference, in which man is equally attracted or equally repelled by good and evil.

We do not stay to inquire whether it was due to the Divine character to make man in this, state,—equally ready to engage himself to God or to Satan; but we ask, was it possible? According to this theory, man's faculties are entire in their number and perfect in their functional action; and yet they are utterly useless. They cannot act,—they cannot make a choice; for if the man inclines to either side, it is because he is not in a state of indifference. If he chooses good, it is because he prefers it; if he chooses evil, it is because he prefers it to good, and so is not indifferent.

But it may be objected that the idea is, that till the object is put before the man he is indifferent. But till the object be put before the man, how can it be known that he is in a state of indifference or no? Besides, existence is but a series of volitions; and to say that the man is in a state of indifference till he begins to will, is just to say that he is in a state of indifference till he becomes a man. We are again called upon to believe contradictions.

The scheme of *indifference* supposes a man with a conscience able to discriminate between good and evil, and yet not able to discriminate between them,—with the faculty of will, and yet not able to will,—with the affection of love, and yet able neither to love nor hate; which is just as rational as to speak of a human frame exquisitely strung to pleasure and pain, and yet incapable of either sensation. There is only one way of placing a man in a state of indifference, and that is, by striking conscience and will dead in his breast. While the constitution of things is what it is, and while the powers of man are what they are, a *state of indifference* is an impossibility. God cannot make impossibilities.

We repeat, the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Fall is a repudiation of the Scripture doctrine of the Fall. This must necessarily affect the whole of the theology of that Church. It must necessarily alter the complexion of her views on the subject both of the work of the Son and the work of the Spirit.

First, if man has not fallen in the Scripture sense, neither has he been redeemed in the Scripture sense. Our redemption is necessarily the counterpart of our loss; and in the proportion in which we diminish the one do we also diminish the other. Our natures have escaped uninjured, the Romish divines teach. We can still do all which we could have done *in puris naturalibus*, had we been created in that state. Man, if he but give himself to the work in earnest, may almost, if not altogether, save himself. He needs only divine grace to help him over its more difficult parts. The atonement, then, was no such great work after all.

Instead of presenting that character of unity and completeness which the Scriptures attribute to it,—instead of being the redemption of lost souls from hopeless and irremediable bondage, by the endurance in their room of infinite vengeance due to their sins,—the work of Christ wears altogether the character of a supplementary performance. Instead of being a display of unbounded and eternal love, and of power also unbounded and eternal, it dwindles into a very ordinary manifestation of pity and goodwill. Nay, it would not be difficult to show that it might have been dispensed with, with some not inconsiderable advantages; that it has stood much in man's way, and prevented the exercise of his own powers, knowing that he had this to fall back upon.

May not this help us to understand why Romanists can so easily associate Mary with the Son of God in the act of redemption, and can speak of her sufferings as if they had been the better half of the work? May it not account, too, for the ease with which the Church of Rome can find the *material* of satisfaction for sin in the works of those whom she calls saints? May it not account also for the thoroughly *scenic* character which the death of Christ bears, as exhibited in the Church of Rome?

And may it not likewise account for the extent to which that Church has undervalued Christ in His character of Mediator, by associating with Him in that august office so many of mortal ori-

gin? For if man's nature be not inferior in its condition to that in which God righteously might have made it, the work of mediating between God and man is not so pre-eminently onerous and dignified.

But, in the *second* place, if man is not fallen in the Scripture sense, neither does he need to be regenerated in the Scripture sense. Our regeneration is likewise the necessary counterpart of our fall. We have sustained, say the Romish divines, no radical derangement or injury of nature by the Fall; we have been stripped merely of those superadded gifts which God bestowed; and all that we need, in order to occupy the same vantage ground as before, is just the restoration of these lost accomplishments.

Regeneration, then, in the Romish acceptance of the term, must mean a very different thing indeed from what it does among Protestants. With us it is a change of nature so thorough, that we can find no term to express it but that employed in the New Testament,—“a new creation.” We believe that man has not only been stripped of his raiment,—to use the metaphor which Romish rhetoric has supplied;—he has been wounded, he has bled to death, and he needs to be made alive again.

But no such regeneration can be necessary in the view of those who believe that man has suffered no internal injury, and that he has lost only what he might have wanted from the beginning without prejudice to the soundness of his constitution.

Now, may not this help us to understand the marvelous efficacy, as it appears to us, which Romanists ascribe to the sacrament of baptism? We believe them to hold that baptism can *regenerate* the man; but we are misled by their abuse of the term *baptismal regeneration*. They cannot hold this doctrine, for man needs no regeneration. Their error lies deeper than baptismal regeneration. It is not so much an error on the function of the baptismal rite, as an error on the yet more fundamental point of man's state. They cannot realize man as fallen, and therefore they cannot realize him as regenerated. All the regeneration he needs is not the *creating* of him anew, but the *clothing* of him anew,—the impartation of those superadded gifts which he has lost; and this, they believe, the sprinkling of a little water by the hands of a priest can effect.

Baptism, then, restores man to the state in which he existed before the Fall. By baptism, the Church of Rome holds, original sin is taken away, and sanctifying grace, of which the Fall denuded man, is restored. Every man who is baptized, according to this doctrine, begins life with the same advantages with which Adam began it,—he begins it in a state of spotless and perfect innocence. At this early stage, then, even that of the Fall, do the Popish and Protestant theologies diverge,—diverge never more to meet. The one flows backward into the dead sea of Paganism,—the other expands into the living ocean of Christianity.

In the course of the debates in the Council of Trent, a momentous question was raised touching the conception of the Virgin. If, as the council had decreed, Adam had transmitted his sin to all his posterity, did it not follow that the Virgin Mary was born in sin? It is well known that since the twelfth century at least the Church of Rome has leaned to the doctrine of the “immaculate conception,” according to which the humanity of the Virgin is as untainted by sin, and as holy, as is the humanity of the Saviour.

Conflicting parties have always existed within the Church on this subject. Many and furious have been the wars they have waged with one another. The Franciscans have violently maintained the immaculate conception, and the Dominicans have as violently denied it. The most delicate management and the most skillful maneuvering of the Pope have sometimes been unable to maintain the peace between these hostile parties, or to avert from the Church the flagrant scandal of open schism.

In the seventeenth century, the kingdom of Spain was so violently convulsed by this question, that embassies were sent to Rome to implore the Pope to put an end to the war, and restore peace to the kingdom, by a public bull. The conduct of the Pope on this occasion illustrates the species of juggling by which he has contrived to keep up the idea of his infallibility. He issued no bull, because he judged it imprudent in the circumstances; but he declared that the opinion of the Franciscans had a high degree of probability in it, and must not be opposed publicly by the Dominicans as erroneous; while, on the other hand, the Franciscans were forbidden to treat the doctrine of the Dominicans as erroneous.

The Council of Trent, though they debated the question, would come to no decision, but left the matter undetermined. To this day the question remains undetermined, proving a fertile source of fierce polemical wars, which break out every now and then, and rage with great violence.

The revolution at Rome having set free the Pope from the cares of government, he employed his leisure at Gaeta in attempts to settle this great question, which so many renowned popes and so many learned councils had left undecided. He took the regular course to obtain the prayers of the Church and the suffrages of the bishops, in order to promulgate his bull. The Pope was engrossed by these deep theological inquiries when the success of Oudinot before the walls of Rome recalled him from the study of the fathers to the not less grateful work of issuing incarcerations and signing death-warrants.

Should a second period of exile intervene, which is not improbable, the pontiff may even yet gather up the broken thread of his thoughts, and elaborate the bull which is to crown the blasphemies and idolatry of Rome, by decreeing that the Virgin Mary was as wonderfully conceived as was the Saviour, and that her humanity was as free from sin, as holy and undefiled, as is the humanity of our Lord. "Neither repented they of their idolatries."

Thus have we come to a leading characteristic of the system of Popery,—one that is already sufficiently distinct, but which will become more fully developed as we proceed,—the disposition to substitute the ordinance of the Church for the gospel,—the symbol for the truth,—the form for the principle,—the sacraments for Christ. The great doctrine of salvation through faith in the free grace of God is set aside, and the *opus operatum* of a sacrament is put in its room. "That it is faith that works in the sacrament, and not the sacrament itself," say the Romanists, "is plainly false; baptism giving grace, and faith itself, to the infant that had none before."⁵⁷

The Catholic teaching of man's fall into sin and of his nature after the fall, is obviously opposed to the position of Scripture. This would be bad enough if it concerned any other teaching of

⁵⁷ *Papacy*, p. 371, by J. A. Wylie.

the Bible, but this false view of man's fall frustrates the plan of redemption right from the outset. God cannot save men who do not know that they have fallen. A drunkard who does not know he has fallen into the ditch, will not call for help. If we do not realize that we are lost, we will not seek redemption. That is another reason why this teaching is a mark of the man of sin.

3. Reformation

THE Reformation could never be the success God desires it to be without correction of the fatal heresy of the nature of man. The old biblical truth that fallen man is totally perverse, must be the starting point for all who truly want to find the way out of the pernicious system of righteousness by works and come to God's system of righteousness by faith.

Today, some believe that Luther over-emphasized this point. If Luther's writings are read superficially, one could come to the conclusion that his message concerned mainly, man's inability to do good works, and the imputed righteousness of Christ, while saying little about the restoration of man's character into the image of God effected through the imparted righteousness of Christ.

What one is inclined to forget is the general picture of the medieval church and the causes of her deviations from the biblical teaching of moral man. The belief that man did not fall all the way when he sinned, and that he was still able to do some good works, was now bearing its crop of abominable, proud and corrupt fruits of self-righteousness—righteousness by works. For many centuries, the religion of the western world was the religion of self-salvation and formalism, their pious Christian profession notwithstanding. When Luther began to touch these fundamental teachings of the church, he was virtually shaking the gates of hell:

“Man is nothing. Therefore he can do nothing. Every imagination of his heart is only evil continually. There is none that is righteous, no, not one.”

That was Luther's message. That is what shook the religious system of the whole world. This was not only Luther's message, it was his lifework. It took the whole man—body, spirit and soul—to defeat the heresy that man is naturally good. At that time it was not possible to over-emphasize the truth on the corrupt state of man's nature. It took every effort, and the full sacrifice of a man,

and the whole Reformation movement to overcome and put away the thoughts of the man of sin. Luther fulfilled this mission.

Many who claim to believe in Luther's teachings and in the Reformation make the mistake of seeing more in the Reformation than really was. It was only the beginning.

Lessons from the Reformation, p. 216-217:⁵⁸

Those wonderful men never can be too highly honored for what they did. It is not too much to say that without the Reformation the world could not have lived till now.

But it is not true honor to the Reformers for *those who have come after* to see only what they saw and as they saw it, and to hold only what they held and as they held it.

For people to dwell in, and have the full benefit of, all the light that broke upon the world by the Reformers, *and not see more than they saw* is to see *less* than they saw: is to be less than they were: and is to *dishonor* instead of to honor them.

The light of God ever shines "more and more" onward "unto the perfect day." And those who come after must stand in all the light that shone before, and *also in the "more"* that shines because of that which has shone before.

So it may be that you assent to all the truths Luther taught, but if you are not prepared to accept more, that actually means you have less. How could you have less than Luther if you assent to the truths he had? Simply, because you are not prepared to accept more. You do not possess the quality to accept the brighter rays of God's righteousness. Luther had this quality. You are lacking one of the fundamental attributes of the Christian experience, namely, the willingness and humility which hungers and thirst after "more" righteousness—that teachable spirit Luther possessed.

The work of the Reformers of the 16th century was only a part of the great Reformation of God which will be finished at the end of human probation. It began with Wycliffe, Savonarola, Huss and Jerome in the 14th and 15th centuries. But the light did not end

⁵⁸ By A. T. Jones. Also titled, *The Reformation: 14th to 16th Century*. This excerpt is in Chapter 17, "The Reformation and the Sabbath."

with those men. They rebuked the corruptions and sins of the church at that time. Then came Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and Knox. They taught all the truths of the previous men of God and “more” because the light shone more and brighter all the time. They, like none of the others before them, attacked the false teaching of the man of sin, by showing the corrupted state of man’s nature and works.

Later, men like Wesley and Whitefield arose. They must have also accepted the light which shone before their time. If they had not had “more” than the previous Reformers, they would actually have had less and could not have been following in the footsteps of the others, humbly seeking “more” light unto the perfect day.

The next great movement in the progress of God’s truth was the Advent Movement in the middle of the 19th century. It was built upon what the fathers of the Reformation had started, but had not finished.

We now want to note and compare some statements of such leaders of God’s cause at these different times and thus view something of the continuous progress and development of the truth dealing with the fall and restoration of man. We will cite only some of those who stood in the highlight of the message as it was given during their time.

The established School of Theology which fought against Luther was, in spite of many conflicting views, fully united in at least one point: the weakening of the biblical teaching of the fall of man. The “scholars” shared their false evaluation of the natural moral powers of man with the Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, whose philosophy was taught and studied widely at medieval schools and universities. Therefore, the fall of man into sin and the consequent absolute corruption of his moral nature, was the pivotal point of Luther’s message: *About Sin*. Here we must confess as does Saint Paul in *Romans* 5:12, that sin came from one man Adam; by his disobedience all men became sinners,

subject to death and the devil. This is called original sin or capital sin.

The fruits of this sin, are the evil deeds, forbidden in the Ten Commandments, such as unbelief, false beliefs, idolatry, lack of the fear of God, presumption, despair, blindness and in short: not to know and honor God. Further: to lie, to swear by God's name, not to pray, not to call unto God; not to honor His word, disobedience toward parents, murder, lewdness, stealing, deception, etc.

This original sin is a corruption of nature, so deep and evil, that reason cannot fathom it. Rather it must be believed on the grounds of the revelation of Scriptures (*Psalm 51:5, Romans 5:16, Exodus 33:20 and Genesis 3:6-7*). It is therefore, altogether error and blindness which the scholars have taught on this point, namely:

1. That after man's fall the natural powers of man remained whole and uncorrupted. As the philosophers teach, man had by nature the right reason and a good will.

2. Further: that man possessed the free will to do good and to leave off evil, and conversely to leave good and do evil.

3. Further: that man, through his natural powers, could do and keep all God's commandments.

4. Further: that he could, through his natural powers, love God supremely and his neighbor as himself.

5. Further: that if a man does as much as is expected of him, God will surely give him His grace.

6. Further: that when going to receive the sacrament, no intention to do good was needed, but that it sufficed if man had no intention to commit sin; that is how good and whole his nature and how effective the Sacrament is supposed to be.

7. That: it was not Scriptural that the Holy Spirit and His grace are needed to do good works.

Such and many similar theses originate because men neither understand Christ our Saviour, nor sin. It is a heathen teaching which we cannot bear. If this teaching is right, Christ has died in vain, seeing there be no damage done in man, and no sin for

which He ought to have died. Or He died for man's body only, for the soul is sound and only the body is to go into death.⁵⁹

About the false repentance of the papists. It was impossible that the papal theologians should teach repentance correctly because they do not evaluate original sin correctly. As I have said before, they do not evaluate original sin correctly. Rather they say that the natural powers of man have stayed whole and uncorrupted, that reason could teach right, and accordingly the will could do right. God therefore, surely would give His grace if man, with his free will, did that which was expected of him.

Hence it follows that they repented only for those sins actually committed, like evil thoughts that they have yielded to (because evil impulses, lust and inducement are not counted as sin), evil words and evil deeds which they could well have refrained from through their free will.

They separated this repentance into three parts, contrition, confession and compensation. They consent with the vain promise, that if a man is properly contrite, makes proper confession and proper compensation, he has merited forgiveness and has paid God for the sin. This is how they instructed the people to repent—by putting their trust in their own works. This is the origin of the saying you could hear from the pulpits when they promised the people a general confession:⁶⁰

“Lord save my life till I repent of my sins and improve my life.” Herein they thought not of Christ and of faith but hoped to overcome and blot out their sins before God through their own works. With this intention we too become priests and monks, to stand against sin in our own strength.⁶¹

God only saves the condemned; and it is not as some say, that they must only consider themselves condemned while believing that they are saved. In reality they are truly condemned.⁶²

⁵⁹ *Die Schmallkaldischen Artikel*, Part 3, “Von der Sunde,” written in 1537. *The Smallcald Articles* from Martin Luther were intended to be a clarification of the Reformation doctrine as opposed to Catholicism.

⁶⁰ That is, when the people had to confess their sins in chorus publicly.

⁶¹ *Die Schmallkaldischen Artikel*, Part 3, “Von der falschen Busse der Papisten.”

⁶² *Der dritte Busspsalm*, (*Psalm 38:23*).

Therefore God accepts only the forsaken, cures only the sick, gives sight only to the blind, restores life only to the dead, sanctifies only the sinners, gives wisdom only to the foolish. In short He has mercy only on those who are wretched, and gives grace only to those who are not in grace. Therefore no proud saint, no wise or righteous person, can become God's material, and God's purpose cannot be fulfilled in him. He remains in his own work and makes a fictitious, pretended, false, painted saint of himself, that is, a hypocrite.⁶³

The scholastics got as far as to teach that man is uncorrupted, only slightly wounded, and so he can keep the law by his own strength, without grace, although a man who has attained grace can keep the law more easily than would be possible by his own strength. Such monstrous things did they teach—without paying attention to the fall of Adam, without recognizing that the law of God is spiritual.⁶⁴

Scholastic theology agrees on this point, that man can merit grace *de congruo* by his purely natural powers, and all the schoolmen taught at least this: "Do what lies in your strength." But Occam, though he was superior to all the others in mental acumen and refuted all the rest of the positions, expressly said and taught that it is not to be found in the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit is necessary to do good works.

These men had talent and leisure and grew old as they lectured, but they had no understanding at all of Christ because they despised the Bible and because nobody read the Bible for the sake of meditation but only for the sake of knowledge, as one would read a historical writing.⁶⁵

God's strength and consolation are given to no one unless he asks for it from the bottom of his heart. But no one who has not been profoundly terrified and forsaken prays profoundly. He does

⁶³ 14 *Luther's Works*, p. 163, (*Psalm* 38:21) edited by Jaroslav Pelican.

⁶⁴ *Table Talks*, 3698, Jan. 10, 1538.

⁶⁵ *Table Talks*, 5135, August 1540.

not know what ails him, and he remains secure in the strength and consolation of another, his own or that of creatures.⁶⁶

The realization that man is corrupt is logically only the beginning of the Reformation. It does not—as some believe—stop with the step. When man has realized his sins and has become terrified about himself, he has to be careful that his sins do not remain in his conscience like that. Otherwise he will only despair.⁶⁷

The realization of our sinfulness is merely the prerequisite to our restoration: Therefore he says: “Save my life” as if he were saying: “It is cast down and condemned; draw or tear it upward again.” Deliver me. For this is the severest and greatest illness of the soul, where it must perish eternally if it should remain in such a state.⁶⁸

Such a true repentance teaches us to know sin, namely that we are all hopelessly lost, that we are evil through and through and that we simply must become altogether new men.⁶⁹

If we are justified through Christ we will not be found sinners but righteous. For Christ is not a servant unto sin but unto righteousness.⁷⁰

There is no righteousness of God in us and there cannot be until that righteousness—our own righteousness—totally breaks down and disappears. We will not stand up until we first fall.⁷¹

The man of sin does not see the degree of sin in its reality. Only he who realizes what sin truly is, will want to forsake it, and seek the divine remedy for it. (*Proverbs* 28:13)

“Be gracious unto me, O Lord,”

⁶⁶ 14 *Luther's Works*, p. 141, (*Psalm* 6:3).

⁶⁷ *Sermon Von der Betrachtung des heiligen Leides Christi*. Article 12.

⁶⁸ 14 *Luther's Works*, p. 142 (*Psalm* 6,5).

⁶⁹ *Die Schmallkaldischen Artikel*, Part 3, “Von der falschen Busse der Papisten.”

⁷⁰ *Kommentar zum Galaterbrief*, 1519 (*Galatians* 5:17).

⁷¹ *Aus der Psalmenvorlesung*, 1513-15. *Weimarer Ausgabe*, 3, 31, 9 ff.

That is, Show me grace, so that I do not dissolve and despair in fear and terror.

“O Lord, heal me.”

That is, Strengthen me; help me in this wretchedness.

“For my bones are troubled.”

That is, All my strength and power passes away at the terror of your punishment. Since, therefore, my strength leaves me, give me your strength.

And here it must be noted that this psalm and others like it will never be thoroughly understood or prayed unless disaster stares man in the face as it does in death and at the final departure. Blessed are they who experience this in life, for every man must finally meet his end. When man thus declines and becomes as nothing in all his power, works, and being, until there is nothing but a lost, condemned and forsaken sinner, then divine help and strength appear, as in *Job* 11:11-17: “When you think you are devoured, then you shall shine forth as the morning star.”⁷²

If man would sincerely repent of and confess his sinfulness, God would restore him and make him righteous....That is as though the psalmist says: “Through your grace make me true and righteous, for I see some who claim to be right and want to stand in their *own* truth and righteousness. Preserve me from this. They want to be something, whereas they are nothing more than liars, fools and sinners.”

It should be noted that the words “your faith” and “your righteousness” do not refer as many think, to the faith or the righteousness with which God is righteous and true, but to the grace through which God makes us righteous. Thus the Apostle Paul in *Romans* 1:2-3 speaks of the righteousness and the truth of God given to us by faith in Christ. Also, God’s truth does not only refer to the words, but rather to the work and fulfillment of His words; this fulfillment is that Grace and Righteousness.⁷³

⁷² 14 *Luther’s Works*, p. 141 (*Psalm* 6:2).

⁷³ *Der siebte Busspsalm*, (*Psalm* 143:1) cf. 14 *Luther’s Works*, p. 196-197.

In His mercy God wants to make conceited men—who are altogether liars, fools, unrighteous, weaklings, sinners—through His truth, righteous, wise, powerful, pure, true, just and strong. He wants to free them from lies, unrighteousness, weakness, and sin, so that His truth, righteousness, wisdom, power and purity will be beautifully revealed through and in them.⁷⁴

Baptism by immersion—as originally practiced, by John the Baptist and the Apostles—symbolizes how the old man with all his corruption is taken away and replaced by a new man in Christ. In order to maintain this simple and unequivocal symbol pertaining to the problem of sin and its only solution, Luther insisted that the word “baptism” carried the idea of emerging:

Baptism (Die Tauf) is *baptismos* in Greek, and *mersio* in Latin, and means to plunge something completely into the water, so that the water covers it. Although in many places it is no longer customary to dip infants into the font, but instead to sprinkle the baptismal water upon them, nevertheless the former is what should be done.

It would be proper, according to the meaning of the word *Taufe*, that the infant, or whoever is to be baptized, should be put in and sunk completely into the water and then drawn out again. For even in the German tongue the word *Taufe* comes undoubtedly from the word *tief* (deep) and means that what is baptized is sunk deeply into the water.

This usage is also demanded by the significance of baptism itself. For baptism, as we shall hear, signifies that the old man and the sinful birth of the flesh and blood are to be wholly drowned by the grace of God. We should therefore do justice to its meaning and make baptism a true and complete sign of the thing it signifies...

The significance of baptism is a blessed dying unto sin and a resurrection in the grace of God, so that the old man, conceived and born in sin, is there drowned, and a new man, born in grace, comes forth and rises. Thus Saint Paul, in *Titus* 3:5, calls baptism

⁷⁴ *Aus der Roemerbriefvorlesung*, 1515-16. *Scholie zu Rom 3,7*, according to *Ficker I*, p. 256, 12 ff.

a “washing of regeneration,” since in this washing a person is born again and made new...Therefore sins are drowned in baptism, and in place of sin, righteousness comes forth.⁷⁵

For Luther it was clear that the old man has to die:

I want to escape the wrath of God, which no man can escape unless he crucifies his old Adam, wipes him out and destroys him.⁷⁶

When this is accomplished, God really does dwell in man:

These people are unaware that God’s kingdom consists of nothing other than piety, decency, purity, gentleness, kindness, and of every other virtue and grace; they do not know that God must have His way in us, that He alone must be, dwell, and reign in us. We must strive for that goal first and foremost. We are saved only when God reigns in us and we are His kingdom.⁷⁷

The righteousness of God is also called our righteousness, because it is given to us through His grace, just as that which God works in us is called the work of God and what He speaks in us is called the Word of God and that which He creates in us is called the power of God, etc. Therefore by the same righteousness God and we are righteous, just as the same Word of God acts and we are what He is, so that we would be in Him and His nature be our nature too.⁷⁸

In Luther’s thinking, cleansing from sin and the infusing of the Spirit go together. Not human ceremonies, but only God’s cleansing purifies:

“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.” Here he supports, as it were, with an example, what he has said before. It is as if he were saying: “When Moses and the Priest of the law sprinkled themselves and the people with hyssop dipped in the blood of a goat (*Numbers* 19:18 ff) and considered themselves clean—on

⁷⁵ 35 *Luther’s Works*, p. 29-30, “The holy and blessed Sacrament of baptism.”

⁷⁶ *Luther’s Works*, p. 35, Vol. 19 (*Psalms* 6:8).

⁷⁷ 42 *Luther’s Works*, “An exposition on the Lord’s Prayer.”

⁷⁸ *Der fuefpte Psalm* (*Psalms* 5:9).

which the hypocrites depend, just as they do in all other outward sanctification under the Law—this was only an outward sign and type of the real thing which You have in mind and which You consider highly. Nor was it the inner truth which You have revealed to me. Sprinkle me, therefore, with the true goat's blood of Jesus Christ. Then I will be truly and thoroughly cleansed, without all my works and efforts."

"*Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*" That is, the outward washing of hands and feet according to the law does not make me white, but with its outward appearance it misleads those who do not recognize the inner value, the true and real wisdom which it only signifies. Now, as the outward sprinkling with hyssop and the washing with water in no way aids the inner washing and sprinkling but is only a figure and an empty sign, so all other outward means and gestures have no other purpose than that God should thus inwardly sprinkle, wash, work, speak, serve, etc., with the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus the old beloved fathers looked upon the type in the Old Testament, and in it they understood the inward and hidden things of the true meaning and wisdom of God..

Sin is a heavy, grievous and terrifying burden; yet it cannot be taken away through the outward works of man, but only through the inner work of God.⁷⁹

These are but a few examples which prove that the Reformer did not, as some today would have it, preach the fall of man only. Man is restored through God's grace. Luther believed in imparted righteousness; but the imputation of righteousness was the desperately needed "present truth" of his day for a people upon which for hundreds of years the doctrine had been inculcated systematically that man by nature had the power and ability to do good works in the sight of God. Imputation was necessarily the entering wedge of the Reformation message then, or else it would have soon ended in either frustration and defeat or may never even have got started.

⁷⁹ 14 Luther's Works, p. 170-171, "The seven penitential Psalms." (*Psalm* 51:7-8).

Obviously, Luther never had the full clarity on the truth of the restoration of God's image in the believer. His was only the beginning of the light which was to shine more and more unto the perfect day. While his preaching on man's fall was ever so true and distinct, he at times, made contradictory statements pertaining to restoration and the nature of the converted new man in Christ. He often presents Christ as our great Substitute and Sacrifice but seldom as our great Example which all Christians must copy in their life and works. The attainability of moral perfection in this life such as will be reached by the 144,000 was denied by Luther:

The truth which God loves is in the heart. Inner righteousness, however, is never attained completely in this life but must always be pursued.⁸⁰

The time was not ripe for these aspects of truth, it had to be continued by another generation to come.

⁸⁰ 14 *Luther's Works*, p. 171.

4. Wesley's Teaching

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 127-128:

In every age there is a new development of truth, a message of God to the people of that generation. The old truths are all essential; new truth is not independent of the old, but an unfolding of it. It is only as the old truths are understood that we can comprehend the new.

When Christ desired to open to His disciples the truth of His resurrection, He began "at Moses and all the prophets" and "expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." *Luke 24:27*. But it is the light which shines in the fresh unfolding of truth that glorifies the old. He who rejects or neglects the new does not really possess the old. For him it loses its vital power and becomes but a lifeless form.

JOHN Wesley not only emphasized what Luther had taught—that natural man is corrupted and is totally unable to do good works—but more: that man must be, through rebirth and sanctification, restored to the image of God. In his book *Forty-Four Sermons*, pages 511-513 he says:

I proceed to draw a few inferences from what has been said. And, first, from hence we may learn one grand fundamental difference between Christianity, considered as a system of doctrines, and the most refined Heathenism. Many of the ancient Heathens have largely described the vices of particular men. They have spoken much against their covetousness, or cruelty; their luxury, or prodigality. Some have dared to say, that "No man is born without vices of one kind or another."

But still, as none of them were appraised of the fall of man, so none of them knew of his total corruption. They knew not that all men were empty of all good, and filled with all manner of evil. They were wholly ignorant of the entire depravation of the whole human nature, of every man born into the world, in every faculty of his soul, not so much by those particular vices which reign in particular persons, as by the general flood of Atheism and idolatry, of pride, self-will, and love of the world.

This, therefore, is the first grand distinguishing point between Heathenism and Christianity. The one acknowledges that many men are infected with many vices, and even born with a proneness to them; but supposes withal, that in some the natural good much over-balances the evil; the other declares that all men are “conceived in sin,” and “shaped in wickedness”—that hence there is in every man a “carnal mind which is enmity against God; which is not, cannot be, subject to” His “law;” and which so infects the whole soul, that “there dwells in” him, “in his flesh,” in his natural state, “no good thing;” but “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is evil,” only evil, and that “continually.”

2. Hence we may, secondly, learn, that all who deny this, call it “original sin,” or by any other title, are but Heathens still, in the fundamental point which differences Heathenism from Christianity. They may, indeed, allow, that men have many vices; that some are born with us; and that, consequently, we are not born altogether so wise or so virtuous as we should be; there being few that will roundly affirm, “We are born with as much propensity to good as to evil, and that every man is, by nature, as virtuous and wise as Adam was at his creation.”

But here is the *shibboleth*: Is man by nature filled with all manner of evil? Is he void of all good? Is he wholly fallen? Is his soul totally corrupted? Or, to come back to the text, is “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually”? Allow this, and you are so far a Christian. Deny it, and you are but an Heathen still.

3. We may learn from hence, in the third place, what is the proper nature of religion, of the religion of Jesus Christ. It is God’s method of *healing a soul* which is thus diseased. Hereby the great Physician of souls applies medicines to heal this sickness; to restore human nature, totally corrupted in all its faculties. God heals all our Atheism by the knowledge of himself, and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent; by giving us faith, a divine evidence and conviction of God, and of the things of God—in particular, of this important truth, “Christ loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*.”

By repentance and lowliness of heart, the deadly disease of pride is healed; that of self-will by resignation, a meek and

thankful submission to the will of God; and for the love of the world in all its branches, the love of God is the sovereign remedy. Now, this is properly religion, “faith” thus “working by love”: working the genuine meek humility, entire deadness to the world, with a loving, thankful acquiescence in, and conformity to, the whole will and word of God.

4. Indeed, if man were not thus fallen, there would be no need of all this. There would be no occasion for this work in the heart, this renewal in the spirit of our mind. The superfluity of godliness would then be a more proper expression than the “superfluity of naughtiness.” For an outside religion, without any godliness at all, would suffice to all rational intents and purposes.

It does, accordingly, suffice, in the judgment of those who deny this corruption of our nature. They make very little more of religion than the famous Mr. Hobbes did of reason. According to him, reason is only “a well-ordered train of words:” according to them, religion is only a well-ordered train of words and actions. And they speak consistently with themselves; for if the inside be not full of wickedness, if this be clean already, what remains, but to “cleanse the outside of the cup”? Outward reformation, if their supposition be just, is indeed the one thing needful.

5. But you have not so learned the oracles of God. You know that He who sees what is in man gives a far different account both of nature and grace, of our fall and our recovery. You know that the great end of religion is, to renew our hearts in the image of God, to repair that total loss of righteousness and true holiness which we sustained by the sin of our first parent. You know that all religion which does not answer this end, all that stops short of this, the renewal of our soul in the image of God, after the likeness of Him that created it, is no other than a poor farce, and a mere mockery of God, to the destruction of our own soul.

O beware of all those teachers of lies, who would palm this upon you for Christianity! Regard them not, although they should come unto you with all the deceiveableness of unrighteousness; with all smoothness of language, all decency, youth, beauty and elegance of expression, all professions of earnest good-will to you, and reverence for the holy Scriptures. Keep to

the plain, old faith, “once delivered to the saints,” and delivered by the Spirit of God to our hearts.

Know your disease! Know your cure! You were born in sin: therefore, “you must be born again,” born of God. By nature you are wholly corrupted: by grace you shall be wholly renewed. In Adam you all died: in the second Adam, in Christ, you all are made alive. “You that were dead in sins has He quickened:” He has already given you a principle of life, even faith in Him who loved you and gave himself for you! Now, “go on from faith to faith,” until your whole sickness be healed, and all that “mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”!

Wesley proves this principle when he says that:

The foundation of the new birth [is] the entire corruption of our nature.⁸¹

The predominant gospel messenger, the instrument and mouth-piece of God to the world at that time, was, undoubtedly, John Wesley and his movement. If this is true, as we know it is,

The Great Controversy, p. 253:

...the Wesleys appeared as light-bearers for God,

–he must have had “more” and brighter light than the Reformers of 200 years before him. All the messengers of God in the past have accepted all the “old light” plus the new light—the “present truth”—for their own age. A man of God must be willing to stand for the greater light. God’s Sun of Righteousness shines more and more unto the perfect day. John Wesley could not have been God’s lightbearer if he had taught only that which Luther had taught, for, to stand still, means to stagnate and stagnation is decline:

Luke 9

⁶² And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 517.

Although the light at Wesley's time shone brighter than ever before, it had not yet come to the perfect day.

5. Advent Movement

LATER, the great Advent Movement started to complete the Reformation. James and Ellen White, E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, some of the prominent messengers of that time, taught far more than Luther or Wesley did. They went further: Namely, the attainability of a perfect life through faith in the atoning ministry of Christ our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

They did not preach perfection in Christ's righteousness merely as a covering mantle for the sinner, rather as an actual imparted, divine righteousness for the innermost life of the believer. They taught Christ's imputed righteousness dealing with the sinful past of the believer and with the unknown sins still present, and His imparted righteousness for the perfection of an absolute and sinless character.

They taught the moral fall, but also the moral restoration of man—the disease and the healing. They emphasized redemption *from* sin, so that the sinner can be kept from falling back into sin for all eternity. None of these things—even though they were always in the Bible—were ever taught as clearly by any previous movement.

Thus, the principle laid down in *Proverbs* 4:18 was proved again. Only those who are willing to receive all the light of the past and all the light of the present, can fully come out of the darkness of Babylon and prepare for that “perfect day.”

The last phase of the Reformation in our time will be spear-headed by a movement which will reach the high standard of absolute character perfection. But only when this standard is reached, can the separation of the sons of God from the man of sin and the sons of perdition take place in its fullest sense.

This last movement has the fullest light on the fallen condition of man and, in addition, all the light of the past. This is only possible through the divine light of Christ's service in the heavenly

sanctuary. This full light is just as necessary for our finishing the work as was the former light which enabled the Reformers to begin the work.

The earlier Reformers could not see the perfect character restoration of the redeemed, the finishing of the Mystery of God⁸² before Christ's second coming.

The Great Controversy, p. 623:

Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ. Not even by a thought could our Saviour be brought to yield to the power of temptation. Satan finds in human hearts some point where he can gain a foothold; some sinful desire is cherished, by means of which his temptations assert their power. But Christ declared of himself:

John 14

³⁰ The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me.

Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father's commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage. This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.

It is in this life that we are to separate sin from us, through faith in the atoning blood of Christ.

Bible Studies from the Book of Romans, p. 19-21:⁸³

A questioner may say, "You make it out that we ought never to sin any more,—you leave no room for sin." But is not that what the Bible says?

Romans 6

¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law, but under grace.

We belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. How? By death, we make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. There is such a thing as a complete surrender to Christ,—when we give up ev-

⁸² *Revelation 10:7.*

⁸³ By E. J. Waggoner.

everything, and then trust to His power to keep us in that state. And I thank God that He is able to do it.

Says one, “I have tried to give up these things before, and I have fallen again, now how do I know but what I shall fall again?” Ah no, you are not making a new resolution this time, you are not turning over a new leaf, and saying that you are going to do better. You are merely letting the old life and all the resolutions go. Simply say, I know that there is power in God. And that same power which spoke the world into existence, that same power which brought Christ forth from the tomb,—into the hands of that power I will yield myself, and let it sustain and keep me in the new life. And day by day as we do that, our hearts will go out in thankfulness to God for His wonderful power.

Romans 6

¹¹ Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

“Likewise”—like what? Like as Christ was raised from the dead to be dead no more, so likewise reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin to sin no more. Is that true? Note it carefully,—that sin shall have no more dominion over you. That is what the Bible says. We are no longer under the law, but under grace. We are no longer under condemnation, but the grace of God rests upon us. The spirit of glory and of grace is present with us.

There is power in Christ. What is that power? Notice. Grace is favor! In the favor of God there is life. Then what is the power of the grace of Christ? It is the power of endless life. If men really believe that Christ is risen from the dead, they can believe that they are dead unto sin, but alive unto God, and free from sin. Does the apostle mean free from sin? It is a solemn, but a glorious thought. How thankful ought men to be that they can have that confidence in the power of God through Christ that they can without any mental reservation take this chapter and believe it. Yes, believe these very words,

Romans 6

⁷ He that is dead is freed from sin.

¹¹ ..reckon you yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ.

But is it true that man can live without sin? But in all our Christian experience we have left little loopholes along here and there for sin. We have never dared to come to that place where we would believe that the Christian life should be a sinless life. We have not dared to believe it or preach it.

Is sin stronger than righteousness? is Satan stronger than Christ? No! Then as Christ has proved himself to be the stronger of the two, and just as surely as when we were the bond-servants of sin, it had power to keep us free from righteousness; so when we yield ourselves as bond-servants unto Christ, He has power to keep us from sin.

The Consecrated Way, p. 84:⁸⁴

Perfection of character, is the Christian goal—perfection attained in human flesh in this world. Christ attained it in human flesh in this world, and thus made and consecrated a way by which, in Him, every believer can attain it. He, having attained it, has become our great High Priest, by His priestly ministry in the true sanctuary to enable us to attain it.

The Consecrated Way, p. 120:

And now, in this time of the consummation of the hope of all the ages, in this time when the true sanctuary is truly to be cleansed, in this time when the work of the gospel is to be completed and the mystery of God indeed finished—now is the time of all the times that ever were in the world, when the believers in Jesus—the blessed objects of His glorious priesthood and wondrous intercessions in the true sanctuary—shall be partakers of the full measure of His heavenly grace; and shall have in their lives transgression finished, an end of sins and reconciliation for iniquity made forevermore, and, in the perfection of truth, everlasting righteousness brought in.

This is precisely and alone the purpose of the priesthood and ministry of Christ in the true sanctuary.

The Consecrated Way, p. 122-123:

Therefore every one who believes in Jesus Christ, in the sacrifice which He has made, in the priesthood and ministry which

⁸⁴ By A. T. Jones.

He exercises in the true sanctuary, must not only confess his sins, but he must then forever implicitly trust that true High Priest in His ministry in the true sanctuary to finish transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, in his heart and life.

Everlasting righteousness, remember. Not a righteousness for today and sin tomorrow, and righteousness again and sin again. That is not everlasting righteousness. Everlasting righteousness is righteousness that is brought in and stays everlastingly in the life of him who has believed and confessed, and who still further believes and receives this everlasting righteousness in the place of all sin and all sinning. This alone is everlasting righteousness; this alone is eternal redemption from sin. And this unspeakable blessing is the gracious gift of God by the heavenly ministry which He has established in our behalf in the priesthood and ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.

The Consecrated Way, p. 124:

And before He comes thus, His people must be in that condition. Before He comes we must have been brought to that state of perfection in the complete image of Jesus. *Ephesians* 4:7-8, 11-13. And this state of perfection, this developing in each believer the complete image of Jesus—this is the finishing of the mystery of God, which is Christ in you the hope of glory. This consummation is accomplished in the cleansing of the sanctuary, which is the finishing of the mystery of God, which is the final finishing of transgression, the making of a complete end of sins, the making of reconciliation for iniquity, the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, the sealing up of the vision and prophecy, and the anointing of the most Holy.

6. From Light to Darkness

Pertaining to the second and last great revelation of the man of sin.

ONCE more we must deal with the question of what happens to those who assent to the old light but do not wish to accept the “more”? They lose the old light as well.

Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 127-128:

In every age there is a new development of truth, a message of God to the people of that generation. The old truths are all essential; new truth is not independent of the old, but an unfolding of it. It is only as the old truths are understood that we can comprehend the new.

When Christ desired to open to His disciples the truth of His resurrection, He began “at Moses and all the prophets” and “expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” *Luke 24:27*. But it is the light which shines in the fresh unfolding of truth that glorifies the old. He who rejects or neglects the new does not really possess the old. For him it loses its vital power and becomes but a lifeless form.

Lessons from the Reformation, p. 341-342:⁸⁵

No fault can ever be found with any of the Reformers because they did not see the true Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment. No one of the Reformers can even be charged with inconsistency in this. It would be inconsistent for anybody to require or to expect that *in their circumstances* they should see everything.

They were awakened in the deep darkness of the papal night. They were awakened by a great light, it is true: and that light was the true Light. Yet even then they could not be expected to see everything. They *could not* see everything *at once*, and could not *live long enough* to see all.

But they did see the fundamental truths. They did see the *principles* in which everything is embraced; in which lies all that should ever follow. And they were perfectly consistent in those principles. Indeed it is marvelous how clearly and fully they dis-

⁸⁵ By A. T. Jones.

tinguished the divine principles, and with what perfect precision in these principles they held the straight course.

Those wonderful men never can be too highly honored for what they did. It is not too much to say that without the Reformation the world could not have lived till now.

But it is not true honor to the Reformers for *those who have come after* to see only what they saw and as they saw it, and to hold only what they held and as they held it. For people to dwell in, and have the full benefit of, all the light that broke upon the world by the Reformers, *and not see more than they saw* is to see *less* than they saw: is to be less than they were: and is to *dishonor* instead of honor them.

The light of God ever shines “more and more” onward “unto the perfect day.” And those who come after must stand in all the light that shone before, and *also in the “more”* that shines because of that which has shone before.

The Reformers are not in any wise to be held at fault for not seeing the true Sabbath. But when *their successors* came in *as heirs of the Reformation*, and Rome picked up that very truth of the Sabbath and brought it home to them, and spread it out before their eyes, and laid it down at their feet, then *these* were decidedly and guiltily inconsistent not to follow up the fundamental principles of the Reformation in the acceptance of that truth.

And when that has ever been continued by Rome, and in the progress of the Reformation has been repeated by others over and over, *these today are still more inconsistent* with the Spirit of Truth, they still more dishonor the Reformers and deny the Reformation, when they refuse to accept God’s Sabbath and honor Him and the Reformation by the observance of it.

Every principle of the Reformation demands the recognition and observance of the Sabbath of the Lord. The Sabbath of the Lord is the complement of each principle of the Reformation and of all of them together, whereas by each and every principle of the Reformation the Sunday is excluded.

Men and churches of this category are in great darkness not only because they have actually lost the light, but also because they still think they have the former light which their fathers had.

To lose divine light is bad enough, but to lose it and then still think one has it is even worse.

Matthew 6

²³ But if your eye be evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!

The time of the greatest spiritual darkness was *not* when the man of sin—the son of perdition—was revealed during the prophetic period of 1260 years of medieval papal world dominion. That darkness was terrible indeed and was overcome only by faith. We now want to see the reasons which speak for the fact that even greater darkness is spreading over the whole world in our time. The righteousness of God can only be revealed through the truth in God's children.

John 8

³² The truth shall make you free.

During the Dark Ages the man of sin had cast the truth to the ground, therefore a revelation of the sons of God was not possible at that time. There was just enough light for conversion and salvation, but there was not enough for the perfecting of a whole church of God's people so that they could be translated without seeing death.

Revelation 6

⁵ And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

⁶ And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see you hurt not the oil and the wine.⁸⁶

Revelation 2

²⁴ But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

⁸⁶ This symbolizes the scarcity of spiritual truth in that age.

²⁵ But that which you have already, hold fast till I come.

God waited until the man of sin reaped that which he had sown—the deadly wound of *Revelation* 13:10. This was the end of the 1260 years in 1798. Only after this time could the full truth come and fully reveal and separate the sons of God from the sons of perdition and bring in everlasting righteousness.⁸⁷

The call to come out of Babylon could only be proclaimed after 1798, and the ruined sanctuary—the *sanctuary truth*—could only be reinstated after that time. Only through the light of the all-embracing sanctuary truth could man attain perfection, and the sons of God be perfectly revealed. This is yet to come and all evidences indicate that it will be soon. The light that illuminates the whole earth will shine with God's glory.

Revelation 18

¹ And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

This revelation of God's character through the sons of God will, as always, be accepted by only a small minority. All others will reject it and in doing so, they will automatically fall into a greater darkness than that of the medieval ages. They will not have learned from the history of the great apostasy depicted in *2 Thessalonians* 2. They will repeat the same mistakes and reap the terrible consequences. All the light which they had before will turn into darkness.

When the bishops during the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine, deviated from the truth and struck that compromise with the state which turned the church, which once had the pure gospel, into Antichrist, they realized in part what they were doing. However, not to such a degree as those who will repeat the same mistakes at the end of time, even in the light of well-known facts of medieval history. Their darkness will be greater than that

⁸⁷ *Daniel* 9:24.

of the papacy, because they should have learned from history, but did not wish to.

The last great rejection of light, a repetition of the prophetic beast, the papacy, and the assertion of the man of sin's great heresy, has been predicted. One of the clearest passages concerning it is in *Revelation* 13. The first half of this remarkable prophetic chapter of the "revelation of Jesus Christ...unto His servants" describes no other power than that of the man of sin, as revealed in the Dark Ages. Luther and all the Reformers knew and understood this passage and applied it to the papacy.

The second half of this chapter is even more significant and important to us today than the first. Something most astounding is foretold: Only a few centuries after the death of the Apostles, their followers gradually slipped into apostasy. Likewise after the death of Luther and Wesley etc., their followers gradually apostatized. The churches will finally unite against Christ, even though they still retain the name "evangelical." This is, in short, the meaning of the beast and his image in *Revelation* 13.

The beast was Catholicism which developed in Rome; the image resembles the character of the beast so closely that inspiration says:

Revelation 13

¹² He exercises all the power of the first beast before him.

The image has the same intolerance, the same claim of authority over the consciences of men, the same unbiblical connection of church and state, the same Sunday laws, and the same spirit of persecution as did the papacy during the 1260 years. But how about the teaching? Is the teaching the same too? This question is of extreme interest to us because we are now living in the time of preparation for the last struggle. If the image does exactly the same works as the papacy did, it must also have the same fundamental teaching out of which all those evil works of self-righteousness proceed!

We humans are far too superficial. When will we learn to look deeper and investigate not merely the outward fruits or symptoms? Our investigations must become more divine. We must look for the causes. Let us search out the source of evil as does the Word of God which is...

Hebrews 4

¹² ...sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

An evaluation of the teachings of a religion is more important than the mere knowledge of their deeds.

Education, p. 146:

No truth does the Bible more clearly teach than that what we do is the result of what we are.

A church is simply what it teaches. If a church teaches truth, the truth will make it free from evil. If a church teaches error it will result in the people being bound in sin. Innumerable are the books about the works of the man of sin during the medieval times, but the fundamental teaching that has caused all these works is too often ignored *and therefore can come up again any time to bring forth the same evil kind of fruit.*

The “mystery of God”—which establishes and perpetuates the righteousness of God’s law in His children by setting them free from sin,⁸⁸—is hidden in the teaching of the truth. Likewise “the mystery of iniquity”—which establishes and perpetuates “the law of sin”⁸⁹ in man, binding him in chains of unrighteousness forever—is hidden in the teaching of error.

Both the first beast of *Revelation* 13:1-10, and the second beast of *Revelation* 13:11-18, who makes an image to the first beast, do the same evil works: they make Sunday laws, are intolerant and

⁸⁸ *John* 8:32.

⁸⁹ *Romans* 7:23.

persecute dissenters etc.⁹⁰ The undeniable biblical principle—that the works of a religion are but the inevitable outgrowth of its teaching—brings up the following question:

“In what way does the second beast in *Revelation 13*, which looks like a lamb, but speaks and acts like a dragon, have the same fundamental teaching as the first beast in the first part of the chapter?”

They must have the same teaching, because they do the same works. The question is,

“In what way?”

It is very important for us to find the right answer. We will not be able to overcome the image of the beast, the name of the beast and the number of his name unless we realize that all these sinful works of self-righteousness are caused by its fundamental teaching. The superficial student does not see this.

Revelation 13

¹⁸ Here is wisdom. Let him that has understanding count the number of the beast.

One of the main causes why the Catholic Church became the man of sin, was her fundamental error concerning the fall of man and his moral nature. This old heathen view of the *puris-naturalibus* condition of man, taught by Socrates and Plato, was systematically dogmatized and inculcated into the minds of men by the Catholic Church. It just had to develop self-righteousness and pride in man instead of crucifying it. Wherever this teaching is held “in the name of Christ,” self is exalted above all that is called God.

Those who have studied the prophecies should be well versed with all these things concerning the first beast of *Revelation*. But how does the second lamb-like beast—fallen Protestantism of our time—fit into the picture? Do not the Protestants, especially the

⁹⁰ Study *Revelation 13* closely.

orthodox evangelicals who are at least the spiritual leaders, have the teaching of their fathers, that the moral nature of man is entirely fallen, corrupt and unable to do good works? Yes they do. However, by ignoring certain fundamental truths, the great truth of the true state of lost man has actually turned into the opposite and is used by the enemy for the destruction of souls.

An example of how such a thing is possible is found in the teaching of Christ's divinity. This was the most important truth preached by the apostles. The Catholic Church never gave up this teaching. On the contrary, Catholicism uses it as a proof that it has not apostatized.

However, what did the church really do with it? By denying another truth closely connected with it, she actually makes the truth that "Christ was God" of none effect. While they recognize Christ's divinity on the one hand, they deny the truth that He was fully man and that He had the same sinful flesh and blood as we do. This robs the truth of Christ's divinity of all its saving power and actually turns it into the opposite, deluding people into thinking they still hold the whole apostolic truth on Christ's nature.

As the Catholic world has made it appear that they teach the incarnation of Christ correctly by emphasizing one side of it while denying the other, so it has been with modern Protestantism in regard to the corruption of the nature of man. We now need to investigate this incredible situation which has developed.

Testimonies to Ministers, p. 118:

All need wisdom carefully to search out the mystery of iniquity that figures so largely in the winding up of this earth's history.

7. The Pharisees of Today

THE nature of the man of sin is actually the same as the nature of the Pharisees who see man as not really being all that bad and being able to do good works in his own strength.

But in God's sight, man is evil through and through; all his good works and "service" to God are only a hollow shell when compared with God's righteousness. When their true condition was revealed through the ministry of Christ, they persecuted Him and delivered Him up to the cross.

When the true condition of the nature of man was revealed through the ministry of the Reformers in medieval times, it was, as in the days of Christ, thought expedient to stop the preaching by force and persecution. In this way the spirit of the Pharisees is embodied in the Catholic system of righteousness by works, which originated from the basic error of the *puris naturalibus* theory.

Revelation 12

¹⁷ 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.

This is the fulfillment of *Revelation* 13:1-10. In the latter part of *Revelation* 13, fallen Protestantism is symbolized by a beast which looks like a lamb but speaks and acts like a dragon. It behaves exactly as the first beast which is the papacy.

Revelation 13

¹² It exercised all the power of the first beast before him.

If the first beast had the character of the Pharisees, the second must have the same character. It has a much better appearance—as Pharisees always do—than the first beast, even though it does the *same* evil works.

Phariseeism in Christ's day and at the time of the Catholic world dominion, had gained a bad name and had to conceal itself.

The Phariseism of today appears much better than during those times. Its character, however, has not changed and will always remain the same until the end.

The great preacher of righteousness by faith, E. J. Waggoner, unmask it all and helps us to see and reject the Phariseism of old as well as detect it in our own time.

Christ and His Righteousness, p. 57-59:

The Pharisees are not extinct; there are many in these days who expect to gain righteousness by their own good deeds. They trust in themselves that they are righteous. They do not always so openly boast of their goodness, but they show in other ways that they are trusting to their own righteousness.

Perhaps the spirit of the Pharisee—the spirit which would recount to God one’s own good deeds as a reason for favor—is found as frequently as anywhere else among those professed Christians who feel the most bowed down on account of their sins. They know that they have sinned, and they feel condemned. They mourn over their sinful state, and deplore their weakness. Their testimonies never rise above this level. Often they refrain for very shame from speaking in the social meeting, and often they do not dare approach God in prayer.

After having sinned to a greater degree than usual, they refrain from prayer for some time, until the vivid sense of their failure has passed away, or until they imagine that they have made up for it by special good behavior. Of what is this a manifestation?—Of that Pharisaic spirit that would flaunt its own righteousness in the face of God; that will not come before Him unless it can lean on the false prop of its own fancied goodness. They want to be able to say to the Lord,

“See how good I have been for the past few days; You surely will accept me now.”

But what is the result? The man who trusted in his own righteousness had none, while the man who prayed, in heart-felt contrition, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” went down to his house a righteous man. Christ says that he went *justified*, that is, made righteous.

Notice that the publican did something more than bewail his sinfulness; he asked for mercy. What is mercy? It is unmerited favor. It is the disposition to treat a man better than he deserves. Now the word of Inspiration says of God:

Psalm 103

¹¹ As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.

That is, the measure by which God treats us better than we deserve when we humbly come to Him, is the distance between earth and the highest heaven. And in what respect does He treat us better than we deserve? In taking our sins away from us; for the next verse says:

¹² As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

With this agree the words of the beloved disciple:

1 John 1

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

This apt description of the Pharisees also describes the condition of the churches today in general, no matter how they may emphasize their stand against righteousness by works. It really appears as though these churches have maintained the truth of man's fallen condition so clearly set forth by the Reformers. However, they do not believe in a real salvation from this condition through the eradication of the old man of sin. Nor do they believe in the present light which perfectly restores and separates from all sin and sinning through righteousness by faith. They teach the sinful condition of the nature of the old man, but...

“...their testimonies never rise above this level.”

In reality, they deny that the old man can be crucified with Christ, so that we do not have to sin. Accordingly, the sinful nature of the old man stays with the Christian until Christ comes again.

The paradox and deception in this whole position is this: While they assent to the truth of the total corruption of man's nature,

they deny the restoration and full sanctification through the Gospel. Then they require “good works” from all “Christians” despite all that is being said about the totally fallen condition of their nature.

“Love God. Love your neighbor! Love your enemies! Do good to all men! Be a good Christian! Sanctify the day of rest (be it the true Sabbath or the Sunday)!”

This is the sermon from every pulpit in every church.

John 3

³ Verily, verily,...

⁷ ...You must be born again,

–if you want to do the works of righteousness. While your spiritual nature is still that of the old man, it will be impossible for you to do so, for that nature...

Romans 8

⁷ ...is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

It is utterly depraved and fallen and has no capacity for performing true works of righteousness, whatsoever. You may try as hard as you wish and can, but you still will not have success. It is only by coming to Christ in faith; delivering up to Him the old man to be crucified to death and then receiving a new life in its place, that you can begin to live righteously.

Ezekiel 36

²⁶ A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

²⁷ And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Romans 6

⁷ For he that is dead is freed from sin.

2 Corinthians 6

¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

Galatians 2

²⁰ I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

If you belong to those who want to be Christians and act like Christians but do not wish to give up their old sinful natures at the cross of Calvary, or believe, as do many, that you keep the nature of the old man until you die or until Christ comes again, and can still serve Christ, then you should prayerfully read the texts quoted above again and again until their full significance dawns upon your mind.

Ask the Holy Spirit for help in understanding this vital matter, and you will find that you are too sinful to serve Christ, that you cannot serve Him and that you cannot even live a Christian life as long as that “man of sin” is in you. By faith, hand the old man over to the Lord and take on the new man. Through God’s creative power you have to be made a Christian before you can act like one.

Thus the great and saving truth of the gospel of Christ is that it is impossible for the nature of man after he fell, to produce the works of righteousness. This nature must be eradicated and replaced by another. Only then will good works follow.

This is not the position of the Protestant churches today. They believe that the old man remains, yet at the same time they call upon their people to be Christians. Everyone in those churches, from the ministry to the laity, believes that Christians should serve God. That, so far, is good, but the problem arises when they believe that they should serve God *while they still retain the old nature*. That is impossible.

It has already been shown what the nature of the papacy's teaching was and is. They taught that in the fall, man only returned to a state of lesser moral goodness from which he had been elevated to a higher condition of holiness prior to his fall. In this lower state of moral goodness, he was quite capable of producing good works and was expected to do so.

In opposition to these teachings, the Reformers arose and proclaimed the utter corruption of the human heart and its inability to work the works of righteousness.

The descendants of those Reformers profess to teach as their fathers taught and are certainly able to give a large impression that they do. But Bible prophecy teaches that they are the people who will form the image or the reproduction of the first beast, the papacy. Therefore, their teaching on the nature of man must be the same.

As surely as the word of God declares that the image of the beast is the reproduction of the beast, *then it is so*. Firstly, we are to believe that it is so but, more importantly, we must be able to see that it is so.

The Roman Catholic priests proclaimed, as has been shown, that the nature of man in his fall was essentially good, while the present Protestant teachers declare the depravity of the human heart. Therefore, they and others will argue that the modern Protestant is as opposed to the Catholic Church on this point as was Luther or any other of the original Reformers.

But do not overlook the fact that Satan is no fool. It is with "all deceivableness of unrighteousness,"⁹¹ that he comes in these last days. He knows the prophecy which says that the Protestant world will form the image to the beast. He knows then, that the people of God will be looking for the likeness in the most fundamental areas of their common beliefs, so he will labor as much as he can to obscure the likeness and make it appear that they are

⁹¹ 2 *Thessalonians* 2:10.

different. All those who lack spiritual perception will be deceived by this.

Some will argue that the two great points of common meeting place for the Catholic and Protestant churches are Sunday sacredness and the immortality of the soul. In these two areas it is patently clear that they are in agreement.

This is true, but once again this is the superficial view for these two doctrines are directly related to the nature of man. They are in harmony on these two points because firstly they are in harmony on the nature of man as it is after the fall. Both believe and teach that the nature of man is such that it is basically good and productive of good works. This is true, even though we know that the Protestant churches loudly preach that man is sinful, depraved and needs salvation.

What has to be seen is that these declarations are only the smokescreen to hide the real teaching from view. Let us make a deeper inspection of their theology.

They teach that a man is depraved from the fall and in need of salvation which Christ alone can provide. They teach that a man has only to confess his sins and believe that he is forgiven. Then, he is taught that the old nature must remain until Jesus returns or his soul is taken to heaven at death. Therefore, he learns that the nature of a Christian is basically unchanged from what it was before he was a Christian. He has new attitudes, new loyalties, new objectives and even many new outer habits, *but the basic nature is the same.*

While still in this condition he is called upon to live the Christian life—to love, to bless, to sacrifice, to live a pure moral life and so on. They would not teach such a doctrine if they did not believe that the nature of man was capable of producing such good works.

Therefore, exactly as does the Roman Church, they believe that the nature of man this side of the fall, is morally good. It is not as

perfect as it will be in heaven where, exactly as the Catholic Church believes, the nature of man will be elevated from this level of moral goodness to a yet higher and more glorious state of holiness and bliss. The *good* men of today will be *better* men in heaven.

Thus, the teachings of the image of the beast on the nature of man are an exact reproduction, though in a more subtle and deceiving form, of the teachings of the beast. Every child of God who desires to stand on the victorious side in the last great conflict should understand these truths very clearly and should study them until they do.

8. In Conclusion

TODAY we see the Evangelicals uniting with the different churches. Modern Protestantism is getting ready to do a last great work of spreading “the gospel” and converting all mankind. But by holding the beliefs they do, and being in the condition which they are in, it would be the worst thing that could happen to mankind. It would be the predicted repetition of worldwide religious intolerance and the setting up of the image of the beast, brought about by the making of Sunday laws.

This is the healing of the wound, when the world will witness the second revelation of the man of sin that will end up in persecuting...

Romans 8

¹⁹ ...the revelation of the sons of God.

Then the good works of the one side can be seen in marked contrast to the evil works on the other. The works of faith in the sons of God being persecuted unto death in comparison to the alleged works of faith by the sons of perdition, who causes...

Revelation 13

¹⁵ ...that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

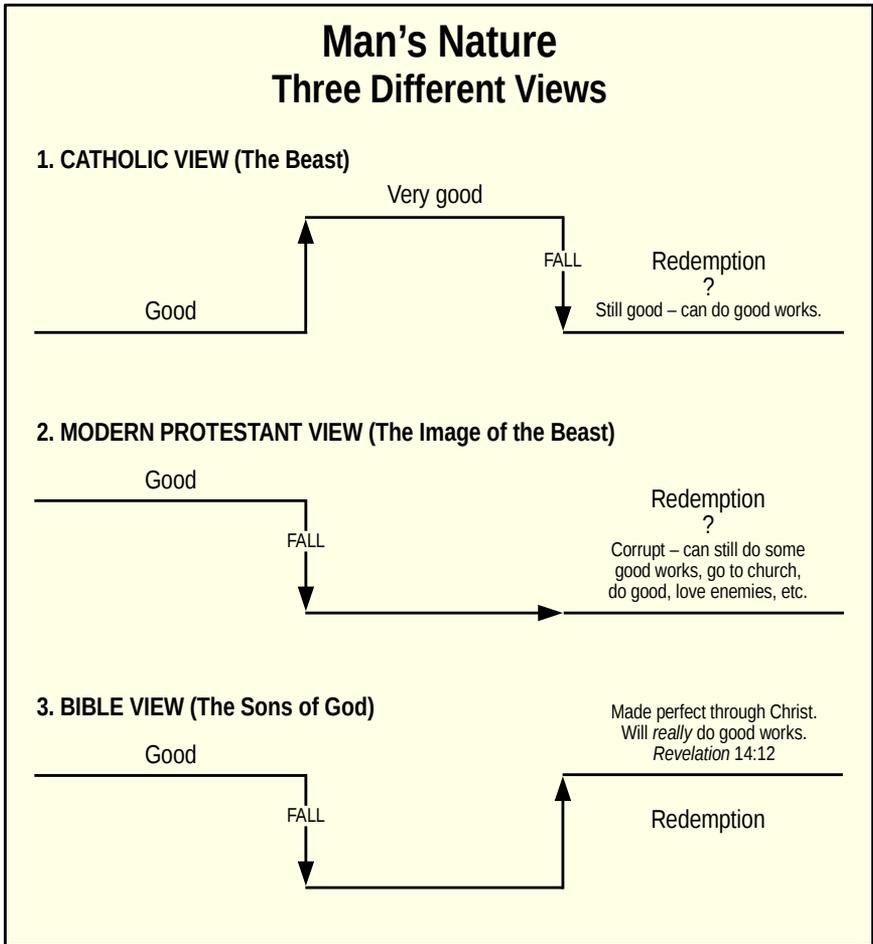
It seems incredible that a Christian movement of churches with an orthodox evangelical profession could ever do this. Dear Reader, do not entrench yourself behind Luther or the others by not accepting any more light than they had.

The Great Controversy, p. 148:

...he [Luther] did not receive all the light which was to be given to the world.

It was not his mission to finish the Reformation, but only to start it. First of all the teaching of the man of sin and the theory of the *puris-naturalibus* condition of man, had to be met and overcome. These men could not fully discern during their time the

more exact and clearer teachings concerning the beginning of a new life in Christ and the revelation of the sons of God with a perfect sinless life.



If they had lived in our day, they would have humbly and gladly accepted the present truth for our time. This is proved by the fact that they accepted all the present truth of their time. Let us treat the greater light of our time in the same way.

Education, p. 146:

No truth does the Bible more clearly teach than that what we do is the result of what we are.

A church is simply what it teaches. Modern Protestantism does not teach and believe that the old man is fully crucified with Christ, that the “body of sin”⁹² is destroyed at conversion. In not believing this fundamental teaching of the Gospel, the churches show how little the total sinfulness of the old man and his works is understood.

The near future will reveal once more—for the last time— what this man will do. All who cling to his great error will stand on his side. Escape ere it is too late, give up that old man of sin and let him be broken on Christ the Rock!

⁹² *Romans 6:6.*

Appendix

1. Till We Meet Again

By F. T. Wright

Messenger and News Review, September 1978

WE ARE deeply saddened and distressed to learn of and report the untimely death of our brother and dear friend, Wolfgang Meyer.

We understand from a newspaper clipping, that an Austrian Sister kindly sent to us, that Wolfgang was traveling with two other believers near the Austrian capital of Vienna. In the car belonging to Brother Johann Pfeifer, 39, was Brother Wolfgang Meyer, 38, and Sister Helen Tintner, 67. Brother Pfeifer was driving on a six-lane autobahn (freeway) when they met with an unavoidable head on collision at 130 km/hr.

The article states that the driver of the other vehicle was an accountant at a hospital. He had just finished work and was proceeding to an evening appointment. The article offered no explanation as to why he got onto the wrong side of the six-lane autobahn. Various people tried to signal him and warn him of his error, but he gave no response. He drove one kilometer before the accident occurred in which four people died.

Brother Pfeifer and the driver of the other car were thrown out of their respective vehicles. They died shortly after arriving at the hospital. Wolfgang was trapped in the car for one hour before he could be freed and he died on the way to the hospital.

Though words cannot encompass and express the feeling in our hearts and the thoughts in our minds, we wish to endeavor to convey our sincerest sympathy to Sister Gwenda Meyer and the children, Timothy, Christopher, Bettina and Sven.

We may take comfort in this passage:

Prophets and Kings, p. 578:

God has a purpose in sending trial to His children. He never leads them otherwise than they would choose to be led if they

could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose that they are fulfilling.

2. Wolfgang Meyer's Death

By F. T. Wright

Messenger and News Review, October 1978

Original titles: *A Word from the Editor* and *Return to Europe*

WE DO not always immediately understand why God permits certain things. But when there is a very important lesson for God's people to learn, then He will reveal the reason quite quickly if we ask Him in faith.

The sudden and unexpected deaths of Wolfgang Meyer and two fellow believers in Austria was not without divine presight and purpose. Although Satan engineered the whole thing, God permitted it to happen because He could not really prevent it. The complete directing of Wolfgang's life had been taken out of God's hands so that He was not able to provide complete protection without taking back what had been taken from Him.

Ever since this movement began, God has been seeking to teach us the vital truth that Christ is to be the only head in the church. He alone appoints our work and it is He and not the church to whom each is responsible. Therefore let no one come between you as a member of the body and Christ as your Head.

It may be objected that it is the duty of the church to disfellowship those who become openly apostate. This is not so. It is not our work to set matters right. Let the example of Christ in dealing with Judas be our guide. We must leave the unruly member to the Head.

The Lord is seeking to impress this lesson on our minds. The true principle has been clearly revealed and the consequences of failure to live by it repeatedly manifested. If we cannot learn after all this, what hope is there for us?

Return to Europe

It was at Medford, that I heard for the first time of the tragic accident which took the lives of Wolfgang Meyer, Hans Pfeiffer and Helene Tintner. All three were believers in this message.

It is generally known that Wolfgang was the full-time worker in Europe. The Lord had done a marvelous work through Wolfgang of building up the movement in both the western and eastern zones of the Old World. He was a very hard working and dedicated person for whom no sacrifice was too great.

Wolfgang first learned the message when he was in South Australia. He lived in Australia for seven years during which time he married Gwenda Holbrook. He took his wife back to Europe with him when they were expecting their first baby, to introduce her to his parents.

In 1967, Wolfgang drove me all over Europe and Norway and was my interpreter for the first time. In God's wonderful way, he was led more deeply into the work of preaching the message and became recognized by all as the full-time worker in the country. From the beginning the Lord prospered his work which extended beyond Germany into Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, Holland, East Germany, Roumania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland.

The European field became as fast growing as any in the world. Everywhere, Wolfgang was loved and respected.

Brother Hans Pfeiffer comes from a Roman Catholic background. I did not have much opportunity to come to know him very well, but Wolfgang spoke very warmly and confidently of him as a believer. He loved the message and had attempted to enter Romania with Wolfgang just before the accident.

Sister Tintner had been in the message and movement now for quite a number of years. She had been a book evangelist in Austria but upon accepting this message had left that work and the Adventist Church. She was known as a good Samaritan. She

would stay with needy people and at personal sacrifice would give them needed help till they were on their feet again. Then she would go to someone else in need. She was a very fine sister indeed.

Consequently, it came as a terrible shock to me to hear that all three had been killed in an accident. The news was not finally confirmed to me until 1:30 am Sabbath morning, September 23. I did not sleep the rest of the night.

To my joy, I found in myself no disposition to make any plans whatsoever. I would wait till the Lord worked it out. So no interruption took place in the Medford meetings. These completed, we traveled to Portland where we stayed overnight with the Malvaney family. Next day we drove onto Boise, Idaho, from where we finally made telephone contact with Gwenda Meyer.

The Funeral

Thus we learned that Wolfgang's funeral would not take place until the following Wednesday, October 4. It was now Thursday, September 28. Gwenda asked if I was coming over. My reply was that I did not know but would seek God's will and direction.

Having done so, I was convinced I should go and accordingly departed Friday morning at 9:00 am from Boise, via Chicago and New York to Frankfurt. I arrived at the Meyer home on Sabbath, midday. The believers were just ending the Sabbath morning study hour and made plans to have me speak to them on Sunday afternoon at 4:00 pm.

On the way over, I had read the story of Lazarus' death and resurrection in *The Desire of Ages* four or five times. I saw in it a close parallel with this incident. Just as Christ had...

The Desire of Ages, p. 528:

...suffered the enemy to exercise his power, that He might drive him back, a conquered foe,

—so it was again. Of this I was convinced. God had given us the powerful truth to preach that He puts life where there is death. Consequently, I saw a confrontation between God and Satan. The latter by inflicting death upon us was directly challenging God to demonstrate His power.

This encouraged in me the strong hope that we would see Wolfgang raised again. It came as no surprise to find that the German folk shared the same expectations. The minds of some of them had also been directed to the story of Lazarus. The fact that Wolfgang's funeral had been delayed two weeks gave us further hope. The practical reason for the delay was that there had been so many deaths that it could not be fitted in any earlier.

The decision to go to Vienna for the funeral was taken only when we were sure it was God's plan. As things developed, it became apparent that this long journey was essential.

Three of us, Gary Davis, another brother, and I, drove on Tuesday to the home of the Gläser family arriving about 4:00 pm. This was close to Salzburg on the Austrian border. Klaus Gläser planned to go with us as he had been appointed to conduct the service.

When we arrived next morning, we found about twenty people had gathered. They were made up of the believers who live in Austria plus a few friends of Wolfgang's father. Precisely at noon the doors were closed and the service began.

Klaus gave a short discourse on the fact that there was a conflict between God, the Life-Giver, and Satan, the life-taker. Satan had demonstrated his power, now it was time for God to show His. Whereupon, in the name of Jesus, he called on Wolfgang to arise. But nothing happened. We then followed the casket to the grave site where again Klaus called for God's power to be displayed with no results.

The Hidden Reason

There was a good reason for this, a reason we were yet to learn. Had I not gone to Vienna, I would never have come to understand this. It was on that trip, from this other person whose name I have not mentioned, that I began to learn of the existence of things in Europe of which I had not known before.

Upon my return to Sonderbach, I learned a great deal more. Back in 1975, while Wolfgang was on a visit to Australia, several well-meaning and earnest people came to feel that the best interests of the work in Europe required them to set up some organization. Wolfgang was twice urged by telegram to return, but he did not do so. These folk went ahead anyway so that when Wolfgang returned, they had certain things all organized for him.

They had appointed a treasurer and had organized such matters as were associated with that. However, they left the matter of where he traveled and to whom he preached, to him. When Wolfgang returned from Australia, he submitted to this but said nothing to me about it. I did observe on a couple of occasions, that he would not make certain moves until he had the approval of the church. This had concerned me and I had shown him the wrong principle in this, because he was not employed by the church but by God. It was therefore to the One who had given him his work that he was answerable.

Then I learned that at the end of the 1978 camp meeting, after I had left for the USA, Wolfgang had submitted, against his better judgment, to the appointment of another full-time worker in Germany. He was, in fact, desirous of additional help, but he recognized that this person did not have the qualifications or the divine calling. His last worried expressions to those who survived him were in regard to this.

All these things were made known to me in the very early hours of Thursday morning. Before going to sleep, I sought the counsel of the Lord and read this with great comfort:

Isaiah 25

¹ O Lord, You are my God; I will exalt You, I will praise your name; for You have done wonderful things; your counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.

² For You have made of a city a heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built.

³ Therefore shall the strong people glorify You, the city of the terrible nations shall fear You.

⁴ For You have been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

⁵ You shall bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.

⁶ And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

⁷ And He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.

⁸ He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the Lord has spoken it.

⁹ And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.

¹⁰ For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under Him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill.

¹¹ And He shall spread forth His hands in the midst of them, as he that swims spreads forth his hands to swim: and He shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hands.

¹² And the fortress of the high fort of your walls shall He bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust.

When I awoke in the morning, I saw with very strong conviction why Wolfgang had died and why he had not been raised in Vienna. My mind was carried back to the story of Paul as recorded in “Paul a Prisoner,” in *The Acts of the Apostles*. I re-read

the chapter and saw that while Paul kept himself answerable to God alone, he was safe. Death could not touch him while his work remained unfinished, but when, in only one thing, he allowed men to become his directors, then immediately his work was cut short and his life soon ended.

My mind was directed to the prophet whom God sent to warn Jeroboam. When he allowed a man to take over his directions, he died.⁹³

We know that Paul will not lose eternal life through this mistake. We are confident that Wolfgang will rise in the resurrection. We do not have a single word of condemnation for him or for the well-meaning, earnest people who were involved. We want only to understand these principles so there will be no repetitions of these tragedies.

Had Wolfgang been raised from the grave in Vienna, then in our joy, there would have been no further searching for the cause of the problem which would then have steadily worsened. The German field would have become disqualified for participation in the final and finishing work.

Meeting in Hannover

I now knew I must speak with the people who had done these things. I had full confidence in them, assured that they would see and accept the witness of God's word and that they would fully repent of the mistakes made. A meeting was arranged in Hannover for Sabbath. The weather throughout my entire visit in Europe had been very overcast and often rainy. As we approached Hannover, the sky was especially black and lowering. On observing this, I turned to Gary and said,

“I estimate that by mid-afternoon tomorrow we will have laid out these principles to the point where they will have seen them, and repentance is working in their hearts. Until that time, the sky will remain dark, but then the sun will break through.”

⁹³ 1 Kings 13.

We had heard no weather reports. It had been dark, forbidding weather for ten days straight, and it now looked blacker than ever. So every visible appearance suggested that an extensive storm system was moving in from the North Sea.

On Sabbath morning we commenced our study. By mid-afternoon, I had finished and it was clear that full acceptance had been made by the group. At that very moment, the sun burst through and flooded the room with light. It was so positioned that it shone right into the room, filling it with sunlight.

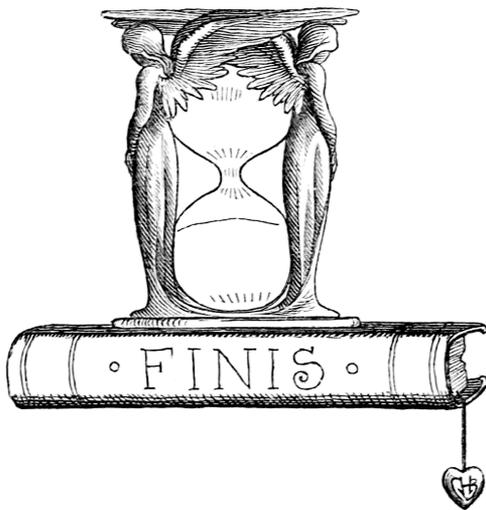
We knelt in a circle of prayer, each one making sincere and heartfelt confession of the mistake made. Outside, the clouds rolled away, leaving a sky immaculately clear. As we drove home that night, the moon was out, and the stars were shining brightly. Next morning the blue dome of heaven was empty of even the slightest fleck of cloud. There remained no clouds over the movement.

This clears the way for whatever the Lord will now do. We wish Wolfgang back for many reasons. We see him as being irreplaceable so far as available talent is concerned. His work definitely was unfinished. His family needs him, and there is need for God to support by demonstration the truth He has given us to preach, namely that He is the Life Giver, while Satan is the life-taker.

On the other hand, a resurrection among us would give the movement, in these days of mass news dissemination, a publicity we can better do without.

With all the witnesses we now have, let the lesson be eternally learned that not one of us is answerable to the church or to one another. It is God who gives to every man his work. Therefore, to God alone is everyone answerable. At tremendous cost, God has made the lesson clear. Let the sacrifice of no more lives be necessary.

On Sunday, October 8, I departed Frankfurt for Chicago, Denver and Boise, to resume the work here in the United States.





Bourbourg

Audruicq

Wambrechies

Wambrechies

Lumblès

Wambrechies