

"Watchman,
what of the night?"

"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
the hour and the end!"

Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)

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Editor's Preface

A doctrine once held by the Church and included as a part of their Fundamental Statements of Belief until 1930, is reviewed in this issue. Many of us hold a limited view of the "new birth." Not so the pioneers of the Advent Movement. They perceived that, as Jesus said, His kingdom was not of this world. Thus to be born again meant more than a spiritual experience in this world. They believed Paul when he wrote, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are all men most miserable" (I Cor. 15:19). The application of the more comprehensive perception of what the new birth is, involves the 1888 message which God gave to this Church. These factors are discussed in the first article.

Just as the first article was being completed, the January issue of *Spectrum* was received. [This was in April] The resume on the "break-away" churches in Adventism - five at the time of the report in *Spectrum* - caught our eye. Realizing that it contained more data than we had been able to present in the series on "Some Assessments" in previous issues of *WVN*, we thought a summary of the report would be of interest to our readers. We have designated it as a "postscript."

In January, we had observed a full page advertisement in *Christianity Today*, of a special satellite program to be sponsored by the Ministerial Department of the General Conference, and aired from the Pioneer Memorial Church on the campus of Andrews University. We were grateful when some friends called and asked if we would like to see a video they had made of the four hour presentation. After seeing this presentation, we had to ask ourselves, why this emphasis on Easter? While various things were done and said during these four hours which were questionable, we have not commented upon them in the third article but rather focused on the significance of the broadcast in the light of what the speakers said, and its relationship to the special message which had been committed in sacred trust to the Church. We also set forth the meaning of the resurrection in our *daily* Christian experience.



The New Birth

In 1872, "A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practised by The Seventh-day Adventists" was printed on the Steam Press in Battle Creek Michigan. It was prefaced with these words:

In presenting to the public this synopsis of our faith, we wish it distinctly understood that we have no articles of faith, creed, or discipline, aside from the Bible. We do not put forth this as having any authority with our people, nor is it designed to secure uniformity among them, as a system of faith, but is a brief statement of what is, and has been, with great unanimity, held by them.

Statement V reads:

That the new birth comprises the entire change necessary to fit us for the kingdom of God, and consists of two parts: first, a moral change, wrought by conversion and a Christian life; second, a physical change at the second coming of Christ, whereby, if dead, we are raised incorruptible, and if living, are changed to immortality in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. John 3:3, 6; Luke 20:36.

This position remained constant in successive Statements of Belief with only the text upon which the last part of the statement is based - I Cor. 15:51-52 - being added. The exception to this unanimity was the aberrant Battle Creek Church's Statement released in 1894. Not until the 1931 Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, was the original altered to read:

That every person, in order to obtain salvation, must experience the new birth. This comprises an entire transformation of life and character by the re-creative power of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (John 3:16; Matt. 18:3; Acts 2:37-39)

In contemplating this change, certain questions come to mind. The two Statements, though related, are not saying the same thing. One is saying much more than the other. Is the change inconsequential? The 1931 Statement does speak of the Resurrection, reading - "Immortality is bestowed upon the righteous at the second coming of Christ, when the righteous dead are raised from the grave and the living righteous translated to meet the Lord. Then it is that those accounted faithful, 'put on immortality.'" (#9) The original Statement followed the distinction of the Biblical text between those who died, and those who are translated without seeing death. The 1931 Statement ignores the distinction. Again, is the distinction made in I Corinthians 15 of vital moment?

The Scripture focuses the end, the objective, of the "new birth" experience as "the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). He who came to provide for man an entrance into that king-

dom, clearly stated - "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). It is obvious that no one is experiencing in this life, either in his spiritual experience, or in his environment, what the Biblical descriptions envision the new world to be. What the "kingdom of God" will be like, escapes us both in the spiritual and in what we know the present reality of life to be. We see it only by faith. Constantly we sense a need, unless we are immersed in Laodiceanism - being in need of nothing.

Unless we perceive the full implication of what this dual aspect of the new birth means, we cannot understand what Paul is saying in Romans 8, let alone who the "man" of Romans 7 is. Plainly Paul writes - "For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it in hope" (8:20, ARV). "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (8:22). None escape, even those "who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body" (8:23).

There are limitations placed on this life, but with these limitations, there is provision whereby we can hope through faith and press on. By the Spirit, we are "reborned" from sons of Adam, to be "the sons of God." Does this mean that from the moment of our "rebirthing", we cease to sin? No. But does not that objective remain our goal? Yes. "My little children, ... I write unto you, that ye sin not." But if we do? "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2:1). The unrealized goal that we sin not, and the fact that there is One who ever liveth to make intercession for us, does not grant to us a life of indulgence in sin. Life is a battle and a march to our objective, a reflection of the life of Jesus.

Before us the Holy Spirit holds the vision of the objective. "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith (Gal. 5:5). Do we experience it now? The answer is both, "Yes" and "No." To everyone who enters into the new birth experience is given the "earnest" of the Spirit. This pledge, or performance bond, is God's guarantee (seal - II Cor. 1:22) that "mortality" will "be swallowed up of life" (II Cor. 5:4-5). The Spirit now comes to convict us of sin, that we might "be renewed in the spirit of (our) mind," and "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:23-24). This is often referred to as sanctification, but sanctification is not the end of the matter, but only the process to that goal.

Paul describes his experience of how a "renewed mind" will view life. He would be found in Christ having the "righteousness which is of God by faith" that he "might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Did he claim perfection? No. "I have not attained, or am already perfect," but "this one thing I do... I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Then he exhorts, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded" (Phil. 3:9-15). To one thus minded, at any point in his life, should he be called to sleep the sleep of death, he would be justified before God. When the final decree goes forth - "He that is justified ('ο δικαιος), let him be justified still" - he would then in the resurrection put on an incorruptible body with a perfect mind that had been by the Spirit "sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30). The reality of the fullness of the new birth would then be realized.

There is another category to be found both in Paul's differentiation of those who are saved at the first resurrection and in the decree that finalizes all human destiny. The mortal puts on immortality, and he that is holy ('ο αγιος) remains holy still. These are the living ones who are translated without the experience of death. They are declared to be holy, and the decree merely confirms this state for eternity. The question arises, how is it attained? Everyone earnestly desiring to see the Lord come, and to be translated, wants this question answered.

Three possible answers are current in Adventism today. 1) We perfect ourselves through works of righteousness. There is a great struggle to attain perfection (and much preaching about it among "Independent" ministries). 2) A second concept is that we will keep on sinning until Jesus comes in the clouds of heaven. This position flies directly against the decree of Revelation 22:11 - "He that is holy, let him be holy still." In context, this experience is prior to the coming of Jesus. Verse 12 reads - "Behold, I come quickly." 3) The allusive answer has been the search in Adventism for many decades. In all honesty it must be admitted that the basic objective of both the Holy Flesh Movement at the turn of the last century, and the Brinsmead Movement of the 60s, were attempts to find the answer.

God sent two "messengers" in 1888 with a message that, in the judgment of this writer, was to lay the basis for this final experience. Further, it is his judgment that the present agitation concerning 1888 by the 1888 Study Committee is likewise missing the mark. The question must be answered as to why there needed to be a revival of the basic Pauline concept, justification by faith alone, to be followed by the call to go on unto perfection. The present agitation has become bogged down over what does justification by faith alone really mean. Independent "voices" are proclaiming a Tridentine gospel in substitution for the Pauline concept. These place themselves at variance with Wieland and Short's emphasis on 1888, and the result is that the real need of the hour is lost in a cloud of controversy.

Paul declares as the climatic conclusion of his treatise on the resurrection - "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 15:57). In context, the victory is over sin. At the coming of the Lord, "death is swallowed up in victory" (v. 54). But the sting of

death is sin (v. 56), and Christ must reign (priest-king?) till all enemies are put under His feet (v.25), the last enemy being death itself because of sin (v. 26). In this picture, the victory is given to us, even as justification is extended to us (Rom. 3:24). If then, I cannot understand and accept justification by faith alone in the merits of Jesus Christ, how can I accept the results of the final atonement procured for me by His intercession as High Priest in the Heavenly sanctuary? Both are declared to be gifts of God, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

At the time in 1888 and following, the message brought by Jones and Waggoner was perceived to be the answer to the allusive how. Of this conviction A. G. Daniells in his summary book, *Christ Our Righteousness*, wrote:

Nearly forty years ago (written in 1926) there came to the Seventh-day Adventist Church a very definite awakening message. It was designated at the time as "the message of Righteousness by Faith." Both the message itself and the manner of its coming made a deep and lasting impression upon the minds of ministers and people, and the lapse of time has not erased that impression from memory. To this day, many of those who heard the message when it came are deeply interested in it and concerned regarding it. All these long years they have held a firm conviction, and cherished a fond hope, that someday this message would be given great prominence among us, and that it would do the cleansing, regenerating work in the church which they believed it was sent to accomplish. (p. 35)

During the period following 1888, heavy emphasis was placed on the Third Angel's Message. In 1893, A. T. Jones gave 25 studies on the Message at the General Conference session, and in 1895, 26 studies. This was as it should have been, for the message of 1888 - Justification by Faith - "is the third angel's message in verity" (*Review & Herald*, April 1, 1890). Both the Three Angels' Messages and the Resurrection treatise by Paul, end in the same two groups. While Paul speaks of the saved of all time - the dead in Christ, and the living (I Cor. 15:51-52) - the prophecy of the Three Angels' Messages focuses on the blessed dead "from henceforth (1844)," and "the steadfastness of the saints" (Rev. 14:12-13). These two categories answer to the last two groups of the final decree. The "blessed" dead were declared justified in life, and they will arise still justified. The "holy ones" will remain holy. (The same word used in the Greek text of Rev. 22:11, and translated, "he that is holy," is used in 14:12 and translated, "saints") These holy ones are keeping not only "the commandments of God," but also "the faith of Jesus."

While the "vile body" is not changed till the coming of Christ, when all are changed, there must be something that happens to them that has happened to no other generation of people, so that in this life, it can be said of them - "they are keeping (not trying to keep) the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." The "how" we

have not discovered as yet, but it must be associated with "the faith of Jesus," for only He of all the children of Adam, in the vile body of our humiliation, did not sin.

There are some "impossibles" in the Biblical record that speak to the issue. Paul uses Abraham and Sarah as examples of "justification by faith" (Rom. 4). Is it not possible to take this experience one step further? Paul's evaluation of Abraham's faith speaks loud and clear to the question for which we seek an answer: "And being fully persuaded that what He has promised, He was able also to perform" (ver. 21). Does the possibility overwhelm us when we look at ourselves closely? Should we as Abraham stagger "not at the promise of God through unbelief," but being "strong in faith," give "glory to God"? (ver. 20) Do not the messages of Revelation 14 begin with "Fear God, and give glory to Him"? Did not God ask Abraham - "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?"

Will not He "which hath begun a good work in you" also "perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"? (Phil. 1:6) The "new birth" begun by conversion will continue till we see the kingdom of God. Keep the faith of Jesus, of which He is the Author, and the faith which He had in you, a faith for which He died.

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Postscript

In the January 1998, issue of *Spectrum*, the lead article, "The Year of SDA Congregationalism," reported on the five new independent Adventist congregations that have emerged since 1996. All have been led by senior pastors of churches under conference control. Prior to the release of the January issue of *Spectrum* in April, we had prepared for publication the report on two of these congregational church adventures, and discussed the source of this independent "vision." [See *WWN*, XXXI - 5 & 7(98)] The article now appearing in *Spectrum* has additional information that we did not have available when our assessments were written. In this "postscript" we will share this with our readers.

The first pastor to lead a break-away congregation was Eric Bahme, senior pastor of the Woodinville, Washington Seventh-day Adventist Church. In May 1996, he and 98% of the congregation formed the New Life Fellowship of Congregational Seventh-day Adventists. This is the only one of the five that retains the name, Seventh-day Adventist, in its designation. The next two were in the Oregon Conference, involving the 1,450-member Sunnyside Adventist Church at Portland, and the Medford, Oregon congregation. These were followed by the Church in Damascus, Maryland, and Grace Place in Colorado.

This past year at the Willow Creek Leadership conference,

these five congregations united in forming the Evangelical Sabbath Association, defined as "a loosely organized group of churches providing support, guidance, and resources for pastors and congregations who have left the denomination." While the similarity between this association, and the Willow Creek Association organized to support congregational ministry, has been noted by "many," according to the report in *Spectrum*, Don Ashlock, a Portland, Oregon, businessman who has long "dreamed of association dedicated to a Congregationalist community," stated - "This is a pre-Willow Creek phenomenon. Willow Creek has just provided oxygen to a flame already burning in Adventism."

The price which the SDA-Evangelical Conferences exacted on the unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is still being paid. The doctrinal deviations, resultant from those conferences, undermined the basics upon which Adventism rested. The first three decades following saw a conservative reaction to the compromises of these basics. Now a liberal declension is expressing itself in a revolt against the structure itself.

Three issues that find common expression in the dissent of the five churches which have severed their conference ties are: 1) Control; 2) Theology; and 3) Worship. The control issue involves tithe allocation, and employment of church personnel. Can a local church hire its own staff instead of the conference? Theology is "de-emphasized," but a review of one of the doctrinal statements, as was given in *WWN* last month, does reveal some major differences of belief. *Spectrum* notes the worship difference as "innovative techniques" that vary from "traditional Adventist worship." One of the five church's innovations includes a "downstairs espresso bar, and Messianic Jewish dancing." Another of the five is planning for a church plant which would include "athletic fields, Christian arts center, non-alcoholic bar and lounge, and Christian cemetery."

Spectrum uses different terms, to define how these men either separated or were separated from the conferences by whom they had been employed. One resigned, two were "fired," and two had their credentials "revoked." One of the five told *Spectrum* that "he knows of 15 to 18 (additional) senior pastors who will most likely be terminated or quit to start new churches. In the beginning they were mostly fired. Now they see a better option and leaving." The writer of the article in *Spectrum* may be using the terms, "fired" and credentials "revoked" as synonyms. There is a difference, however. Usually, the revocation of credentials involves a serious breach of one's ordination vows, or as in the case of Dr. Desmond Ford, a denial of major theological tenets held by the Church.

The first to break with the Church, as noted above, was Eric Bahme senior pastor of the Woodinville Adventist Church in Washington, who now pastors the New Life Fellowship of Congregational Seventh-day Adventists.

Bahme stated that, "theology was never mentioned for his termination." The new church, while "definitely evangelical in theology," still fits "within the Adventist parameters." This is not difficult to understand if we recognize that 1955-56 is a BC and AC date in Adventism - "Before Compromise" and "After Compromise." This Fellowship sponsors events such as concerts, and operates a Christian resource and book center. The members are committed to a program which "will fully subsidize the education of the member's children." Bahme declares - "We're in it for the long haul. We are creating a lasting ministry." He admits that "the movement of independent Adventist congregations is still relatively small, but claims that it is primarily composed of middle to upper-class Anglo-Saxons - the segment of the population with the most money and resources."

The second break-away Church involved a two-way split. First, the congregation of the 1,450 member Sunnyside Portland, Oregon, church, divided within itself due to innovations, which its senior pastor, Robert Bretsch, introduced. A "group of 60," according to Bretsch, used "the political resources available to them to undermine what the will of the church was." Sometimes such activity is carried out by laity in the Church against the pastor, with the encouragement and direction of the conference president. The immediate outcome was the formation of a Bridge City Community Church, with that congregation inviting Bretsch and two of his associates at Sunnyside, to become their pastors. The remaining associate pastor at Sunnyside, George Gainer, said, "The battle is still raging. It's not over. This is the saddest thing I've seen in ministry."

Another Church in the Oregon Conference has been formed from an existing Church. It is unique among the five. The pastor of the 600-member Medford, Oregon, Church, Chad McComas, was told that he could no longer pastor because his wife had a prescription drug addiction. He still retained his credentials, but resigned as pastor in the conference because he sensed his days in the Oregon Conference were over, as he had been "labeled." He has pastored 20 years in the conference, during which time he served six years on the conference executive committee. Again local laity threat played a part. One member allegedly withheld \$180,000 in tithe from the conference until such time as McComas was removed. His comment to the writer of the article for *Spectrum* bears thought - "I don't trust the church anymore. . . There's a witch hunt going on in the Adventist Church. So many of my friends have been fired across the country. If you don't fit the mold, (the denomination) doesn't have a place for you."

Not seeking to compete with the Medford Church, McComas organized a Set Free Christian Fellowship concerned with addiction. McComas indicated that, "the Adventist Church doesn't know how to deal with addictive people." His final judgment on the move from the Conference organization is that "it's more fun working for God than the

denomination. We are reaching all kinds of people the [Adventist] could never reach. . . We are not trying to compete, only trying to reach the people they can't."

There is a close fellowship between the two break-away churches in Maryland and Colorado. Fredericks, of the Maryland Church, describes it as "sybiotic twins." Peck, pastor of the Colorado Fellowship had served as an associate pastor under Fredericks. We have discussed in detail the Colorado Grace Fellowship in previous issues of *WWN*, as well as the Editor's comments in the *Adventist Review* on the Damascus, Maryland, break-away. Only two items in *Spectrum*, in regard to Fredericks, need further comment. With Elder Herbert Broeckel, president of the Potomac Conference, the issue is simple - adherence to conference policy. He is quoted as stating, "If Fredericks [should] dissolve his corporation, and adhere to the rules and regulations of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I would be happy to hire him tomorrow." As one of the five pastors stated, "the most important issues [are] control, money, and power." These are not the items upon which Christ built His church, neither was the Seventh-day Adventist Church originally established on these factors. Well did the divine Instructor state the case - "'How is the faithful city become an harlot?' My Father's house is made a house of merchandise, a place whence the divine presence and glory have departed!" (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8, p. 250)

The second item is a comment of Fredericks - "The gospel, not our law-keeping, defines all who constitute God's 'remnant' people." Again, here is a subtle mingling of truth and error. To God's people was committed "the everlasting gospel." It was to mark them as the remnant people of God. Into this picture come the aspects of the keeping of the commandments of God, for Heaven will finally say of those who receive the fullness of the Everlasting Gospel - "Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12). All must confess their sinfulness, because not one can bring a clean thing out of an unclean (Job 14:4). This is the work of the great High Priest in the final atonement. Yet this work of Christ is the very thing that was denied in the compromises of the SDA-Evangelical Conferences (*Questions on Doctrine*, p. 381). This same denial has been written into the Statements of Faith of the congregational break-away church in Colorado. It dare not be forgotten, that when Christ returns the second time - and that day is at hand - He will come to take "vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thess. 1:8). Obedience to the gospel will mark the remnant people of God.

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"Christ became one flesh with us, in order that we might become one Spirit with Him. It is by virtue of this union that we are to come forth from the grave, - not merely as a manifestation of the power of Christ, but because, through faith His life has become ours." (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 388)

Why the Easter Emphasis?

For a number of years, Adventist ministers in different places have united in Easter sunrise services in the communities in which they lived. This was especially true if the minister had joined the local ministerial alliance. This year the Adventist involvement in Easter has been more pronounced than previously.

In the January 12, 1998, issue of *Christianity Today (CT)*, was a full page (p. 17) advertisement announcing a special Easter presentation, March 31, 1998, via satellite on "Resurrecting the Resurrection," as a "professional growth seminar" sponsored by the *Ministry* magazine. Four ministers were scheduled to present their perceptions of the resurrection, two Adventists and two non-Adventists, a Presbyterian and a Baptist. The March 2 issue of *CT* carried a half page (p. 12) announcement of the same program. The Andrews University Church was the "staging area" for the four hour presentation.

Representing the Adventists were Charles E. Bradford, and Dwight K. Nelson, senior pastor of the Pioneer Memorial Church on the campus of Andrews University. The non-Adventist speakers were W. Frank Harrington, minister of the Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, Georgia and Gardner C. Taylor, retired pastor of the Concord Baptist Church of Christ in Brooklyn, New York.

Both non-Adventist speakers introduced the concept of life immediately after death into their messages. After each presentation, questions received by E-mail, or over the telephone from listeners were presented to each speaker to answer. Questions on the state of man in death were called in, following the presentations of both Nelson and Harrington. Each speaker "danced" around the intent of the question. It should be said, however, that the presentations of the two non-Adventists, apart from the heresy, were the most substantive of the four messages. The last speaker's presentation, though a Baptist, indicated that he was well read in the *Desire of Ages*.

The question still remains, why are Adventists sponsoring Easter? It should be well known that the celebration of Easter on Sunday was a prelude to worship on each Sunday. One Church historian, Latourette, states that the "first certain notice of Easter is from the middle of the second century," suggesting that, "the festival, commemorating the resurrection of Christ, was *presumably* observed by at least some Christians from much earlier times." (*A History of Christianity*, Vol. I, p. 137; emphasis supplied) The earliest celebration of Easter, especially in the East, timed to the Jewish celebration of the Passover, rotated through the week. In the West, the Roman Church set the day as Sunday, since Christ arose on that day, and determined which Sunday by astronomical data.

The first commemoration services of Christ's resurrection were not called, Easter, but rather Pasch. Actually, the one place in the KJV where the word Easter is found (Acts 12:4), the Greek word is *πασχα*, a transliteration out of the Hebrew for the Passover. The name, Easter, along with other things connected with it today, such as Lent, is pagan in origin. It stands for Astarte, the queen of heaven. On Assyrian monuments the name is Ishtar.

The correct day on which to celebrate the resurrection of Christ became a basis for ecclesiastical strife, known as the Quartodeciman controversy. The Jewish Passover came on the 14th day of the Jewish month Nisan. Those who commemorated the resurrection timed to that date were called "Quartodecimans," the 14th day observers. The matter was finally settled by the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., in favor of the practice advocated by Rome. Latourette, cited above, suggests that because the final decision for the time of the celebration of Easter on Sunday prevailed, "the prestige of Rome was thereby enhanced." (*Ibid.*)

Further, we need to ask, is the Second Angel's Message no longer relevant in the decisions made by the leadership of the Church? Has "Babylon" changed its "skin" or lost its "spots"? Do we no longer believe that "in a special sense Seventh-day Adventists" were given "a work of the most solemn import, — the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages"? (9T:19) The second angel proclaimed - "Babylon is fallen, is fallen" (Rev. 14:8). Here is double emphatic emphasis. Now the Church proclaims to the world via satellite that it questions this message, and joins in with "Babylonians" to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What is this saying to God? "God, you made a mistake when you gave this Revelation to Jesus; these of Babylon are our brothers in Christ." One thing is certain, the ministerial leadership of the Church, with the blessing of the administration, have gone into captivity to Babylon. Following the type and antitype principle of Interpretation, the message of Revelation 18 takes on new significance. The people to whom God gave "a work of the most solemn import" have gone of their own free choice into captivity to Babylon. The call is to "my people" to come out of that captivity, and return and rebuild the temple [of truth] for the Lord. For and to that temple, "the Desire of all nations" will come (Haggai 2:7).

The message of the resurrection needs to be resurrected every day, not just a yearly remembrance of the event. Paul counted the loss of all things as "but dung, that [he] might win Christ... that he might know Him and the power of His resurrection" (Phil 3:8,10). Daily, he would die (1 Cor. 15:31); daily he would need to be resurrected. Paul realized that to be planted together in the likeness of His death meant also to experience His resurrection. He could confess - "For me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). The daily personal experience of the resurrection brings "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

Let's Talk It Over

In a recent issue of WVN, we documented the Romeward drift in Adventism [XXXI - 4(98)]. We have noted the continuing trend toward identification with Evangelicalism, which began with the SDA-Evangelical Conferences of 1955-56. Either this altering of course is the working of the Lord as He is preparing to enlighten the earth with His glory, or it is the apostasy which the Lord's Messenger wrote about in 1905, when she stated - "One thing it is certain is soon to be realized, - the great apostasy, which is developing and increasing and waxing stronger, and will continue to do so until the Lord shall come from heaven with a shout." (*Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 7, p. 56-57)

If what is taking place within the community of Adventism is of the Lord, then every "voice" needs to join unitedly proclaiming that new emphasis, and every tithe dollar plus offerings needs to be placed behind the programs initiated by the Church. If not, and this is the predicted apostasy, then a different course needs to be followed. That which is the Lord's needs to be placed behind that for which the Lord stands - the Truth as it is in Jesus. This then raises the same question that Pilate asked Jesus - "What is truth?" This is no idle question.

The Church has set its course. That is plain for anybody to see who has eyes to see, but what about the myriad voices on the periphery of Adventism, each with its siren call? With truth there are no choices, it is either pure and unadulterated, or it is tinctured with error which is deadly. We forget that one drop of strychnine can make a glass of pure water lethal. Yet hundreds are willing to listen to, and support with their tithe and offerings, any and every wind of doctrine blowing through the corridors of Adventism today, so long as it is called, "historic Adventism."

The problem today among the "independent splinters" is no different than the problem the church faced in 1888. The Lord's Messenger wrote - "They are not willing to be deprived of the garments of their own righteousness, which is unrighteousness, for the righteousness of Christ, which is pure unadulterated truth." (*TM*, p. 65) Until this occurs, all of the show of "eucharistic unity" evidenced among some "independents" earlier this year, still leaves their multicolored publications laced with the strychnine of error.

In connection with the prophecy of the continued apostasy in the Church, there was some pertinent counsel given - "We are to hold fast the first principles of our denominated faith, and go forward from strength to increased faith." (*Special Testimonies*, *op.cit.*, p. 57) First, we must know what those "first principles" were. Secondly, we must recognize that "the truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light." (*Review & Herald*, March 25, 1890) Thirdly, we must realize that "it is necessary that our unity today be

of a character that will bear the test of trial," and therefore it is mandatory that we face the painful reality that, "we have many lessons to learn and *many, many* to unlearn." (*TM*, p. 30) Those who think that if we merely return to the statements of belief held by the Church prior to 1955-56, that we are proclaiming "historic Adventism." Instead we are but transferring the concerned Adventist from the Laodiceanism which permitted the compromises of 1955-56, to be a Laodicean follower of the "independent" voices. Christ, the way, *the truth*, the life, is still standing at the door just as unwelcome by the "Independent Voices" as He ever was by the Church. To foster mission programs so that those who wish to feel the same kind of a "security blanket" they felt in the mission programs of the Church, is no substitute to truth, pure and unadulterated. Truth means study, not surface reading. It means prayer and the guidance of the Spirit of truth into all truth. Guidelines have been given; when will they be adopted and followed? Note carefully the following:

Those who sincerely desire truth will not be reluctant to lay open their positions for investigation and criticism, and will not be annoyed if their opinions and ideas are crossed. This was the spirit cherished among us forty year ago [circa 1850] (Hear ye, professed "historic Adventists"!) We would come together burdened in soul, praying that we might be one in faith and doctrine; for we knew that Christ is not divided. One point at a time was made the subject of investigation. Solemnity characterized these councils of investigation. The Scriptures were opened with a sense of awe. (R&H, July 26, 1892)

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