

THE
CHURCH
OF
GOD
IS
NOT
BABYLON

by F. T. WRIGHT

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From time to time, God has called His people to separate from an organization, which, though originally called of Him, has fallen into deep apostasy. What God does, Satan seeks to counter. Therefore, when God calls His children to separate from those who are no longer His, Satan works very hard to prevent this happening. Conversely, where God is against separation, Satan is for it.

God's reasons for His children leaving the apostate churches are the same in every case, while Satan never varies from the arguments he uses to prevent this. The enemy is especially adept at using Scripture to achieve the opposite result from what God intended it should. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the basic principles involved in both God's and Satan's arguments in order to know what the real truth is and to take the appropriate action.

This is a study of those arguments and counter-arguments with special reference to the way in which Paul used God's truth to meet Satan's errors.

FOREWORD

This study has been prepared in response to numerous requests. It is intended to be a specific answer to a specific problem. Only one particular problem will be dealt with, thus leaving many phases of church relationships untouched. The reader is asked to keep this in mind.

These pages set forth a re-examination of statements which are being used to justify unconditional continuation within a certain church organization. The student would be wise to assume that the arguments herein could be valid, substantial, and soul saving. Therefore, the wise course is to carefully ascertain what the writer is actually saying before any evaluation is formed or arguments in opposition are raised. It is a clever trick of Satan's to build a straw man and then tear him apart, thereby missing the real issues and leaving the vital truth untouched.

The subject matter of this little paper is highly important. Some people would not agree with this because they believe that it is not so critical where one's loyalties are aligned; that it is possible to serve God just as well in one organization as in another. But this cannot be, for if it were so, then why has God repeatedly called His people to separate from church organizations opposed to the pure principles of truth?

The present situation is not new. The same issues, problems, and failings have all been enacted and re-enacted in the past, with the same arguments and counter-arguments being advanced in each re-run of the old story. The only differences are the names of the actors, the geographical settings, and the times in history. In each instance, both sides were sure they were right, but they could not see, when they made their decisions, what the full outworking of those choices would be.

It is here that the records of history furnish the present generation with decided advantages. It is possible to see the two sides of the question and to trace the inevitable outworking of the respective positions taken. With great clarity it will be seen that one position led unswervingly to separation from God and the loss of eternal life while the other brought the opposite effect.

So clearly drawn are the lessons of history that there is no excuse for any to stumble in the wrong pathway at the present time. It is only necessary to trace from cause to effect. When

men in the past chose a particular course and followed arguments justifying that decision, they ended up in a certain position. Those who decided on the opposite choice, came to a different place altogether.

God's principles have not changed in the least. The same causes will still lead to the same results, which are so critical as to involve the loss or gain of eternal life. Therefore, it is essential that every professed child of God learn the lessons of history and learn them well. Those who fail to do so will be condemned to repeat the tragic errors of the past and suffer the same fearful losses.

One principle which must become clearly established is that the many statements in the Old Testament which speak about the perpetuity of Israel were never designed to prove who Israel is, and that a particular body is going through as God's church to the end. They are intended to show the ultimate triumph of true Israel. Therefore, before the statements can be applied it must be determined which is still the faithful company who number God's church at any given time in history. First that church, that Israel, that Seventh-day Adventist denomination, must be found and then the statements can be applied, but not before.

When in his time, Paul was assailed by all the "proof" texts from the Old Testament declaring that while the sun shone by day and the moon by night Israel would still be God's people, he simply showed that there was more than one Israel and that before the texts could be applied, it had to be determined which of them was the one about whom the prophecies had been written. He was on the correct pathway when he adopted this procedure. Therefore, those who follow the same guidelines will be in a safe position today.

It is hoped that the reader will approach this paper with a thoughtful, prayerful spirit, determined to learn the truth about who the church of God really is today. It is hoped that all will escape the pit into which the Jews fell when they believed in the unconditional continuation of their nation. The same mistake was made by the Romanists in the Middle Ages and is being repeated by the majority of Seventh-day Adventists today. It is a masterful device of the devil. May you escape it.

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"As the light and life of men was rejected by the ecclesiastical authorities in the days of Christ, so it has been rejected in every succeeding generation. Again and again the history of Christ's withdrawal from Judea has been repeated. When the Reformers preached the word of God, they had no thought of separating themselves from the established church; but the religious leaders would not tolerate the light, and those that bore it were forced to seek another class, who were longing for the truth. In our day few of the professed followers of the Reformers are actuated by their spirit. Few are listening for the voice of God, and ready to accept truth in whatever guise it may be presented. Often those who follow in the steps of the Reformers are forced to turn away from the churches they love, in order to declare the plain teaching of the word of God. And many times those who are seeking for light are by the same teaching obliged to leave the church of their fathers, that they may render obedience." *Desire of Ages*, 232.

These words are true, not exclusively of one time and situation in history, but in every time and of every people. Wherever the same conditions exist, the same course will be followed by those whom God has called to be His own. They will find no choice but to separate from the decadent churches. It has always been true that when such a move becomes necessary, there are those who will parade what seem to be unanswerable Scriptural arguments condemning the separation. Some will even go so far as to acknowledge that the reformers have the light and the established church is in darkness, yet will still stay with "the good old ship".

The curious fact is that any people in any age are quick to recognize, accept, and apply the above principle when it is to their advantage, but utterly deny, reject, and war against it if it is not to their favour. Thus the Jews in Christ's day viewed with joy and pride any acquisition which came to them from the heathen nations round about. They were indeed zealous

missionaries and were forever seeking to draw other peoples into the family of Israel. This is evident from Christ's words when He said: ". . .ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." *Matthew* 23:15.

They would cheerfully accept the above statement when it told the story of the heathen being forced to turn away from their own teachers to come and learn from the Jews but when Christ came, who was *the* Truth then, they fought with all the strength they had to prevent people from leaving the hollow sham which was their message, to go to that which was the real and living way.

One has only to study the history of the Reformation to find the same picture repeated as the Catholic church fought to keep her prisoners, and today the situation is with us again as the churches fall into the sad pattern of apostasy.

Without question, the situation which existed in Christ's day and which was repeated during the Reformation, imposed a severe test on the people who lived in those periods. They had to make a difficult choice between the comfortable security the long-established church organization appeared to offer, and the seemingly fragile future of the infant movement led by Christ. The former, though it had buried the truth in mazes of speculative human theories, still commanded tremendous respect, while the latter appealed only to those who desired the truth at any cost.

Today, as we look back, we marvel not only at how men could, as the majority did, make the choice for the orthodox organization and against the truth, but confidently feel that had we lived back then, we would without hesitation have stood with Christ and the truth.

It is all too easy to do this so far as the past is concerned, because, not only are we not a part of the organization then involved, but we also see the outworking of the choice made by those men and women. Furthermore, our minds tend to be imprisoned in an identically intense loyalty to another organization, which we have been educated to believe is the called of God today, beyond and besides which, there can be no other. This very attitude, then and now, causes the mind to close against any consideration that we could be mistaken, especially when it appears that the witness of God's Word supports the concept we hold.

But we are to understand that the tests imposed upon one generation are not confined to it. They are common to every generation of men. Always the call is to choose between established orthodoxy and the truth of God.

So today this test has come nearer home than we could ever have anticipated. Once again, the church which was raised up, even as the Jews were, to proclaim the message of God, has come down to the third and fourth generation. Evidence upon evidence shows that a complex organizational structure has developed wherein the authority of the church and its material prosperity are more important than the clear proclamation of truth.

Exactly as in the days of Christ and of the Reformers, the Lord has sent the living message into the church. This message today is the one that was given in 1888 through Elders Waggoner and Jones, and which, after its unfortunate general rejection then, has now been brought again to the church. In all this, the history of the past is being repeated to the very letter, for, exactly as the Jews and Romanists reacted to the fresh and living truth among them, so the leaders of the church have today, while the emphasis on the supreme authority of the church that was the major defense of the religionists then, likewise has become the emphasis and defense of the church today. As the multitudes blindly followed then, so they have followed as blindly today, while only a few are able to see the real issues and make a correct choice between denominationalism and the living truth.

So, the history of the past is being repeated as once again this glorious message of the *Revelation* 18 angel which is the light and life of men, has been rejected by the ecclesiastical authorities.

Once again the church has arisen with all her strength to prevent this separation; to keep every one of the believers in the confines of her control. Curiously enough, she has been strongly assisted in this work by many who at first stood for the call to revival and reformation and declared loyalty to the wonderful truth, but who have turned back from following the Lord to become very adept at using His Word as a means of keeping the believers in the church. So skilfully are they able to make it *appear* that the *Word of God* condemns any separation from the established church, that some of the believers are perplexed as to what they should do about this problem. Therefore, to put the matter in its true perspective and to assist souls to correctly choose, the matter needs to be carefully and accurately analyzed.

To discuss an opponent's arguments clearly and successfully, it is essential that the argument itself be plainly understood to avoid missing the other person's line of reasoning. No attempt should ever be made to deal with another position until it is well understood. Therefore, the case for the opposition will be briefly set forth here.

It is built up as follows:

A comprehensive collection is made of every statement and verse found in the Spirit of Prophecy and Bible which assert that the church is the depository of truth, the apple of God's eye, the called of God, the one object of His supreme desire, and the channel through which He will finish the work. Then it is argued that these are unbreakable prophecies of the church's present and future status with God. They see anyone who leaves the church as being a rebel separating not only from the church but from God and eternal life.

There is no need to quote all of these statements here. One or two will suffice as samples. When separated from the rest of the Scriptures and compiled into a single document, they do appear to teach just what the ecclesiastical authorities would have them teach. But, when all the

Scriptural evidence is understood in the light of fundamental Bible principles, these statements do not provide an argument against separation. *Instead, they are a decided call to separation!*

One such statement is as follows: "Again I say, The Lord hath not spoken by any messenger who calls the church that keeps the commandments of God, Babylon. True, there are tares with the wheat; but Christ said He would send His angels to first gather the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into the garner. I know that the Lord loves His church. It is not to be disorganized or broken up into independent atoms. There is not the least consistency in this; there is not the least evidence that such a thing will be. Those who shall heed this false message and try to leaven others will be deceived and prepared to receive advanced delusions, and they will come to nought." *Selected Messages 2: 68, 69.*

It is not necessary to openly teach that the Seventh-day Adventist church is Babylon in order to be charged with advocating this position. All one needs to do is separate from the organization. This action is sure to be interpreted as a *declaration* that the church has become Babylon. Those who draw these conclusions certainly have a point, for if the church has not fallen, there is no justification for leaving it. Those who are zealous in their defence of the "grand old ship", seize upon statements such as the one quoted above in their battle to justify their position.

Again we quote:

"The message to pronounce the Seventh-day Adventist Church Babylon, and call the people of God out of her, does not come from any heavenly messenger, or any human agent inspired by the Spirit of God." *Selected Messages 2: 66.*

These are strong statements, and, used by enemies of the message, they can wield a weighty influence. But they do not provide any difficulty when truly understood. While those who are using these statements think they have a winning position, it is to be found that they do not have any such thing.

Those opposing separation from an apostate organization will always charge that those who are leaving deny the Scriptures by making them say the opposite from their clear declarations. But this is an ill-founded accusation. The Word of God means exactly what it says. Great care must be taken not to misread it. Safety lies in taking all the evidence and examining it in the light of consistent and proven principles of interpretation. Only then will it be possible to understand what the Lord is really saying.

In approaching this question, we are fortunate in that the situation for God's people is not new. Exactly what we have to face, has been faced in past ages, and we have the history of their experience as a sure guide. In fact, we have been expressly told that "all these things happened unto them

for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." *1 Corinthians* 10:11.

In the past, the Lord has brought the message of life and salvation to the church which, having fallen into an apostate state, finds truth unacceptable to it. The church fights against the light, forcing the believer to separate from the ranks. Then she turns to denounce the ones whom she has forced out, by using God's Word to condemn their separation. The Scriptures used are those which proclaim quite truthfully, the eternal continuation of the church. Despite the fact that their actions seem to be utterly contrary to inspired statements, the believers in present truth have separated from the established organization. Further complicating the problem is that simultaneously a number of other movements which do not have the truth, are also separating from the organization on the basis of personal grudges or lust for power. These have no justification for leaving and by so doing cast a dark shadow over the true separation entered into by those who do have the real truth.

This is not new. Every time the true believers withdrew from the church which was hostile to the living light God was sending, they found themselves confronted with ecclesiastical opponents who argued from Scripture that the church was going through to the end and only those who remained with it would safely make the heavenly harbour. They likewise found themselves being relegated to the same category as every other movement that was withdrawing on erroneous principles.

But the true people of God separated back there despite all these assaults and God blessed and guided them. They met their opponents with a clear "Thus saith the Lord", and went forth conquering and to conquer. The stand they took was right, even though many taunted them with the claim that their position was Scripturally unsound. Time has proven that their understanding of God's Word was correct and that of their enemies incorrect. How fortunate the modern generation is to have those arguments on record; for, if they were the answer then, they are still the answer today.

The specific point of history from which guidance will be drawn is a particularly reliable one, for its chief spokesman was the inspired apostle Paul. What he wrote was in fact God's Word. This mighty reformer lived when a floodlight of truth was shining on the earth, but, as usual, the ecclesiastical authorities were vigorously opposed to it. Paul withdrew from the Jewish church which was the established church of that time, *but he had to do it in the face of powerful statements from the Old Testament*. These were far stronger than those written in the Spirit of Prophecy about the Adventist church. Yet he left the church. No professed child of God today questions that he did what the Lord wanted him to do. His action is recognized and it is felt that if we had lived back then we would have separated with him.

Paul's answer to the charges levelled against him is found in *Romans* 9. The first verses of this chapter express a love for the Jewish people and a

recognition of what they had been called to be which reflects the character found in the heart of the Eternal Father. Never will one who has the real truth of God in his heart separate with a hateful, vindictive, and destructive spirit within him. His departure will be on the basis of principle, not feeling. Whenever we see a person come out of the church with a burden to condemn and malign it, we know that his separation is on an entirely wrong basis. Time and again this class of person has eventually rejoined the church and has supported it more ardently than before he left it.

But such was not the spirit of Paul. He left with the deepest love in his heart and he never returned. Here are his words:

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

"That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

"For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

"Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

"Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." *Romans 9:1-5*.

Note very carefully that the same Paul who was protesting his love for the Jews even to the point where he was prepared to lose his eternal life that they might be saved, was calling for the complete separation of all believers from their organization and communion.

Let us also read this in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

"And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

"And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

This statement is applicable to all peoples of the earth who are not believers—Romans, Greeks, and all other Gentiles. But let us never forget that to Paul anyone who did not believe and receive Christ, was an unbeliever. In his day, the most vigorous and outspoken unbelievers were the Jews. Therefore, this statement names Jews among others. It means that Paul was describing *them* as unbelievers, unrighteousness, darkness, Belial, infidels, and idol worshippers.

These are strong terms to use in describing a religious people who have for centuries taken the greatest pride in their religion. One does not normally take words like these as expressions of love and one would hardly be blamed for concluding that Paul no longer had any love for the Jewish people. It is not a usual practise to go about calling those you love infidels, Belial, and the like, yet we find that Paul did this.

Consider the situation from a worldly viewpoint. Suppose you hear Mr. Anderson say about Jim Brown, "That man is a waster, a thief, a liar. Have nothing to do with him. Keep right away from him." The next day you hear Mr. Anderson saying "There is nobody in the world I love so much as Jim Brown." Whatever would you think? A crazy contradiction? But is not that exactly what Paul is doing? Here in 2 *Corinthians 6* he says, "Come out and do not touch the unclean. They are infidels, Belial, darkness, unrighteousness, unbelievers, a temple filled with idols." But in *Romans 9* he protests that he loves the Jews!

Paul expressed his true feelings in *Romans 9*. This was not a mere profession of love designed to convey a good impression. His love for the Jews was as deep and true as God's love for them though not of course on so infinite a scale. True love did not lead Paul to a false evaluation of the truth about his people. He saw and stated the facts as they were and related himself to them accordingly.

His enemies, being totally unable to appreciate the spirit of love which filled him and wishing only to capitalize on his words, seized upon them as evidence with which to charge him with hatred of the Jews and desertion from God's church. Their accusation was that he made the prophecies of none effect, for, if he believed the Spirit of Prophecy as recorded in the Old Testament, he must, according to their view, remain loyally within the organized church. It is the same line of attack used by modern church leaders to destroy the effect of God's call to separate from the fallen churches.

When their argument is examined it can be seen that the same tactics are still used. The Pharisees based their contention on the truth that Israel had been called of God, and with this Paul had no disagreement. Israel *had* been called of God. But that was not the point. Paul was concerned about what they had become, not what they had been called to be.

The Pharisees argued that because the Israelites had been called of God they must continue in this role forever, whereas Paul recognized the conditional nature of God's commissions. Therefore, while their believing that God had called the church required them to remain with it forever, Paul saw the imperativeness of separating from those who, having professed to be the true continuation of the movement called by God, had turned against the truths which had been the original making of that people. He had to withdraw in order to preserve that truth, just as God called Abraham out of Ur so that the truth might be preserved in its purity.

Therefore, Paul could cheerfully and sincerely state his belief in *the call* of Israel. Read the words of his declaration: "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; . . ." *Romans 9:4*.

Likewise, at the present time there is no question but that the Lord called the Seventh-day Adventist church to be the channel of communication to a perishing world. We are as firmly established on that truth as Paul ever was on the raising of the Jewish church. The Great Second Advent Movement was no mistake. It was of God, and the truths the Lord gave His people there, are to be with them to the end.

The preservation of truth in its purity requires separation from any organization which despises God's light and wars against those who love it.

In neither case is there any question about what the Lord called the people to be. *The dispute is entirely over what that people have become.* That was the issue in Paul's day, and it is the same today.

The moment Paul and the early Christians raised any question as to what the Jewish church had become and therefore charged that they had, by their apostasy and rejection of the Lord, forfeited their divine calling, the Jews pointed to the strong array of Old Testament Scriptures which foretold the perpetuity of Israel to the end.

"You!" they cried at Paul in hot indignation, "make the Scriptures of none effect! You claim to believe them but, while they plainly say that we will be the people of God to the very end, you declare that we are no longer God's church, and you call people to come out of our fellowship and ranks. Just look at what the Scriptures say and then compare that with your stand!"

Some people in our day have been dismayed by the power, strength, and apparent unanswerableness of the statements in *Selected Messages* and *Testimonies to Ministers* which the church leaders have so carefully compiled. But these statements are not one whit stronger than those that confronted Paul from the Old Testament, in *the face of which* he had to separate from the church of his day.

Let us turn to some of these and see how the Pharisees would use them. The first reference is in *Isaiah 2:1-3*.

"The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

"And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

Here is a prophecy which distinctly says that in *the last days* Jerusalem will still be the great centre from which the truth of God would go forth to

the whole world. There might be some dark patches in between but the Lord would always hold that city for Himself.

The inference so strongly pressed upon the people was that to separate from that church meant separation from the ship which was going through and consequently to fail to go through oneself.

Hear the wily Pharisees and other church leaders arguing as they most certainly must have done in the days of Christ and Paul:

"Do not be disturbed by the Man from Galilee, or this preacher, Saul of Tarsus. There is nothing new here. We have been through these problems again and again. Remember how various offshoots have arisen in the past and proclaimed the apostasy of Israel, claiming that they had the real truth, and calling people to 'Come out'? But what has become of these movements and the men who led them? Look and see!

"That man Theudas arose, followed by Judas* (see *Acts* 5:36, 37), and then there was Barabbas (see *Desire of Ages*, 733). But where are they now? In some cases the leaders were killed by the authorities and the movements are scattered and come to naught. Look at the disappointment, disillusionment, and sadness of the unfortunate people who were deceived by these false teachers, every one of whom declared the end of the church but who speedily came to their own end instead.

"Where is the church in and through all this? It is still there. And we do not doubt that others will arise even as this Paul, but they too will pass away while the church continues. So save yourself the disappointment and sorrow; learn the lesson of the past and stay with the ship. Go through with it to the very end of time."

How fatally wrong time has proved them to be. They were completely mistaken in their argument that the men who had arisen had failed because they charged the church with apostasy and called for separation. This was not the reason they had failed at all. They simply did not have the life experience and the message to correct the apostasy. The Jewish leaders, being wrong in their basic argument, could not help being wrong in the conclusions drawn from it. They propounded that the Jewish organization *was going right through to the end* as the church of God and the channel of His blessing to the world, regardless of its spiritual state. To certify what they supposed to be the truth of this argument, they were able to quote many powerful Old Testament promises.

Their conclusion that the church as they defined it was going through, convinced them that any group which separated must come to nothing, while the "good ship" sailed majestically on. They saw in every movement which had previously separated and failed, the confirmation that their position was right.

It cannot be denied that the Old Testament Scriptures, as they *understood them*, did state that the church was going through to the end

*Not Judas Iscariot, the disciple of Jesus.

and would thus forever be the church of God. Without exception, until the appearance of the new movement under the leadership of Christ and the apostles, every off-shoot had come to nothing. Therefore, the Pharisees had what *appeared* to be a most convincing argument.

And how convincing their logic sounded to the men and women of that time! How many indeed were won over and followed that line of reasoning! It took all the worry and burden from their minds. It eased the troubled convictions stirred by the mighty messages of Paul and other apostles. It led them to relax and commit the keeping of their souls to the church. After all, the church was going on through, and what did they need to worry about, but to be in her fold and under her care?

But where today are those who propounded these arguments and those who believed them? Their fate should teach us the sober lesson that we are not to take too easily the arguments put forth to sustain a church which is manifestly departing from the truth. There is something a little *deeper* in these statements than appears on the surface.

One class of people was not so readily convinced by the arguments put forth by the Pharisees. To them it seemed that something was not quite right.

When listening to the Pharisee quoting *Isaiah 2:1-3* some would look puzzled and say: "Yes, but look at Israel's condition. Look at the apostasy, corruption, and departures from the truth that mark her ways. See how she persecutes those who seek to do the right thing and who have the courage to point out some of the wrongs in the church. How can she *be* thus and do such things, yet still claim to be the peculiar people of God? Are not the promises in regard to the perpetuity of the church *conditional* on her faithfulness?"

The Pharisee, not lacking an answer, would say with a confident expression, "Yes, I know the situation in the church is far from good. There are many things I cannot endorse and there is nothing in the world that is needed more right now than a revival in the church.

"But the Lord knows all about it, and He will take care of it in His own time and way. The difficulty with these reformers is that they *will* run ahead of the Lord. They are not prepared to wait for God to work it out.

"It is all written in the Word of prophecy. Read it here with me in *Isaiah 1:21-23*. 'How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.

" Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:

" Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.'

"Now," continues the wily Pharisee, "you can see that the Lord knows about the situation. It has not caught Him by surprise and He is working to correct it. Read now the words of verses 25-27. 'And I will turn My hand

upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:

" 'And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.

" 'Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.'

"Now, tell me, what could be plainer than that there is to be a great shaking in Israel? God will bring it about and then all the elements in the church which are out of tune with Him and His truth, will be shaken out and the true people of God will remain to go on to victory. And when that shaking is over, the church will be the mighty power for good that the Lord wants it to be. At that time of grand victory, you are either going to be in or out of the church. If you are in and faithful, you will share in its triumph, but, if outside, then you will certainly fail to share in that victory no matter how sincere you may be. So, would it not be better to take the safe path and stay with the church? It is going through to the end."

Such were the arguments that the Pharisees in Paul's time could use in seeking to turn people away from the message. Undoubtedly, they were successful in turning away many people who would otherwise have been believers in the Saviour and His message. The truth of this is evident from a statement in *The Desire of Ages*, 205, which reads, "If the priests and rabbis had not interposed, His teaching would have wrought such a reformation as this world has never witnessed."

Here is something to really do some deep thinking about. On this earth was the *living* Christ with the *living* message of *living* righteousness, and the people were of a mind to receive that message. If they had, there would have been the greatest revival the world has ever witnessed. Looking back in history we can believe that if we had lived then, we certainly would have been a part of the movement Christ was leading. Wonderful indeed should have been the results.

But that mighty revival never came.

Only a very few took their stand for it.

And who prevented it?

The apostate leaders of the church they had led into apostasy.

And with what weapons did they defeat it?

They defeated it with the arguments that, irrespective of how far she had wandered away from God's righteousness, the church would always remain the object of God's supreme desire. They contended that God was fully aware of her condition and had made provision to purify and reform her. They believed that the church as *they knew and defined it* would then go through to the kingdom.

This proved to be an entirely erroneous position and it cost the ministry and everyone who followed and believed them, their eternal lives. It was a serious blunder to make. We have the witness of history to prove that. That

church as *they knew and defined it*, did not go through to the end as they were so convinced it would. It became totally rejected and cut off, and those who stayed with it were in like manner rejected and forever cut off.

This is *not* saying that the church of God is not going through to the end. The church as God knows and *defines it*, *is* going through, and all those who stay with *that* church, and are faithful, will triumph with it. The failure with the Pharisees and the people they led, was that they could not see and know *that* church. They knew and saw *a* certain church organization, and defined *that* as God's church. Then they applied the statements in the Old Testament prophecies, which were intended by God to speak only of His true church, to that which they mistakenly thought was God's church.

And so, by misapplying the statements of these prophecies to their own church organization, they were able to make a case convincing enough to lead the majority astray. How effectively they could use *Jeremiah 33:23-26* to support their opposition to Christ, provided their hearers did not question the false premise on which their arguments were based!

Let us read this passage and ask ourselves whether stronger or more definite language could be used. "Moreover the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying,

"Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the Lord hath chosen, He hath even cast them off? thus they have despised My people, that they should be no more a nation before them.

"Thus saith the Lord; If My covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth;

"Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David My servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them."

Now compare this with *Jeremiah 31:35-37*. "Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts is His name:

"If those ordinances depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever.

"Thus saith the Lord; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord."

The modern reader of the Spirit of Prophecy who seeks to disprove the message by proving the perpetuity of the church, could hardly have found a stronger statement than that. Imagine the line of reasoning the Pharisee would have used. He would ask:

"Does the sun still shine by day?"

"Yes," the answer would be.

"Does the moon shine by night at this present time?"

"Yes, it does."

"Then is it possible for God to cast off Israel for what it has done?"

Imagine how convincing this was to those people, but only because they did not understand that first they must carefully identify who Israel was before they applied the verse.

This tactic of Satan's to thwart the truth is so often used that one might think it would no longer be of any value, but in every generation when God brings forth the truth, Satan uses this weapon just as effectively as before. It was the great weapon that helped to frustrate the marvellous revival which might have been in the days of Christ and in the time of the Reformation.

This latter fact is well stated by A. T. Jones in his book *Lessons from the Reformation*, pages 103-106, as follows:

"How dismal was the effort—the failure—of the Council of Constance at reformation, when what was considered the best that it could do to save the church,—the burning of Huss and Jerome—was the worst thing that it could possibly do, for any cause or for any reason!

"The explanation of this blank incongruity, and the key of the whole vicious circle of self-involved contradictions, is in the fact that all those men who denounced the Popes and their evil practices, and the extortions and oppressions of the clergy, held that the church of which all these evils were but the expression, was the true and only church!

"Even when they were compelled to admit that the church was inextricably involved in it all, and when they were thus required to reflect even upon the church, this was always done with the reservation and apology that in spite of all this she was the true and only church.

"They denounced the *men* and the activities of the *men*, even of the Popes and the papal court, but still apologized and pleaded for *the machine*.

"They condemned the evil *practices*, but justified *the system* by which alone it was possible that those practices could not only be perpetuated, but could even exist.

"The *times* were evil, but 'the church,' which made the times what they were, was 'righteous!'

"Church-men were bad; but 'the church,' whose members and the expression of whose life those church-men essentially were, was 'good!'

"Customs were pernicious; but 'the church,' whose the customs essentially were, was 'the abode of sanctity!'

"Practices were abominable; but 'the church,' which invented many and profited by *all* of these practices, was 'holy!'

"Popes were demoniac; but 'the church,' of which the Popes were 'the head'—the acting will, the guiding mind—was 'divine!'

"See the grand churches and magnificent cathedrals! Hear the 'heavenly' music of the 'divine' chants! Catch the impressive odor of the 'holy' incense! Feel the awe of the 'solemn' services, as the richly-robed ecclesiastics minister at the 'altar,' kneel before the 'host,' and move in 'holy' procession! Think of the wide extent of her 'missions!' Behold her 'perfect organization,' by which she executes as by one man the wonders of her will, holds empires in awe, and rules the world! Isn't *that* the true and only holy church?

"The church was 'the ark of God,' the 'ship of Salvation.' The pilot, the captain, and the crew, might all be pirates, and use every motion of the ship only for piratical purposes, and load her to the sinking point with piratical plunder, and keep her ever headed straight toward perdition, yet 'the grand old ship' herself was all right and would come safely to the heavenly port. Therefore, 'cling to the ark,' 'stand by the old ship,' and you will be safe and will land at last on the heavenly shore.

"Such in essence is the conception held, and that for ages had been inculcated. . . .

"So long as this delusion was systematically inculcated, blindly received, and fondly hugged, of course reformation was impossible.

"But as soon as there arose men with the courage of conviction and the confidence of truth, and spoke out plainly and flatly that the Roman system is *not* The Church at all in any feature or in any sense, *then* The Reformation had begun.

"That is how The Reformation came. And without that The Reformation never could have come."

When I was young, I read a great deal of church history. I studied the tactics of the Roman Catholic priests and prelates to keep the people in the papal churches. In pondering these things, I marvelled at how the people could be so ignorant and enslaved as to be deceived by arguments such as the ones quoted above from A. T. Jones. But then, it was an age of serious illiteracy, of consequent ignorance, and therefore fear. Those were the "Dark Ages".

I distinctly remember that, as I read past history, I felt a comforting glow of thankfulness that those times were gone. I believed we had entered an enlightened age wherein men would quickly perceive the falsity of such arguments. But, to my intense surprise, I found that the same arguments used during Christ's, Paul's, and Luther's times, are being used with equal success today. This indicates the tragic fact that Christ's professed followers are not learning the lessons of history. In physical warfare, a general knows not to use the same tactics every time. He wisely varies his strategy with the result that the enemy cannot predict his approach. Satan does not have to take these precautions. He can see that men have not learned, so he is able to use the same tactics repeatedly with equal or even better success each

time. That he is able to do this is a sad commentary on man's failure to profit from his predecessors' errors. But these lessons must be learned. The price of failure is very high—*eternal life*.

The Pharisees and papal priests were masters at quoting the Scriptures. They could pile argument on argument to prove their point and were largely successful in convincing the majority. But none of this saved them. It is not sincerity, nor weight of argument, but *the truth* that saves. Therefore, we must firstly find the truth. Then we will have found the church and salvation.

What Then Is The Answer?

The disastrous outworking of the arguments employed by Pharisees and then papists prove beyond doubt the falsity of their contentions, but this is not enough. The arguments themselves must be examined to show *wherein* they are false.

This is the natural step to take once it has been demonstrated that because the theories advanced by the Pharisees and papists confirmed them in direct opposition to God and His faithful followers, they were decidedly and only of satanic origin.

Man is no match for Satan, whose sophistries cannot be met by human devisings. Only the Word of God can be used to meet him successfully for not even Christ, when upon this earth, would confront the adversary with any other weapon. The Scriptures expose the satanic sophistries so effectively that none who understand will be deceived.

Because the position in which Paul found himself is reproduced today, the answers he gave will resolve the same issues now. When the decision to follow the truth necessitated his separating from the Jewish organization, he was confronted with many arguments propounded by the religious teachers who advanced Old Testament Scriptures to support their contentions.

Those who today would follow the living truth will likewise find that they must leave the established church organization. Leading men will resist this, advancing Spirit of Prophecy statements to urge the idea that the church will never be replaced by any other movement. The believers can make no mistake if they respond with the same answers Paul used. *Let his answer be their answer*. They will then stand on the only safe ground there is.

In the first five verses of Romans 9, Paul confirms his great love for the Jews and his fixed conviction that God called them and gave them the treasures of the everlasting covenant.

Yet this did not prevent his departing from their organization, or from calling others to join him in this move. In *2 Corinthians* 6:14-18, he makes it clear that separation from unbelievers, as he correctly evaluated the Jews to be, was required if they would remain God's children.

The Jews did not misread Paul's evaluation of them as unbelievers, infidels, idols, unrighteousness, and darkness.

Naturally, they countered by representing themselves as being strictly obedient to the Old Testament declarations while charging Paul with making that same Scripture of none effect.

Paul correctly denied that the Scriptures had been made of none effect. It was his enemies who had misunderstood and misapplied them. He said very firmly, "Not as though the Word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.

"Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

"That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." *Romans 9:6-8.*

Paul's statement attacked the basis of the Pharisees' argument. They made no distinction between the physical and spiritual descendants of Abraham, although they were able to see differences between certain of his physical children. While they regarded themselves as Abraham's children and therefore heirs to the blessings promised to Abraham and his seed, they refused Ishmael's and Esau's offspring any right to the divine birthright.

On what basis did they do this?

The Arabs and Edomites were open rejecters of the message God had given to the Jews, so the Jewish teachers would not recognize them as having any part in God's church. In this, of course, they were right. They correctly assessed the status of these children from Abraham on the basis of spiritual, not physical, qualifications. Yet, when evaluating their own position, they pointed to their being Abraham's physical seed as the guarantee that they were also God's true children. Paul showed that this was an erroneous stand to take. "The children of the flesh," he says, "these are not the children of God."

They failed to see that long established membership in the organization, the history of which they could trace back over many generations, great zeal for the work, and a vast knowledge of Bible information, did not make them God's spiritual children. In this respect they were actually no better than the Ishmaelites and Arabs whom they openly despised and relegated to the family of the lost.

Paul emphasizes the truth that Ishmael and Isaac were brothers from the same father, yet the promises were given only to the latter. They might have argued that this was understandable in view of Ishmael's having an Egyptian bondswoman for a mother. This, however, was not the real problem as is proved by the next generation. Esau and Jacob could not have had a closer inheritance unless they had been identical instead of diversified twins. They had the same parents, conception, and birth. Yet once again, Paul reminded the Pharisees of a fact they could not

deny—that only Jacob inherited a place in God's kingdom on earth. Therefore, spiritual and not physical descent is the deciding factor.

Therefore, only if the Jews of Paul's day possessed the spirit and experience of Isaac and Jacob could they have any claim to being members of God's church. The fact that they crucified their Saviour, proved that they did not even know what the truth was. The experience of two other Old Testament characters proves that physical descent is not even necessary.

They are Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, and Ruth, the Moabitess. Neither could claim physical descent from Abraham. In fact, they came from races which greatly despised and hated the Israelites, who in turn held them in poor esteem. Yet they were taken into the family of Israel *and actually became mothers in the direct line of the Saviour*. Thus, in the most complete sense, were they the children of Abraham, for the promise was that through Abraham, in the birth of Christ, all families of the earth would be blessed. They were integrated into the commonwealth of Israel not as Gentile believers, but as Israelites, and God so fully recognized this that the holy seed was brought on down through them.

By such illustrations would God teach us that the children of flesh are not the children of God. Physical descent counts for nothing, or Ishmael's and Esau's children would have as much claim to be the children of God and Israel as Paul or the apostles, while Rahab and Ruth would be without hope.

What did Ruth and Rahab have that the Ishmaelites and Edomites never had? They had a living, spiritual connection with God. Therefore, they were His children and *thus* the children of Abraham. It becomes evident then, that the only children God recognizes as being Abraham's and Israel's, are those who have a living experience in righteousness and are faithful to His truth. No others can claim sonship with Abraham no matter what their position or power in the world might be.

In every age God has such a people, sometimes extremely obscure and small in number, but He has them. The world may at the time be filled with large organizations of long established churches, proudly claiming to be the true church as did the Jews and Catholics, and the Adventists today. But God does not walk with these bodies unless they are faithful and true to the principles of His righteousness.

Not one of His promises are for these organizations, nor were they ever intended for anybody who did not walk with God. True, these people can say that their fathers had the promises, but that was only because the fathers were faithful to God and His truth. The faithfulness of the fathers does not automatically guarantee that the promises will pass on to the children. The faithful sons of Abraham and Isaac inherited the promises, while the unfaithful ones did not.

Therefore, before the Jews in Paul's time ever dared to claim the promises of Isaiah and Jeremiah as we have previously quoted, they

should *first* have determined by an examination of their faithfulness, if they were indeed the children of Abraham, // they were Israel, *if* they were Jerusalem.

In like manner, those who would quote the many Spirit of Prophecy statements assuring that the church will never fall, should pause before applying them to any given organization. These inspired words were never intended to prove who the church is. They are given to show the future of the church only after it has been accurately identified. Only when the assembly of believers is found to be walking in the full light of present truth with an experience to match, can its members claim to be God's people.

It is not enough for the Seventh-day Adventist organization to be able to point to the Spirit of Prophecy and the Bible on their shelves and in their book shops.

The Jews in Christ's day could do that also, for the Old Testament was the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy to them. But this did not make them God's church, nor did it save them.

It is not enough to point back to the accomplishments and the Lord's evident blessings on the work of the Advent fathers as proof that today their children are the church of God.

Remember that the Jews could do all that too.

It is not enough to be able to point to the prophetic proof that the Adventist church rose at the right time with the right message for the hour.

The Jews could do that too.

It is not enough, when grown large and prosperous, to claim all this as the result of God's blessing, and therefore proof that the Lord is still with them.

Remember that the Jews could do that too. So can the Roman Catholics. No church is larger, more prosperous, or powerful than the papal church today.

All these things can be claimed by those who are the children of the flesh. They have them by virtue of physical inheritance from their fathers. But, "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God." Romans 9:8.

One can have all the above without being a child of God or a true member of His church. It is spiritual connection and faithfulness to God's truth which identifies the one true church. Will men never learn the correct way to determine where the church is? The common practice is to name the church and then claim that the truth of God and its attendant blessings and promises are therein. But this is in the reverse order. Firstly the truth must be found and then the church has been identified. That is the whole point of the argument God gave Paul in answer to the Pharisees' charges.

Another Look At The Situation

As seen in the previous discussion, the question at issue is really what and where the church is at any given point in history. It is evident that the true church must *first* be found *before* we begin to apply the various Scriptures and quotations which speak of her eternal perpetuity and favour with God. But a moment's reflection will reveal that the arguments of those who oppose separation, whether in the days of Paul, the Roman Catholic supremacy of the Dark Ages, or today, are based upon *the assumption* that a certain body of people is the church. No one is allowed to question this idea. No matter how deviant from the path of righteousness a church may be, she is the church, and therefore all statements written in the Word in regard to God's true church are applied to her and to no other body. This is the reasoning. But do not allow it to deceive and mislead, for the Pharisees in Christ's time lost their eternal life *through this* very reasoning.

There was given to Sister White in the earliest days of the third angel's message, a vision which accurately defined the history of the true church from that day through to the kingdom of God. It is found in *Early Writings*, 14, and reads as follows: "While I was praying at the family altar, the Holy Ghost fell upon me, and I seemed to be rising higher and higher, far above the dark world. I turned to look for the Advent people in the world, but could not find them, when a voice said to me, 'Look again, and look a little higher.' At this I raised my eyes, and saw a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were travelling to the city, which was at the farther end of the path. They had a bright light set up behind them at the beginning of the path, which an angel told me was the midnight cry. This light shone all along the path, and gave light for their feet so that they might not stumble. If they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city, they were safe. But soon some grew weary, and said the city was a great way off, and they expected to have entered it before. Then Jesus would encourage them by raising His glorious right arm, and from His arm came a light which waved over the Advent band, and they shouted, 'Alleluia!' Others rashly denied the light behind them, and said that it was not God that had led them out so far. The light behind them went out, leaving their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and lost sight of the mark and of Jesus, and fell off the path down into the dark and wicked world below."

For some reason, a portion of the original vision was not included in *Early Writings*. The full account is published by F. D. Nichol in *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, 211. The extra portion reads: "It was just as impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the City, as all the wicked world which God had rejected. They *fell all along the path one after another*, until we heard the voice of God like many waters, which gave us the day and hour of Jesus' coming." (Emphasis ours.)

The complete statement provides an accurate portrayal of the journey to be undertaken by God's true children from the close of the two thousand three hundred year prophecy to the second advent. They travel a straight and narrow path cast high above the dark and wicked world below. Not all who begin to walk the way to the kingdom, abide on this pathway. From time to time some fall off it down into the darkness below, never to return. At the beginning of the path is located a bright light that shines along its length. This is the truth contained in the midnight cry which sounded immediately prior to October 22, 1844, and contained all the light already revealed through the first and second angels. This shaft of light was as narrow and straight as the path, so that anyone not on the path was not illuminated by it. Therefore, those who fell off the path likewise fell out of the beam of light and were enclosed in darkness.

The message of the vision is unmistakable. Only two classes of people are revealed—God's faithful children and the dwellers in the dark and wicked world. To be among the former was not a matter of being a member of a specific organization; it required remaining on the path and staying in the light. All others walked in darkness and could not be recognized as God's true children. Therefore, they were not the church of God either. The only ones to reach and occupy the kingdom are those who remain on the pathway and in the light.

If the facts revealed in this communication from God were carefully relied upon to guide in determining where His true church and people are to be found at present, no one would misidentify the true church. The only question that would be asked is, "What people are faithfully walking in the light given back then, with their feet firmly placed upon the pathway seen in the vision?" When a truly honest answer to that question is found, the time will have come to apply the many statements in the Scriptures and Spirit of Prophecy which assure that the true church will never fall but go through to the end.

It is a mistake to search for an organization bearing a certain name simply because the true followers of the Saviour bore that name in the past. If this is the guiding principle then we need only search for the church named Israel, since it was the great original organization which God called after the flood. But, there are very few who seek for true spiritual fellowship from this source, for it is well known that the Jews long ago rejected their final opportunities to repent and have been separated from God. Never again will He be able to work through them.

It would be well if the reason for not joining the Jewish organization was faithfully followed through in choosing the movement with which one will stand. Perversely and inconsistently however, people will elect to leave one group because of their apostasy from the truth, but will remain with another equally apostate. They will misapply statements written about God's true people, to those who still carry the name but have not retained the truths

and principles of the former generation. These have no right to claim the promises and assurances contained in the prophetic utterances for they are to be applied only to the people who have remained on the path and in the light. They alone are the ones who must not be called Babylon. If anyone comes proclaiming that this body is Babylon, then he is neither to be received nor followed. God has not sent such an one. All other organizations can be called any name one cares to justifiably attach to them provided they are not declared to be God's church. They can qualify for this only if they are on the path and in the light.

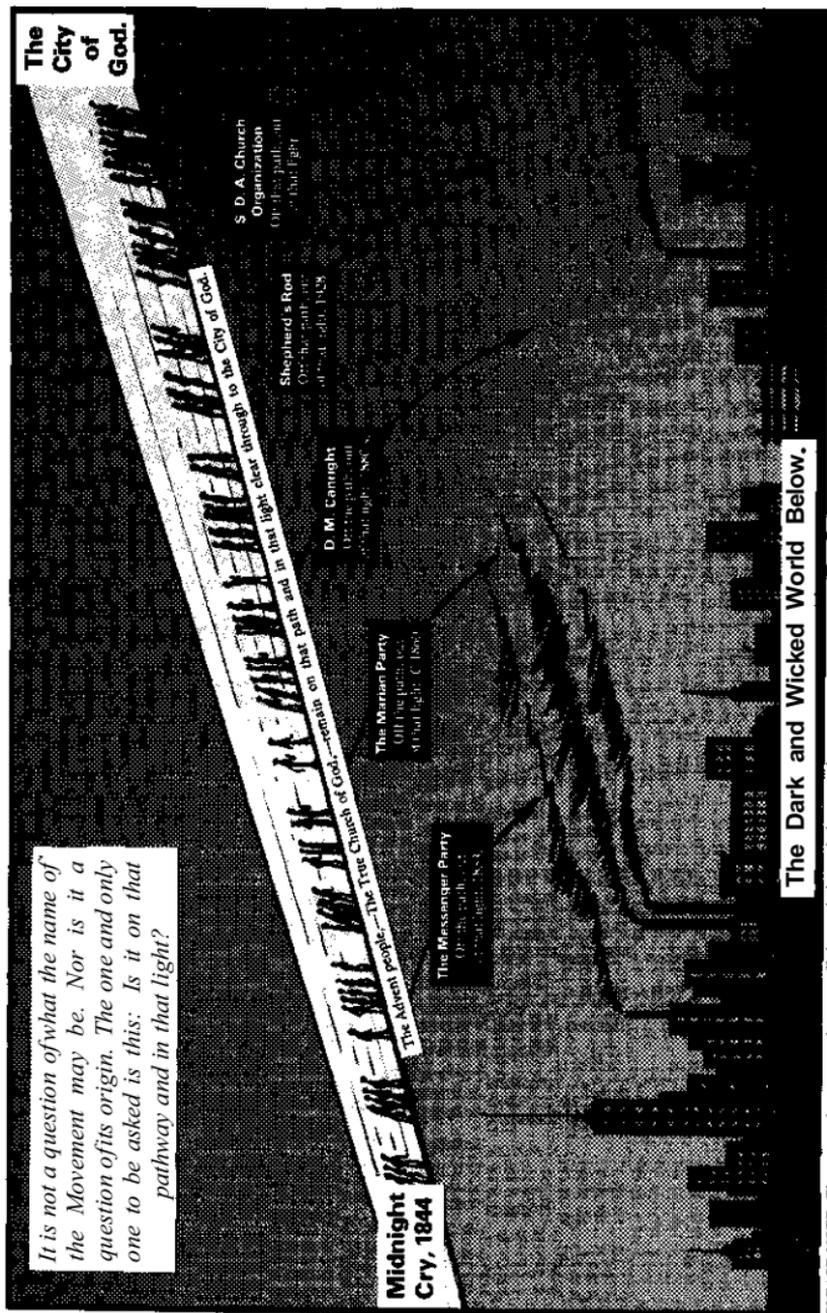
It is critically important that one be able to identify the true from the false. Every movement loudly clamours their claims to being God's true people while urging all to join them, but one must not allow claims to impress and guide. Each movement must be assessed according to Scripture tests and nothing else. As time passes, continual reassessment must be made to ensure that the church remains true. When it has manifestly departed from God, the sincere believer must be open to Christ's leadings, so that when He raises a new movement to take the place of the decadent one, they will follow on with Him.

This is a test of loyalty which has already been experienced by Advent believers a number of times in their short history. One of the earliest took place with the rise of the *Messenger Party* which began in Jackson, Michigan, in 1853. They departed from the light shining on the pathway and sought to draw all the Advent believers with them. Once they left, they never returned. At the time, every Adventist had to assess the validity of the claims advanced by these people. They had to decide which was the true church. The only way they could do that was by determining which group was faithful to the light of the midnight cry.

A few years later came the Marian Party, which continues to this day as the *Seventh-day Church of God*. Others followed. In the 1880's came D. M. Canright and E. B. Jones. During the time Waggoner and Jones were proclaiming the third angel's message in verity, various individuals arose to lead folk away from the living truth and the movement where it was being taught. Later still came the *Shepherd's Rod* movement, which, despite serious problems, still continues.

In every one of these separations, those who were true to God remained where the truth continued. The numbers of those who stood on one side or the other are not a determining factor. The only guiding principle is the consideration of those who remain in God's light and on His pathway.

During the 1950's, there was another parting of the ways in the Adventist church. For the second and last time, God brought the third angel's message in verity to the church, but, sad to say, they determinedly rejected it. Some saw the light of the message and were greatly blessed by it. When these people saw the attitude of the authorities, they were



PLEASE NOTE: There are other groups that got off the path beyond the ones shown.

THE TRAVELS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD TO THE CITY.

troubled about what to do, especially when pressure was placed upon them to either give up their faith or lose their church membership. Many yielded to this pressure and returned to the fold, but others declared it was not important how many stood for the truth. To them, the only guiding principle was the correct one. * They saw with great clarity that the church was no longer on the pathway or in the light and so was not immune to the charge that she had become Babylon. The prophecy that, unless she severed all relationship to the world she would become Babylon, had been fulfilled. In 1891 the warning was sounded but has been unheeded. "The world must not be introduced into the church, and married to the church, forming a bond of unity. Through this means the church will become indeed corrupt, and, as stated in *Revelation*, 'a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.' " *Testimonies to Ministers*, 265.

Only Babylon the great becomes the cage of every unclean and hateful bird, yet this is what the church was told she would become if she did not sever all connection with the world. Such a statement denies the idea that the church organization must necessarily always be God's church.

In Conclusion

Each has only one soul to save or to lose. Therefore, in every crisis great care must be taken to ensure that the right side is chosen. Vital assistance is provided in an accurate understanding of the lessons of history for Satan does not change his tactics or his arguments from generation to generation. The advantage of history is that a person is provided with the outworking of the position taken, thus clearly demonstrating whether it leads to heaven or to separation from God.

For instance, the Jews took the stand that they were always to be favoured as God's people no matter what course they chose, but history showed that this led to complete separation from God and cost them their eternal life. Others carefully considered the spiritual relation of the church to the truth, and, when they found that the church had apostatized beyond recall, elected to follow Christ. The chronicles of time unerringly show that whenever they courageously did this, they prospered, were blessed and led by God, and accomplished mighty things for Him.

Everyone must face the same test at some time or another. Let it be made with great care, much prayer, and careful consideration of divine principles and the lessons of history.

It is not the purpose of this publication to prove that any particular organization today is the true church of God. It is designed to show the dangerous fallacies resident in a particular line of argument, thus removing

*A comprehensive discussion and evaluation of the issues faced during the 1950's is in *The Destiny of a Movement*, by F. T. Wright, available from Destiny Press.

the objections levelled at our present separation stand. If, as a result of reading this, you find yourself evaluating every movement only on the basis of whether it is on the path and in the light, then this study will have achieved its purpose.

But if you persist in clinging to the notion that a certain church organization, because it was once truly God's church, must still, by virtue of its clinging to the same name, be the true church of God, then your understanding is no better than the Jews' and the papists' and unfortunately you will suffer the same separation from God that they experienced with its attendant loss of eternal life.

That is too high a price to have to pay. May it be that you will find the people who today are on the path and in the light and be numbered among them.