

# Reform

Habitat

Clothing

Cleanliness

Food

Thoughts

Steward-  
ship

Language

Work

Time  
management

Exercise

Partnership

Contact  
with others

*The Principles of Reform*

*Part 1*



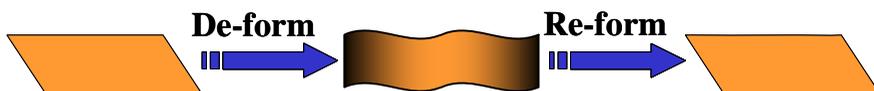
## *Reform – from where, and where to?*

In the past, many people who wanted to be faithful to God have often seen the need to practice reform in their daily lives in order to prepare for heaven. Their goal was to bring their eating, drinking, clothing, contact with others, and so forth, into obedience to Christ. They viewed their task as a privilege and took up their work joyfully.

Unfortunately, reform has often been seen as a burden by professing Christians. And many people today feel that it is a limitation on their natural wishes and tendencies, an unnecessary burden of the law, and an unwelcome intruder.

But do we understand what reform really means? What is its purpose, and how does it apply to our lives? These questions need to be answered so that, as believers, we can render intelligent service to God.

To "re-form" means to form something new, to change its form, or to return something back into its original condition. What was the original form of humanity? It was the image of God, in which we were created. Sin has deformed this image, and the purpose of the gospel is to re-form us, or to form us anew.



The image of God - the original form - was lost. Humanity was deformed.

When the original form is restored, and the image of God is renewed in us, we are reformed.

The "image of God" refers not only to a copy of the dignity and grace of His outward appearance, but in particular to a reproduction of His character - His way of thinking, feeling, and acting; His whole Being. When God created Adam and Eve, He gave them the ability to communicate with their Creator, to grasp His thoughts, to understand His purposes, and to carry out His will. Adam spoke with God and understood why He had created things

with a particular form, and he was therefore able to give a fitting name to every creature on earth. He was one with God in thought, feeling, and action. He trusted God, and knew what his place was in the world that the Creator had made. As he came forth from the Father's hand, his whole being was filled with harmony and peace.

But everything changed when Adam and Eve consented to sin. God had given our first parents the freedom to make their own decisions, and when they made the wrong decision, against their better judgment, they were brought into miserable captivity to sin. Then they could no longer understand God - His thoughts, feelings, and actions became a riddle for them.

In order to give His deceived children a second opportunity, God gave them a time of probation. During our probationary period He offers us the gospel - the only means to end this sad condition of confusion. To everyone who chooses to accept it, the power of God is able to bring the thoughts into right lines again - into harmony with the character of our loving Creator.



Reform is a part of this healing process. It relates to all the practical areas of life such as eating, drinking, clothing, hygiene, order, sexuality, social contact, the use of money and time, and so on. Reform does not play the leading role, but it does play an important part in the way of return - a part that God's children need to understand.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

*Romans 12:1.*

## *Fear of Reform*

### **Fear of Reform**

Although reform is intended to bring us healing in all the different areas of our lives, it has often been the cause of fear and uncertainty. There are various reasons for this.

The first reason is the fear of the unknown. Human nature is naturally resistant to everything that seems foreign and uncomfortable. We are reluctant to change. Why should we learn new and difficult things when the accustomed ways have seemed to be so good? Every change in our habits is strenuous, and costs us an effort, and we usually recoil from such a step. Some will even quote the Bible as a justification for their unwillingness to change: "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on." *Matthew 6:25*. "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking." *Romans 14:17*.

For those who are afraid of uncomfortable or inconvenient changes, and do not want to think about food, clothing, or the other necessities of life, these statements are understood to mean that it is not necessary to be concerned about such "earthly" things. But is this the correct interpretation? Can we really eat and drink whatever we want? Can we dress ourselves as we please, without asking what is right in the eyes of God?

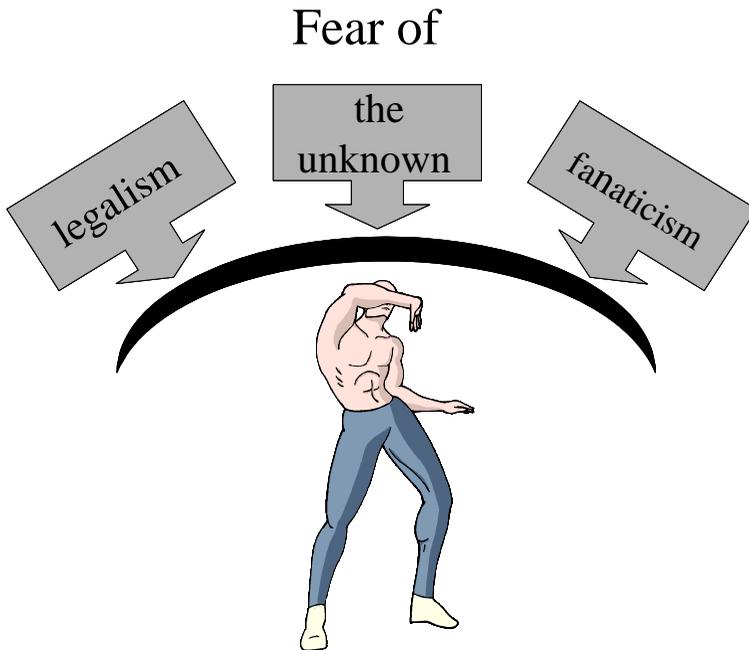
The Bible says, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." *1Corinthians 10:31*. We are to ask what God's will is in these matters, and keep our body in such a condition that it can serve as a temple for the Holy Spirit. "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." *1Corinthians 6:19-20*.

"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."

*1Corinthians 3:16, 17.*

## Legalism

In the days of Jesus, the Pharisees and Sadducees had so many dietary and hygiene laws that their lives were quite a struggle. Nothing was more important to them than the meticulous fulfillment of the canon of their own creation. Even today people train themselves with discipline and strictness in order to meet the supposed requirements of the law, although in the course of time, the emphasis is laid more and more on the training of others. This development results in self-righteousness, legalism, and formality. Such a spirit has always led to the destruction of faith and Christian fellowship, and it is appropriate that believers are afraid of it.



"The effort to earn salvation by one's own works inevitably leads men to pile up human exactions as a barrier against sin. For, seeing that they fail to keep the law, they will devise rules and regulations of their

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own to force themselves to obey. All this turns the mind away from God to self. His love dies out of the heart, and with it perishes love for his fellow men. A system of human invention, with its multitudinous exactions, will lead its advocates to judge all who come short of the prescribed human standard. The atmosphere of selfish and narrow criticism stifles the noble and generous emotions, and causes men to become self-centered judges and petty spies."

*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, 123.1.*

### **Extremism and Fanaticism**

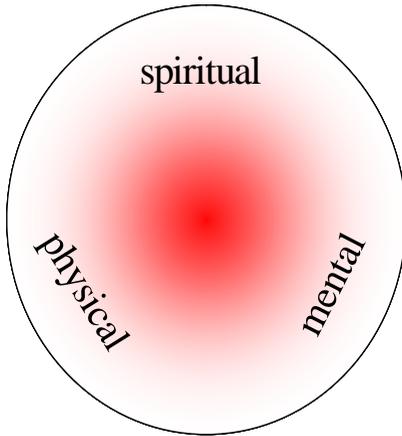
Another counterfeit of reform, which is similar and closely allied to the spirit of legalism, is extremism. That is when emphasis is laid on particular aspects of the reform without paying attention to the entire picture. Some people develop their own, favorite ideas and then stress that these are the only instruments of salvation that can make us holy. The result of this is fanaticism, or religious extremes.

Our present society is afraid of this evil, although very few people know what extremism really is. For instance, a person may be viewed as being fanatical for simply doing something differently from the majority, especially if it is done from conviction. But religious fanaticism is more than being zealous and different. Instead of gaining a healthy, balanced picture of the divine will, some religionists make a standard for themselves, and for others, from their own one-sided and narrow-minded opinions. In doing so they make a prison for themselves, which finally replaces everything else, including the gospel. Fanaticism substitutes its own concepts, regulations, and traditions for the simple word of God.

"But ministers who bear the last message of mercy to fallen men must utter no random works; they must not open doors whereby Satan shall find access to human minds. It is not our work to experiment, to study out something new and startling that will create excitement. Satan is watching his chance to take advantage of anything of this order that he may bring in his deceiving elements. The Holy Spirit's moving upon the human agents will keep the mind well balanced."

*Selected Messages 2:60.1.*

## *A Harmonious Whole*



Each of us should be a harmonious whole, the spiritual, mental, and physical areas forming an inseparable unity.

Reform is, in fact, a balanced work that involves the whole being. Human beings not only possess reasoning powers, they also have feelings and a physical nature as well as a spiritual nature. Reform will only lose its threatening appearance when all these areas are in harmony with one another and counterbalance each other. Beauty then shines from this harmonious balance, which attracts others and can point them to Christ.

"Created to be 'the image and glory of God' (1 Corinthians 11:7), Adam and Eve had received endowments not unworthy of their high destiny. Graceful and symmetrical in form, regular and beautiful in feature, their countenances glowing with the tint of health and the light of joy and hope, they bore in outward resemblance the likeness of their Maker. Nor was this likeness manifest in the physical nature only. Every faculty of mind and soul reflected the Creator's glory."

*Education, 20.2.*

"He who places himself unreservedly under the guidance of the Spirit of God, will find that his mind expands and develops. He obtains an education in the service of God which is not one-sided and deficient, developing a one-sided character, but one which results in symmetry and completeness."

*Selected Messages 1:338.2.*

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Achieving a harmonious balance entails evaluating each area of life in relation to the whole picture of the human being. Let us see this principle illustrated in the example of food:

- Food should not only be healthy – that is, it should contain all the necessary nutrients and cover the needs of the physical area – but
- It should also be tasty and look appetizing, so that it can be eaten with pleasure.
- When the food is in harmony with the diet that our Creator has given, it can be adapted to the needs of people in different circumstances. The simplest food can be a witness to point others to the loving Provider of humanity.

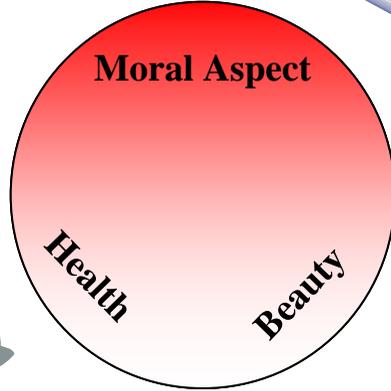
When people emphasize one single aspect at the cost of the whole picture, they are simply limiting themselves and they will surely reap adverse consequences.

The same applies to clothing. The clothes we wear should not just be healthy and comfortable, they should also fit well, look becoming, be appropriate for their purpose, and morally correct.

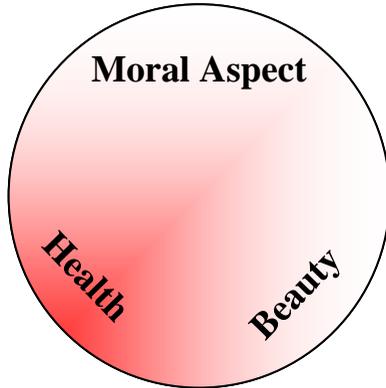
- If we were to consider only the moral aspect of clothing, our dress would look as if it came from a cloister, and we would build up a wall between ourselves and others.
- If we consider only comfort, then we would probably feel best in a sack-like dress that lacks form.
- If we think only of beauty and pleasing others, we would become prisoners of fashion and vanity.

An independent, balanced personality, which is also expressed in dress, can only be developed when the person's entire life is taken into account.

"To transgress His law, physical, mental, or moral, is to place one's self out of harmony with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin." *Education*, 99.2.

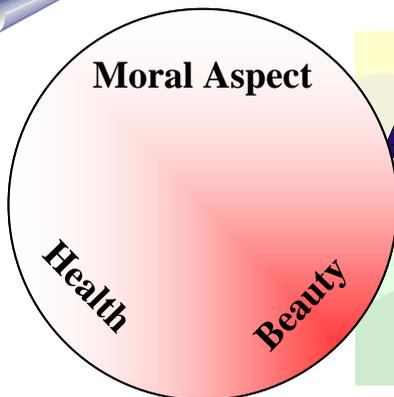


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we would become prisoners of fashion and vanity

### *The Daily School*

These Bible verses lead us to the question: how are eating, dressing and all the other areas of human life connected with the work of redemption?

Before sin ruled over humanity, God told Adam and Eve what they could and could not eat. In the Garden of Eden there was a tree of whose fruit they were forbidden to partake. God Himself had created human be-

“We sometimes hear the questions:  
Am I never to do as I please?  
Am I never to have my own way?  
Am I always to be restrained?  
Can I never act in accordance with my inclinations?”  
*Messages to Young People*, 68.1.

ings with the inherent need of food, and He used this very need to test them and to teach them essential lessons of obedience. The test they were given was not because the forbidden fruit was unhealthy or even poisonous. Nor was it a question of their not having enough to eat - they did not fall into sin because of hunger. It was more a test of whether Adam and Eve would exercise respect for what did not belong to them. And indeed, the knowledge of good and evil was an area that belonged only to God. They did not need such knowledge in order to be happy. God asked Adam and Eve to exercise trust and obedience in just this one area. He asked them to respect Him, His property and His word.

God's goal for humanity includes righteousness, peace, joy, and freedom.

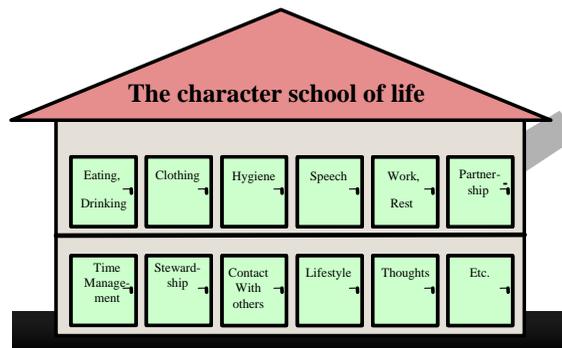
The entire Garden of Eden was a school for our first parents. But curiosity, conceit, and the desire for God's position, led Eve to relinquish her respect and intrude into the area of another. She began to serve herself. Adam also chose to go this way and, instead of accepting the loss of his wife and leaving the problem in God's hands, he too was unfaithful to the Lord.

The test in Eden had nothing to do with the food itself, but with maintaining the image of God.

As

### Training our capacity

- we
- To be active
  - To cooperate
  - To make decisions



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look back at the history of God's people it becomes very apparent that God frequently used the school of eating and drinking in order to teach His people important lessons. In fact, all the practical aspects of life can be seen as subjects, or classrooms, in the great school of life. This school is concerned with learning and copying the character of God. Eating, drinking, clothing, hygiene, order, sexuality, social contact, the use of money and time, and so on, are all classrooms in which we are to learn what could not otherwise be taught us.

"Eating, drinking, and dressing all have a direct bearing upon our spiritual advancement."  
*Counsels on Diet and Foods, 57.2.*

### Some Examples of the Food Classroom

The tree of knowledge

Esau and the lentil stew

The manna and water

Food offerings

Gideon's army

Elijah at the Brook Cherith

The widow of Zarephath

David and the showbread

Daniel and

his three friends

John the Baptist's diet

The temptation of Christ

The wedding at Cana

Feeding of

the five thousand

The Lord's Supper

*Genesis 2:16, 17*

*Genesis 25:29 ff*

*Numbers 11:1-6; 21:5*

*Leviticus 2:1 ff*

*Judges 7:1 ff*

*1Kings 17:3 ff*

*1Kings 17:9 ff*

*1Samuel 21:7;*

*Matthew 12:3, 4*

*Daniel 1:8 ff*

*Matthew 3:4*

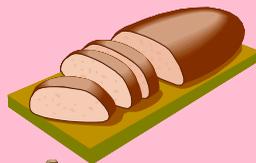
*Matthew 4:1 ff*

*John 2:1 ff*

*Matthew 14:13 ff*

*Matthew 26:26;*

*1Corinthians 11:17 ff*



## *Some Examples of the Dress Classroom*

The coverings of fig leaves

Tunics of skin

Joseph's tunic of many colors

Take your sandals off your feet

The priest's clothing

The Israelites' clothing

Men and women's clothing

Achan and the Babylonian garment

Elijah's mantle

The prophet John's clothing

The wedding garment

Jesus' one-piece garment

The prodigal son's new garment

Jesus' graveclothes

Fine apparel

Laodicea

The harlot on the beast

Fine linen (righteousness)

*Genesis* 3:7

*Genesis* 3:21

*Genesis* 37:3

*Exodus* 3:5;

*Joshua* 5:15

*Exodus* 28:1 ff

*Numbers* 15:37 ff

*Deuteronomy* 22:5

*Joshua* 7

*2 Kings* 2:1 ff

*Matthew* 3:4

*Matthew* 22:1 ff

*Matthew* 27:35

*Luke* 15:22

*John* 20:6-8

*James* 2:1 ff

*Revelation* 3:17, 18

*Revelation* 17:4

*Revelation* 19:8



## *The Junics of Skin*

Let us deepen our understanding that every need we have and every task we are faced with is a school which God has given us for our own benefit. To do this we will look at some more examples from Bible history.

As studied above, God began using the practical aspects of daily life to educate His children in the Garden of Eden. And even immediately after their fall, despite the changed circumstances, God continued with His teaching methods. After Adam and Eve's sin had separated them from God, they noticed that something was missing - their former robe of light. So they went to work to make a fitting covering for their nakedness. God had made them rulers of nature and they knew how to handle the gifts of nature skillfully, so they made themselves suitable clothes from fig leaves. We can be sure that these were not some kind of primitive aprons, as often depicted in children's Bible books, but instead they would have been well thought out, practical articles of clothing covering their outward nakedness. Nevertheless, their efforts were insufficient. When their Creator visited them as usual in the evening, they hid themselves because they were ashamed.

"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden." *Genesis 3:7, 8.*

Why were they ashamed, and why did they hide themselves although they had covered their nakedness? They still were naked and they knew it!

"So he [Adam] said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.'" *Genesis 3:10.*

Adam and Eve felt their separation from God. They no longer fully comprehended Him, and could not communicate with Him properly any more. When God called them they finally responded, but they accused one another, and above all, God.

The fig-leaves did not solve the problem. Because of His great love for them, God gave Adam and Eve other garments that did provide a solution. A lamb had to die so that they could wear these clothes (see *Genesis 3:21*). God used their need of clothing to show them that sin made the death of

His Son necessary. Only through the cross is it possible for humanity to come into harmony with God again. Only when we give up our own solutions and accept God's solution can we find righteousness, peace and joy again. This was the lesson God wanted to teach the first couple in the classroom of clothing.



"The white robe of innocence was worn by our first parents when they were placed by God in holy Eden. They lived in perfect conformity to the will of God. All the strength of their affections was given to their heavenly Father. A beautiful soft light, the light of God, enshrouded the holy pair. This robe of light was a symbol of their spiritual garments of heavenly innocence. Had they remained true to God it would ever have continued to enshroud them. But when sin entered, they severed their connection with God, and the light that had encircled them departed. Naked and ashamed, they tried to supply the place of the heavenly garments by sewing together fig leaves for a covering.

"This is what the transgressors of God's law have done ever since the day of Adam and Eve's disobedience. They have sewed together fig leaves to cover the nakedness caused by transgression. They have worn the garments of their own devising, by works of their own they have tried to cover their sins, and make themselves acceptable with God.

"But this they can never do. Nothing can man devise to supply the place of his lost robe of innocence. No fig-leaf garment, no worldly citizen dress, can be worn by those who sit down with Christ and angels at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

"Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God's presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul. 'I counsel thee,' He says, 'to buy of Me . . . white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.' Rev. 3:18."

*Christ's Object Lessons, 310.4–311.3.*

## *In the Wilderness*

When God freed His people from Egypt He led them through the Red Sea "to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai." *Exodus* 16:1. On the way God made the bitter waters sweet so that the Israelites would learn to sweeten their wandering through the exercise of trust and thankfulness. See *Exodus* 15:22–25. Then they murmured again, this time because they were afraid their food would not last, and God gave them manna to eat. See *Exodus* 16:2 ff. He also gave them directions about how to gather the manna, and left them to prepare it. But some of the people thought they knew better and saved some manna for the following day. Their unholy ambition was, however, not rewarded. In the final analysis, each person had the same amount of manna, and those who had tried to save some for the next day were bitterly disappointed - their provision went rotten and became a health risk for the entire camp. But each Friday, when God preserved the provision of manna for the Sabbath, it did not turn bad.

"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.'"

*Exodus* 16:4.

God provided His people with manna for forty long years of wandering. It was an invaluable gift that demonstrated God's dependability, love, and dedication to His people. The provision of manna was also a test of God's people, and a means of instructing them in patience, gratefulness, trust, obedience, and faithfulness. The daily provision of food, and the continual supply of water from the Rock, taught them to trust God in temporal as well as eternal matters. These practical lessons for Israel also contain precious instruction for God's children today.

"The history of the wilderness life of Israel was chronicled for the benefit of the Israel of God to the close of time. The record of God's dealings with the wanderers of the desert in all their marchings to and fro, in their exposure to hunger, thirst, and weariness, and in the striking manifestations of His power for their relief, is fraught with warning and instruction for His

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people in all ages. The varied experience of the Hebrews was a school of preparation for their promised home in Canaan. God would have His people in these days review with a humble heart and teachable spirit the trials through which ancient Israel passed, that they may be instructed in their preparation for the heavenly Canaan." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 293.1.

"Many look back to the Israelites, and marvel at their unbelief and murmuring, feeling that they themselves would not have been so ungrateful; but when their faith is tested, even by little trials, they manifest no more faith or patience than did ancient Israel. When brought into strait places, they murmur at the process by which God has chosen to purify them. Though their present needs are supplied, many are unwilling to trust God for the future, and they are in constant anxiety lest poverty shall come upon them, and their children shall be left to suffer. Some are always anticipating evil or magnifying the difficulties that really exist, so that their eyes are blinded to the many blessings which demand their gratitude. The obstacles they encounter, instead of leading them to seek help from God, the only Source of strength, separate them from Him, because they awaken unrest and repining." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 293.2.

### *The Sanctuary Service*

In the Old Testament there are many other people whose lives illustrate God's methods of teaching these truths embodied in reform. For example, Elijah who was brought food by the ravens; the widow of Zarephath whose life was saved by her spirit of sacrifice; Daniel who refused to bow to the

"In the building of the sanctuary as a dwelling place for God, Moses was directed to make all things according to the pattern of things in the heavens. God called him into the mount, and revealed to him the heavenly things, and in their similitude the tabernacle, with all that pertained to it, was fashioned.

"So to Israel, whom He desired to make His dwelling place, He revealed His glorious ideal of character."

*Education*, 35.2, 3.



God revealed His glorious ideal of character to the people of Israel through the sanctuary

Babylonian philosophy even at the table; Elisha who received a double portion of Elijah's spirit and took up his mantle; Achan who had to die because of his desire for a Babylonian garment; the prophets of God whose faithfulness was also expressed in their clothing; and many more. But apart from all these examples we also find a clear illustration of reform principles in the sanctuary, both in its original form as a portable tent, and later as a stone building.

God gave the believers of those times a special field of activity in the building of the sanctuary, as well as in its services. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 321–325.)

In this school, the people were required to exercise their skills and their organization. The work had to be planned and coordinated - wood and metalwork had to be done, cloth had to be woven, skins had to be tanned, dyes had to be used, and so on. In all this activity, they were not to work just as their imaginations suggested - they had to build according to the pattern that was shown to Moses in the mount, which he in turn faithfully passed on to them. Their skills were to be coupled with obedience and consecration.

Similarly, when the temple was built later on, the people were not to

"The Jewish temple was built of hewn stones quarried out of the mountains; and every stone was fitted for its place in the temple, hewed, polished, and tested before it was brought to Jerusalem. And when all were brought to the ground, the building went together without the sound of ax or hammer. This building represents God's spiritual temple, which is composed of material gathered out of every nation, and tongue, and people, of all grades, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned."

*Testimonies for the Church* 9:180.2.

work in any way they pleased, nor where they pleased. Everything had to be prepared so that the work on the sanctuary could be carried out without a single stroke of the hammer. They were to be deeply impressed with the realization that their part of the work was not the most important. The presence of God among them was the main goal, and this could be fulfilled only through their respect for Him. Furthermore it pointed to the fact that we are hewn out of the quarry of this earth and shaped, so that we will be finished stones ready to be used in the heavenly building when we are translated.

The daily sacrifices that pointed to Christ lay at the heart of the sanctuary service. In the exercise of these services God attached great importance to the priest's clothing, a certain form of washing, the cleanliness of the articles, eating regulations, and a particular form of communication between the sinner, the priest, and Himself.

All these are areas of our daily sphere of activity. Through the sanctuary service God gave the day-to-day food, clothing, hygiene, and work, a special meaning. He revealed that He has given us these daily tasks in order to draw us nearer to Himself. In all these classrooms, which all belong to the school of character formation, we are to learn of God and become one with Him. We are not to please ourselves, but through the principles of reform we are to gain the blessings God has designed for us in all these areas of daily life.

To be continued ...

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Sabbath Rest Advent Church  
Waldstraße 37  
57520 Dickendorf

Tel.: 02747-9201-0  
Fax: 02747-2647  
Sabbath@sabbath-rest-advent.org