

Questions People Have Asked Me

www.CreationismOnline.com

The Editor Of The Review And Herald
Answers Questions On Various Matters Of Interest To Adventists

By Francis D. Nichol Review And Herald

Publishing Association

Washington, Dc Copyright

1959.
Printed In The U.S.A.

Contents

From the Author to the Reader of This Book

1. ADORNMENT and DRESS

The Wedding Ring
Facial Adornment
Proper Dress
Adornment and Church Office

2. AMUSEMENTS

Swimming and Christian Standards
Church Entertainment
What About Television?
A Divided Home and the Theater
Sports on School Radio
The Moving-Picture Theater
What Shall We Do About Christmas?

3. THE BIBLE

Surety and Purity of Translations
The Revised Standard Version

4. CHURCH ORDER and ORGANIZATION

Renting Our Churches to Others
Easter Service in Adventist Church
Child Participation in Communion Service
Should Women Speak in the Church?
Chewing Gum in Church
Guardians of the Pew
Fellowship at Communion Service
Use of Church Organ for Practice
Pictures in Churches
Should We Kneel in Prayer?
Are Our Church Buildings Too Fine?
Friendliness in the Church
Dis-fellowshipping a Member
Loud Amen's in Church
Proper Order at Communion Service
Deacons and Offerings
Time of Communion Service
Rights and Authority of the Church

The Right to Dissent
Shall We Circulate Old Reviews?
Value of Welfare Work
Dealing With Erring Members
Are Adventist Books Too Expensive?
Advanced Training for Ministers
Adventist Position on the Bearing of Arms

5.FANATICISM and OFFSHOOTS

How to Identify a Fanatic
Cats and Dogs as Pets
Fanciful Stories of Prophetic Warning
Tenants' Right to TV Antenna
The Folly of Chain Letters
Setting Date for Advent
Should Our Churches Face East?
Street Meetings, Not Fanatical Endeavor
The Measurements of the Pyramids
How to Identify Adventist Publications

6. HEALTH REFORM

Temperate Mood on Health Reform Five Questions on Flesh Foods
Restraint in judging Our Brother's Diet
Adventists and Tobacco Selling Coffee for Non-Adventist Guests How Hot Were the
Old Cook stoves? Is Eating Pork a Sin?

7. LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

How to Raise Spiritual Level of Church
Three Steps for Spiritual Health
A Christian Witness in the Army
A Soldier Asks Four Questions
Heartless Criticism
Victory Over Smoking
The Folly of Debt
Don't Depend on Feelings
Believe Your Sins Are Forgiven
Confession When Wronged One Has Died
Stiff Necks and Broken Hearts
Living With Non-Adventist Husband
Should We Serve God From Fear?
Relative Importance of Heredity and Environment
Help for Our Youth in the Cities
Jury Service and Murder Cases
How Shall We Salute One Another?
Nursing in Catholic Hospital
When Is Rebaptism Needful?
Work on War Weapons
How to Differ as Christians
Reading the Works of Infidel Authors
On Entertaining Strangers

8.MARRIAGE and MORALS

Expensive Weddings
Backsliders and Mixed Marriages
Attendance at Mixed Wedding
Should We Have Children?
Adultery and Divorce
Cruelty and Divorce
How to Resist Unholy Desires

9. PROPER SABBATH KEEPING

Bids Opened on Sabbath
Investments and Worldly Alliances
Sunday keeping and Salvation
Traveling on the Sabbath
Church Treasurer's Work on Sabbath
Limitations on Sabbath Work
Lending Machinery to Non-Adventist
Renting Property to Non-Adventist
Sabbath Work in First-Aid Station
Delivering Newspapers on Sabbath
Attending Certain Services on Sabbath
Consignment Selling and Sabbath keeping
Buying on the Sabbath
Uncalled-for Zeal in Sabbath keeping Sabbath Department
Sabbath Missionary Work

10. SUFFERING and BEREAVEMENT

Why God Permits His Children to Suffer
Bodily Suffering, a Test of Faith
We Sorrow Not as Do Others
Peace Amid Trials

11. THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

What Genesis 1:1 Reveals
The Hebrew of Exodus 20:10
Was Pentecost on Sabbath?
Speculating on Unfulfilled Prophecy
The Nature of Christ
Is Man a Sinner by Nature?
The Mystery of the Trinity
The 144,000
False Views and True Adventism
Free Will and God's Foreknowledge
Bible Skeptics Answered
Tithe and Federal Taxes
Weapons of Warfare in Heaven
Why Was "Strong Drink" Permitted?

12. ELLEN G. WHITE

The Inspiration of the Prophet
Are Mrs. White's Writings Applicable Today?
Faith, Reason, and Revelation
Reason Versus Revelation
Four Questions About Mrs. White
Mrs. White and Hypnotism

From The Author

To the Reader of This Book

The best reason that an author can offer for writing a book is that he hopes thereby to help someone. This hope, real, even if sorely misplaced, has actuated my writing. The questions considered have come from a wide range of men and women, our brothers and sisters in the Advent Movement. The answers represent the endeavor of one confessedly finite man to offer help on difficult problems. The very nature of the material makes sequence impossible. Each item stands more or less alone, except that certain questions can be grouped under general heads.

If you are a minister or church officer, you may perhaps find here a little aid in dealing with the problems of your flock. If you are a member in the pew, I trust you may discover somewhere in the contents an area of help and strength for your heart.

I have not tried to cover all the possible questions that trouble the lives of believers; that would call for a ponderous tome. But at least the questions considered are the ones that have most frequently appeared in my mail over a period of years, and thus presumably are the ones of widest concern and interest to our people.

If the answers you here read throw any light on your path, if in any degree they fortify your heart and quicken your step toward the kingdom, I shall feel fully repaid.

FRANCIS D. NICHOL

May 1, 1959

Dedication

TO ONE WHO IN HER HAPPY YEARS OF YOUTH OFTTIMES PERPLEXED ME WITH BEWILDERING
AND MEATY QUESTIONS; TO MY DEAR DELIGHT, MY ONLY DAUGHTER, VIRGINIA, THIS BOOK IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

1. Adornment And Dress

The Wedding Ring

A married church member inquires about the increasing use of the wedding ring by our sisters in America. She says that thus far she has refrained from wearing a ring because she understood it was contrary to the teachings of the church and because, so far as she knew, our ministers in this country would not solemnize a marriage with a wedding ring. She states that she has tried to uphold the church standards in presenting the truth to others, but adds: "Since so many of our young women wear rings, I am at a loss to effectively explain the church's stand on the wedding band. If the church has changed its stand on the wearing of wedding bands, I would like to know. If we're not to wear rings, we need something to back us up."

I know no better answer to give than to quote the authoritative statements on the matter found in the Spirit of Prophecy and in the Church Manual. The first is inspired counsel for the church, the second is the summary of the rules governing the church. Here are Ellen G. White's words, under the title "The Wedding Ring:

"Some have had a burden in regard to the wearing of a marriage ring, feeling that the wives of our ministers should conform to this custom. All this is unnecessary. Let the ministers' wives have the golden link which binds their souls to Jesus Christ, a pure and holy character, the true love and meekness and godliness that are the fruit borne upon the Christian tree, and their influence will be secure anywhere. The fact that a disregard of the custom occasions remark, is no good reason for adopting it. Americans can make their position understood by plainly stating that the custom is not regarded as obligatory in our country.

We need not wear the sign, for we are not untrue to our marriage vow, and the wearing of the ring would be no evidence that we were true. I feel deeply over this leavening process which seems to be going on among us, in the conformity to custom and fashion. Not one penny should be spent for a circlet of gold to testify that we are married. In countries where the custom is imperative, we have no burden to condemn those who have their marriage ring; let them wear it if they can do so conscientiously. But let not our missionaries feel that the wearing of the ring will increase their influence one jot or tittle. If they are Christians, it will be manifest in their Christ likeness of character, in their words, in their works, in the home, in association with others. It will be evinced by their patience and long-suffering and kindliness. They will manifest the spirit of the Master, they will possess His beauty of character, His loveliness of disposition, His sympathetic heart." - Testimonies to Ministers, Page 180, 181.

In Testimonies for the Church, volume 4, is a section entitled "Simplicity in Dress," which not only discusses the principles that should govern in the matter of dress but also makes some general observations on the matter of adornments. I quote one paragraph:

"Have not our sisters sufficient zeal and moral courage to place themselves without excuse upon the Bible platform? The apostle has given most explicit directions on this point: 'I will therefore . . . that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becomes women professing godliness) with good works.' Here the Lord, through His apostle, speaks expressly against the wearing of gold. Let those who have had experience see to it that they do not lead others astray on this point by their example. That ring encircling your finger may be very plain, but it is useless, and the wearing of it has a wrong influence upon others." -Page 630.

What the Church Manual Says

This counsel is reflected in the rule set down in the Church Manual, as the following reveals:

"It is clearly taught in the Scriptures that the wearing of jewelry is contrary to the will of God. 'Not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array' is the admonition of the apostle Paul. 1 Timothy 2:9. The wearing of ornaments of jewelry is a bid for attention which is not in keeping with Christian self-forgetfulness.

In some countries the custom of wearing the marriage ring is considered imperative, having become, in the minds of the people, a criterion of virtue, and hence is not regarded as an ornament. Under such circumstances we have no disposition to condemn the practice." - Pages 202, 203.

Here is what the Spirit of Prophecy and the church have to say on the matter. I would add nothing to the counsel; I would subtract nothing from it. But I do think it in order to offer a few comments. The first and most evident comment is this: The counsel given is explicit and unambiguous. If memory has not deceived me, there was a time when this instruction was most earnestly invoked

and very generally followed in America. No secret is being disclosed when I say that this is not so today. It would be an exaggerated play on words to say that the proof is found on every hand. But there is proof on enough Adventist feminine hands to make evident that the ban on the wedding ring is far from being fully invoked in our American churches today.

I am well aware of the reasoning employed to justify the drift away from the counsel given for our membership in the homeland; namely, that custom is changing in America and that while formerly a woman might not wear a ring, today she must wear one to avoid criticism. Indeed, some add that a woman in America today needs a ring for protection. So far as I know those who make such statements do not provide any proof other than their personal impression. I doubt very much whether research would reveal that American women today are more given to wearing a wedding ring than in former generations. Certainly, the ring ceremony at weddings seems to have been employed, so far as I can learn, long before our present generation. I repeat: No proof, objective and convincing, has come to my knowledge that the custom as to a wedding ring for women in America is in any way essentially different from what it was in earlier generations.

Protection Provided by a Ring?

And what of the contention that an Adventist woman needs a ring today for protection? Let me ask: Is there evidence that philandering men today are in any way hesitant to engage in a flirtation with a married woman? If our daily newspapers and our courts are any dependable mirror of societies morals, one must conclude that the answer to this question is an emphatic No.

I believe that social workers in any city would agree that a woman's protection is found primarily in her demeanor and not in a ring. To say the least, a ring is a poor substitute for modesty, decorum, and a radiantly Christ like bearing. I have had some occasion to check on this matter and can say that right and left everywhere exemplary Adventist women are prompt to testify that their failure to wear a ring has caused them no embarrassment in the United States. They have not needed it for protection! I believe their testimony.

Though the question of a wedding ring is not a major matter, by denominational standards, on the other hand, we should never forget that departures from simplicity never come all in one day. A study of other religious bodies that once were strict in their rules on dress and deportment, and that now are lax, should put us on guard when any move is made to lower our standards. It is not a far step, for example, from wedding rings to engagement rings, and from both of these to other rings, and from all of these to earrings. In this matter, as in many others, our safety lies, not in seeing how near we can come to the treacherous edge of the road, but how far we can stay away. I commend, for the sober reading of our people, the words of guidance from the Spirit of Prophecy and the Church Manual. They are both authoritative and timely.

Facial Adornment

A sister writes-and her letter is similar to others that have come to me-that she is troubled over the matter of personal adornment. She says that when she wears make-up her conscience troubles her. But she remarks that the church seems to say little or nothing on the subject, and therefore, perhaps, she should not be concerned about her make-up. She confesses that she is not able to get the subject off her mind, and seeks counsel.

There are two extremes against which we should ever guard One is the extreme of focusing our first thought, and attention upon our personal appearance, vainly thinking that we should bedeck ourselves so as to catch the eye of others and to appear something beyond what we really are intrinsically. Those in our ranks who are at that extreme stand indicted, not only for wasting undue time before the mirror, but also for pandering to the vanity of their poor hearts. They certainly are not in a heavenly mood, and are not doing what they might to present a good witness to the world or to develop characters that can stand in the great day.

At the other extreme are those who, because of a mistaken sense of values and of what is represented by the holy life, feel that they should bend over backward in the matter of simplicity. Some through the years have actually confused piety with absence of refinement.

Now the practical question is this: What is the middle ground between these two extremes? Let me set down one or two principles that may help you to answer the question. First of all, it is not only proper but a duty to look neat, becoming, and in the right sense-of the word, attractive. God finds joy in things beautiful. But I believe that Christian good taste requires one to refrain from doing anything in regard to face, figure, hair, or dress with a view to calling particular attention to the individual. What we spend on ourselves ought always to be governed by the holy injunction: "Seek you first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." I think we should ask ourselves from time to time: When I sit before the mirror am I governed by the wholesome desire simply to look neat and attractive in a Christian way, or am I motivated by the desire to be outstanding in company and the object of admiring eyes?

I do not recall that Mrs. White deals specifically with the matter of facial adornment, to which you and other sisters refer in your letters to me. The reason seems evident, though I hesitate to mention it. In the days when Mrs. White wrote, respectable women did not use paint on their faces. That is a simple statement of fact. Bright color on the face was the mark of a dissolute woman. A play that was current years ago revolved around the life of a courtesan and was entitled "The Painted Woman." The qualifying adjective, "Painted," was sufficient to identify the nature of the woman portrayed. This is the sorry historical background of face coloring. What changes a few decades have made!

Now do not misunderstand me. I imply nothing amiss in the moral standards of women today simply because they use face coloring. On the other hand, I think it altogether proper to mention the sordid historical background of such coloring-nor is it ancient

history either. What caused dissolute women of an earlier day to paint? Obviously to attract attention to themselves. What causes women today to use bright coloring? Whatever the reason may be, it is hardly because they seek to be modestly retiring!

Two Specific Illustrations

I am painfully aware that in discussing adornment I tread a thorny and treacherous path. But I receive inquiries so often on this subject that I must seek to put my thoughts into words or be guilty of timorous evasion.

Speaking as a mere man to my Adventist sisters, let me say that I deplore the colorful adornment that marks our day. Let me give two specific illustrations as a typical text for my comments.

When red fingernails came into vogue, I wondered what made mortal creatures think they could improve on the delicate shade that God gave to our nails. I still wonder! The sight of such gaudy, lurid nails makes me shudder. Because I don't like beauty? No; because I don't like to see natural beauty disfigured.

Now fashion calls for bright paint on the lips as well. As I see some of our sisters steadily, though sometimes cautiously, bringing the color of their lips to crimson, I feel sad that they should have such a mistaken sense of beauty and should give such pathetically slavish obedience to passing fashion. By what strange process of reasoning would anyone ever conclude that blood-colored paint could improve on the delicate shell-pink shade that God gave to human lips?

Painted nails and painted lips will undoubtedly go out of fashion -the sooner the better-and another bizarre style for face and fingers be substituted. Will some of our sisters then promptly find themselves bewitchingly tempted to follow that new style? And if so, how can they escape conveying the impression to all men that they are as vain and as dutifully obedient to the dictates of facial fashion as are those who make no profession of godliness? Which leads on to the question: How can they hope to bear that distinctive witness that they should, the witness of a people who are in the world but not of the world?

As Adventists, haven't we something distinctive in the matter of ideals for our lives, for our persons? Isn't there an impressive charm, an ethereal beauty, to simplicity? Indeed, is that not the heavenly way to be attractive, and to stand out from the slavish mass of humanity? Some time ago I took through our publishing house a non-Adventist young couple, dressed and adorned in current colorful style. When we returned to my office the young woman did not begin at once to discuss the marvels of modern printing. Instead, she exclaimed: "Your women workers don't use make-up. But they look very attractive. I'm impressed." Our sisters in the Review did not realize it, but they unconsciously succeeded in doing what a host of brightly painted women in Washington, D.C., had not succeeded in doing-they stood out from the crowd.

I analyzed the matter this way: The absence of a deadly sameness of red paint permitted the distinctiveness of their personalities to stand out. And a Christian personality can give rare beauty to the countenance. It is a delusion of the devil to keep people concerned with color on the outside. We should be cultivating and intensifying the unique colors of personality that God has given to each. Such colors do not wash off; they become more beautiful the older we grow. I appeal to our sisters to be beautifully different from the world around them.

Apply the Principles Individually

I would not say for a moment that those who follow this or that fleeting fashion commit a mortal sin, for I do not so believe. But I do firmly believe that slavish following of vain fashion can prove a sad handicap to the one whose goal is heaven-and what greater indictment need I make than that? Someone has well said that good breeding is made up of a lot of little things, but that good breeding is no little thing. That is equally true of our witness to the world and of our development of character in relation to changing fashion.

You will notice that I have not tried to tell you precisely where the line divides on this whole matter. I am opposed to that kind of approach to the problem. Evidently the church at large feels similarly, for our Church Manual refrains from detailed legislation on the matter. It deals with principles, as I have here attempted to do.

It is my conviction that if you sincerely and prayerfully seek to follow these principles, you will find yourself increasingly able to discern where the line divides between right and wrong on the subject of dress and adornment. Certainly you will not find yourself constantly worrying about it, as you say you now are. There is something wrong with our striving for holiness if it leads to morbid introspection. We should be a joyous people, day by day thanking God for the privilege of living for Him, of being His children, and of witnessing for the standards of Heaven before the world.

Talk quietly and confidently with God day by day, with the assurance in your heart that He has light and help for you on this matter. Keep in mind the danger of the two extremes and ask the Lord to bring into focus before your mind where the line divides. Then relax in spirit, rejoicing in the Lord that the day is soon coming when these sin-scarred bodies of ours will be changed like unto His glorious body. To attain that everlasting beauty is the goal of the true child of God.

Proper Dress

A sister writes: "According to Sister White, would the trimming that we often put on dresses be considered an unnecessary extravagance? I guess it is unnecessary. However, I put it on clothes that look like they need a little more trimming to make them look more attractive." The letter closes with the statement: "I want to do what is right."

This letter is typical of a certain type that comes to me. In one form or another the question of proper dress will be with us as long as we are on this side of the Jordan. It is perplexing and vexatious, yet ever pertinent. We may all be thankful that loyal members are so desirous of doing God's will that they seek to apply the principles of practical godliness to their dress. And, indeed, there are principles that apply. However, there are also extremes against which we must guard when we seek to apply the principles. That is why it is often misleading to give a simple Yes or No answer to a question on dress. In most instances it is better to state principles, with cautions against extremes, and ask the reader to make his own application.

Four Questions

There are four questions that confront a Christian when he considers purchasing any piece of wearing apparel. In general, these questions have as much point and significance for the brethren as for the sisters. This is particularly true of the last two of the four questions. Let us examine them:

1. Will this piece of clothing conform to standards of Christian modesty, or will it give the lie to my profession on this important point? Through the years changing fashions have at times made this a very real and practical question. This no one will deny. As Christians we have certain standards to maintain. So careful are we to be on all matters that we are to avoid even the appearance of evil. It is therefore clear that any piece of wearing apparel that contributes in any degree to lowering the high standards of Christian modesty and morality will not be worn by a Seventh-day Adventist.

2. Is this piece of wearing apparel unhealthful? There have been times when changing fashions decreed garments that were anything but healthful. One of the distinctive tenets of our faith is the belief that our bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost, and that we should, therefore, care for these bodies most sacredly. We remember the admonition of Scripture: "Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

3. Is the piece of wearing apparel extravagant in cost? Some garments that contribute nothing more in warmth, comfort, or durability than other garments, may, nevertheless, cost a great deal more because, for example, they are the very latest in fashion, are made of rare goods, or are trimmed or lined with some particularly costly material. The Bible makes plain to us that we are accountable to God for the way in which we spend the means that He gives to us. There is also presented to us constantly the arresting fact that we have a real opportunity to advance the kingdom of God by liberal gifts to His cause. Would it be right for us to spend unnecessarily on wearing apparel when a world, hungry for material and spiritual food, cries out for help? That question answers itself.

The Chief Question

4. Will the piece of apparel pander to the natural pride and vanity of my heart—a pride and vanity that I should ever seek to crucify? This question, which is closely related to the third, is the heart of the whole problem of dress. And only when we see the problem in this setting are we able to deal with it in its true character. Through the long years men and women have dressed at times immodestly, unhealthfully, and extravagantly, and for one reason above all else, to satisfy the vanity, pride, and conceit of the human heart.

We are never nearer to the stuff of which sin is made than when we are dealing with these manifestations of the natural heart. How prone we are to think of ourselves, to fill up our horizon with a picture of our own importance, to lavish all our thoughts and interests upon ourselves. Expending our first energies and funds upon our clothes is one of the choice exhibits of self-centered living. The matter of dress is not primarily a question of a particular sex, but of selfishness. It simply happens that in our age the opportunities for the manifestation of pride and vanity are greater, perhaps, for women than for men. In past ages this was not always so. It would be difficult to say to what lengths some men might go if fashion presented the temptation!

When we think of the matter in this light we lift the whole discussion above the level of petty disputes over this or that minor feature in the realm of dress and fashion, and discern in the question a broad and vital spiritual problem. We cannot hope to be separate from the vain, self-centered world when we slavishly follow practices that quicken our vanity. Let the one who tries to defend conformity to every changing whim of fashion, first ask himself the question, "Are my thoughts on God, or on myself? on the enlarging of His kingdom, or on the beautifying of myself?" Christ warned against the evil of thinking constantly and exclusively of what we shall eat and drink and what we "shall put on." What a handmaid of pride and vanity the mirror can become; what self-idolatry the looking glass can produce!

If we approach the matter of dress in terms of a right answer to these four questions here set forth, we will not be in much danger of going to worldly extremes in the matter of dress.

An Opposite Extreme

However, there is an opposite extreme, one to which sincere and conscientious Christians sometimes go. This extreme results from a mistaken view on one or more of the following four points:

1. Mistaking dowdiness for piety. There is no virtue in wearing clothes that make one look unkempt, unsightly, or slatternly. The devil has deluded some devout Christians at times into thinking that queer, outlandish, or even slovenly dress is a mark of piety and humility. It is only one step from this to the pathetic and ludicrous spiritual state of being proud of one's humility. There is a story

told of an ancient Greek philosopher who affected great humility. Instead of wearing the beautiful robe common to philosophers, he wore a tattered garment, ragged and full of holes. As he walked down the road one day, another philosopher pointed to him and remarked, "Behold how the pride sticks out through the holes in his garment."

Sister White appealed to our sisters to dress tastefully even when only the husband and children would see their attire: "Sisters when about their work should not put on clothing which would make them look like images to frighten the crows from the corn. It is more gratifying to their husbands and children to see them in a becoming, well-fitting attire, than it can be to mere visitors or strangers." Testimonies, vol. 1, p. 464.

It is true that the mirror is often a handmaid of vanity and pride. But that does not mean that the mirror has no proper place in our lives. Our friends and acquaintances would be distressing to look upon if they did not own or use mirrors.

2. Thinking that it is sinful to wear certain apparel simply because it happens to be in fashion. Those who reason thus declare: "We should not be like the world; this particular garment is what the world is currently featuring; therefore, we should not wear it." Such reasoning, though undoubtedly sincere, distorts the whole question of dress, and if carried very far, would place all of us in an impossible situation. Some devout religious groups actually do drive such logic to the extreme so that they refuse to cultivate their farms with tractors and abstain from wearing neckties or even buttons on their clothes. They abstain not simply from ornamental buttons but from any kind. They use hooks and eyes. When carried to this extreme the fallacy of the logic becomes evident.

Now, the warning of Scripture against conforming to the world is a warning against conforming in any word or deed or practice that would lead us away from the high standards that Heaven has set for the Christian. There are a multitude of ways in which we may be like others round about us in the world without affecting in any way our spiritual standards. We must ever remember that there is no particular virtue in oddity. The rightness or wrongness of wearing a garment is not to be measured by whether it happens to be the style currently in vogue but by whether that garment conforms to Christian standards.

Mrs. White, in one of her earliest statements on the matter of dress, makes this very clear:

"Christians should not take pains to make themselves gazing stocks by dressing differently from the world. But if, in accordance with their faith and duty in respect to their dressing modestly and healthfully, they find themselves out of fashion, they should not change their dress in order to be like the world. But they should manifest a noble independence, and moral courage to be right, if all the world differ from them. If the world introduce a modest, convenient, and healthful mode of dress, which is in accordance with the Bible, it will not change our relation to God, or to the world to adopt such a style of dress." - How to Live, No. 6, pp. 61, 62.

3. Mistaking love of beauty for vanity. Some good Christians feel that anything we do in regard to our homes or our dress to give them a touch of beauty is a manifestation of sin, the terrible sin of pride and vanity. Without minimizing one word of what I have said of the grave danger of pandering to vanity and pride, I affirm that it is not necessarily sinful to give a touch of beauty, and even of brightness, both to our homes and to our garments. God placed in our hearts the love of beauty. A beautiful picture on the wall, a vase of gorgeous flowers on the table, yes, and even a flowered dress may give a lift to our spirit without having about them any of the odor of the bottomless pit. Our Lord declared that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like the lilies of the field. As I have walked along my garden path and gazed on the gorgeous pansies and petunias, I have often thought, how great is God's sense of beauty. Color, beauty of line, and arrangement have a proper place in relation to our homes and to our dress. While we keep constantly in mind that attention to taste and beauty may easily be carried to extremes, let us not, on the other hand, seek to develop piety by drabness. There is no virtue in drabness. There may even be an evil in it. If our person or our homes tend to repel, our witness for Christ is sadly impaired.

4. Vexing our souls with too great refinement of principles. There are some who are troubled when they read in the Scriptures a warning against being "overmuch righteous." They wonder how this could be possible. Surely a person could not become too righteous. Then, why the warning? A careful reading of the whole Bible and also of church history provides the answer, and that answer throws light on a certain part of this complex question of dress.

Let us take an illustration from the religious practices of the ancient Jews. They had before them God's command to honor the Sabbath, to refrain from any work during its holy hours. Now, none will question that that command should be obeyed, very literally and very fully. It is a command that is not to be minimized or explained away in any degree. We call upon our believers right today to suffer every kind of hardship and disability rather than be disobedient to this command. But what does the history of the Jews reveal concerning their obedience to it? There were centuries, of course, when they flouted the law of the Sabbath altogether. But in later centuries they swung to the opposite extreme as the rabbis began to apply the Sabbath command with refinements that made it something grievous instead of a blessing.

Unreasonable Burdens

Let me illustrate: The rabbis, who rightly understood the Sabbath prohibition against work as forbidding the bearing of burdens on the Sabbath day, reasoned that if it is wrong to carry a substantial burden, like household effects, it is wrong also to carry a smaller burden, like a handbag. Nor did they stop here. They carried their reasoning to the point where they argued that carrying a handkerchief violated the Sabbath law. Now a handkerchief was at least sometimes so necessary that the rabbis had to find a way around their own reasoning. They did this by declaring that if the corner of the handkerchief were sewed to the wearing apparel, it then became part of one's clothing and not a burden being carried!

We laugh at such reasoning, and well we may. Perhaps we should also weep, for the reasoning serves only to make a holy command of God appear ludicrous before the world.

There is a reasonable limit beyond which no command, either of God or man, applies. Hence the warning against being “overmuch righteous.” The present-day religious groups to which we have referred, who eschew neckties and buttons as unnecessary vain display, would seem to us to come under this warning of Scripture. At least, the reasoning they employ should warn us that there can actually be a danger to normal spiritual living, in spinning out our reasoning too fine.

Now, I would not say that the sister whose letter prompted this discussion is “overmuch righteous,” not at all. I know nothing concerning her except what she presented in her brief letter. I am sure she is sincere in her desire to serve God acceptably. But I think she needs to guard against taking an extreme position.

Adornment And Church Office

A sister writes to inquire whether “there is a ruling of the General Conference which says that anyone using any make-up (even if it be unnoticed by others) shall not hold any office in the church. Would it be wise to put out of office persons who are capable just because they use a little rouge?”

Contrary to the impression that seems to be widespread, the General Conference does not take actions concerning numerous details of the life and habits of Seventh-day Adventists. We would soon have a ponderous volume if we did that. We try to set forth general principles that ought to govern the lives of our people, and let the matter stand at that. Beyond those principles we believe that the individual conscience of the member must be invoked to guide him in the application of the principles to his own life.

There is a principle, of course, that has to do with the modesty and decorum of believers. Obviously, we could not have as church officers those whose appearance, because of dress or any other reason, would cause them to be a definite object of attention and discussion, and would detract from the principles that we believe in. But as to how far we can apply this principle to details, is a question on which I suppose no two people would quite agree.

I think that most times we can find our way through a problem such as you present if, in the true spirit of Christ, and free, thus, of any critical attitude, we discuss with the person involved the whole perplexity that exists, and of how some in the church are troubled over the example that she sets. I say “she” because you are evidently discussing feminine adornment, though vain display is a distinguishing mark, not of a sex, but of humanity. I am sure that if the spirit is right, the sister thus approached can be helped so to change her attire or her adorning that she will not bear the wrong kind of witness before the world and before the church members. I do not know what else to suggest.

If we are looking for some kind of code to which we can point for each detail in the handling of church life and discipline, we will look in vain. I do not know who would ever formulate such a code. I hope we never attempt it. There are a great many problems that can be solved by sympathetic contact and prayer and, if need be, tears, that can never be solved by a cold written code, coldly applied.

2. Amusements

Swimming And Christian Standards

A sister inquires: “What are the standards of the church as to dress, environment, et cetera, in regard to swimming? Where I live, the places to go are crowded with worldly people of all kinds, the dance music sounds loudly, and the swimming attire is extreme. I wish I knew what is ‘the middle of the road’. there seem to be so many different opinions among our people.”

The only safe rule for us to follow in this matter, or in any other matter, is to ask ourselves these questions: “Will my attendance and participation in this or that activity make me more firm in the faith? Will the sounds that strike my ear and the sights that strike my eye serve to strengthen the struggling holy desires within me toward heaven, or will they stimulate desires in an opposite direction?”

The person who will, with absolute sincerity, and in the context of prayer to God, ask himself these questions, will, I believe, find the answer. For me at long range to attempt to give specific answers on endless details of social contacts and situations, would be quite impossible. That is why I have suggested the solution in terms of questions that one should ask oneself.

However, I would say, as regards certain worldly places of bathing, with all of their attendant factors of jazz music, et cetera, that they are not the kind of places for Adventists to frequent.

As to scanty swimming attire, I think that it stands condemned by the prime Christian principle of modesty. Such attire seeks, not to clothe, but to expose, the body.

After all, there is one purpose, and one purpose only, that dominates the mind of a true follower of God, and that is so to live and so to develop character as to be ready to stand in the great day of God. We should not try to see how near we can come to the fire and not be burned, or how closely we can associate with unbelievers without becoming fully identified with them. We are to stand apart from all the evil around us, to come out of the world, and that means to come out of a great many pleasures, so-called, that mark the world.

Church Entertainments

Letters come to me expressing deep concern over the kind of social activities, recreation, and entertainment provided by some of our churches and institutions, very particularly the kind of moving pictures that are sometimes shown. The writers ask: Has the church lowered its standards?

The answer to this question is No, though I grant that in some churches and institutions our vision seems to have become a little blurred as to the standards that ought to control entertainment programs in general and moving pictures in particular. However, I feel neither depressed nor discouraged. The very fact that members write in from various places, sensing keenly a danger, reveals that a true appreciation of standards is far from being lost in our ranks.

Heeding Counsel to Laodicea

I do not hesitate to speak out plainly for fear that this will provide ammunition for critics. I could never say anything half so strong against the trends in the church as the Bible says about us in its description of Laodicea. Nor could I match the words of rebuke that are found in Mrs. White's writings, as she has described the shortcomings of the church from time to time during our history. The hope of the church lies, at least in part, in its capacity for self-criticism, in its ability to realize the dangers that are upon it.

The worst thing that ever could happen would be for us to fall into the mood of boasting, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (Revelation 3:17). Our attitude should ever be, not that we have attained, but that realizing our low estate, we are resolved by the grace of God to climb ever higher toward perfection. But we shall not be able to maintain that mood unless we constantly are aware that we live in the midst of a sinful world, whose temptations are more varied and subtle than ever, and that we can hope to escape only by constant watching unto prayer.

Let me quote briefly from two most recent, representative letters, from widely separated parts of the country. The first letter says in part: "I am so puzzled over this motion-picture practice that has taken over our so-called recreation, that I can no longer make it harmonize with our old SDA belief that right is right and wrong is wrong." Then the writer goes on to tell of a social at the church she attends, and names the particular movies that were shown. Concerning these movies she remarks, "They flirt with sin." She declares that she doesn't want to be a "back number," but adds, in her concluding line: "I love the truth and want to go with progress so long as it leads to heaven, but I want to make sure of heaven."

The second letter contains these words: I am concerned as I realize the great and dangerous change that has come over our people when occasionally we attend a social. They put on shows here like I used to see from Hollywood. Theatrical, dramatic productions, ridiculous clowning." Then she adds: "I am also perplexed to know just what to tell people when they are coming into the church. Should we tell them: 'Don't go to the shows out in the world, go to ours'?" She exonerates the pastor of her church: "Our preacher seems to be an earnest soul and preaches straight and stirring messages. But for some reason they have little or no effect."

In some of our college papers there are news stories about dramas and plays given. Only a short time ago a college paper described an evening's entertainment that included a "clown" who, it was explained, provided entertainment for the children. The accompanying picture showed a clown who appeared to be a complete replica of the kind pictured in the newspapers after the circus has been in town.

Wrong Mood Created

Now, it may be contended that a clown is harmless. There are a few of them on the campus of almost any college, any year. It may, perhaps, also be claimed that the kind of drama given at a college is harmless. But I am not too sure. Perhaps nothing intrinsically evil is said or done in connection with any of these affairs, but that is not a sufficient defense. We must view the overall effect, the trend that such entertainment produces, the mood created in the minds of the student body. I think that trend wrong, altogether wrong. Our colleges were established, first and before all else, to provide this Advent Movement with youthful workers, and to surround all who attend these schools with an atmosphere strangely different from the world, an atmosphere that will in no way give momentum to any latent desire in the mind of youth to seek the pleasures and the entertainment of the world.

Am I therefore critical of our college leadership? No! They are doing valiantly, and achieving a heartening measure of success. But as our institutions grow larger and, much more important, as students come in from homes and churches where the entertainment is less than ideal, the problem of our school administrators grows.

Now, shall we take the position that no entertainment ought to be provided for the youth, or for our church membership in general? Emphatically, No. Good religion is not opposed to moments of relaxation, or even to a hearty laugh. But we should never forget that it is along the path of entertainment that some of the gravest dangers lie, and that we can never be too careful in the matter, lest we go by imperceptible stages over into areas that are alien to the spirit and the objectives of the Advent Movement.

I believe, in the light of the evidence available, that those responsible for the social events of some of our churches and institutions have permitted themselves to go definitely beyond the bounds of safety and thus to endanger the ideals that we seek to maintain. I cannot say less than this and be honest. I cannot say less and be true to my trust.

The record will testify that I have given ample space, week in and week out, in the columns of the Review, to descriptions of the glorious advances of the cause, and the blessing of God upon His work. I shall continue to do this. God is indeed with us, and we may all humbly thank Him for it. What is more, He will go with us to the end. But we would be a deceived company of people if we focused our eyes and our minds wholly on the hopeful aspects of our church life.

We cannot forget the warnings both of Scripture and of the Spirit of Prophecy that grave dangers beset us on every side and that many who believe that they are ready for the day of the Lord are walking in dangerous paths, spiritually asleep, and will be rudely awakened at the last great day. Hence I cannot do other than raise my voice in warning when I read letters that describe in specific detail certain social activities and certain moving pictures that have been shown under the auspices of the social committees of some of our churches and institutions.

It is bad enough for a family in the circle of their own home to have a social that is less than ideal. It is much worse for that kind of social to be held under the auspices of the church. If the church does thus and so, there cannot be anything wrong with it; thus reason many of our young people and some who are not so young.

I am aware of the persuasive argument that we must have this or that kind of social hour and entertainment if we are to hold our youth. It is one of those half-truths that can be more dangerous than outright error. Certainly we should seek to hold our youth. We must. But to what do we wish to hold them? Is it merely to the form of church life, so that they will nominally declare that they happen to be members of the Adventist Church? Hardly. That is the road along which endless other church bodies have traveled. Either this Advent Movement has distinctive high standards and beliefs, or it has no excuse to exist in the world. Accordingly, unless our endeavors in behalf of our youth seek ever to hold them up to the highest standards and objectives of the church, we gain little or nothing merely by holding them on the church rolls.

I question seriously whether we would have much success in holding them even to the mere form of church membership by a worldly type of entertainment. The church has more entertainment for its youth today than ever before. But there is nothing in the statistical tables of the church to warrant our believing that we are having much greater success today in holding our youth than we have had before.

Incidentally, this problem is not confined to our youth. It seems that those who are older often enjoy being present at social hours as much as the youth. Now, we may rejoice that our older people are young in spirit. What concerns me here is, that if the level of entertainment is not what it ought to be, there is damage to the sense of values of old as well as young. And that presents a double danger to the church.

As I have noted the frequency of letters on this whole problem in the relatively recent past, I have begun to fear that there is a relationship between the rapid appearance of television sets in American homes and the kind of moving pictures and other entertainment considered proper by the social committees in some of our churches and institutions. How could it be otherwise, when a steadily increasing total of Adventists have in their own homes a television machine, which, if not constantly guarded and controlled, will present endless vaudeville skits and movies in the living room? It would be nothing short of a miracle if some of this did not reflect itself ere long in the social activities of the church.

If we had a thousand years to make ready to meet our God, a millennium in which to perfect character, countless centuries in which to finish a task for God in the earth, we might take a more measured stride in discussing matters like this. But our mood must ever be measured by our conviction that the day of the Lord is near and hastening greatly, and that we must be prepared to meet Him face to face. A true Seventh-day Adventist can never be casual about anything that might affect his readiness for heaven. It is a matter of life and death with him as to the direction in which any influence might lead him. He must ever ask himself the question, Am I being led upward or downward?

As a people we have given due heed, and well we may, to the warning that the deceptions and lying wonders of the devil will be abroad in the world in the last days. But we have too closely circumscribed the range of those deceptions and wonders. We have thought of them rather exclusively in terms of false doctrines, delusive views concerning the manner of Christ's coming and the purposes of it. It is time for all of us to see a larger meaning in the inspired warning against such deceptions.

The chief deception, we believe, that will rob Adventists of heaven will not be in the form of false doctrines. We are rather well established on our main teachings, and a host of us can give proof texts without end. But proof texts alone are not sufficient to protect us from all the devil's deceptions, nor are they of themselves a passport to heaven. Deceptions in the form of a false sense of values, of entertainment, of social views, can as effectively debar us from heaven as any false doctrine.

I believe with all the earnestness of my soul that there is need for reform in our conception of what is right and proper and good in this whole realm of social activities, entertainment, and moving pictures, not only in our homes but also in our churches and our institutions. Heaven is worth too much to exchange it for a few questionable social hours on this earth.

What About Television?

Many have written to ask, in substance, What about TV? Is it safe to have in our homes?

There is no simple Yes and No answer to these questions. But it is possible to set down certain facts, and certain principles from Scripture, that can guide us safely to right answers.

Perhaps the most comprehensive and authoritative survey on TV to date is one that was prepared and published by U.S. News & World Report (Sept. 2, 1955). The survey dealt, first, with the different types of TV programs, which showed that 77 per cent of the programs come under the head, "Entertainment." Then there was presented the effects of TV on different classes of people. The survey was both enlightening and startling, and most certainly not flattering to this modern mechanical marvel.

The revelations of this U.S. News & World Report survey make certain conclusions inevitable. The first is this, that television is a subtle mixture of good and evil, with the evil heavily predominating. Television has imported the moving-picture theater into the home. Few will question this statement, certainly not the owners of moving-picture houses. Many of them found themselves going bankrupt as television sets began to be widely used.

When you have a television set in your home, the moving picture theater is no farther away than the length of your arm. We condemn the moving-picture theater. Shall we commend its most active competitor? We frown upon the kind of entertainment provided by the moving-picture theater. Shall we commend the kind of entertainment provided by the television, which draws on the same actor talent in many, many instances? Indeed, TV chains are now buying millions of dollars' worth of movie films for their programs! That helps to explain why the survey reveals that more than three fourths of all the television programs may be listed under the head 'Of entertainment, with much of the entertainment quite indistinguishable from that which is provided by the moving picture theater.

I grant that many of the entertainment programs on television and, remember, they constitute 77 per cent of the programs—cannot be described as baldly and blatantly bad. They do not picture murder, robbery, and other varieties of sin in their gross, sordid forms. No, many of them are what would be described in theater language simply as vaudeville skits or song and dance numbers. On the screen* comes an actress singing a popular song, and accompanying it, maybe, with various rhythmic motions. Not very bad, perhaps, but also not very good. The person who views such programs for a time becomes conditioned to view more theatrical numbers that are presented on the screen. It is this gradual conditioning, which inevitably results from many of the entertainment features on television, that presents the gravest danger to Seventh-day Adventists.

Let me say here with all the earnestness I can command, that men and women who seriously and sincerely seek to make ready for heaven, will find no help in that direction by spending hours looking at and listening to an entertainer sing a popular song with the rhythmic accompaniment that generally marks such features. And if a program so apparently harmless and clean as this, is a hindrance rather than an aid in the Journey toward heaven, then what of many other of the programs that are found on television, programs that are condemned even by those who are in no way concerned about the business of making ready to meet God? We should never forget that by beholding we become changed.

“Vice is a monster of so frightful mien, As, to be hated, needs but to be seen; Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face, We first endure, then pity, then embrace.” ALEXANDER POPE, *An Essay on Man*

We pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” But are we sure we can sincerely offer this prayer and keep within arm’s reach a whole array of seductive temptations? The answer is that we can do so only if we belong to that small minority who possess not simply high and holy desires but also a resolute, inflexible will that is unfailingly invoked to discipline every moment of our waking hours. I do not doubt that a portion of our membership have that much-desired kind of will. I am equally certain that many others among us have not. Some who feel that they have the kind of will that protects them from all danger are sadly deceived people.

Our safety lies, not so much in thinking that we have a strong will, as in remembering the warning: “Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” It has been well said that if we would avoid sin, we must avoid the occasion for sin. How many have felt that they were free from a variety of temptations in life, only to discover in a moment of weakness that their self-confidence was their undoing.

Concerning the problem of TV, the words of our Lord most rightly apply: “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee. For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell” (Matthew 5:29). If one’s eyes are increasingly tempted to go beyond the quite limited number of truly worth-while programs, then we would paraphrase our Lord’s words and say that it is better to go into heaven minus a few good programs than into hell with a swirling array of questionable ones.

Let us never forget that we cannot reach heaven by accident. The holy heights will be gained only by those who, by the grace of God, make a serious day-by-day and hour-by-hour business of rising toward heaven in thought, desire, and affection. We need to give constant attention to the command of Holy Writ: If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1, 2).

In the light of the fact that the large majority of TV programs are entertainment—with most of that entertainment falling short of Adventist ideals do we not face a constant temptation to violate this holy command when we have a TV set in our homes?

Let me repeat, no one will ever reach heaven by accident. There must be a daily discipline, a constant watching unto prayer, a filling of the mind with heavenly thoughts and heavenly songs. Thus only will we be prepared for “the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Revelation 3:10).

A Faulty Analogy

Some would quickly dispose of the whole problem of TV by saying, in substance: “We would not throw out all books simply because many are bad. We learn to pick and choose. The same applies to TV.”

Unfortunately an argument from analogy is worthless unless it first be proved that the analogy is valid. But a TV cannot accurately be compared to a collection of books. With books, you can keep the bad out of the house simply by not buying them. But when you have the TV you have both the good and the bad in one package. It would be much more accurate to compare TV to an omnibus volume, with some of its pages presenting helpful uplifting food for the mind, and other pages, a quite different kind of food. What a book that would be to read—and to let our children read! What a temptation to bad reading! How easy to run right on in our reading until we are immersed in thoughts quite alien to our ideals—Undoubtedly, constant discipline could justify such a book in the home. I willingly grant that this is possible; though, to be honest, I fear that in most instances it is highly improbable.

The U.S. News survey makes a significant comment on this very point. It notes that most people find it hard to confine their viewing of TV to the truly worth-while programs—news events, educational, high-grade music, et cetera—for such programs are sandwiched between entertainment material. This presents an extra hazard when children and young people are permitted to sit hour after hour before a TV set.

The survey requires this further conclusion: A TV makes heavy demands on the time of those who own one. That fact was most graphically described by one housewife who said that she and her husband called their TV set “our evil.” Even if all the programs were above question, I would still say that we as Seventh-day Adventists have a task to fulfill, a work for God to do, that leaves us none too much free time at best. Hence, any device that draws heavily upon our free time is open to serious question, quite apart from the nature of the programs that may be presented.

Here we are, a unique people, the Advent people, who believe we must find time to study the Holy Word, and to do an ever-increasing amount of missionary work for God. But how can we do this if we come under the spell of TV? Of course we are sure some of our readers will reply immediately that they are in no danger of coming under any spell, that they use their TV only for the occasional programs of high quality that are consistent with our ideals and principles. Perhaps so, but I doubt that that is always true. Are we Seventh-day Adventists made of flesh and blood different from that of other people? We are not. Others testify freely that one of the most distinguishing marks of the TV is its time-consuming claim upon those who have it. Perhaps we spend more time with the TV than we realize. That has been the case with many others, until someone began to inquire of them the actual number of hours that they spent viewing the screen.

We are a people who believe we should sacrifice for the advancement of God's cause in these last days. But how can we sacrifice so greatly when we must make substantial payments on a TV set, or on repairs for it if the machine is already paid for? Perhaps it is the very modern gadgets like the TV that partly explain why there has been an almost uninterrupted decline in the ratio of mission gifts to the tithe that we pay. The tithe reveals our income, but our mission gifts reveal most clearly our freewill giving.

Furthermore, I believe that our money belongs to God, and that we are but stewards of it. It is evident that the number of worth-while programs—programs in keeping with our standards—are rather small compared with the entertainment features. Does it quite make sense to spend heavily for such limited returns?

Rights and Duties

Now, someone will remind me that it is his own private business how he spends his money. Granted. I have never told any individual that he ought not to buy a television, nor do I plan to do so in the future. But I solemnly believe that it is the duty of a minister of the Advent Movement earnestly to set forth principles that will best enable the movement to accomplish its objectives. And I believe that television may possibly threaten two of the great objectives of the movement—making ready a people prepared to meet God, and securing from that people large sacrificial offerings for the preaching of the gospel in every land.

Let me repeat: I freely grant that each church member has the right to determine how he shall spend his money. What concerns me is not the question of his undebatable rights, but of his undebatable duty before God and in relation to this movement. After all, the true follower of God is not so concerned to assert his rights as he is to discover what are his duties before God, and to seek by all means to fulfill those duties. Of this I am certain, that there will be no change in the downward curve of mission-offering giving in proportion to tithe unless someone speaks out with earnestness, vigor, and great definiteness concerning the spending habits of Seventh-day Adventists. Nor will we find protection against the downward pull of the devil unless we are constantly warned of his seductive temptations.

Someone may inquire whether I think, therefore, that anyone who has a television set in his home is a sinner. I have expressed no such thought, nor do I entertain it. God has not given me the task of classifying Adventists as sinners or saints, or of deciding who has will power to control his TV set, and who has not. But I do believe that it is undebatably my task, as an Adventist minister, to raise a warning note against anything and everything that could lead into sin those who seek to be ready for heaven.

To those who might ask: Should I buy a television set? I would reply: That is a personal question, to be settled by the individual in the light of all the evidence, and in communion with his God.

I am not forgetful that a most promising work is being carried on through television, for example, the Faith for Today program. For that let us thank God and take heart. Here is an illustration of how the wrath—or rather the folly and foolishness—of man is made to praise God. But the fact that the denomination spends money to bring the truth to men via the television, provides in itself no grounds for our concluding that we are justified in spending money for a television set. We sometimes rent a theater in which to preach the gospel. But the preaching of the gospel for that particular hour does not thereby sanctify the shows that may later be presented from its stage, or the customers who come to see what takes place on that stage. We may justify standing at a street corner in a disreputable part of a city to preach the gospel to those who live in that area, but this provides no justification for tarrying in such an area after we have accomplished our mission for God.

To sum up the matter: We must never forget that we are a people who believe that we should be separate from the world. Few will question the statement that it is hard to be in the mood of separation from the world when we are viewing much of what appears on the TV screen. Nor are there many among us who will challenge the further statement that a most potent temptation for ourselves, and even more so for our children, ever resides in the TV set, whose limited number of worth-while programs are sandwiched between those that present unheavenly entertainment.

Are we sure that we are sufficiently alert spiritually, and possessed of a sufficiently strong will, to prevent any unheavenly program from coming on the screen? This is the heart of the problem—the heart of the question that each must answer as he communes with his God.

A Divided Home And The Theater

An earnest brother, whose wife is not an Adventist, wants to know whether it is right to take her to a theater to see a “good” motion picture, such as a travelogue. He states that through the years he has refused to enter a theater, but wonders, now, in view of the suggestions of some of his friends, if it might not be permissible to make exceptions. He naturally wishes to please his wife.

Is it all right to go to a theater when something very “good” is portrayed? In order to answer this question rightly we must consider two prime facts. The first is this, that we must always guard our influence so that it will witness for good. Even if we might argue convincingly that we can make a clear distinction between the good and the bad, it would still remain a fact that we were setting before others the example of attending the theater where both good and bad are shown. Such other persons would thus be led to feel

that it was all right for them to attend also. Nor would they necessarily enter the theater with any resolute decision as to what they would see or any clear-cut sense of distinction between what is good and what is bad. Hence we might lead such persons into a grave temptation as a result of what we had done. The Bible has much to say about the significance of our example. Indeed, Paul declared that while there were some things that he considered quite harmless to do, nevertheless he would refrain from doing them if by any chance he would cause someone else to offend.

The second fact is this: the devil routinely employs as one of his most effective devices the mixing of good and evil. Only thus is he able to seduce into evil a certain type of person who would be shocked by immediate contact with outright iniquity. Now, unquestionably a theater provides a mixture of good and evil. Hence I must counsel against attendance at such a place, even though the particular picture portrayed may be above reproach.

Remember, it is easy to set up habit patterns. It is easy also to lose one's sense of shock. It is easy to move from what we feel is transparently acceptable to something that is less acceptable. And because it is so easy for the human mind to move, by degrees, from the good to an acceptance of the bad, why should we place ourselves in the way of temptation by going to a place where we will be confronted by subtle transitions?

It is in terms of this question that we must find our indictment of card playing, for example. Certainly no one will attempt to establish that merely shuffling and dealing out small pieces of cardboard with pictures of kings, queens, et cetera, on them, is going to damage anyone's morals. Then why do we put a ban on card playing? The answer is evident: Because card playing leads on to certain associations, to certain experiences, that we feel are inimical to the best spiritual living.

Now, if our reasoning in the matter of card playing is valid and I believe it is—it is tenfold more valid when employed with regard to attendance at a theater, which at times presents something acceptable and other times, something less acceptable, or even wholly contrary to our standards.

In the light of these facts, I don't believe you should attend the theater, even for the showing of some particular picture that might be considered altogether harmless.

I come, now, to the next point in your letter, the relationship that you bear to your wife. I'm sure you do have very great obligations to your wife. She is your own flesh and bone. But those obligations should be ever fulfilled in the context of the highest principles that God has given to us. I do not believe that the way to win your wife to the Advent Movement is by going with her to the theater. To accept the logic that a man may make his decisions as to where he should go, simply by how pleasing it is to his non-Adventist wife, would be to make her desires the measure of his moral and spiritual standards. And that would, in some instances, spell abandonment of all standards.

Now, my brother, I don't doubt but that your refusal to take her to the theater could easily create misunderstandings, and possibly tensions. That is part of the price that we have to pay to follow our Lord Jesus Christ. He declared, in speaking of family tensions, that He came to bring, not peace, but a sword. All who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, said Paul. Some of that persecution can be in terms of mental distress over the fact that one cannot find a way of going along with his wife in her desire for entertainment.

The Adventist husband living with a non-Adventist wife must seek to strengthen the marriage ties and the bonds of mutual affection, not by acceding to her desire to go to places of amusement contrary to our standards, but by living so thoughtfully, so considerately, so graciously, that she will feel he is the most wonderful husband in the world, despite his "odd" notions concerning entertainment. I believe that if a husband makes a real business-as-all-husbands-ought-to-do-of trying to be the most wonderful husband in the world, of going out of his way to have a sympathetic, understanding nature, to be attentive even to the point of obvious gallantry in all of his associations with his wife, she will find herself so proud of him that she will be proclaiming his virtues to all the countryside.

Now perhaps this states the matter too hopefully; but if I understand human nature at all, a wife is more concerned about a thousand and one little attentions than she is about an occasional trip to a place of entertainment.

Sports On School Radio

A sister writes in Perplexity regarding the matter of amusements and sports. Specifically she speaks of the local church school, where the teacher brings a radio to school and permits the children to bring their radios to listen to the ball games, even during the time they are supposed to be studying. She expresses grave concern regarding this love "for commercialized ball games that is being instilled in the children at school."

I have heard from some other places of this weird and incredible practice of broadcasting ball games during school hours. Evidently it is not confined to one school.

The question raised concerning sports is an old one and a very perplexing one. The perplexity arises largely out of the fact that there is a considerable difference of opinion among us as to where the line divides between proper and improper recreation for our children. Part of the problem is, What shall we listen to on the radio? I am not qualified to mark out any exact lines on a matter of this kind. I would, however, draw a hard and fast line against having radios in the schoolroom. I think that is a fantastic situation. Parents pay tuition bills to have their children instructed in reading, writing, arithmetic, and above all, the Word of God, not to have them listen to sports on the radio. Our schools were not founded to promote sports. Solomon said that there is a time for everything. School hours are a time for study.

The denomination rather generally has frowned on the idea of commercialized sports, partly because of the waste of time and waste of money, but even more so because of the unhealthy excitement that generally is connected with such sports. It must be granted, of course, that there is no cost to listening to sports on the radio and that much of the wild excitement of the stadium is

missing when we hear the game in our living room, or in the schoolroom, for that matter. Hence, many good folk in the church justify their listening to commercialized sports programs on the radio. God has not made me a judge of such people. But I do not believe that listening to such programs on the radio will help to prepare us for heaven. What is more, listening to such sports, via radio, only stimulates the desire to watch them firsthand.

There is a great and insidious danger in becoming gradually more and more absorbed in sports and amusements until we have little or no time for God. On the other hand, we must not forget that wholesome recreation holds a proper place in the life of even the most devout Christian. But I don't believe that commercial sports should rightly be listed under the head of wholesome recreation they are far from that.

The Moving-Picture Theater

One of the questions that repeatedly confronts us in letters from the field is that of the movies. While letter writers generally seem to understand that the denomination has placed a ban on attendance at movies, they are not always clear as to why this ban exists. The result is that some who write seek to discover whether there might not be exceptions and whether movies are really as great a foe to spirituality and Adventist ideals as they are said to be.

There is one handicap that immediately confronts me when I seek to write with any definiteness and authority on the subject of movies. I have no personal acquaintance with them. There are a few who would make capital of this fact and declare that I am theorizing on a subject of which I am ignorant. Sometimes young people speak in this fashion and occasionally an older person. Perhaps the reason older persons use this argument less is that experience has taught them that a person need not have firsthand experience in regard to some things in order to know that they are evil or dangerous. One need not have the personal experience of falling over a precipice in order to speak with certainty concerning the dangers of walking too near the brink. One need only know the law of gravity. And one need not walk into a pest house in order to be sure that plague is contagious. He need only know the law that applies to communicable diseases.

Movie Advertisements

I would have to be blind not to know the kind of wares the movie house offers its customers when they lay down their money for tickets. In all our great cities large billboards strike the eye. Some of these billboards advertise what the movie houses in the city are offering. Frankly, I don't like what they offer. Sex and seduction seem to be one of the most prominent features played up in the advertising. Close to sex and seduction is crime, with a generous dose of murders included. We presume that such advertisements do not disappoint those who go to the movie house and that the moving pictures fairly live up to the claims made for them in the advertisements. Otherwise the public would soon be skeptical, and the millions spent on movie advertising would prove a bad investment.

Before me as I write are current issues of very respectable magazines which carry advertising of all kinds. Leafing through these issues, I find advertising of the latest moving pictures. One page advertisement is dominated by an amorous scene and carries these suggestive words: "Possessed by one woman.... obsessed by another." Another colorful page advertisement describes a moving picture, Caesar and Cleopatra, that has just been produced. The opening lines of the advertisement read thus: "Never before such seductive beauty, such riotous ... luxurious ... loving and living!" The pictures in the advertisement blend with these lurid lines.

I am not interested in the love life of Caesar and Cleopatra. I believe it contributes nothing to up building my moral standards or preparing me for heaven. I do not wish to see on the flickering screen the "siren, sorcerous enchantress, whose beauty and allure was so overpowering she used it to rule the man who ruled the world"-to borrow a further line from the advertisement. I don't wish to see luxurious barges of the rulers ... where revelry reigned and joy was unconfined." Nor to see "the sinuous siren of enticement," as the actress who takes the role of Cleopatra is described.

Someone may say immediately that this is an extreme case, not typical of good movies in good moving-picture houses. But, if advertisements give any fair suggestion of what the customer receives for his money, the illustration here given is in no way extreme or unusual.

I am further persuaded that the factors of sex, seduction, and crime, that drip from the margins of movie advertisements, must actually be very prominent in many movies, else why should boards of censorship have to be set up in various States to examine the movies?

Remember, the theatergoer in many of the States actually sees movies only after they have passed a board of censorship. There must be something inherently off-color in the viewpoint of those who manufacture this particular product, or there would not be need of a board of censorship in different States. And I need hardly add that the board of censors lean very much to the liberal side. None of the members are Seventh-day Adventists, and even if they were they could not thereby remedy a fundamentally bad situation.

A Reviewer Makes a Confession

Once in a while a moving-picture reviewer expresses his real mind as to the character and quality of movies. A while ago, the rather scholarly Saturday Review of Literature carried an article entitled "The Kingdom of the Blind." The subtitle was "An Ex Moving Picture Reviewer Considers His Ex-Job." Here is a sentence from this article:

"It is my indignant opinion that ninety per cent of the moving pictures exhibited in America are so vulgar, witless, and dull that it is preposterous to write about them in any publication not intended to be read while chewing gum." Further on in the article the reviewer speaks of the "massive vulgarity" of most of the "so-called A pictures (those that cost more than a million dollars to produce)."

Evidently this movie reviewer does not think very well of the movies, and he ought to know them as well as anybody could ever hope to know them. He did not approach the movies with the prejudiced eye of a Seventh-day Adventist preacher. But he ended up by speaking of the “massive vulgarity” of the so-called best of pictures produced by the great companies. His use of the word vulgarity is highly appropriate. The term conveys a breadth of ideas that brings to us a picture of things tawdry, cheap, gross, and low, even if not hopelessly immoral. But it is against all the cheap, tawdry, earth piling influences that the Christian fight.

The Wrong Atmosphere

Things vulgar can certainly have no place in the life of an Adventist who declares he is making ready for a better world, a world where vulgarity in thought and speech or action is unknown. Vulgarity is the very opposite of refinement and the enemy of high and holy living. To the promotion and sale of such products of vulgarity the moving-picture business seems evidently dedicated.

Every institution has its own atmosphere. The church has the atmosphere of prayer. We find ourselves in a certain mood when within the influence of that atmosphere. A business office has another certain atmosphere. We feel in the mood of activity and the execution of tasks when we are in the atmosphere of the business office. Likewise a moving picture house has its own clearly defined atmosphere. The atmosphere of the theater hangs heavy with evil. The atmosphere produces its effect on all who frequent such a place.

For this reason, if for no other, I think that an Adventist presents a weak and worthless argument when he declares that he wishes to go to a moving-picture house only occasionally to see a good movie. Doubtless I might secure at a saloon a glass of pure water to quench my thirst, but I would rather find a good drink elsewhere. I don't like the atmosphere of a saloon. If I went in there I might even be tempted to drink something else besides water. Even more forcefully does the principle apply in this matter of going to a movie house occasionally for a so-called good movie. There are places where Adventists simply do not belong. The moving-picture house is one of them. The fact that it may contain some good pictures at times provides no defense for attendance. Adam and Eve found out long ago that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a bad tree to visit.

What Shall We Do About Christmas?

Each year as Christmas draws near we receive a certain kind of questions. Those questions might be summarized thus: (1) Is it wrong to have a Christmas tree? (2) Is it wrong to give Christmas gifts? (3) Is it wrong to be gay at Christmas time?

Is a Christmas Tree Wrong?

First, is it wrong to have a Christmas tree? Fortunately, we need not be in doubt on this question. Long ago Mrs. White, the messenger of the Lord, discussed rather fully the subject of our proper relationship to the Christmas season. She states explicitly, what we, of course, all know from a study of history—that the date of our Lord's birth cannot be determined. No records of antiquity throw any sure or certain light on this point. She goes on to say that “the silence of the Scriptures upon this point evidences to us that it is hidden from us for the wisest purposes.” And she adds:

“There is no divine sanctity resting upon the twenty-fifth of December; and it is not pleasing to God that anything that concerns the salvation of man through should be so sadly perverted from its professed design. Christ should be the supreme object; but as Christmas as is, as it has been observed by the world, the glory is turned from God to mortal man, whose sinful, defective character made it necessary for Him to come to our world.” - Review and Herald, Dec. 9, 1884.

After describing the true purposes of Christ's advent to the world, Mrs. White remarks: “Parents should keep these things before their children.” But she follows this almost immediately with the statement:

“As the twenty-fifth day of December is observed to commemorate the birth of Christ, as the children have been instructed by precept and example that this was indeed a day of gladness and rejoicing, you will find it a difficult matter to pass over this period without giving it some attention. It can be made to serve a very good purpose

“The youth should be treated very carefully. They should not be left on Christmas to find their own amusement in vanity and pleasure-seeking, in amusements which will be detrimental to their spirituality. Parents can control this matter by turning the minds and the offerings of their children to God and His cause and the salvation of souls.”

Applying this principle to the matter of a Christmas tree, she wrote in this same article: “On Christmas, so soon to come, let not the parents take the position that an evergreen placed in the church for the amusement of the Sabbath-school scholars is a sin; for it may be made a great blessing.” Obviously, if a Christmas tree may properly be placed in the Sabbath school room, it may also properly be placed in an Adventist home. That much seems clear beyond all question.

Is It Wrong to Give Gifts?

What Mrs. White goes on to say further regarding a Christmas tree in the Sabbath school carries us directly into the answer to the second question: Is it wrong to give gifts at Christmas time?

“Christmas is coming. May you all have wisdom to make it a precious season. Let the older church members unite, heart and soul, with their children in this innocent amusement and recreation, in devising ways and means to show true respect to Jesus by bringing to Him gifts and offerings. Let everyone remember the claims of God. His cause cannot go forward without your aid. Let the gifts you have usually bestowed upon one another be placed in the Lord's treasury. In every church let your smaller offerings be placed upon your Christmas tree. Let the precious emblem, ‘ever green,’ suggest the holy the loving heart- work of God and His beneficence to us; and the work will be to save other souls who are in darkness. Let your works be in accordance with your faith....

“Every tree in Satan’s garden hangs laden with the fruits of vanity, pride, self-importance, evil desire, extravagance—all poisoned fruit, but very gratifying to the carnal heart. Let the several churches present to God Christmas trees in every church; and then let them hang thereon the fruits of beneficence and gratitude offerings coming from willing hearts and hands, fruits that God will accept as an expression of our faith and our great love to Him for the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. Let the evergreen be laden with fruit, rich and pure, and holy, acceptable to God. Shall we not have such a Christmas as Heaven can approve?”

She writes at some length on this subject of making gifts to the Lord and then presents this earnest appeal to believers:

“Now, brethren, let us on Christmas make special efforts to come before the Lord with gifts and grateful offerings for the gift of Jesus Christ as a Redeemer to the world. Let nothing now be spent needlessly; but let every penny that can be spared be put out to the exchangers. Satan has had his way in managing these occasions to suit himself. Now let us turn the current heavenward instead of earthward. Let us show by our offerings that we appreciate the self denial and sacrifice of Christ in our behalf. Let God be brought to remembrance by every child and parent; and let the offerings, both small and large, be brought to the store-house of God.

“You that-have means, who have been in the habit of making donations to your relatives and friends until you are at a loss to know what to invent that will be new and interesting to them, seek to put your ingenuity to the test, as well as your influence, see how much your means you may gather to advance the work of the Lord. Let your skills and your capacities be employed to make the coming Christmas one of intense interest, paying your addresses to the God of heaven in willing, grateful offerings. Follow no longer the world’s customs. Make a break here, and see if this Christmas cannot show thousands of dollars flowing into the treasury, that God’s store house may not be empty.

You may not be recompensed on earth, but you will be rewarded in the future life, and that abundantly. Let those who have so long planned for self now begin to plan for the cause of God, and you will certainly have increased wisdom. Let the conscience be enlightened, and the love of truth and of Christ take the place of idolatrous thoughts and love of self.

“Let there be recorded in the heavenly books such a Christmas as has never yet been seen, because of the donations which shall be given for the sustaining of the work of God and the up building of His kingdom.”

These inspired words are vigorous, direct, and heart-searching. But does she mean that we ought not to spend any money for gifts to loved ones at the Christmas season? We think not. Let us look again at the quotation just given.

The Key Word

Note the words: “Let nothing now be spent needlessly; but let every penny that can be spared be put out to the exchangers. Satan has had his way in managing these occasions to suit himself. Now let us turn the current heavenward instead of earthward.” We believe the question of gifts to loved ones turns on this word “needlessly.”

Christmas time should not be the occasion of spending money on gifts simply for the sake of conforming to a holiday custom of giving gifts, irrespective of whether the recipient of that gift stands in any possible need of what we give. And for what other purpose should a Christian spend his money, either at Christmas time or any other time? We are stewards of God. We are not our own; we are bought with a price. Our pocketbooks, along with our hearts, should be converted and sanctified. Our money as well as our time belongs to God and should advance the work of God.

If this simple Bible principle is allowed to direct our thinking in the matter of gifts, we shall find the right answer to the question, Is it wrong to give gifts at Christmas time. Yes, it is wrong, if those gifts represent a waste of money, a pandering to the vanity of the human heart. Yes, it is wrong, if the gift is a profitless article that does not clothe the body or strengthen it, or that does not feed the soul and lift it upward, or that does not instruct the mind in worth-while knowledge and principles, that does not, in brief, make some contribution to more worth-while living.

When we are spending for gifts at the Christmas season, we ought first of all to remind ourselves that we belong to a unique religious movement that has a world task, and that that task is far from completion. We should also remind ourselves of the sober fact that there is a great gap between the needs of the mission fields and the size of the mission treasury.

Is It Wrong to Be Gay at Christmas Time?

And now, the third question: Is it wrong to be gay at Christmas time? To be gay means to be lighthearted, to be in a festive mood, to be happy. We think the answer to the question depends, therefore, on the kind of gaiety, festivity, and holiday happiness displayed. There are different kinds. It must have been the devil himself who created the impression in the souls of devout men and women that there is something essentially evil in being happy, something sinful in laughing; for nothing has done more to frighten away from holy living some classes and ages of people, particularly the youth, than this mistaken idea. The devil did not give us our sense of humor; that was one of the God-given traits that Adam brought with him from the Garden of Eden. Even today, is there anything that is sweeter than the laughter of little children, bubbling over with the joy of living? And does not the wise man tell us that a merry heart doeth good like a medicine? Let us be done with the idea that laughter is necessarily sinful.

Now, it is true that Satan has succeeded in turning, oftentimes, what was originally intended to be wholesome and harmless into something that is spiritually debilitating and actually evil. If he can persuade a devout man that he should eschew all happiness and look ever as grave and glum as death itself, Satan is well contented. He knows that such a Christian will hardly bear a strong witness to the worth of Christianity, and will scarcely persuade others that there is much joy in serving the Lord. If, on the other hand, the evil one can persuade Christians to feel that they can give free rein to every feeling or mood that the world may define as happiness, he is equally satisfied, for by giving such free rein to worldly forms of gaiety, happiness, and laughter, the Christian is undermining the sober and serious foundations on which the whole edifice of his Christian living should solidly rest.

There is a right and a wrong kind of happiness and festivity. The man who laughs at the mistakes and misfortunes of others is simply joining in the chorus of the imps. The man who laughs at his own mistakes and misfortunes may simply be carrying out the command of Scripture not to think of himself more highly than he ought, and to minimize the troubles that come to him. Again, if we laugh with the laughing brook and feel festive with the warbling birds, our very souls full of the joy of living, we will not be far from the kingdom.

We believe that a good test for laughter is this, Will my laughter make the angels weep? Some laughter does. Do we feel that if our guardian angel were visibly standing beside us, we could imagine his laughing with us, his being festive with us, in some particular situation? Does not that question bring us close to the heart of this whole problem? And if we keep this question clearly before us, will we not find in it the safest guide in a variety of situations that confront us in life? We have seen some very happy family groups at Christmas time whose joyous laughter, we believe, grieved no angel away.

The Christian who keeps in close communion with God day by day will find himself possessing a variety of moods. At times he will feel to weep as he thinks of his own shortcomings, or of the tragedy of a sinful world, or of the pathetic picture of hungry little children in devastated lands. Suddenly his mood may change to that of righteous indignation as he thinks of the injustices in the world, of the flouting of the law of God. Again, he may experience a mysterious, tingling thrill of loyalty, adoration, and devotion to the God of heaven, with whom he can hold sweet communion as he journeys along the way. And then the many-stringed harp of his heart may find another chord vibrating as some delightful, yes, even humorous, incident or experience stimulates the muscles of his face and shapes his vocal chords for laughter.

Normal Range of Emotions

The healthy Christian has a normal range of emotions. That range runs all the way from tears to laughter. The difference between the Christian and the unbeliever is this, that the Christian's emotions are always under the control of the Spirit of God and expressed in harmony with the principles of Heaven. Conversion means, not the suppression of normal God-given emotions and desires, but the control and direction of those emotions for ends and purposes consistent with the will of God.

It may not be amiss to remark, in passing, that some of God's great men have actually had a marked sense of humor, an irrepressibly gay and cheerful spirit. There is no better illustration of this than the devout John Bunyan, who stands in the forefront of the witnesses for Christ who suffered bitter persecution in seventeenth century England. Everyone knows his deeply spiritual Pilgrim's Progress, but what everyone does not know is that his Puritan associates chided him for his humor. In a poetic introduction to the second part of Pilgrim's Progress, Bunyan takes note of this objection:

“But some there be that say, ‘He laughs too loud;’
And some do say, ‘His head is in a cloud.’ Some say,
His words and stories are so dark,
They know not how, by them, to find his mark.”

“One may, I think, say, ‘Both his laughs and cries,
May well be guessed at by his watery eyes.’
Some things are of that nature, as to make
One's fancy chuckle, while his heart does ache.”

Inspired Counsel Regarding Pleasures

Why should we not be happy at Christmas time? Why should we not feel gay and lighthearted in the right sense of the word? True, we have no way of knowing when our Lord was born, and certainly we ought not to observe Christmas with any thought that it is some religious day whose observance is necessary to our salvation. But that does not mean that there is anything wrong in taking advantage of the time of year when the birth of our Lord can be brought particularly to mind and using that occasion for a happy and joyful time in the family circle. This is particularly true as regards the children and young people in our homes. On the subject of Christmas, Mrs. White wrote this:

“Youth cannot be made as sedate and grave as old age, the child as sober as the sire. While sinful amusements are condemned, as they should be, let parents, teachers, and guardians of youth provide in their stead innocent pleasures, which shall not taint or corrupt the morals. Do not bind down the young to rigid rules and restraints that will lead them to feel themselves oppressed and to break over and rush into paths of folly and destruction. With a firm, kindly, considerate hand, hold the lines of government, guiding and controlling their minds and purposes, yet so gently, so wisely, so lovingly that they still will know that you have their best good in view.

“How many parents are lamenting the fact that they cannot keep their children at home, that they have no love for home. At an early age they have a desire for the company of strangers; and as soon as they are old enough, they break away from that which appears to them to be bondage and unreasonable restraint, and will neither heed a mother's prayers nor a father's counsels. Investigation would generally reveal that the sin lay at the door of the parents. They have not made home what it ought to be attractive, pleasant, radiant with the sunshine of kind words, pleasant looks, and true love.

“The secret of saving your children lies in making your home lovely and attractive. Indulgence in parents will not bind the children to God nor to home; but a firm, godly influence to properly train and educate the mind would save many children from ruin.”
Review and Herald, December 9, 1884.

Yes, at Christmas time let happiness suffuse our souls. Instead of heavy spirits, let there be light hearts. Has not the weight of sin and condemnation been lifted from us through the grace of Jesus Christ? Has not a song been placed on our lips because of the blessings of Heaven? Let us be happy, we with our children, remembering always to keep our happiness, our lightheartedness, consistent with the principles of Heaven, so that the angels of God will not be grieved by our words or deeds.

3. The Bible

Surety And Purity Of Translations

A brother writes that he has been a shut-in for several years. These years of his illness have been the “severest test” of his life. “I never supposed,” he says, “that a worker for the Lord could be tempted to doubt or fear on points that I have been tested on. Reading the Word of God has brought great comfort when periods of mental depression have crossed my path. However, I have been tempted to question on one point: Can we know that translations from the original manuscripts have been so perfect and complete that our present translations can be relied upon to bring us the words of Christ and all the precious promises from the inspired writers?”

It is letters like yours that lead me to conclude anew that the devil is about the most despicable coward in the world. He always comes along with his doubts when a man is down. He never would have troubled you on this point of translations if you had been in good health. But you are weakened and weary, so he injects a doubt. He can’t come at you as he might some others, leading you to doubt the Bible itself-no, he comes at you in a different way, to lead you to doubt the translations.

Now, my brother, I am no authority on translations. But I know that eminent Greek and Hebrew scholars state unequivocally that we can be more sure of having the words of the original Bible writers than those of any other ancient writers. But we don’t need to rest the case for the accuracy of the present-day text of Scripture on those statements of scholars, proper and significant as they are. I would rather rest the case on this simple proposition: In view of the fact that our gracious Lord saw fit to give us a revelation of His will through the prophets of old, we may most reasonably conclude that He would not permit that revelation to be blurred or distorted as it has passed from generation to generation and from manuscript to manuscript. Was God interested simply in giving a revelation of His will to those who first heard it from the prophets? Is He not the same God today as He always was, and is He not as interested that we should know His will?

Seeing that the devil can’t persuade you that God did not give a revelation, don’t let him have any entrance to your mind with the doubt that something disastrous has happened to the Bible during the centuries since God gave His revelation. I am sure that on second thought, my brother, you will realize that the devil is seeking only to destroy your faith in the whole of Scripture. The greatest miracle is the original revelation of the mind of God to the mind of man. If you accept the greater miracle, yea, the greatest of all, why allow the devil to tempt you to question the lesser miracle, namely, the preservation of the revelation of God after it was once given?

Let me state the matter another way. Many things in Scripture were written for us who live in the last days. Now, if God gave the revelation originally, and we are sure that He did, would it not be wholly irrational to believe that He allowed that revelation to become so distorted and corrupted by translations and copying that we, for whom it was particularly written, could not hope to be sure of what we were reading? Don’t you see that we are again led to the same primary question, my brother, of whether we really believe God gave a revelation to man. I know you believe this; hence, I know that on second thought you will believe that He has preserved the Scriptures to our day.

Let me suggest that you may find of interest the statement by Sister White on this matter in the preface to Great Controversy.

The Revised Standard Version

Ever since the Revised Standard Version of the Bible was brought out a few years ago we have been asked from time to time: What about the new version? Has the General Conference made any pronouncement on it? And what do you yourself think of it?

The General Conference has made no official statement on the new version. Through the years the denomination, so far as I can recall, has not made a formal pronouncement regarding any version. The matter of the relative worth of versions has been left to the individual judgment or preference of our church members.

Because of having traveled in far lands I cannot develop too much concern as to what particular version is used to present truth. That is not to say that there is no difference in the value of versions, or that no version in any tongue has been tainted with objectionable translation of any passage. On the contrary, I am sure there is a wide range of quality in the translations found in various languages, both from a literary standpoint and from the standpoint of accuracy of translation.

But the fact remains that the Advent message is convicting hearts in all lands at a most encouraging rate despite the varied translations and other limitations of the versions from which the message must often be preached. Perhaps the most startling illustration of this is the preaching of the message with the aid of a pidgin English translation. If ever there was a caricature of the English language, pidgin English is it. Yet the South Pacific has been the area where some of the greatest victories for Christ and the cause have been won.

I refer to these varied translations abroad simply to suggest that the presence of a new version in English should not cause us undue concern or lead us into passing hasty judgments. We may measuredly consider the whole matter without fear that the cause is going to suffer irreparable harm. The Advent Movement has proved to be very durable.

Not only has the General Conference never endorsed any particular version, what is even more important, the Advent Movement has been scrupulously careful never to endorse the idea of a special version for Adventists. Some religious movements

have produced translations for their adherents on the implied or expressed assumption that other versions do not truly translate the Scriptures. But onlookers can only conclude that such translations have been produced simply to support the interpretations of Scripture that those religious bodies promote. We could do no greater disservice to the Advent cause than to convey the impression to the world that our teachings need a particular version to support them.

That is why I am concerned when criticisms of the Revised Standard Version are compressed into the brief indictment: We cannot teach certain of our doctrines from this version. The conclusion we are supposed to reach is that it is evidently an evil translation. Now, the question of the truth of our doctrines is not before us to discussion. Of their truth we as Adventists are all fully persuaded.

Obviously, if we are seeking to prove our doctrines true by reference to the Bible we cannot begin-as a few have-attempted to do -by indicting a certain version on the ground that it is patently wrong because it does not square with our doctrines! That would make us guilty of the fallacy in logic known as reasoning in a circle; that is, taking for granted the point that is to be proved. We do not have to reason in a circle to prove our teachings.

Or to restate the case: If the King James Version is a good and dependable version because it supports our doctrine, then we make our doctrines the measure of the worth of a translation. And in as-much as most of us know the Bible only in translation, such reasoning comes seriously close to affirming that the Bible is true to extent that it supports our doctrinal beliefs! No Adventist, of course, could entertain such an idea, even for a moment.

The question before us, therefore, is this: What is the proper way to proceed in our investigation of the possible worth of this new version?

Most assuredly the proper way is not by attacking the character of the translators-as some have done-implying that they have hatched up a dark plot against God and Christianity, wittingly going about to distort the words of Holy Writ. We need not impugn men's motives in order to question the validity of their conclusions. A good cause needs not the aid of slander.

True, probably all the translators of the new version are modernists in varying degrees. We disagree with their theology, but we do not doubt their sincerity, their probity, or their skill in Hebrew and Greek. Slander, defamation of character, has no place in our consideration of the new version.

To believe that the answer to the question of the worth of this new version rests upon the answer to two questions:

1. What did the holy prophets and apostles say as they wrote in Hebrew and in Greek?
2. What English words best convey the thought found in the Hebrew and the Greek?

There is no absolute answer to the first question, for there are no original manuscripts extant. We have only copies. The work of gathering together various copies and determining the most accurate text has been the work of able scholars for long years. There is rather general agreement today on most passages as regards the Hebrew and Greek text. In some instances, however, scholars differ in their evaluation of one, manuscript as compared with another. The result, of course, is a difference in the Hebrew or Greek text accepted. In turn, that means A difference in the translation.

Even when a scholar has decided on the Hebrew or Greek text that he considers comes nearest to the language of the Bible writer, the second question still confronts him: What English words best convey the thought found in the Hebrew or the Greek? Some passages are obscure because of the grammar or idiom; others, because of the author's style of writing or the profundity of the subject he is discussing. Paul, a penman for God, wrote "some things hard to be understood." Nor was he alone in this among Bible writers. When a scholar is confronted with a passage that is "hard," because of grammar or otherwise, he most naturally will translate it according to his theological views. He does this quite unconsciously. This fact explains many of the differences in translation that are found in various versions.

God has not seen fit to work a continuing miracle to preserve in every respect the text of the Bible through the centuries. But His overruling hand has protected the Scriptures in a most providential way against such corruption of the text as would prevent honest truth seekers from finding salvation. As Frederic Kenyon, one of the most noted of scholars in the field of Biblical archeology and Biblical literature, has well observed:

"No fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith rests on a disputed reading. Constant references to mistakes and divergences of reading, such as the plan of this book necessitates, might give rise to the doubt whether the substance, as well as the language, of the Bible is not open to question. It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is certain.... The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true Word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries." - *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, p. 23.

On this whole matter of the transmission of the text of the Bible through the centuries in relation to the human factor, Mrs. White has made some statements that may appropriately be quoted here:

"I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible, yet when copies of it were few, learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to lean to their established views, which were governed by tradition. But I saw that the word of God, as a whole, is a perfect chain, one portion linking into and explaining another. True seekers for truth need not err; for not only is the word of God plain and simple in declaring the way of life, but the Holy Spirit is given as a guide in understanding the way to life therein revealed." - *Early Writings*, Pages 220, 221.

"Some look to us gravely and say, 'Don't you think there might have been some mistake in the copyist or in the translators?' This is all probable, and the mind that is so narrow that it will hesitate and stumble over this possibility or probability, would be just as ready to stumble over the mysteries of the Inspired Word, because their feeble minds cannot see through the purposes of God." - Ellen G. White manuscript 16, 1888.

“The Bible is not given to us in grand superhuman language. Jesus, in order to reach man where he is, took humanity. The Bible must be given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect. Different meanings are expressed by the same word; there is not one word for each distinct idea. The Bible was given for practical purposes.

“The stamps of minds are different. All do not understand expressions and statements alike. Some understand the statements of the Scriptures to suit their own particular minds and cases.” - Ellen G. White Manuscript 24, 1886.

Indeed, except as the Spirit of God fully controls the mind, everyone understands the statements of the Scriptures to suit his own particular mind. That applies to the understanding of the meaning of the original language, and the meaning of the words when found in a translation.

It would be nothing short of a miracle if a group of scholars who have quite uniformly been viewing all things through modernist eyes should do other than view Bible manuscripts through the same eyes. But our approach to any theological problems they have created for us through their translation must be in terms, not of an indictment of their character, but of a questioning of their inner eyesight and judgment. In some instances we may differ as to the relative value of the manuscripts; in other instances, as to the translation that should be made from them. It is for us to present in calm, convincing, and orderly fashion the reasons why we believe our choice of original manuscripts, and our translation of those manuscripts, is right rather than theirs.

We as a people have followed this procedure in dealing with the incorrect “version” of God’s other book, nature, that scientists have given to the world. They have made the record read that evolution has taken place over the ages. We have not been content, as some have, to dismiss that “version” simply by a denunciation of scientists as atheists who have hatched a plot against Heaven. We have endeavored methodically and in scholarly fashion to present evidence in support of a wholly different “translation” from nature’s ancient records. The result is that we have a satisfying basis for the time honored creation “version,” even though it goes counter to that produced by the learned scientists.

Unless we follow this method in dealing both with the Bible record and the record of nature we shall never have a truly sound foundation for our faith. Loose denunciation of those we differ with might –satisfy the minds of some of us for a time, but not forever. Even more significantly, perhaps, such denunciation will never satisfy the minds of well-educated men, for whom we most surely have a saving message.

Nor should we forget that to dispose of the matter with wide, sweeping denunciation will place us in a curious position. Most of our ministers have already discovered that certain texts are so translated in the Revised Standard Version as to provide us real aid in our exposition of certain doctrines. It is hard to believe that our minis and our lay missionary workers, will not wish to use various of the new version renderings that are helpful in the presentation of the truth. But how can we do this consistently if we have first covered the whole version completely with the heavy odor of suspicion and dark indictment?

We believe that a calm, scholarly examination of this version will disclose that, like almost everything else that comes from the hand of man, it is a mixture of good and bad-good and bad as to translation and as to selection of manuscript texts. Those of our men who are peculiarly well qualified in the field of manuscripts and ancient languages should go into this subject, even as some of our scientific men have gone into the subject of evolution and creation, so that our rejection of what is most evidently bad in the translation may be based on clear and reasonable grounds.

In the meantime, let us not fear that this new version, any more than numerous other versions before it, will cause the pillars of the temple to shake. The Advent Movement is far more durable than that.

4. Church Order And Organization

Renting Our Churches To Others

A brother inquires: “Is it right to rent a Seventh-day Adventist church to another denomination for use on Sunday?”

The question you raise is one that has confronted the denomination from time to time in various parts of the world field. The consensus has been that we ought generally to let another Protestant denomination rent our church building if they are definitely in need of a place of worship. I am quite aware that there are certain plausible arguments that can be presented against renting. I have always been of the opinion, however, that in the last analysis the reasons for renting much more than offset the reasons against.

I must confess that I am not greatly impressed by some of the arguments you present, particularly when you say that an onlooker seeing worshipers at our church on Sunday would conclude we keep two holy days a week and are therefore fanatics. I can remember when as a pastor I held Sunday night meetings in my church regularly for a long period of time in addition to my Sabbath services. In other words, I conducted a kind of one-night-a-week evangelistic series in my church. But I never found anybody concluding therefore that I was a Sunday keeper as well as a Sabbath keeper. Incidentally, we all believe in prayer meeting and think that ideally everyone should attend. That would certainly be going to church two days a week in the Adventist church, wouldn’t it? And yet you don’t feel that a person looking on would conclude that Adventists are fanatics.

Let us remember that in many instances, both in the homeland and abroad we have been dependent on a rented church in order to hold our services. We have rented from a variety of Protestant bodies, and I’m sure we would think them very unkind if they were unwilling to rent. Now, we may believe that we have an argument that defends us in refusing to reciprocate, but I’m afraid our argument would not sound impressive to anyone but ourselves. Never forget that in a world turned upside down by sin, we can’t always be strictly logical. There are certain adaptations we must make in our program in the light of an illogical, disordered world. And one of those exceptions, I feel clear, is the renting of a church building to another Protestant body.

This does not necessarily mean that we should feel obligated to rent to any religious group that might make request of us. There are some churches whose practices and ways might violate our sense of Christian decorum. This point should rightly be considered by a local church board before responding to a request to rent out the church.

Easter Service In Adventist Church

A pastor living in a remote and sparsely settled corner of North America writes that because our Adventist church is the largest and nicest building in the community, the ministerial association has asked whether he would let them use it for an interdenominational Easter morning service. He felt to do so but was hesitant because some of his members objected.

Let me remark first that there are grave limitations to what I can say of any possible help when my total knowledge of a situation in the field is limited to one letter written to me. I'm sure you can realize how much easier it would be for me to speak with definiteness if I were talking with a group of you so that I could get the "feel" of your particular problem. With these limitations in mind, let me see whether I can set down some principles that may aid you.

In various places in the world we have sought and secured permission from other religious bodies to hold our weekly services in their churches. Indeed, if we had not been able to secure such privileges we would have been sorely handicapped in many instances. That fact in itself is, to my mind, most primary in the consideration of -any problem of the use of our churches by those of other denominations.

The next fact to remember is this: The Seventh-day Adventist Church has certain well-defined standards and distinctive doctrines. These we must maintain and promote if we are to justify our existence. We are, truly, a separate people. Whatever actions we take as a church must bear witness to our beliefs and standards.

Therefore, the practical question before us is this: Can we maintain clearly our witness in_ behalf of our distinctive teachings while cooperating with other religious bodies to the extent of letting them use our church building for a special service such as Easter? You did rightly when you told the ministerial association in your city that we are non-conformists on the question of Easter."

I don't know what else you said besides this. You could have added, and probably you did, that while we cannot attach a uniquely religious significance to any particular days other than God's holy Sabbath that He set apart, and while we must take exception to the pagan taint to Easter, we nevertheless want all men to know that we firmly and joyously believe in the literal resurrection of our Lord, and that we find in His resurrection the hope of life everlasting for us. In this latter fact we discover the measure of agreement that we can have with others not of our faith, as regards this Easter service. In a world where truth and error have been so bewilderingly entwined through the centuries, we must be careful that we do not give the appearance of discarding the good with the bad; in this particular instance, the glorious truth of the resurrection. In trying to reach the minds of others we must always seek to discover, at the outset, the points of agreement that we have. This is both good religion and good psychology.

If you made clear to the ministerial association what it is we believe and what it is we don't, so that our witness in behalf of the truth is in no way blurred, then I think that you are justification in granting permission for the use of your church building for an Easter service to be held by the other religious bodies.

Now a word with regard to any misunderstandings within your own church because of granting this, permission. You say that "a few of our members tend to divide their attendance and go to other churches more than we like to see," and that "those who object to the Easter service feel that our participation in any way would encourage this." I can see how this might be, provided you failed to make clear to your members the statement of principle on which permission was granted for the holding of this Easter service. Let me suggest that you take time on a Sabbath morning, soon, to speak on the subject of the reason for the existence of the Advent Movement in the world and the duty of all who belong to it to give it their unlimited, ardent support.

Then I would follow this with a presentation of the principle of how we must find all the possible ways we can of being helpful to others, of finding points of religious agreement with them, as a background for trying to help them to see the distinctive truths of the Advent Movement. I would remind my own church that we, of all people, believe most fervently in the resurrection of our Lord, though we attach no religious significance to the particular day on which He was raised from the dead. Therefore we hold, in common with others, a most basic truth of Christianity. Incidentally, our very emphasis of this point of Christ's resurrection can certainly help to correct the mistaken idea that some good people have had regarding us, namely, that we are not truly Christians. Then I would say to the church that I had made clear to the members of the ministerial association where the line divided between what we believe and what we do not believe concerning services in connection with Easter time.

If you thus speak to your church it ought to lead your members to go forward with a more ardent zeal than ever before to promote the teachings that God has given to us for the world, while graciously making our church building available to others.

As I see it, the challenge that confronts us in a situation like this is to maintain a fine balance between the fact that we must remain separate, holding up our distinctive teaching and the fact that we must be sympathetic and helpful to others in a religious community always cooperating within those limits that will not blur our witness to the world.

Child Participation In Communion Service

A brother writes to ask whether it is proper to permit the unbaptized children of our church members to participate in the quarterly communion service-the ordinance of humility and the service of the Lord's table.

I have never before heard of the unbaptized children of our church members being invited to participate in the communion service, either in the foot washing or in the partaking of the bread and wine. Inquiry of several of my ministerial brethren reveals that they all hold that participation in this special service should not begin for our children until they are baptized and thus become members of the church. One of the purposes of the communion service is to make evident the fellowship of the family of believers.

Now, while it is true, in a sense, that young, unbaptized children may believe, the full meaning of belief calls for baptism and entry into the church. See Mark 16:16.

Unless we hold that there is a great and real significance to church membership, we undermine the whole idea of the need of joining the church. If unbaptized children may partake of Communion, we are preparing the way for o continue to participate on through the years even though they are never baptized and so never join the church. Thus we destroy some of the prime symbolic value of the Communion and make it a common thing in which any may join without an open avowal of Christ and a dedication of life to Him.

It is true that the Adventist Church practices what is known as open Communion, and hence does not require that everyone w participates be a member of our particular religious body. But we do ask that those who visit us from another communion shall examine their own hearts, and if they have accepted Christ and are walking in fellowship with Him in their church, they may feel free to partake with us. However', this principle of open Communion does not cover the question under consideration.

Should Women Speak In The Church?

Some have inquired as to how we should understand Paul's counsel to the church at Corinth: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also said the law" (1 Corinthians 14:34). In other words, is his counsel applicable today?

First Rule of Interpretation

In order rightly to interpret this text, we should keep in mind certain primary rules that apply if we are rightly to understand any text in the Bible. One of those rules is that we should remember the time and the conditions under which a statement was written. Some mistakenly feel that time and circumstances have no relationship to inspired declarations. But they do, and some of Paul's own words are the best illustration of this. He speaks of certain things as being right, but not expedient. Now, expediency is not a question of morals, but of good taste and propriety, and generally in relation to a particular time or special circumstance. Another illustration is Paul's remarks about one's being a stumbling block to another. For example, there was no sin in eating meat offered to idols. But it was hardly expedient to do so under certain circumstances, because someone weak in the faith might be confused in his mind, and might conclude that the eater was worshiping idols.

Now, the apostle who gave us the counsel that some things are right, but not expedient, is the same one who gave the counsel, "Let your women keep silence in the churches." It is a simple matter of history that in the first century, when Paul wrote, it was considered quite out of place for women to put themselves forward in public life, and especially in religious life. Hence it was easily possible that public activity on the part of women might bring the gospel into bad repute.

A second fact to remember is that Paul is not here dealing with the question of whether certain women, who might have been called specially of God or have been particularly trained for public life should speak. He was discussing the question of the rank and file of women, who in those days, when women received no education, could hardly hope to contribute much, if anything, to the edification of the congregation.

Second Rule of Interpretation

And that brings us to the second rule; namely, that we should examine a text in the setting of its context. In other words, what is the general line of thought being presented in the passage in which the text is found? It is evident that Paul is decrying a tendency in the church at Corinth to engage in unseemly and confusion-creating activity in their public service. They were trying to talk with different tongues, and several of them at the same time. Some of them were seeking, in fact, to prophesy, and yet in no orderly fashion. Any phase of the situation at Corinth that would contribute to the confusion and to the disrepute of the church would naturally come under Paul's criticism. The context shows that Paul even challenged the propriety of some men speaking. In view of this, and in view of what we have just said concerning the status and education of women in the first century, it is easy to understand why Paul should speak as he did in the thirty-fourth verse.

Third Rule of Interpretation

But we are sure that Paul never intended that his words, which were directed to a specific situation, should be used to prevent any woman, simply because she was a woman, from taking any active part in public church services. This conclusion can be deduced from a further examination of the context and from following the third rule of interpretation; namely, that any text in the Bible must be understood in the light of all other texts. Paul speaks here about prophesying, and gives instruction as to how prophets should speak. Now, prophets are persons who are given a special message from God, and certainly they ought to deliver it to the church. In this Paul would have concurred. But a reading of the book of Acts and a study of the travels of Paul reveal that he came in contact with some prophets who were women. Yet no rebuke came from him, and none would be expected. We read in both the Old and the New Testament of women who were prophets, and who led out in an active way in the work of God.

Nor do we need to show that a woman is a prophet in order to justify her speaking in church. The simple fact that God calls women as His spokesmen is sufficient to prove that Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 14:34 must be understood in a certain limited way, and as applying under certain conditions. We believe it is altogether reasonable for us to hold that there are other women besides those strictly termed prophets who have been called of apart by God. Such women, furthermore, have come under the scrutinizing eyes of the ministry who are held responsible by God for sending out the right kind of workers to the churches. The only thing in

common between such persons and some of the women referred to by Paul in the perplexing text is that they are of the same sex. Beyond that, we think there would immediately develop a wide divergence.

Paul was seeking to have everything done decently and in order, a most laudable objective. And under the local conditions then prevailing the attaining of this objective required the counsel he offered concerning women. But neither Scripture nor common sense requires that women be banned at all times and in all lands in order to preserve either decency or order in our public services.

Chewing Gum In Church

A brother writes to inquire: "Will you set us clear on chewing gum in church? Is it just uncouth, or is it vulgar, immodest, or a downright sin? Many people in church chew gum even during prayer-not only children, but parents with the children. I personally feel it is a sin. Am I right?"

I hardly think it is necessary for me to tell you whether chewing gum in church is uncouth and vulgar. I can think of nothing that a person could do in the house of God that would be more crude or boorish. How great is the need for a heightening of a sense of reverence in church on the part of many, for gum chewing is not the only offense of which churchgoers are sometimes guilty.

Now as to whether chewing gum is "a downright sin," I would reply to you as I must reply to others who inquire at times whether this or that action is sinful. I am loath to go into the business of making a list of sins beyond those which the Bible clearly sets forth. The list seems to be ready of appalling length, owing to the perversity of the human heart. When the great ledger above is opened to the gaze of the saved we may then find the answer to the kind of question you here pose. In the meantime I think it is sufficient to brand gum chewing in church as a horrible example of bad manners.

Guardians Of The Pew

A deacon asks whether something might be done to encourage church members who come early to the church to move into the middle of a pew instead of sitting down at the end beside the aisle. The deacon explains that when early comers thus sit next to the aisle those who come in later to fill the pew find some difficulty, to say the least, in making their way into the pew.

What shall I say in reply? I know not. The Advent Movement refrains from making detailed rules as to the conduct of its members in the house of God. A pastor of a large church once urged from the rostrum that the members who arrive first should move in to the middle of the pew. He reported later that one good soul chided him for making such an appeal, declaring, I would have a headache if I couldn't sit at the end of the pew." What this dear member did not realize was that others who stumbled over his feet each Sabbath trying to get into the pew experienced, if not a headache, at least an unpleasant moment.

I have often come early to a church and seen seated the kind of souls to whom the pastor refers. At first blush they seem like guardians of the pew, even as stanch soldiers might guard a pass. On second thought I rejoice that there are some who always come early to church. Probably they are quite unaware that deacons, and the rest of the members who come later than they, do not rejoice over the strategic position these early comers occupy. It is always hard for us to see ourselves as others see us. All of us together, guardians of the pew and those who arrive later at church, are alike seeking to live in harmony with God. What we sometimes forget is that living in harmony with God involves also living in harmony with our brethren. For one, I wish to make all my brethren, including the deacons, rejoice by moving faithfully in to the middle of the pew.

Fellowship At Communion Service

A brother writes that at communion service in his church certain members always choose particular friends, generally on their own social level, as partners for the ordinance of humility. He observes that this means that some poor members, who lack money, education, or social standing, and who may be little acquainted in the church, are left conspicuously alone. He asks, "What do you think about this?"

What I think should be evident. And my thinking is fortified by numerous Scripture statements. If there is one thing above another that the Bible stresses, it is the equality any fellowship of all believers. Paul announced what was to many in his day a most startling truth: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). In the apostle's day the Jews considered themselves better than every other people, the Greeks thought other races barbarians, and all men foolishly imagined themselves superior to women. They were mistaken, and doubly so in the setting of the Christian faith. We are Christians, not because of any good thing in ourselves, but because of the unmerited favor of God.

The apostle James faced this problem in New Testament times and left on record both counsel and warning:

"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and you have respect to him that wears the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: are you not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (James 2:1-5).

The church should be the great exhibit to the world of true equality, with the ordinance of humility one of the choicest opportunities to express the spirit of heavenly brotherhood that God has implanted in our hearts.

Use Of Church Organ For Practice

A brother asks: "Is it proper for the organ in a church that is dedicated to the worship of God to be used as a practice organ for those who are learning to be future organists of the church? If it is not proper, then the question arises: Shall we send them to non-Adventist churches or to mortuaries to practice?"

This question arises from time to time. Let me answer simply that I see nothing wrong in permitting the use of the church organ for the purpose you describe. You say the organ has been dedicated to the worship of God. For that matter our whole lives are, or ought to be, dedicated to God; and yet there are some very material, earthly things that we find it proper to do from day to day. Certainly if our young people are to learn how to play, they must use an organ somewhere, and I would much prefer to have them kept within the four walls of one of our churches while being trained for better service than to go out to a mortuary or to the church of some other religious body to receive their organ training. Of course I am not attempting to make a denominational pronouncement. I don't know of any action of the denomination on this particular subject.

Pictures In Churches

A brother states that his church is planning to erect a new church building. The question has arisen as to whether it is right to have stained-glass windows with Biblical scenes.

I do not recall having read at any time a formal denominational pronouncement on stained-glass windows. When we have purchased fine old church buildings from other denominations we have never felt that the stained-glass windows they contained were out of harmony with our denominational ideals and standards.

If I understand the feeling of our Advent ministry and people, there has never been any general opposition to pictures in our churches. Our people have always considered that there is a real and practical difference between a picture and a statue of some Biblical personage such as Christ or the apostles or prophets. We have never understood the prohibition of the second commandment to apply to pictures. A few good people have so interpreted the second commandment, but that is not the thinking of the Advent Movement

If it were conceivable that any of our people would begin to bow down before a picture and say prayers, then I think we would most certainly have to revise our conception of pictures immediately and with vigor. But the facts are that no one ever has done such a thing.

And, after all, the practical test of the validity and propriety of any procedure is the result it produces "By their fruits you shall know them." I think the only fruitage from the practice of having pictures (glass or otherwise) in our churches has been the added feeling of solemnity and a reminder to our hearts of the lives of great men and great incidents recorded for our admonition in the Scriptures.

Should We Kneel In Prayer?

A reader calls attention to the statements in the Spirit of Prophecy that strongly advocate kneeling in prayer and then expresses perplexity over the fact that in certain of our religious assemblies there seems to be a tendency to have the congregation stand for the prayer, even when there is ample room to kneel. He wishes to know what is really right in the matter.

Undoubtedly in many instances there are valid reasons for asking congregation to remain standing during prayer. But in any discussion of the subject of the bodily posture in prayer we may well consider the following from the pen of Mrs. White:

"Christ's followers today should guard against the tendency to lose the spirit of reverence and godly fear. The Scriptures teach men how they should approach their Maker-with humility and awe, through faith in a divine Mediator. The psalmist has declared:

"The Lord is a great God,
And a great King above all gods...
O come, let us worship and bow down: Let us kneel before
the Lord our Maker."

"Both in public and in private worship, it is our privilege to bow on our knees before God when we offer our petitions to Him.

Jesus, our example, 'kneeled down, and prayed.' Of His disciples it is recorded that they, too, 'kneeled down, and prayed.' Paul declared, 'I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' In confessing before God the sins of Israel, Ezra knelt. Daniel 'kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God.'" - Prophets and Kings, p. 48.

Speaking personally, I like to kneel in prayer, for there is a certain relationship between pose of body and mood of spirit. It seems to me that a mood of contrite confession and genuine adoration can find best expression in the soul when one is on bent knee.

However, it would be sad indeed if in any of our churches we permitted the question of kneeling versus standing to become the occasion for controversy. In that event our prayers would likely avail little, no matter what our bodily pose.

Are Our Church Buildings Too Fine?

A reader writes that he is troubled over the fine Adventist church buildings that are now being erected in America. He seems to feel that structures much more simple, and thus less expensive, would suffice. He believes that when we spend money on these fine buildings we merit the criticism he declares he received from a non-Adventist who declined to contribute when he came at Ingathering time.

I don't doubt this brother's sincerity-others have expressed similar views at times-but I'm unable to agree with him, and for certain definite reasons. In the first place, I don't believe that our presently constructed church buildings are too lavish. There is little or no evidence of ornateness in the interior finish. The exterior is occasionally stone, often brick, and not infrequently wood. In the

case of virtually all of our larger church buildings, especially those erected in cities, the building code largely determines the nature of the building material, particularly with a view to fireproofing the structures.

I think of a further reason for not considering our church buildings lavish. A church is something more than four walls and a roof to keep out the rain. Rather, it is a monument reared to the glory of God. Certainly it ought not to be a whit less well built or furnished than our own houses. It ought to be built and furnished at least a little better. Part of the witness that we bear in the community is the building that we erect for our services.

I'm wholly unimpressed by the criticism said to have been offered by the person approached for an Ingathering gift. I can recall the day when one of the favorite means by which critics tried to discount Adventists was to remark that they met in halls or in little run-down buildings on the edge of town. The comment was in part true, for we were very small and very poor in our earlier days. Let us be thankful that God has blessed us as the years have passed by, and that He has put it into our hearts to build a house for Him in our various communities.

We will never escape criticism, but we need not be troubled by the kind of criticism that grows out of the fact that we have respectable church buildings. Let us have more of them. We should never be content to meet in a hall any longer than is required to raise a fund to build a church. Let us constantly be in the business of raising up monuments to the glory of God. Such monuments stabilize the work in a community and put it at a great advantage.

Friendliness In The Church

A brother writes with deep feeling of the "coldness and indifference" in his church. His beloved companion of many years has died. His heart is heavy with grief and longs for thoughtful words that will bring surcease to sorrow and give him a sense of fellowship. But, he says, his wife is hardly buried before the church members seem quite to have forgotten the tragedy. They appear to act-or so he interprets their actions-as if they thought he ought also to forget her as quickly and go along in a routine way.

It is not unusual for us to receive a letter from some member, often a new convert, who feels that more of a sense of friendliness should be evident in the church. Occasionally one even writes that he could be absent from the church for months and his absence not be noticed.

Now, it is difficult to evaluate accurately such strictures on the church. Friendship is a two-way street; it calls for reciprocal action on the part of two persons. Some people, by their very nature, make it difficult to be friendly with them. They may be excessively shy, slipping quietly, and they hope unobserved, into a seat, and as quietly and quickly hurrying away afterward. A person would need to be on the alert to intercept them. Or they may have some other quality, or defect, of personality that makes people hesitate to draw near to them in spirit. In other words, this much should be said in defense of the church: Many times, a part of the apparent unfriendliness is due to the very nature of the person who brings the complaint.

But having said this, I come to what seems to be a real lack in some of our churches. It is so easy for us to greet those whom we know and to forget that there may be a stranger in our midst. That stranger may have recently come into the faith. What a glorious opportunity for us to increase the circle of our friends and to bind more fully to the blessed Advent Movement someone who may still walk uncertainly among us. There would be a new zest to attending services if we made a special point out of seeking for the new face in the church and extending the right hand in greeting.

After all, the real joy in living is found, not in money or houses acquired, or in honors secured, but in the fellowship of kindred minds. Perhaps the stranger has small children like your own. Ask about them. Nothing can bring a light to the eye more quickly than to have someone inquire about the children. In fact, it is so simple to make friends that it seems strange that most people do not have more.

Coming, now, more directly to the burden of the letter referred to in the opening paragraph. True, it is often hard for us to enter into the sorrows of others. But it is a heavenly skill eminently worth acquiring. Christ best displayed it. He entered deeply into the problems, the heartaches, the tragedies, of others. Those who came into His presence sensed that fact. Part of our development of character as Christians is the acquiring more fully of a feeling for the woes of others.

We need to be able, not simply to say a few sympathetic words the day of the funeral, but to maintain a genuine sympathy in the weeks, and probably months, afterward. We must never forget that though the funeral of Brother Jones or Sister Smith may be only a sorry statistic to us, it may be like the end of the world for the one bereaved. And it is always hard to rebuild a world, especially if it has to be inhabited alone.

Christ came to abolish death. Until that glorious day when death is swallowed up in victory, it is our joyous privilege as Christians to take from death as much of its dread sting as possible by applying, whenever opportunity affords, the soothing balm of genuine Christian love and solicitude.

Disfellowshipping A Member

A sister is much exercised in mind because the board of her church is considering dropping her name. She declares that the Bible calls for us to bear one another's burdens, pray for one another, even to warning and rebuking, "but can you find one word about its being given to any man, or group of men, to say who is to belong to the church of Christ in this day, and who is to be dropped from His church?" She also takes vigorous issue with what she considers the Don't, don't" kind of attitude the church assumes toward many practices. She thinks that this "negative" attitude is wholly wrong; that we should simply set a good example, encourage, and exhort to holy living, but that we should never take the definitely negative position of saying Don't."

Most certainly it is a serious matter to consider dropping anyone from the church. Such a problem should always be approached in the spirit of greatest forbearance, long-suffering, and solicitous regard for the soul of the person involved. But I cannot agree that there is never a time when a person ought to be disfellowshipped. The Scriptures make plain that after we have taken every possible means to help a member to change from his wrong course, from then on he is to be unto us as a “heathen and a publican” (Matthew 18:17). That is, we are to view him as outside the circle of the church, though certainly not outside the circle of our love and endeavor to win him back.

When confronted with the unpleasant task of disfellowshipping a member, I have presented the matter to him on this wise. You came into the church of your own free will, by your words and deeds revealing to us that God had changed your life and made you a part of the “household of faith.” The church made record of this changed state by placing your name in the church records. Likewise, now, by your words and deeds you give equally clear proof that you have turned back from your former decision and have moved out of the “household of faith.” My most earnest endeavors to keep you from this step have failed, and therefore the church is taking your name from its records so that the records will conform to the facts as they now are.

If it is proper for the church to place a name on the books as a result of the course of life begun by an individual, it is certainly equally within the province of the church to remove that name from the record when the course of life of that individual is reversed. It could hardly be otherwise, unless we wish to accept the doctrine of once in grace always in grace. That doctrine, we all know, is wholly unscriptural.

Now as to presenting Christian standards in terms of “don’t, don’t, don’t.” The point at issue here is one not of doctrine but of teaching procedure. It is generally better to take the positive attitude and show what a person ought to do rather than what he ought not to do. But the failure of some preachers to use the positive method as fully as they ought does not justify any indictment of the basic objectives and principles they are seeking to maintain. We must always remember that the Ten Commandments are largely a series of don’ts.

Loud Amen’s In Church

A brother inquires: “Do you think it is proper for folks to praise the Lord with a loud voice in church or to give expression to hearty Amen’s every so often as an indication of their religious thankfulness to God or in agreement with what the pastor says?”

You are asking me a very difficult question. In the first place, everyone’s definition of what are loud and unseemly Amen’s is different. I’d almost have to sit in your church and listen awhile in order to come to any clear conviction as to the propriety of what was happening. There are two extremes, of course, against which we ought always to guard. There is the extreme of boisterous and unseemly noise, which some people confuse with exalted piety. This should be condemned, in harmony with Paul’s declaration that all things should be done decently and in order.

At the other extreme is that cold formal church order that seems to provide no occasion for any audible expression of joy in the Lord. Perhaps you have heard the story of the woman who came to a very fine, rich church. After her second ardent Amen the deacon tapped her on the shoulder and rebuked her, to which she replied that she couldn’t help saying Amen because she had “got religion.” The deacon allegedly replied, “We don’t have anything like that in our church.” Undue formality can give a clammy quality to religion, and is to be deplored and condemned.

Just where the middle ground lies between noisy exuberance and cold formality, I don’t profess to know. Customs and manners of different countries have some proper bearing on the question. There is one basic rule that ought ever to govern us. That is, that whatever we do or say while participating in a religious service should be conducive to the spirit of worship and thus to the spiritual uplift of all others who are worshiping with us in the church. There will always be some who are emotionally more expressive than others. We must make allowances for that.

Thinking back over quite a few years of public ministry I can scarcely recall any instances where a congregation with which I was worshiping was troubled by too ardent Amen’s on the part of any of the worshipers. I think we have swung to the extreme of undue restraint today in expressing our joy in the Lord. There was a day quite a few years ago—I can still remember a little of it from my childhood—when it was not uncommon for earnest and hearty Amen’s to break forth at times from members of the congregation. I’m sure that such Amen’s must have been a source of strength and encouragement to the minister.

It does seem a little strange that people can become enthusiastic about almost any activity imaginable—ball games, parades, circuses, and the like—and express themselves so earnestly that they actually become hoarse, without anyone’s thinking they have lost their reason or done anything abnormal. But let a person who is filled with the joy of salvation, who has suddenly received a new vision of the goodness of God and the glories that await the children of God, break forth in any audible fashion, and he is likely to be considered queer, erratic, and a distressing embarrassment to the church.

Now far be it from me to give any encouragement to empty, boisterous noises. They can easily prove a disgrace to a church and a caricature of what I am seeking here to describe as an expression of true joy in the Lord. Each instance has to be considered on its merits, each particular case dealt with in terms of the entire context.

When we proceed to do that, I think we will compass all the cases very quickly, because, as already remarked, I scarcely can recall any audibly ardent souls during all my public ministry. When we have considered these few particular cases and offered appropriate recommendations to deal with them, then I think we might fittingly turn to a consideration of the other aspect of the problem of church worship, namely, how to inject into the service more of the warmth of the Spirit and the joy of the Lord. Our goal

should ever be to give the worshipers a radiance of countenance, a sparkle to the eye, and a delight in doing the will of God. And when we have succeeded in doing this we shall probably discover that it produces at least a few Amen's in the church services.

Proper Order At Communion Service

The wife of one of our workers writes to ask certain questions as to "how the service of the ordinances should be carried out." And adds immediately:

"There are some who act as if the service had been dismissed when preparation is being made for the ordinance of humility. Should any church member who holds no office assist the deaconesses, or not? How should those not participating conduct themselves? It seems very difficult to maintain a spirit of reverence during this part of the service. We are anxious that order and reverence be maintained."

The heart of your problem seems to be how to preserve reverence. It is encouraging that you sense that reverence is of primary importance in the successful carrying out of any feature of church life. I cannot escape the conviction that lack of reverence is a blight in many of our churches, not simply in connection with this particular service, but all the services. In other words, the problem of reverence at the service of the ordinance of humility is merely a reflection of a larger problem. Those who have been accustomed to maintaining a spirit of reverence week after week will not suddenly forget that spirit on the particular Sabbath when the ordinances are celebrated.

That leads me, at the outset, to suggest that your husband preach an occasional sermon on reverence in the house of God. We become conscious of those things that are repeatedly brought to our attention.

A powerful sermon can be preached on the fact that the church is the house of God, and that the angels of God fill the room. We must be conscious of God and the angels if we are to demean our selves reverently in the church. And it is one of the prime privileges of the minister to make heavenly beings real to men.

Then there needs to be a work of education as to the significance of the ordinances. Sometimes we take for granted that everyone, old and young, fully understands their meaning. What an opportunity the Communion Sabbath offers to a minister to bring to the hearts of the worshipers a picture of the Son of God, who made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a servant. Can the worshipers see in their mind's eye our Lord kneeling, towel in hand, to wash the feet of Judas, of Peter? If not, we who are ministers have failed to measure up to the opportunities and responsibilities of our calling.

Next, there is need for a work of education to be done to link more closely together the ordinance of humility and the communion service at the Lord's table. The more closely we tie the two together, the more reverence we engender in the hearts of all in connection with the ordinance of humility.

Again, we could further heighten the-spiritual effect and the sense of awe and solemnity that should rightly hover around the Communion Sabbath if on the preceding-Sabbath we took a few moments to speak of it. Personally, I have found it spiritually profitable to take time on the Sabbath before to remind the worshipers that the next Sabbath is a high day in our lives, and to call upon them to come prepared for the blessing it can give by making right with God and man beforehand. There is something about the fact of calling on men and women to make special preparation for an event that causes that event to take on special significance in their minds. The Lord repeatedly did that in His dealing with the Israelites.

The danger always lurks in any repeating service that we will take it too casually, that it will lose its uniqueness for us. We need evermore to be made aware that nothing of the house of God can ever become common, because God and the angels are not common, and our reason for entering into the services of the church is to have fellowship with heavenly beings.

And now for a few specific suggestions as to the actual course that should be followed in the conducting of the services in order to induce reverence. In the first place, it is a grave mistake to leave the church auditorium with no one in charge while the ordinance of humility is being conducted in the special rooms provided. If the church is of any size it would be well to have the organ played softly during the time, bringing to those who remain in the church a sense of continuing reverence. After all, we have a spiritual responsibility for those who remain behind. Doubtless they need more of our help than those who have retired to engage in the ordinance of humility. Also, an usher should stand at the doorway during this interim in the service. It is remarkable how quieting is the effect, especially upon children, of the Presence of someone in authority.

And speaking of children, it would be better, in most instances, if we took Johnny or Mary with us to this service of humility. We can explain to them ahead of time the meaning of the ordinance of humility, and thus they can in some degree enter into the service, even though they do not participate. We only invite irreverence when we leave small children, and some not so small, to their own devisings in the church auditorium. Parents and church officers should remove as far as possible from the children the temptation to irreverence.

Proper Duties of Officers

Now as to the question, "Should any church member who holds no office assist the deaconesses, or not?" The principle underlying the selection of church officers is that everything should be done decently and in order. That principle is best maintained when the tasks that properly belong to certain officers are carried out by those officers. Though it is an inflexible church rule that none but an ordained church elder or a minister may officiate at the communion service, a person not elected as a deaconess might possibly aid in the tasks usually assigned to the deaconesses. But in the absence of an exceptional situation I believe that the spirit and intent of church order is best served by restricting the normal functions of a deaconess to one who has been elected for that purpose. If experience proves that there is a shortage of deaconesses, that is a situation which may properly be relieved by the election of another deaconess. Such an election need not wait until the end of the year.

One further suggestion in the interests of reverence. I like the custom, not now too frequently followed, of engaging in holy song while participating in the ordinance of humility. What can better lift our hearts and lead us into a spiritual mood!

Closing Part of Service

When the communicants are ready to return to the main auditorium, I believe it would be better if they came in approximately at one time, rather than gradually drifting in over a period of time, which means that some have come upstairs before the ordinance of humility as really been completed for all. Finally, when the worshipers have all been seated, the interests of reverence are probably best served if the elders, deacons, and deaconesses walk in at one time, and with measured step, up to the seats reserved for them. In a sense, a new phase of holy worship is beginning. Those who are to lead out in it should give evidence of great gravity and decorum. Church officers who wish to create the atmosphere of reverence in worshipers will not straggle into any feature of church service. There is a wholesome effect produced by the measured, dignified step of elders, deacons, deaconesses, taking their places for the communion service.

Reverence, like good manners, is made up of many little things. We need to watch each feature of the Communion Sabbath services in order to generate in the hearts of all that measure of reverence prerequisite to securing a genuine spiritual satisfaction from the services.

Deacons And Offerings

A brother inquires as to whether it is proper for ushers, who are not ordained as deacons, to take up the church offerings. He notes that the Church Manual states that a newly elected deacon cannot fill his office till he has been ordained by a credentialed conference minister. This leads him to inquire as to “the duties of a newly elected deacon who has not been ordained.” He also wishes to know “how soon after his election should a deacon be ordained?”

It is the general position of the denomination that anyone may be delegated by the church to take the offering at the church service or at any other service. When we have special meetings, like a camp meeting or a General Conference session, we draft a great number of men, many of whom have not been ordained as deacons. The church treasurer, who has most to do with the offering, is rarely a deacon. If he can handle the money, it would not seem inappropriate for any other properly requested persons to receive the offering and pass it on to the treasurer.

Now with regard to deacons. The fact that a man has been voted by the church to be a deacon does not in itself make him a deacon. There are two acts involved, his election and his ordination. Thus the question as to what a deacon is to do before he has been “ordained” is automatically answered. He has neither the privileges nor the duties of a deacon until he is set apart in the special service of prayer. As soon as it is possible to secure a visiting minister—if the church does not have an ordained pastor—the newly elected deacon, or deacons, should be ordained. This is the orderly way to proceed.

Time Of Communion Service

A brother asks: “Why do we celebrate the communion service quarterly, particularly in view of the fact that our communion service replaced the ancient Passover, which was an annual memorial?” He wishes specifically the Bible text to justify our quarterly celebration.

We claim no scripture for our quarterly celebration of Communion. Christ did not say anything regarding a time interval. He said, instead, “as oft as” you eat and drink, when He referred to the celebration of the Communion. In other words, it seems patent that He left the matter to the individual discretion of His followers. Hence, different customs have sprung up. I think it is quite invalid to draw a parallel to the Passover feast, which was conducted once a year. It is true that our Lord instituted the communion service in connection with the Passover feast, but in so doing He was engaging in a symbolic service that was to prove distinctive of Christianity. He did not perpetuate any aspect of the Passover service in a revised or mystic form. Everything with regard to the ceremonial service ended at the cross.

Rights And Authority Of The Church

A brother writes calling attention to the following statement that had appeared in a Review editorial: “It is an inflexible church rule that none but an ordained church elder or a minister may officiate at the communion service.” Then he remarks: “I am fully convinced that the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy are the voice of God, and no other authority in the denomination can speak as the voice of God at present. Am I right? Is it too much to expect that the above quotation be sustained with a ‘Thus said the Lord?’”

The kind of reasoning that you offer in your letter presents itself from time to time in the whole cycle of church life. I have often wondered how extensive the writings of inspiration would need to be in order to give us detailed, specific instruction on every conceivable point of order, church government, and belief that might arise. We look to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy for the presentation of major principles. But the application of the principles must generally be left to responsible persons and boards that have been appointed in harmony with Bible principles.

Some years ago a man who had attended a series of meetings wished me to baptize him. In speaking with him, I mentioned, among other things, that he must give up the use of tobacco. He challenged me and asked for a text against tobacco. Of course I did not attempt to quote a text naming the weed, but I did quote certain texts that set forth the principle that our bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost and that whether we eat or drink we ought to do it to the glory of God. Then I told him that the church had given consideration to the evils that result from the use of tobacco and had decided to make the use of it a test of fellowship.

He wished to challenge the authority of the church, but I reminded him that if properly chosen church officers were not empowered to apply inspired principles, then we might as, well abandon the idea of having a church organization that stood for anything distinctive. I told him that there never would have developed a distinct Adventist Church, into which he now wished to be baptized, if properly constituted church leadership had not felt that it was within its right in applying Biblical principles in the operation of a church government. He made no further application for baptism. I am sorry that he did not see the matter rightly and join with us. But I am glad that inasmuch as he did not, no laxness in checking on candidates allowed him to come through into the church entertaining the ideas that he did. Such a person could have proved only a liability to the church.

The Basic Principle That Governs

What is the principle on which we proceed in church government? First, we appoint elders and deacons in harmony with the divine outline set forth in apostolic times. These, of course, are set apart for their work by the ministry, who have themselves been ordained to their work in harmony with Bible instruction. But we no sooner have a church organization set up than a whole list of practical questions of procedure and orderly handling of spiritual and material matters present themselves. As already stated, these must be handled, or else no church or organization can really function. The Bible does not give endless details for church life; nor, for that matter, does the Spirit of Prophecy. But there is a basic principle that stands out to determine the course of duly appointed church officers: "Let every thing be done decently and in order!"

In harmony with that principle a wide range of actions have been taken. It is on that principle we have proceeded in choosing other church officers than elders and deacons. That principle guides in determining, for example, time of meetings, length of meetings, order of service. And most certainly that principle has been the basis for apportioning tasks to different officers and other members.

A Second Important Principle

There is another principle that guides in setting up church rules: That sacred things shall be handled sacredly, and to this end men set apart or ordained to the work of God in some special way shall be in charge of those sacred things. That principle is one of the most prominent in the whole series of principles set forth by God when He instituted a visible church company on the road to Canaan long ago. And it is in harmony with that principle that the Adventist Church has set down the rule regarding the communion service, which you quote in your letter.

Now, my brother, you may not wish to agree with what I have written. That, of course, is your privilege. I have simply set before you the basis on which the church proceeds. Nor do I see how it could proceed on any other and maintain order and decency. If every man were a law unto himself, and felt free to do as seemed good to him in church life, except where a specific text of Scripture or the Spirit of Prophecy stopped him, then I think you will agree with me that neither you nor I would long want to be in that kind of church. Certainly such a church would not be the Advent Church, which is making ready for translation; for order, I believe, is Heaven's first law.

The Right To Dissent

A non-Adventist reader of the Review notes that we stress religious liberty. She declares that her idea of genuine religious liberty calls for her to acquiesce in differences of theological views in her church, making no endeavor to bring to trial for heresy those who may thus differ with her on doctrine. Then she inquires: "Do you have this kind of religious liberty in your church?"

The right to dissent is an inalienable right, but there must be some limit to the exercise of independent thought and divergent view within the circle of a well-defined organization that stands for certain well-defined beliefs. Else what becomes, ultimately, of the organization, which depends for its uniqueness and its justification as a distinct entity, upon holding such beliefs? It is this fact that led someone to coin the beautiful phrase: "On essentials, unity; on nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity."

One of the reasons for the existence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is that we believe we should band together to promote the doctrines of the seventh-day Sabbath and the personal coming of Jesus Christ. Now, if we permit someone holding membership in our church to proclaim that Sunday should be the day of worship and that there will be no personal coming of Christ, we permit to operate within our ranks a force that would confuse and destroy the very organization of which we are all members. That is naught but organizational suicide.

A person who joins us does so of his own free will. As a prerequisite to joining us he declares his unreserved acceptance of certain beliefs and policies and his purpose to give his loyal strength and support to the church. Now, if after he secures membership he again wishes to exercise his free will to change his mind and repudiate what he earlier affirmed, he can escape the charge of bad faith only by withdrawing from membership.

I am not expressing an idea peculiar to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Any well-defined organization, religious, social, political, would subscribe to this basic idea. Your right to believe and do what you wish, I do not challenge, and I hope no one else will, but your right to do that within the framework of an organization created to hold contrary views, which views you subscribed to as the basis for your admission, is something very different.

Let me repeat: The Seventh-day Adventist Church exists because a group of people who hold certain beliefs are banded together to promote those beliefs most effectively. Those who wish to accept and promote these beliefs will naturally wish to join us, and thus freely joining us, will exercise religious liberty. Those who do not will exercise their religious liberty by remaining apart from us.

Shall We Circulate Old Reviews?

A church officer who has, asked-members to bring clean, used papers to the church for missionary purposes, writes: "Some of our good people seem to think the Review is not to be used for reading racks or missionary purposes. Some of us maintain they are the best and most interesting to read, besides acquainting others with our great worldwide work, and helping to make our high standards of Christian living known to others. I personally have had those to whom I handed our papers to read tell me that they liked the Review the best. I can't see one thing in the Review that is objectionable or that would do harm for nonmembers to read. On the contrary I believe it is a soul winner for church members, as well as nonmembers."

I can say at the outset: Don't destroy the Reviews. That would be folly. On the other hand, don't encourage folks to spearhead an evangelistic program with copies of the Review. That's not its purpose. But inasmuch as the Review has been printed and then read by our people, it is far better to let it go into the hands of others who may read it, if they will, than to throw it into the trash can. It will never hurt anyone, that is sure. On the other hand we have numbers of instances where it has helped them. Why shouldn't it? It contains a cross section of the doctrinal teachings of the Advent Movement, a presentation of the high standards we seek to maintain, and cheering, impressive reports of God's leading in mission fields. Yes, let's use whatever copies of the Review that come into our hands and thank God that we have this extra material for possible reading on the part of those who wish to know more about Adventist teaching.

I might add that my own beloved parents, some sixty years ago, gained their first knowledge of Seventh-day Adventists from reading a stray copy of the Review they picked up by the roadside. They were so impressed that they set out at once to learn more, and were soon baptized. They remained faithful till death. I'm surely glad that that particular copy of the Review was not destroyed!

Value Of Welfare Work

A sister writes to protest that in her church she is made to feel that she is obligated to join the Dorcas Society. She says that she would rather use her time in evangelistic missionary service. Further, she feels that Mrs. White has counseled against concentrating on welfare work, and that therefore we are wrong in stressing the importance of such work.

I don't believe any member in the church ought to feel that he is required to belong to any society or subdivision of the church work. Everything in our organization is voluntary. And I feel quite sure that the officers of your church would agree with that statement, even though some ardent member in the church may have seemed to you to put undue pressure on you to join the Dorcas Society. If you feel there is some other branch of the work in which you can engage more effectively, that is for you to decide.

I agree with your statement that our first and major task is to preach the gospel. But let us not forget, sister, that we have some other responsibilities. Not only do we have the gospel commission in the twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew; we have also the extended declaration by our Lord in the twenty-fifth chapter. You will recall that there Christ speaks with great earnestness about clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, etcetera. See also James 1:27.

You refer to some statements by Mrs. White that suggest that we should not concentrate on doing welfare work. Sister White's statements, like those of the great prophets of old, were made in a historical setting. She was talking about the particular kind of missionary work that we were attempting to do at the time she wrote. We had put a great emphasis on a certain sort of welfare work in great cities, in which we were endeavoring to deal with drunken reprobates for whom, in many instances, little or nothing of lasting value could be done. Thus, too much of the resources and time of the denomination were being drained away into fields of activity that were of doubtful value. Against this Sister White spoke with vigor, and we are glad that she did. I fail to see any true parallel between the kind of welfare work against which she wrote, and the kind of welfare work that our Dorcas Societies are generally doing throughout the land.

It may be that in some instances we are doing a disproportionately large welfare work as compared with strictly evangelistic labor. I could not say because I don't know the activities of all of our churches. But I must express the conviction that I don't think that this is so in general.

Let us never forget that we go to the public annually seeking millions of dollars-in behalf of what? Well, at least in part in behalf of what we declare is a welfare and uplift work that we do for men everywhere. Now, if we collect millions partly on that presentation, I think we certainly ought to give a service that is in keeping with the gifts that we solicit. Indeed, if it were not for those gifts, we would be greatly handicapped in our whole world mission program. Our Dorcas and other welfare work are some of our greatest aids in leading the public to give us their gifts. So you see we are all interlocked in all the branches of the church. One part reinforces the other.

May the Lord bless you in whatever branch of church work you feel impressed to labor.

Dealing With Erring Members

A brother writes to protest what he believes is a "too conciliatory" way in which the church in general, and the Review in particular, deal with erring church members.

I would yield to no man in my belief that straight doctrine should be preached and that sin should be purged from our ranks. What some fervent souls forget is that there is a right way and a wrong way of preaching the truth and crusading against sin. The way that results routinely in driving out the sinner as well as the sin, is most certainly the wrong way. Our business is to seek and to save sinners, by leading them to Him who can cleanse them from sin.

While the day of mercy lingers, our God is pictured in the role of a compassionate father and not a coldly calculating judge. As His representatives we should follow His example. A compassionate father never boasts that he is planning to disinherit even the most wayward son, and certainly he will never let him go until he has exhausted all the love and solicitude he is able to bring to bear

upon him. All of us need more of the compassion of Heaven in dealing with the wayward. We should remember that it is not severity but mercy that breaks the stony heart: "The goodness of God leads thee to repentance" (Romans 2:4). It is our business to reconcile men to God and to one another. And a spirit of love and conciliation provides the setting for reconciliation.

I would not challenge the vigorous maxim: "Hew to the line and let the chips fall where they may." But I would differ with a certain type of ardent person as to where to draw the line in some instances.

When Christ rebuked Simon's self-righteousness He certainly modified this maxim, or rather, adapted it to the circumstances. "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee," spoke our Lord to this Pharisee. Then followed, not a shower of chips, falling where they might, but a quietly presented parable, with its moral and application.

It is true that at times Christ did denounce unsparingly the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, but those instances were few, and furthermore the hypocrisy was most aggravated and insufferable. It would be a caricature of Christ's method of spiritual labor to point to those few instances as exhibits of His usual way of dealing with sinners.

Even so in the church of God today. There are doubtless instances when vigorous, open denunciation of certain sins and sinners may be called for. But in most instances a wholly different method is required if we are to follow in the steps of our Lord, who came to seek and to save that which was lost. The psalmist comforts us with these words concerning our heavenly Father: "He knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14). We shall have success in laboring for the erring only as we likewise remember the frailties of the children of men and display vast compassion toward them.

Are Adventist Books Too Expensive?

A brother writes to us of the "exorbitant price" of a recent book published by the Review and Herald. He thinks the publishing house must be making a great deal of money, that indeed it may even be more interested in making money than in advancing the cause. Then he adds: "Some of us remember when God had to destroy our publishing house because moneymaking became the aim, instead of giving God's message for this time. It looks as if He would be compelled to intervene again. We trust the brethren will awake before it is too late."

First, let me set the record straight as to history. True, God did send a judgment of fire on the Review and Herald publishing house. That was in 1902. The judgment came very particularly because the house had turned its prime energy and time to commercial publishing, some of which printing Mrs. White described as "trash of satanic origin" (Testimonies, Volume 8, Page 90). Since 1902 the Review has not engaged in any kind of commercial work, but has devoted its full energies to the publication of the Advent message.

I doubt not that all of us in this publishing house today are far short of perfection, and perhaps some judgments of God may have to come upon us for our failings. But I feel clear in saying that I do not believe such judgments are going to come upon us because of the price we charge for books.

The book business has never been known as a particularly prosperous business. Many publishers go bankrupt. By and large, publishers' profits represent a very conservative return on their investment. Now, we pay the same price for our paper and other materials as secular publishers do. Hence, if we charged essentially the same price for our finished product as they do for theirs, we could hope only for a conservative profit.

But if we are consumed by a passion for making money, and hence presumably making high profits, that fact should reflect itself in relatively high prices for our books compared with the prices charged by outside publishers. What are the facts?

Three Kinds of Books

To make a true comparison we must divide into three groups the books offered for sale in the average bookstore:

1. Certain novels and a few nonfiction works that enjoy a heavy sale and are printed in editions of fifty or a hundred thousand or often much more. Obviously the price of such books is relatively low because the initial costs of publication can be distributed over a large number of copies. The special "book of the year" that our publishing houses have been bringing out for one dollar shows that we can-and do-offer amazingly low prices when we can print large quantities.

2.Reprint editions. Almost always the total initial cost of such books was met in earlier printings. Hence the reprints can be sold much more cheaply. Also, reprints are made only when there is sufficient potential sale to justify a large printing. That also permits a sharp reduction in price. On reprint editions our publishing houses have also offered remarkably low prices, as witness the price of trade editions of Mrs. White's works.

3.Books that deal with serious subjects-religion, history, science, business, et cetera. Except when printed as school textbooks, such works are-generally published in limited editions, often not more than five thousand copies, frequently even less. It is this category of books that provides the true parallel to most of our books that are published. We print, generally, studious works; and, except in certain cases, such as books sold in large numbers by colporteurs, these books have a rather limited circulation. They average less than five thousand copies for each book.

A comparison of secular and Adventist books in this third classification shows that page for page these secular books sell for fifty per cent more than Adventist books. (At the camp meeting season the price of our books is still lower because of the attractive discount regularly offered at that time.)

Look now at another aspect of this matter of prices; namely, the price increases in our journals as compared with secular publications. The Saturday Evening Post has long been a pacemaker in the magazine field. Until prices began to inflate, after the depression, the Post sold for five cents. Today it sells for fifteen cents. There is deadly competition in the magazine field, and only the most dire economic necessity leads journals to raise prices. If we had increased proportionately the rate for the Review, for example,

its subscription price would now be \$7.50. Instead it is \$6.50. And for the period of the annual subscription campaign, when most of our subscriptions are secured, there is either a cash discount or a premium book offered.

We have had efficiency experts look over our institution, so that we might continue to publish our books and papers at the lowest cost consistent with good workmanship. We have also made heavy investments in new labor-saving machinery. But we cannot do the impossible. We cannot make machines run faster than they are geared to run, and I'm sure no one would suggest that we try to make our employees work beyond a reasonable speed. We hope, however, to keep publishing our Advent literature at prices as reasonable as manufacturing conditions permit.

What I have here said applies equally to our other publishing houses. We are all controlled by the same denominational policies.

Advanced Training For Ministers

A most earnest minister questions the General Conference plan that candidates for the ministry shall receive advanced training in our theological seminary. He states that he had but thirteen grades of education and that he can continue his education simply by reading. He feels that extended schooling holds back young men who wish to be on their way preaching for God. He questions the need of learning Biblical languages and thinks that Young's Analytical Concordance suffices. He fears that we are following the world in giving increased tutoring to our ministerial students. He feels that the unction of the Spirit is the secret of success in the ministry rather than intellectual tutoring.

There are certain churches that carry the logic of your argument to what I think is ultimate end; namely, that there is no need of any formal education, that we receive our direction and guidance from the Spirit of God and that therefore the Lord will give us the words we need. Those churches don't provide theological schooling for their ministers. I know you would not carry the argument that far, but I find nothing in your reasoning that sets duty a barrier at any point along the way that leads to zero in education. And inasmuch as you set up no barrier in one direction, I see no logic in your setting up a barrier in the other direction, namely, along the road that leads to more education than our ministers have been receiving of late. You say that you are a man with thirteen grades of education. Now, my dear brother, at the time you were in school that was an advanced education. I can easily imagine someone at that time arguing against your securing thirteen grades of education. They would point to a good many men who had gone out with only eight grades, and all the rest of them who had gone out with only twelve. In fact, they could take the whole range of argument in your present letter and use it powerfully against you. But for some reason you felt it wise and good to take thirteen grades. Perhaps you might even have taken a grade or two more if conditions had permitted.

I am not always impressed by the argument, so frequently brought out in connection with endless matters confronting us, that we are doing as the world is doing. We are doing as the world is doing when we give our children any education from the first grade onward. Only yesterday I was reading about a devout religious body that is in trouble with the state because they don't believe their children should receive formal education beyond the eighth grade, and the state insists that they shall go on through the twelfth. These dear people think that what the state insists on is worldly. Now, the question of whether something is worldly depends on whether it tends to separate a person from the ideals and the standards that mark the church. There is nothing, in and of itself, in higher education-in the case before us, more grades than sixteen-that leads us away from the standards and principles of the church.

You feel that there is no point in the argument that our men should know Hebrew and Greek. You think Young's Analytical Concordance is all we need. Well, to depend only on such a concordance would be something like trying to understand the French and German people simply by having a French-English or German-English dictionary. There are people who try to travel the world exactly on that formula, but they have a woeful time. There was a day when various of our missionaries tried to carry on their labor in mission lands through translators. We've gotten far away from that idea. The same logic holds good for Hebrew or Greek.

You think that our young men ought to have a chance to get out to preach for the Lord rather than stay on and on in school. One of the reasons for a further education for our young men is that our conferences are sometimes not able to absorb all of those coming out of our colleges who want to go into the minis. Hence, whether they will or no, a number of our college ministerial graduates have been turned to anything except preaching when they finished their sixteenth grade. They might have wished ever so much to enter the ministry, but that did not in itself avail.

Now, it was thought that if we required these men to go further in their education, that in itself should be something of a testing ground to discover which of them gave the best proof that they should be taken into the ministry. In other words, the conferences could more intelligently pick from those who have gone on through seventeen years. The chance of a man's getting into the ministry is not reduced by taking the extra year. If anything, it is enhanced.

You think we need more men "on the firing line than in the ammunition factories." I wonder if your figure of speech is correct. The young men in the Seminary are not in the ammunition factory. It is men like myself, for example, rather than these young men, who are in the factory. These ministerial students in the Seminary are in a situation analogous to young men in an army training camp. They are simply receiving a little more training before they go onto the firing line. And I might add that military experience reveals that men who are trained a little better in the camp often win far more victories out on the firing line.

Adventist Position On The Bearing Of Arms

A brother inquires as to the Adventist position on the bearing of arms. He asks: "Do we make non combatancy a test of fellowship, and hence do we disfellowship a member if he joins the Army and takes a gun to fight?"

In the days of the Civil War in the United States [1861 to 1865] the then very small Seventh-day Adventist Church was first confronted with the grave and perplexing question: How should Adventists relate themselves to war? The question was answered in

favor of noncombatancy. The position then set forth has been the position of the denomination ever since. Contrary to the mistaken idea of many, we are not pacifists, as that word is properly defined. We are not passive in relation to war. We do not fold our hands, either literally or figuratively, to watch unconcerned the conflict of nations. We are not of that group who refuse to wear the uniform of the armed services. And we are poles apart from those who refuse to salute the flag.

On the contrary, we believe, as the Bible declares, that governments are ordained of God, that we should pray for the heads of government, and that we owe certain duties to the government. We consider the flag a proper symbol of government and the salute to it an appropriate sign of allegiance to government. In time of war we willingly wear the uniform of the armed services and seek, while wearing that uniform, to do our duty in behalf of government.

Then wherein lies the distinction between us, as noncombatants, and others who are in the armed forces? The distinction lies in this, that our thoughts and our acts are constantly controlled by the vivid conviction that the same Bible which commands us to give obedience to earthly government, commands us also to give our first obedience to God, that indeed if there is any conflict, we should obey God rather than man.

We have not been blind to the fact that earnest Christians through the centuries have held differing views as to the Christian and war, and we are aware that a great majority of Christian people have proceeded on the belief that the Christian may properly bear arms. But we have felt that when the Christian life is placed in the setting of the Sermon on the Mount, the noncombatant position best expresses the ideal that Christ sets forth for His followers.

In taking this view of so difficult a spiritual and moral problem the church has sought to be earnest without being dogmatic, and to appeal to its youth to follow a noncombatant course without threatening them with dis-fellowshipment if they fail to do so. Our belief in noncombatancy, like our belief in tithing, for example, is not made a test of fellowship. We firmly hold that both are an expression of Christian principles and ideals. Nevertheless, we have always taken the position that the failure of any member to measure up to the ideal in either of these beliefs shall not be ground for removing his name from the church book.

There are critics of the Advent Movement who seek to make capital of the fact that our believers in some lands have not all been noncombatants in the two world wars. Such critics have contended that because the General Conference failed to excommunicate any who bore arms or who encouraged other members to bear arms in any land, the General Conference, and thus the whole Advent Movement, has departed from the faith, become merged into Babylon, and ought to be deserted for some new and more holy movement.

The history of the Advent Movement in relation to this difficult problem of the Christian and war will not support the conclusions of such critics. In this matter of non combatancy, as in many other matters involving ultimate Christian ideals, the task of the church leadership is not that of excommunicating but of compassionately exhorting to higher levels of Christian conduct and ideals. Only thus shall we rightly follow in the path of Him who said to the poor sinner, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

5. Fanaticism And Offshoots

How To Identify A Fanatic

A sister writes to inquire how the great work of revival, of which the Adventist leadership is speaking so definitely, can be carried out by earnest church members without their being accused of fanaticism. She lists a number of specific ways in which she understands that the church needs reviving and reforming. After mentioning the matter of health reform, for example, she asks, "Why is it that I am considered a fanatic for trying to live out these principles of health reform?"

It is quite impossible for me to give you a specific answer to your questions. If I were the pastor of your church, who had opportunity to talk with you frequently and to see you in relation to others in the church, I might attempt an answer as to why some think you fanatical. In the absence of such personal knowledge I must confine myself to discussing the broad principles underlying the question of fanaticism versus healthy fervor. There is a fine line that divides between holy, healthy spiritual fervor on the one hand, and fanaticism on the other. Time and circumstances may change the position of the line a little, but not a great deal. Following are seven marks by which to identify a fanatic:

1.A fanatic generally first reveals himself by his inability to keep a sense of proportion in his beliefs and practices. Not only is he impressed with some important truth; his mind soon becomes filled up with it. He talks it to everyone. He sees everything else in terms of it, and thus his spiritual vision and sense of proportion are lost. The situation is worse when he focuses on a minor point, as is often the case, until it looms up so large that it quite obscures all the major features of the faith.

2.A fanatic seeks to make all-others around him in the church conform to his views. It is natural that he should do this, because if he believes that his particular view or views are of tremendous importance, why should he not seek to have all others think as he does? The trouble here is not so much with his ardor as with the reasons that prompt his ardor.

3.A fanatic almost invariably proceeds to condemn others when they refuse to accept his line of thinking. When ardor thus deteriorates into intolerance, the most dangerous effects of fanaticism begin to be evident. The fanatic, in most instances, is quite unable to believe that those who refuse to go along with him might base their refusal on common sense and intellectual and spiritual honesty.

4.As the church members around him refuse, in general, to accept his views, a fanatic usually begins to become critical of the church and of the whole Advent Movement. As the mood of criticism develops he may feel that the church is so far from salvation and so hopelessly set in its wrong ways that he must withdraw from it. More than one fanatic has finally left the church.

A fanatic, despite his fervor and his zeal, rarely accomplishes any great constructive good. We are not forgetful of the fact that there have been great men of God who, for a time, were thought fanatical because of the emphasis they gave to some tenet or feature of the

faith. But time has proved that they were wrongly judged, because some constructive results followed from their fervent emphasis. A fanatic, when examined in terms of the years, is one who can show little or nothing for his ardor except a spirit of division, criticism, and doubt in the circle in which he has moved. This is true, whether he continues to stay in the church or whether he leaves it.

6. Most fanatics seem to be tainted with that most subtle heresy; namely, that by the works of the law men can be justified. It is so easy for all of us to begin to think that if we but follow a certain program and do certain things, we shall thereby become holy and just in the sight of God. This heresy often displays itself in the emphasis that some give to the doctrine of health reform. We cannot ensure holiness by what we eat or do not eat, though one would well-nigh conclude that from listening to the way some have promoted the doctrine. But, let me hasten to add, obedience to the laws of our physical being is vitally related to good religion.

7. A fanatic is generally distinguished by spiritual pride. Pride has a thousand ways of displaying itself, and a thousand ways of concealing itself. It may appear in the guise of fervor for God, yes, even in the guise of humility. What is it but spiritual pride when a finite individual, with no better natural gifts or acquired training than others, begins to sit in judgment on all the church members around about him because they do not agree with his particular ideas of holy living, or his particular sense of relative value of certain beliefs?

Now, my dear sister, I do not know whether any of these distinguishing marks of a fanatic apply to you. I hope not, and leave you to be the judge. Let me now offer a few suggestions on how one may be zealous in the right sense of the word.

Christ could declare, "The zeal of your house hath eaten me up." No one can doubt His zeal and ardor and the greatness of the work He accomplished. Yet He had no taint of fanaticism. He displayed, first of all, an ardor in living the holy life. His life was a constant rebuke to sin and a stimulus to holiness to everyone who came in contact with Him. What this Advent Movement needs is men and women who will focus on the raising of the level of their own lives, so that the very atmosphere that surrounds them will be heavenly and uplifting for all whom they meet. Even one such truly high-level person in each of our churches could do marvelous things in lifting the spirituality of the whole movement and producing a glorious revival.

The person who has a true yearning for the betterment of the church will find himself more concerned to discover the defects in his own life than in the lives of others about him. And as his own life rises higher the example of it becomes a more mighty rebuke to the spiritually slothful and wayward in the church than any of his criticisms could ever be.

I think not only of Christ's example but of His persuasive teaching of the truth. Except in the rare instances when He had to denounce the outrageous pretensions of the scribes and Pharisees, Christ spoke in a quiet, persuasive way as He sought to bring the vital truth of heaven to the hearts of His hearers. If we are to win men to a higher and a better level, we ought to give close attention to the teaching and the preaching methods that our Lord followed. In fact, we ought to saturate our souls with the whole spirit that controlled Him and that radiated out from Him.

May God give to each of us in all our churches an ever-increasing ardor and zeal, and may He give to us, along with those fervent graces, the equally important gifts of sanctified common sense, good judgment, humility, and tolerance for others who do not see eye to eye with us.

Cats And Dogs As Pets

A sister inquires: "Is it wrong for us to have a dog or a cat as a pet, in view of the fact that they are unclean for food? Someone in our church has made quite an issue of it.

I know of nothing in the Scriptures or in our church regulations or precedents that would justify the position that it is wrong for us to have a cat or a dog as a pet. The fact that they are unclean as food does not justify our concluding that they are unclean as pets. Many things that are dangerous internally are harmless externally.

True, the Bible does make certain derogatory statements about "dogs," which some have understood literally as an indictment of the canines known to all of us. But commentators are quite universally agreed that the disparaging Bible reference to "dogs" should be understood figuratively as descriptive of a certain evil kind of person. Why Bible writers should employ a "dog" as a symbol of evil men is easily understandable to those who have visited Middle East lands, where dogs are a scurvy, snarling, mangy kind of beast with a status little better than that of jackals.

It is unfortunate that anyone should seek to make "an issue" of a matter such as house pets, whether dogs or cats or any other animal. There are great issues before the Advent churches today, issues of eternal significance for the souls of men, but the question of house pets is not one of them. Let us not become sidetracked and dissipate our time and nervous energy on matters that are irrelevant when they are not ludicrous.

Fanciful Stories Of Prophetic Warning

A brother writes to state that he is "under the impression" that there appeared in the Review a few years ago a report of some of our missionaries traveling in Africa who stopped their car and picked up an old man. According to the story, the old man told them that "within six months" war would break out and that it would not cease till the Lord came. Then they rode along quietly for a time. Later, when they looked back, the old man had disappeared from the rear seat. Therefore he must have been an angel. The brother felt sure that he read the story in the REVIEW, which, naturally, to his mind, meant that it was authentic.

I am loath to take space to refute idle tales, but so widely has this story spread over a period of years that a word in refutation is in order. This story, unfortunately, is simply typical of many stories that have had circulation. Let me say first of all that our index fails to disclose such a story in the Review. Nor can any member of the staff recall that such a story was ever printed in these columns, or that any responsible worker, either in the homeland or from abroad, ever submitted such a story for publication. I have heard the

story at different times during the past ten or fifteen years, with a little different geographical setting given each time, but always an American one. Your letter reveals that the story includes an African setting also. It is truly amazing how far and how fast this mysterious wayfarer has traveled-and always on foot!

Undoubtedly, angels have appeared at times in human form to converse with the children of God, for the Scriptures so declare. But the question at issue is this: Did a particular incident, such-as the one mentioned in your letter, actually occur? The answer must be found by an examination of witnesses.

When the disciples told their amazing story of the supernatural events in connection with Christ's resurrection, for example, they consistently declared that they were witnesses, that they spoke from firsthand knowledge. They had seen Him with their own eyes, heard Him with their own ears, and handled Him with their own hands, after His resurrection. And for good measure they gave a list of others who had thus seen Him. The disciples were not the bearers of unverifiable tales. They wrote out their testimony, finally, and we have it today.

When the alleged story of a wayfarer in Africa-and other places-is tested by this rule of witnesses it collapses like endless other stories that gain currency. We have made a few attempts to trace the story, but always without success. I must say unequivocally to you as I have said to others who have inquired: The story is without foundation.

Those who put such pious frauds in circulation, or who give further circulation to them by repeating them as true, do a great disservice to the cause of God in general and the doctrine of the Advent in particular. There are hosts of worldlings who are only too anxious to make sport of the faith and hope of Advent believers, and what a choice opportunity such a groundless story affords!

I appreciate your writing to ask whether the story is true. We would save ourselves much disappointment in life if we did more checking on stories before we believed them or passed them on. Yes, and we would also save others much sorrow-those who may be the unhappy subjects of the stories.

In regard to this particular instance, we may thank God that our hope of the soon coming of our Lord is not dependent on unverifiable stories. We have a more sure word of prophecy unto which we do well to take heed. "What is the chaff to the wheat? said the Lord."

Tenants' Right To Tv Antenna

A brother writes: "I have a house rented to a family, members of our church. I have learned that they intend to buy a TV set. Should I prevent them from putting the antenna on my property, since I would feel ashamed among other people? It may hurt their feelings. Should I be concerned about this?"

Most certainly you should not "prevent" your renters from putting up an antenna. Though people know that you own the property they also know that you have rented it out. There is nothing in the Book of God that calls for you to be conscience for another. It was within your right, at the outset, to refuse to rent the property to these tenants; that was a civil matter between you and them. You are under no obligation to rent to anyone. But seeing that you have rented the property, it becomes a matter between the tenants and their God as to what they do or don't do as touching spiritual matters. It is good for us to be sensitive about holy standards, but that sensitivity should not harden into a repressive action against someone else whose spiritual standards may be a little different from ours. By the logic suggested in your inquiry I fear that a devout and ardent Sunday keeper might as plausibly consider taking steps to prevent an Adventist tenant from doing any work on his rented dwelling on Sunday. And the moment that happened you and I would cry out, "Religious intolerance."

You say that you would "feel ashamed among other people" if that antenna was erected. There's another way to look at the matter. If someone speaks to you about it, why not reply this way: "Yes, that is my property, and that is an antenna. Personally I don't like TV because of much that it presents. But I believe in religious liberty. That is a good Adventist teaching. My tenant does not have to answer to me for his action in this matter. He must answer to his own conscience and to his God." Then for good measure I think it would be nice to add immediately: I believe my tenant is a good Adventist brother, even though he and I believe differently about the propriety of having TV in the home. I like to think that he looks only at that which is good. But even if he doesn't, God has not made me the censor of what he sees."

That will make you feel kindly toward your brother, will relax your spirit, and will make you a good witness for the principles of religious liberty.

The Folly Of Chain Letters

Occasionally people will write to us about a weird device known as a chain-letter prayer. Recently a sister who had received such a letter sent it in to me, remarking: "We get them from our own people and we hate to break them." She is referring to the fact that a chain-letter prayer always includes a warning against breaking the link, that is, failing to copy out the prayer and send it on to several more persons.

If I understand rightly, a chain-letter prayer consists generally of a brief passage from the Scripture that has the quality of a prayer, followed by a statement to the effect that the person sending on the letter has received it with the admonition to copy it and send it on to four more persons, or perhaps it is five or six. Each of the new recipients is supposed to do likewise, sending it on endlessly around the world in an ever-widening circle.

Now, why send on the letter? Simply that more persons may read a passage of Scripture and be made conscious of prayer? Not exactly. Generally the letter states, as in the case of the one I now hold in my hand, that some very great good fortune will come your way if you faithfully send on the letters. Sometimes the letter simply states that "good luck" will be yours. In this particular letter

reference is made to some person who, a little while after fulfilling his part and sending on the letter in multiple, received a large sum of money, and to another person who broke the link and lost a large sum.

What should I say in comment? Simply this, that a chain-letter prayer seems to be a combination of a Tibetan prayer wheel and a lottery. A Tibetan prayer wheel is meaningless, and a lottery is Sad. That about sums up the matter. When did carbon paper become essential to spiritual success and financial gain?

Let us not distort or disgrace the idea of prayer by being a party to any chain-letter prayer. Let us not try to wheedle God into giving us a large sum of money because we go through the motions of multiplying the number of copies of a prayer that has been sent to us. Money, perhaps, is the very last thing that we ought to have. It might be the damnation of our souls. Prayer is communion, as between close friends. We talk to God, and then, if we are in the true spirit of prayer, we wait for Him to talk to us. What has that in common with a chain-letter prayer? Nothing!

Setting Date For Advent

A brother inquires: "Would a professing SDA who sets an independent date of his own for Christ's return be called a genuine SDA?"

I am not sure what you mean by "an independent date." That seems to imply that Adventists have fixed on a certain date and this "professing SDA" has selected another date. I can hardly believe that you wish to have your words thus understood, for I am sure you know that Adventists do not believe that the date of our Lord's coming can be known. I conclude, therefore, that you simply mean that this "professing SDA" has selected a date for the Advent, independent of the denomination's position that the date cannot be known.

Though this brother may, according to his light, be a "genuine" member, he is a sadly misinformed one. Further, by his very act of setting a date he gives aid and comfort to those who have ever sought to make ridicule of the Advent Movement by declaring that "Adventists are always setting a time for the coming of Christ."

The facts are that from the earliest times the body of Christian believers known as Seventh-day Adventists have emphatically declared, in the words of Scripture: "Of that day and hour knows no man" (Matthew 24:36). However, while we have consistently thus believed, we have also believed, in the words of Scripture, that when certain prophecies are fulfilled, we may "know that it [the Second Advent] is near, even at the doors" (Verse 33).

Should Our Churches Face East?

A church member contends that inasmuch as the Temple at Jerusalem faced the east and the heavenly sanctuary faces east, our churches should face east. This member cites Ezekiel 8:16, among other texts, and maintains that worshiping in church facing the east, that is, the worshiper facing east, is committing the same sin as did the children of Israel.

Let us look at the phrase, "their faces toward the east" (Ezekiel 8:16), in the setting of the whole verse. It was not because these Men happened to be bowing toward the point of the compass called east that made them sinners before God. There is nothing in the Bible to support the contention that in and of itself there is significance in bowing in the direction of any point of the compass. There must be something else tied in with the bowing to give a moral or religious significance to the act. Look again at Ezekiel 8:16. These men stood "with their backs toward the temple of the Lord." There is the clue. Any man who turns his back on the house of God reveals that he does not want to have anything to do with the worship of God, and that certainly is sinful, irrespective of how the turning of his back relates him to a point of the compass.

Look once more. What did these men do? "They worshipped the sun." Here is an act of idolatry. It was a combination of turning "their backs on the Temple of God and worshiping the sun in place of God that constituted their sin. The relationship of their bodies to the points of the compass, I repeat, was not in itself sinful. It was the reason for their turning toward the east that made sinful their deed. Now, the facts are that it is only in the morning that one can turn his face toward the east to worship the sun. If a man wanted to worship the sun as an evening religious act, he would have to face toward the west. If simply the position of the body is the point at issue, then these men could worship the sun at the evening hour and be free of guilt. Why? Because they would not be facing the east.

Of course I might add that any attempt to find in our present church worship an analogy to the Temple incident of Ezekiel 8:16 breaks down. Those faithless Jews were not in the Temple but in front of it. Hence they could turn their back on the Temple, and by their turning, face east. But we do not worship "at the door" of our churches, but inside. Therefore the direction we face involves not simply the factor of the relationship of the building to the compass but also the arrangement of the pews within, and the possible fact that a right-angle wing of the church would involve a wholly different point of the compass. Besides, in the very act of praying-the heart of all worship-the worshiper's compass relationship is affected mightily by so variable a factor as the differing custom of kneeling toward the pew or toward the pulpit!

There are many things that can affect our eternal salvation, many things that can ruin our character, many things that can make us an evil example to others, but the relationship of our bodies to the points of the compass is not included in these acts or deeds. Let us not spend our time twisting the Scriptures to the points of the compass so as to make a sin out of something that is not conceivably a sin in and of itself.

Street Meetings, Not Fanatical Endeavor

A brother writes: "A question has arisen in our church as to the propriety of our holding meetings on street corners or on the commons, and whether or not this might be in conflict with the counsel given us in Volume 8, page 185, regarding the methods employed by the Salvation Army. Are there not other and far more desirable and effective methods of evangelizing? Then, too, would not street meetings somewhat lower the dignity of this message? What stand has the denomination taken on this matter?"

I do not know that the denomination has taken any definite position concerning the matter of holding street meetings. From time to time our ministers and lay evangelists have held such meetings. I do not believe that what Mrs. White wrote in Volume 8, page 185, should be considered an indictment of street meetings. She is there discussing the laudable activities of the Salvation Army in behalf of what she describes as "the neglected, downtrodden ones." The Army gathers in drunken, degraded people, cleans them up, feeds them, houses them, and finds work for them. This is quite different from holding a meeting on a street corner where we hope to reach, not necessarily "neglected, downtrodden ones," but the rank and file of people who may be walking along the street.

As to whether street preaching would lower the dignity of this I could not say offhand. Much depends on how the street message, meeting is held. Personally, I have always believed that we ought, within limits, to encourage every possible means for the proclamation of the truth of God. Paul declared that he was going to rejoice even though Christ be preached of contention, so long as Christ be preached. His statement gives us the clue as to whether we ought to be interested in various ways of proclaiming the message. I don't say that all are qualified to engage in all the different forms of missionary activity. They are not. All I am saying is that I do not see that there is anything necessarily wrong or fanatical about a street meeting.

The Measurements Of The Pyramids

A brother states that he is holding Bible studies with a family, one member of which is interested in the measurements of the pyramids of Egypt. These measurements are supposed to provide some kind of revelation of God's plans for man. Our brother is troubled because he feels he will have to meet the argument from the pyramids, but is ignorant concerning the whole matter.

I don't think you have missed anything by not knowing the dimensions of the pyramids, or the conclusions that have been drawn therefrom. You can adequately meet any argument drawn from the pyramids if you will keep in mind these simple facts: The Christian religion is a religion that is revealed in a book, the Bible. In it we can find all that is necessary to our salvation. Everything else must be squared with it. Despite some strange attempts to distort its evident meaning, the Bible has nothing to say about the measurements of the pyramids. They were built by pagans for the glorification of pagan rulers. Egypt long ago came under the curse of God, and its rulers suffered under the judgments of God. If someone keeps insisting that the pyramids be considered, just remind him that your religion is based on the Bible and that you can't go to pagan monuments to find saving truth for your soul.

How To Identify Adventist Publications

Now and then brethren send to me leaflets or other printed or mimeographed materials they have received that critically discuss certain doctrines or policies or standards of the church. They wish to know: Is the author of such material a Seventh-day Adventist? And how can we know when a piece of printed matter correctly presents Adventist teachings?

The answer to the first question cannot always be given simply in Yes or No form. Some holding membership in the Adventist Church devote their time, energy, and resources to attacking it. But they belong in name only, not in spirit. When they joined the church they solemnly affirmed their belief in its doctrines and covenanted to be obedient to its standards and its government. Without such a declaration of belief and obedience they would never have been voted into church fellowship. Admittance into the church rests, not upon a candidate's expression of a vague, sentimental interest in things heavenly, but upon a specific declaration of belief in certain truths that directly and constantly affect the lives of all who affirm them.

The member who turns against what he once devoutly affirmed when he sought membership, most certainly beclouds his title to membership. He is no longer a church member in spirit. And almost invariably his body finally follows his spirit outside the pale of the church, so that his name no longer appears on the records. But that last step is only the outward evidence of something that had really taken place in his heart at an earlier time.

There is another class who write strange, critical things against the Advent Movement. They are people who have been disfellowshipped for years, and for the very reason that they attacked some distinctive feature, or teaching, of the church! Such persons often use the name Seventh-day Adventist in their propaganda literature in a way to convey to the ordinary reader the impression that they are still members of the church. At best their methods are questionable, at worst, plainly dishonest. If the writer of a piece of literature does not wish to state his connections, religious, political, or otherwise, that is his privilege. But it is not his privilege within the bounds of common honesty to write in such a way as to convey to his readers the idea that he belongs to a certain organization unless he really does.

Probably we might be justified in feeling flattered that some who attack the church still seek to pose as Seventh-day Adventists. This movement must have built up a good reputation through the years to make the name a thing to be desired.

Sometimes those who have gone from us use the words "Seventh-day Adventist" prominently on their literature, but precede or follow these -words with a qualifying adjective, often in small type, that is supposed to reveal honestly the distinction between them and us. But we would ask such persons a question: Suppose you and your fathers before you had spent a century in a business building up the name of a particular product, until that name conveyed one distinct idea to all who saw it. Then suppose that a few dissatisfied workers in your establishment left you and began to advertise a competing product under the same familiar name, merely adding a qualifying word like new-or "improved." Would you feel that their use of that century-old name, for the obvious purpose of catching and favorably impressing old customers, was an honorable use? I think you would probably go to the courts and seek to

restrain them from the use of the name. You would have good business precedent for so doing, and the chances are large that you would win in the courts.

Now, how is it any more honorable to take the century-old name, “Seventh-day Adventist,” which rightly belongs to a well-defined organization and stands for equally well-defined beliefs and standards, and merely add to it some such word as “New” or “Reformed”? I think that the answer to that question is evident to all who believe in common honesty.

I do not question the right of any man to leave our ranks or his equal right to freedom of pen and voice to oppose us. I am firmly committed to a view of religious liberty that assures him such rights. But I do not agree that he has a right to carry on his opposition in deceptive fashion, and with such a use of the words “Seventh-day Adventist,” that good members of the church need to write to inquire whether the literature is Seventh-day Adventist or not. A good cause needs no such deceitful aids to advance it, certainly not a cause that poses as a “reform.”

Let us look directly, now, at the matter of our Adventist publications in contrast to pseudo-Adventist literature. There is nothing more vital to the stability of the Advent Movement than its doctrines. If they are tainted, so also is the movement. If they are undermined, so also is the movement. That is why the church takes such pains to see that its publications are correctly edited. All our publishing houses of any size have special committees that read manuscripts that have been submitted for books, booklets, or pamphlets. The editors of our major religious journals are almost invariably ordained ministers, to ensure that the material printed will be in accordance with the beliefs that the journals were founded to promote. The leaders of the denomination, in setting up these publishing policies, are simply seeking to discharge their responsibility to provide the members with literature that is in harmony with the doctrines and standards of the church.

But how can we be sure that the piece of literature that comes to us in the mail, or that someone may give to us has been produced in one of our denominational publishing houses, and thus truly expresses Adventist views? Fortunately there is a clear answer that can be given. Such literature always bears the imprint of the house that published it. Our members, no matter in what division of the world field they may be, should know the name of the publishing house that provides the church’s literature in that area. In most divisions there is only one house. In the North American Division there are four, as follows:

Review and Herald Publishing Association
Takoma Park, Washington 12, D.C.

Pacific Press Publishing Association
Mountain View, California

Southern Publishing Association
Nashville, Tennessee

Kingsway Press
Oshawa, Ontario, Canada

Signs Publishing
Warburton, Victoria, Australia

Stanborough Press
England

If you live in the United States or Canada and receive a piece of literature, look for the name of one of these publishing houses on it. If it is Seventh-day Adventist literature, it will almost certainly have been printed by one of the first four houses.

Occasionally a conference or an Adventist institution may print and send out a tract or paper. But in such instances the name of the conference or institution will be found on the printed matter or in an accompanying letter. Thus our members need have no uncertainty as to whether a piece of literature coming through the mail is bona fide Adventist and reflects soundly the teachings, policies, and standards of the church.

A piece of ostensibly Adventist literature coming to your home with no identification on it, or with a name and address on it not that of a denominational publishing house, or conference office, or Adventist institution, is properly suspect. And the suspicion is only heightened if such a piece of literature prominently displays a statement like this: “Published in the interest of Seventh-day Adventists.” That is not the way genuine Adventist literature is sent forth. Such a statement would be superfluous if the literature were coming from one of our publishing houses or other unit of the church. In fact, I can say without hesitation that one way that our members can be sure that tracts and booklets coming to them are not genuinely Adventist is if they display a line like this: “Published in the interest of Seventh-day Adventists.”

It is true that occasionally some devout, doctrinally sound, and loyal church member has privately printed a tract and sent it out more or less generally. And doubtless some good has resulted. But all things considered, I think that the harm has generally outweighed the good. And that is more true today than ever before. Such persons should remember that the general effect of this independent printing is to confuse the minds of the members. They are not quite sure as to the dependability of what they read, for it

bears no other identification than the name of the author. And if, having read it, they find that it is sound doctrine, they are put off their guard when another piece of privately printed literature comes to them. But the second piece may contain subtle heresy.

An Important Resolution

Let me call the attention of all our members to an action that was taken by the Autumn Council of the General Conference in 1949, entitled "Independent Publications." It reads as follows:

"With the growing perils of these last days it is becoming increasingly important that the literature issued in connection with the activities of the denomination should receive the most careful editing by competent persons, and the approval of some regularly constituted denominational authority.

In order to accomplish this:

"1. We consider it pre-eminently essential to maintain the most thorough organization of our denominational activities, in order that a proper balance may be secured and maintained in all our departments of church work, and that our denominational teaching and standards may be safeguarded.

"2. Every individual who prepares manuscript for publication in the form of tracts, pamphlets, or books for general distribution through our Book and Bible Houses or other denominational channels shall submit the manuscript to a regular denominational book committee for criticism, endorsement, and final decision as to publication.

"3. The foregoing regulation shall not be interpreted as applying to unbound mimeographed sermons prepared by our evangelists for free distribution or to radio sermons offered free to listeners.

"4. Our Book and Bible Houses and churches shall carry in stock and promote the circulation of only those books, pamphlets, tracts, periodicals, and magazines which are regularly printed under denominational direction or are furnished through our publishing houses.

"5. Our publishing houses and branches should not purchase or carry in stock books dealing with any phase of the third angel's message which are published by individuals on their own responsibility, and which are produced and promoted independently by individuals or by non-Seventh-day Adventist publishers, except as hereinafter specified.

"a All orders received for such publications shall be referred to the publisher and promoter of the same.

"b It is inadvisable to promote the circulation of such literature or give it an apparent standing or approval through reading notices, advertisements, or by listing in catalogs.

"c Union and local conferences shall cooperate in a united effort to curtail the publication of independent literature by laborers in conference employ.

"6. Books approved by reading course committees, and such other valuable books, not of a competitive character, as have been approved by a denominational book committee, shall be handled and promoted in the same manner as are denominational publications. It is understood that reading course books not published by the denomination are to be stocked and promoted only during the life of the course or courses of which they are a part or as long as the stock is carried by the publishing houses.

7. College printing plants should confine their work to local and special job printing, and they should not enter the field of our regular denominational publishing unless counseled to do so by the General Conference Publishing Department.

"8 The reprinting, in tract or other form, of chapters or portions of chapters from our standard denominational works, should be definitely discouraged. Such a course is an infringement of copyright, which cannot be permitted.

"9 We appeal to all our denominational employees, sustentation beneficiaries, and membership to stand loyally by our denominational publishing policies in the matter of publication and circulation of our regularly approved literature.

"10 Editors of our union papers are asked to keep the columns of their pages free from advertisements intended to promote the circulation of non authorized literature.

"11 It shall be understood that these recommendations shall not restrict the publication of promotional or special literature on authorization of any union committee for free distribution among church members within its own territory."

In the light of this resolution surely no genuine Seventh-day Adventist can permit himself privately to print and circulate tracts, pamphlets, books, or papers, and thus bring perplexity to our conferences and possibly confusion to the minds of our members. At best such a procedure is costly. The money would go much farther if used to purchase literature from our approved publishing houses. At worst the procedure provides a screen behind which every variety of apostate may send his productions into the homes of our people.

We live in a day when deceptions are abroad, deceptions so subtle that if possible they would deceive the very elect. Before we either read or circulate, we should look for the identifying mark that the literature is a product of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Let us take our Seventh-day Adventism straight and unqualified. Mrs. White, whom most offshoots so fervently quote, knew nothing of a new wing of the church. When she used the name Seventh-day Adventist she meant what we have always meant. True, she spoke of "reformed" and "transformed" and "translated" Seventh-day Adventists. Throughout the seventy years of her writings she held these key words before the church. But never did she suggest that these words would come true as a result of turning away

from a divinely constituted movement, whose clearly defined government had come down through the years. On the contrary she called for unity and loyalty, an ever greater pressing together.

The doctrines of the movement are true, its government was given to us of Heaven, its standards rest on the Bible, and its world work fulfills the prophetic description. There is no question that the movement is true. The only question is: Will we be true to the movement?

6. Health Reform

Temperate Mood On Health Reform

A sister living at one of our Adventist centers tells of her perplexity in trying to study more fully Sister White's instruction on healthful living. She describes a study group of which she is a member, stating that this group have sometimes been the object of criticism and gossip simply because they are "sincerely endeavoring to carry out the inspired instruction found in Mrs. White's writings." She says that a few who have thus been studying may have become a little extreme in their emphasis on health reform, but she feels that this is perhaps a rebound from the critical attitude of other church members who seem quite to flout health reform. She states that one or two of the study group have even become a little distrustful of various workers because of their at least apparent apathy toward health reform. With an expressed desire only to do that which is pleasing to God, she asks for comment on her letter.

In the matter of health reform there are dangers at both extremes: dangers of fanaticism at one end, and of cynical disregard of divine counsel at the other. We must ever pray to be kept in the middle of the road. I am sure that you thus pray, and that all of you who are seeking to do the will of God are concerning the matter of healthful living, desire thus to walk. It seems very hard for us poor mortals to keep to a straight line.

I grieve as much as you do over the cynical attitude of some, and I totally grieve over the undue attention to diet in a most fanatical fashion that has distinguished some others among us through the years. What disturbs me more than all else is the attitude of distrust and suspicion that occasionally comes into the thinking and into the speech of some of those who desire ardently to do the will of God. They seem to conclude that because others of us in the church do not go along with them in exactly the same way and with the same intensity, we must be lacking in genuine religious experience. Distrust and suspicion are probably the most corrosive forces that can ever work on the life of an Adventist.

I like simple living. I don't like much rich dessert. I rarely ever taste ice cream. I am also a vegetarian. In fact, even the sight or smell of meat is repulsive to me. Yet I must never forget that the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, and that I shall never receive any credit in heaven because of my vegetarianism. I must be charitable toward those who don't see eye to eye with me on this matter. I think, of course, that they are in error in their conclusions. But it is not for me to be the judge, nor to make such an issue out of any phase of health reform as to obscure the more primary truths essential to the salvation of men in every part of the world, including those parts where it may be very difficult to be a vegetarian.

I would not discourage you by one word. May God give you light and grace and understanding as you seek to learn His will more fully. May He guide any who may be associated with you in such study. When we are seeking to know more fully the mind of the Lord, we need to pray not simply for knowledge but also for wisdom to apply rightly that knowledge. We need to pray for tact and skill in bearing the most winning witness for the further truth that may have come to us. This last is perhaps most important of all.

Let me illustrate: I have known people who, coming to a knowledge of the Sabbath, have borne a less than helpful witness to the world regarding it. For example, they have hung out their washing on Sunday in a neighborhood of devout Sunday keepers. They were not going to let their light remain under a bushel. Not they! But such misguided Adventists forget that a light may blind, and thus irritate, instead of giving helpful illumination for men's path. We are all agreed that the Sabbath truth should be proclaimed, but most of us are also agreed that there are wrong ways as well as right ways to proclaim it. The same is true of our message of health reform.

May the Lord be merciful to all of us. I do not see how any of us can ever hope for heaven except by the mercy of God, for we are all so lacking in one way or another, and most times in a great many ways.

Five Questions On Flesh Foods

A brother writes for light on five questions that trouble him in the matter of health reform:

1. "Mrs. White (Youth's Instructor, Aug. 18, 1898) states that inasmuch as Daniel and his three companions had not eaten flesh food before they came to Babylon, they resolved not to eat of it while in Babylon. An article in the Review states that Daniel had no compunctions of conscience against eating clean meats. The proof offered was Daniel 10:2, 3, which reads as follows: 'In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.' How can I harmonize Mrs. White's statement with this Review article?"

2. "Mrs. White states that because every green thing was destroyed by the Flood, God allowed man to eat the flesh of animals. Why could not God have worked a miracle, as He did at the Exodus, and given men manna to eat? Why was the Flood a greater emergency than the Exodus? Furthermore, the SDA Bible Commentary suggests that the 'olive leaf' found on the waters of the Flood was plucked from an olive tree that had survived the Flood. Hence if one tree survived, why could not thousands of others have survived also? Thus man would have had non flesh food to eat."

3. "Mrs. White says that flesh food animalizes man's nature. Christ ate flesh foods. Don't we here come to a rather embarrassing conclusion?"

4. "Mrs. White says: 'Take the Bible as your study book. . . Do not present theories or tests that Christ has never mentioned and that have no foundation in the Bible.' Now, though Christ was on this earth for over thirty years, where does He teach or even infer that vegetarianism is a rule to be followed?"

5. "If I am not to be judged at the last day by any other book than the Bible, as Mrs. White declares, how should I interpret her statement: 'The indifference with which the health books have been treated by many is an offense to God.'"

Let me seek to answer, in order, these questions.

Question No. 1

1. Mrs. White says of Daniel and his companions, as they went into captivity: "They decided that as flesh-meat had not compose their diet in the past, it should not come into their diet in the future, and as wine had been prohibited to all who should engage in the service of God, they determined that they would not partake of it." - The Youth's Instructor, Aug. 18, 1898. Daniel, writing about seventy years later, at the end of his long public life of service, declared concerning a certain three-week period when he was in mourning: I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth" Daniel 10:3).

There is an apparent lack of harmony between Mrs. White's statement and Daniel's. But this much is evident, that if Daniel's statement provides unqualified authorization for eating flesh, it provides the same authorization for drinking wine. Of course I know that there are many church people in various denominations who think they can find in the Bible adequate defense for wine drinking, which means, of course, that they would be challenging Mrs. White's declarations on total abstinence, even as some among us challenge her statements against meat eating. But I have never heard of an Adventist endorsing wine drinking. However, consistency requires that if we are to question Mrs. White on the point of flesh eating, we should also question her on the point of wine drinking. But, I repeat, I don't know of any Adventist who would want to question her stand on wine drinking.

There are a number of instances where I am unable to find a harmony between the statements of two Bible writers, and yet I believe the Bible unreservedly. Therefore, I am casting no shadow over Mrs. White's status as a prophet of God because I admit that in certain instances I have not been able to find a harmony between her statements and those of a Bible writer.

There is a seventy-year span between Daniel's going into captivity and his statement in Daniel 10:3. Someone might plausibly offer in explanation that in that long period of time Daniel, living in Babylon where there might not have been an abundance of non flesh foods, possibly adapted his diet to include flesh foods. And likewise, that he adapted his dietary habits to include mild wine.

Certainly if through the seventy years and the changed food possibilities of Babylon, Daniel had made some changes in his diet in the matter of flesh foods, that would have been entirely reasonable. And if, indeed, he thus adapted his dietary program, all conflict between his statements and Mrs. White's would disappear.

Whether this explanation that some suggest, is correct, I would not presume to say. But at least it indicates that if we had all the facts, we could find a harmony here. Of this much I am sure, that to decide that Mrs. White goes contrary to Scripture and is therefore undependable simply because of an apparent contradiction like this, would be to reach a most unnecessary and unwarranted conclusion. The logic of such reasoning could finally lead us into the camp of the skeptics who reject the Bible because of its alleged contradictions.

Question No. 2

2. Your questions regarding the Flood and manna, et cetera, presume that I should possess a measure of knowledge beyond that nothing more about the conditions immediately following the Flood than is obtainable from exceedingly brief references in the Bible and The Spirit of Prophecy. Why God did not cause manna to fall after the Flood as He did after the Exodus is a question that only He can answer. The Bible provides many illustrations of how God did not relate Himself in the same way to more or less similar crises in the lives of His children. God delivered the three worthies out of the fiery furnace, but He did not deliver John the Baptist out of the dungeon. To borrow your words about the postdiluvian days, "What hindered God from" delivering John? Might it not be that God had a somewhat different purpose in mind in dealing with the post-Flood emergency than He had in dealing with the Exodus, and do we not have a suggestion of this in another statement by Mrs. White to the effect that God permitted the eating of meat to shorten the lives of men in this rebellious world? (See Counsels on Diet and Foods, page 373.5)

I think you are building a very great deal on "the olive leaf." The SDA Commentary is not dogmatic. It says, "Apparently from a tree that had survived the Flood." The Hebrew in the case could be satisfied by assuming that the olive leaf was "plucked off" a floating branch. The Commentary simply suggests that the leaf and the branch on which the leaf was found were attached to a tree that had survived the Flood, but that is confessedly a surmise.

Question No. 3

3. In another context Mrs. White says, in substance, that the environment of a city is injurious to the spiritual life, particularly of children. I think you and I and any observing person would agree with that statement. Now Christ grew up in the town of Nazareth.

And "can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" asked those who sought to defame Christ. But our Lord was not tainted because of dwelling in evil Nazareth, and what was possible for our Lord is possible for us. Then shall we conclude that Mrs. White was wrong in her observations about the evil influence of a city? No.

When it is not possible for a child, let us say, to be in any other place than a city, he and his parents may rightly invoke special divine aid to offset the potential danger to his spiritual life that is resident in the city atmosphere. Likewise we may ask God to bless for the strength of our body the best food that is available under the circumstances, and I think we would not be presumptuous in doing that. Christ's promise to His followers is: "If they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them" (Mark 16:18). If such

protection is assured the faithful, it seems entirely reasonable to believe that Christ's followers may rightly claim protection against the deleterious possibilities of certain foods that they find it necessary to eat in particular situations.

Simply to keep the record straight, you should remember in this connection that your question implies that we can know with certainty what Christ's normal dietary practices were. You speak of "the life practices of Christ" in regard to diet. The facts are that the Bible is singularly silent as to His dietary habits, day in and day out. It would indeed be most interesting to know just what His regular menu was.

We know that He turned a few fishes into a great many to feed a hungry multitude, and that He once ate a piece of "broiled fish" offered Him (Luke 24:42, 43). But these incidents throw little or no light on the question of His usual diet. Perhaps Christ daily ate the same food as all others around Him-and perhaps He did not. Many other of His habits were very different. Neither you nor I can speak with certainty on the matter. Half of our fallacies in interpreting Scripture spring from our haste in drawing sweeping conclusions regarding points on which the Bible is silent.

Question No. 4

4.If you try to find in the four Gospels Christ's counsel to Christians on all the details of their lives, I think you will be disappointed. Christ explicitly declared to His disciples: I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). What those "many things" were we can only surmise. It is not unreasonable to believe that one of those things might have been counsel regarding the principles of healthful living.

I was once confronted by a group of infidels who asked me why Christ did not denounce slavery, and why the apostolic New Testament writers counseled slaves to be obedient to their masters. (The Greek word *doulos*, translated "servant" in the King James Version, is correctly rendered "slave" in many modern versions.) Our missionaries in polygamous lands have longed for some clear-cut Bible declaration against polygamy-especially when polygamous inquirers point to the ancient worthies whom God blessed and to whom God made great promises, though they had both wives and concubines!

Our missionaries answer by pointing to God's original plan as revealed in the Garden of Eden, when God gave Adam one wife. Indeed, the only way that Christian ministers have found to deal with a number of Bible problems-such as polygamy, the permission to have slaves, the right to divorce on grounds other than infidelity, et cetera-is by pointing men to God's original perfect plan as pictured in Eden. I think it equally valid to do the same regarding man's ideal diet.

5. You and I, who certainly are to be judged by what is written in the Bible, agree that the Bible says nothing, for example, against tobacco. A baptismal candidate once faced me with what he thought was an unanswerable argument in defense of his continued use of tobacco: "You said that the Bible is our one guide. Where does it prohibit the use of tobacco?" He was not interested in any "health books," either secular or religious, that I offered to give him to prove that tobacco was bad. He stuck tenaciously to his contention that between the covers of the Bible must be found all that is necessary to salvation, and that the Bible is silent about tobacco.

Now, how would you have met that argument? I think you would have said to him essentially what I said. This was the substance of my reply: "Our bodies are the temples of the Holy-Ghost. The Bible declares that 'whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God' (1 Corinthians 10:31). The Bible thus sets down a comprehensive principle. God has given us a knowledge of many things concerning the body and its health as a result of medical research. It is our responsibility to study to know how to apply the principle set forth in Scripture in the light of such knowledge." I think you will agree with this reasoning, and agreeing with it, you have the answer to your question.

In Conclusion

Now let me offer a general word in conclusion. The person who sets out to read Mrs. White in a mood to discover contradictions between what she says and what the Bible says, will almost certainly end up by concluding that she is out of harmony with the Bible. And why? Simply because human language is so faulty a medium of expression, and historical situations have so vital a bearing on the proper interpretation of statements, that it is not difficult to discover apparent contradictions and to conclude that they are real contradictions. Here perhaps applies the old saying that we find what we are looking for. I do not charge that you have this mood. To help to guard you against this mood is the purpose of these remarks.

All of us who have applied ourselves to theology through the years have been keenly aware of the problems within the Scriptures. We have found a reasonable harmony to many apparent contradictions, though of course we have never satisfied infidels, who make capital of these seeming contradictions. For some apparent contradictions we have not found harmony, but have not lost our faith in the Bible, no, not for a moment. The reason why is that in taking the whole sweep of Scriptures we can come to no other conclusion than that the writers are indeed what they claim to be, spokesmen for God. Having reached that sufficiently buttressed conclusion, we willingly leave in a state of suspended judgment our thinking on certain perplexing passages of Scripture, confident that in the great day, when we can commune with the Author of Scripture, we shall find the answer and the complete harmony.

May I earnestly commend to you the same attitude toward the writings of Mrs. White. Speaking personally, I think that I have gone through all the stages of questioning that an inquiring mind could be expected to go through in studying her writings. I have examined and written upon most of the major arguments brought forth against her. But after examining all these arguments in the setting of a broad study of her lifework and her writings, I have come surely and irresistibly to the conclusion that she was what she claimed to be, a handmaiden of the Most High God, to whom were given inspired revelations and instruction for the church. I devoutly trust that you may come to the same conclusion.

Restraint In Judging Our Brother's Diet

An inquirer quotes the following statement that appeared in a Review editorial: "The denomination has never taken the position that the eating of clean meats is a sin, or that a church member should be censured for eating such meat." Then he comments: "If it is no sin for Seventh-day Adventists to eat of the clean meats, then it must be perfectly proper to satisfy the appetite in eating meat, and therefore it is not necessary to conform to the instructions given us of the Lord through the Spirit of Prophecy." He gives a number of striking statements from Mrs. White on the subject, and indicates that he believes a more vigorous position should be taken against meat eating.

The point you raise is an old and perplexing one: Is meat eating a sin? To say that it is, raises other perplexing questions. What shall we do with the fact that they were commanded to eat of the flesh of certain offerings? And what shall we do with the fact that our Lord gave to the multitude, not only bread, but fish? Again, what shall we do about the fact that in certain parts of the world fruit and vegetables and grains are hardly obtainable, and flesh, particularly fish, is the main staple of life?

I happen to be a lifelong vegetarian myself, but I have never been able to go along with some of my brethren who have taken what I feel is an unwarranted position in regard to the evil of eating any lean meat at any time or under any condition. I might add immediately that I cannot go along with other of my brethren who take the opposite extreme position of quite completely disregarding the Spirit of Prophecy counsel in behalf of a non flesh diet.

I do not believe it necessarily follows that simply because it is not a sin for a Seventh-day Adventist to eat of the clean meats, it must therefore be perfectly proper for him, in any land and under any conditions, to satisfy himself with meat and to ignore completely the counsel of the messenger of God. I think that the business of the Christian should always be to seek to come up onto higher ground, to reach more fully the ideal. However, the fact that a Christian has not come up to a certain level as yet, does not require me to say that he is therefore at the present time in a state of sin.

In the religious life there are many questions that we will never be able to settle with a simple Yes or No, and certainly many situations where it is dangerous, if not pharisaical, to use the terse, descriptive label, "sin." I think we are far safer, walking as we must amid a company of believers with varying degrees of perfection on many matters, to put our emphasis on the goal of higher ground, leaving to the Lord the hard problem of determining just where sin enters the picture in the conduct of others. These words are not intended to minimize sin or the Ten Commandments. They are intended only to minimize, or rather restrain, any tendency within us to use our human judgment in deciding just when the black label of sin should be attached to a fellow believer.

Every time I read Paul's letter to Philemon I receive new insights into how to relate myself to someone who, according to my viewpoint, has not moved onto the higher plane that is possible through the further revelation of the will of God to man. Did Paul call-Philemon a slave-driving sinner, and excoriate him? Did he say that he would cast him out of the church forthwith unless he immediately freed Onesimus? No. Paul pleaded, appealed, entreated, but he did not condemn. Philemon might have stood squarely on the scriptural permit to have slaves. Whether he made such a response to Paul, no one knows. But of this we can be sure, that despite the explicit permission to have slaves-even to instruction on the marking of them-Paul was right in pleading with Philemon to rise to a new and higher level in his social relations with others, the relation of brothers in -Christ, rather than of master and slave.

I think that this Philemon incident should help all of us who seek to follow the Christ like way of leading men onto higher ground. I would not say, of course, that it provides an exact parallel to the matter before us-there are no exact parallels in any area of spiritual guidance. But at least this much can be learned from Paul's approach: We must lead kindly and gently, holding back hard adjectives, if we would help another to move upward toward the gates of heaven.

I confess to deep distress when I hear some ardent vegetarians speak of their meat-eating brethren as guilty of a most heinous sin and of slipping fast down the wrong road. I would rather let the Spirit of Prophecy speak to their hearts. If they give to Mrs. White's words a different interpretation from what I do, or if they feel to ignore her words completely, standing resolutely on the scriptural permit to eat flesh when as Philemon might have done regarding the scriptural permit to have slaves-that is a matter between them and their God. I do not feel that I should sit as a judge.

But as I said in the editorial to which you refer, I wish, not only that certain ardent vegetarians would withhold their withering judgments, which I am sure God cannot bless, but also that certain ardent meat eaters would withhold their ridicule. Ridicule has ever been the favorite weapon of infidels when in debate with any religious person. It is an easy, befuddling substitute for logic and evidence, and has no place in our ranks. It proves nothing, except the emotional state of the one who uses it. Let us be done with censure and ridicule in seeking to solve our differences.

My dear brother, our hope of finding a calm middle road of study in this matter of vegetarianism can come only by a new attitude on the part of both extremes, and by a new interest in healthful living on the part of all of us. I love all my brethren, and I believe they are all seeking to reach the kingdom. Mrs. White tells us-and she declares that God revealed it to her-that higher ground in diet, as in numerous other matters, will aid us greatly in our endeavor to reach the blessed abode. Nor do I believe that she takes a hard and extreme position on the matter of vegetarianism. The essence of her counsel on this subject is summed up in one clear sentence that is not only restrained, but amply allows for varying conditions: "We do not mark out any precise line to be followed in diet; but we do say that in countries where there are fruits, grains, and nuts in abundance, flesh food is not the right food for God's people." - Testimonies, Volume 9, Page 159.

I believe her words, and wholeheartedly would seek to give obedience to them. How others believe and obey is for them alone to decide as they commune with their own hearts and with their God.

Adventists And Tobacco Selling

A brother writes: "As you know, we are out and out against the use of tea, coffee, tobacco, and alcoholic beverages, and also the use of unclean meats. But some of our people, while claiming not to use these harmful articles, have no scruples in selling them to other people. A brother in our church sells even pork and all forms of tobacco products in his store. He was spoken to, but claims he has to cater to the needs of his customers. He once was selling wine too, but stopped it. There is another who also sells tobacco, but tells his customers it is not good for them. Now if a member refuses to hold up the principles for which we stand on this matter, what should be done in the way of discipline to show the church's disapproval in the matter?"

The answer to these and all other questions regarding church discipline must be found in the Church Manual, which expresses authoritatively the collective mind of the church. To this Manual all of us, ministers and laity, must conform if we would act consistently with the approved standards of the church, and thus act in harmony. We have no right, in a local church or conference, to employ standards other than those given in the Manual. Only by conforming our church actions to the Manual can we accord to a member who is under question the kind of treatment to which he is entitled. The Manual declares:

"Among the grievous sins for which members shall be subject to church discipline are the following:

"1 Denial of faith in the fundamentals of the gospel and in the cardinal doctrines of the church or teaching doctrines contrary to the same.

"2 Open violation of the law of God, such as worship of idols, murder, adultery, fornication, stealing, profanity, Sabbath breaking, willful and habitual falsehood, and the remarriage of a divorced person, except of the innocent party in divorce for adultery.

"3 Fraud or willful misrepresentation in business.

"4 Disorderly conduct which brings reproach upon the cause.

"5 Persistent refusal to recognize properly constituted church authority or to submit to the order and discipline of the church.

"6 The use, manufacture, or sale of alcoholic beverages.

"7 The use of tobacco or addiction to narcotic drugs." - Pages 224,225.

These reasons for disciplining a member are plain and explicit. Some may contend that the church should discipline a member for selling tobacco even as we would discipline him for selling liquor. We grant that a plausible argument may be set forth in the matter, for is not tobacco truly harmful? Yes, but is not coffee also harmful and numerous other products? The question becomes a very practical one of deciding where to draw the line. The conviction among us has thus far been that the line should be drawn between liquor and tobacco, with a member disciplined who sells the one but not disciplined who sells the other. No matter how much we deplore the use of tobacco, we must all grant that there is a world of difference for the individual and for society between liquor drinking and tobacco smoking. And that very great difference has provided the basis for the drawing of the line.

After all, we should never forget that the church, in its formal statements, seeks to err on the side of restraint in the matter of setting down specific points on which members should be disciplined. That restraint is our protection against falling into the fatal error of the ancient Jews who set down endless detailed regulations to govern men's conduct.

This does not mean, however, that the church necessarily condones what it does not explicitly condemn. Far from it. We speak out against certain habits and practices of members that do not constitute ground for official church censure. For example, we do not discipline a member who is remiss in tithe paying. But we do speak out against such a practice; indeed, we declare it to be robbery of God. See Malachi 3:8-11.

This principle operates in the present matter. We may very properly declare that the practice of selling tobacco confuses, when it does not completely neutralize, our witness against tobacco. And we may rightly go on from that to labor most earnestly with the one who sells the tobacco. But beyond that the church does not feel free to go. Indeed, to go beyond that calls for official church action, which generally eventuates in disfellowshipment. Now, the church takes a most grave step when it disfellowships a member. We should bear long and patiently before we take such a step. What is more, we should keep to an irreducible minimum the number of offenses that call for disfellowshipment. That is what the church has sought to do in drafting the list for the Manual. And, let me repeat, no local church has authority to go beyond the Manual.

The goal of any local church that finds itself confronted with a member whose life bears poor witness to the truth should not be to attempt to find legal grounds, if possible, for disfellowshipping the weak member. Rather, our goal should be to seek by every means possible to help that member to see the more excellent way to live and witness for God. Much can be done by tactful, sympathetic labor with an erring member. We can never do too much of that; we rarely ever do enough. It is not sufficient to compass land and sea to make a proselyte; we must explore and employ every possible means to hold that member. Our goal is to bring men, at last, through the gates of heaven. Indeed, if we fail ultimately to do that for converts, we fail altogether.

Coffee For Non-Adventist Guests

A sister inquires: "Is it right for me to keep coffee in my home so that I will have it to serve to non-Adventist relatives when they come to visit me?"

There is a very wide category of questions that can hardly be answered by a dogmatic Yes or No. I think this is one of those questions. I'd rather approach the problem from a little different angle, asking myself, Will I bear the best witness to my belief that my body is the temple of the Holy Ghost if I keep in my kitchen any product injurious to health with a view to offering it to relatives when they come to my home? Personally, I could not do this. I have an immense responsibility for what is done in my own home. What my relatives may wish to do in their homes is something altogether different. Those who come to my home know, or ought to know, the distinctive standards to which I adhere, including stand subject of diet. They have no rightful claim upon me to provide them any particular kind of food.

After all, unless we are diligent ever to let our light shine and to live out our standards, how will we ever promote them? It is not sufficient simply for Adventists themselves to practice what they believe; it is for them also to tell others of their belief, seeking to persuade them to come with us both in belief and in practice.

Now, right on this last point, let me offer a word of counsel. There are different ways in which we can bear witness, different ways in which we can seek to persuade others. Certainly there is a right way and a wrong way to let our light shine on the subject of healthful living. There are a few among us, unfortunately, who let their light shine with such a burning beam that it serves only to produce a distressing sunburn on the soul and the mind of everyone toward whom they direct it. The end result of that is irritation or worse. I am confident that our Lord bore no such witness to the truth. The light that radiated from Him was warm and inviting, and it illuminated the right path for men without blinding their eyes or searing their souls.

Or let me state the matter this way: The health message that God gave to us was not intended as penance. Adventists do not believe in the doctrine of penance. Nor was health reform given to us to aid the cause of pharisaism, so that we might feel that we are holier than others because we abstain from certain foods or certain practices. To view the matter this way is to caricature the Heaven-revealed message on health that was given to us by the messenger of God. The health message is intended of Heaven to protect us against practices that would shorten life, reduce the joy of living, and decrease our effective service for God. Let us never permit the devil to lead us astray by any program that would cause us to view the health message as an arbitrary list of regulations that we carry out simply because we feel we must carry them out. Adventists ought to be the most joyous people in the world, the people most free of any mood of salvation by works.

Now don't misunderstand me, my dear sister. I am not implying that you have a wrong idea on the subject of health reform. I know nothing about your personal thinking. But inasmuch as there is sometimes involved in questions on health reform a mistaken concept of why we practice such reform, I thought it proper to add these words of general counsel in conclusion.

How Hot Were The Old Cookstoves?

A sister writes that she has been told that Mrs. White's indictment of meat no longer holds, because "in Sister White's day they could not cook meat enough to kill the germs, but now with means to cook it thoroughly the danger of disease is eliminated." Another sister writes that a lecturer who spoke in their church on nutrition said, in part: "Science has proved that meat, including pork, is the best source of protein known, and that cooking makes it safe."

I lay no claim to scientific knowledge. But eminent authorities in nutrition state unqualifiedly that non flesh foods can provide wholly adequate proteins for human consumption. I may remark in passing that so far as non-Adventist doctors and other scientists are concerned, they see no more scientific reason for excluding pork than other flesh food. They believe that cooking can kill any possible germs in one as much as in the other. If we are left wholly to the testimony of such men we may soon find ourselves embarrassed-scientists tell us, for example, that evolution is true! Incidentally, Mrs. White does not confine her appeal to abstain from meat on the ground that disease may thus be transmitted.

Now as to the efficiency of stoves in Mrs. White's day. I have never before heard the argument that the cook stoves of our childhood were rather lukewarm affairs. It is hard to believe that the argument is made seriously. I do not know just how hot an old cast-iron kitchen stove could become. But I do know from personal experience that with the draft open, such a stove could easily be made to glow cherry red on top and to provide heat for a large part of the house-sometimes the only heat the house had. By comparison, modern gas and electric ranges seem rather cool counterparts. If someone wishes to disparage vegetarianism, that is his privilege; but I wish he would not say cold, disparaging things about that warmest, cheeriest memory of my rugged childhood, the roaring kitchen stove!

Is Eating Pork A Sin?

Occasionally someone writes to raise the question: "Does the denomination teach that it is a sin to eat unclean meats?" Or this question: "We do not make the eating of swine's flesh a test of fellowship; can we therefore make the eating of pork a sin?" Or again: "Would we never, under any circumstance, be justified in eating pork, even if our life depended upon it?"

The denomination holds that as formally set forth in Leviticus 11, is not a ceremonial one, uniquely and exclusively belonging to the Jewish dispensation, and therefore that it is still in force in our day. There are at least three reasons why Adventists thus view this prohibition: First, there is nothing in the wording of this divine ban to suggest that the prohibition is a ceremonial one. Second the distinction between "clean beasts" and "beasts that are not clean" (Genesis 7:8) was expressly set

down by God long before there was a Jewish race. Third, God is described as having an abhorrence of unclean meats at the end of time, long after the Jewish ceremonial statutes had expired. Note the words of Isaiah 66:17: "They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, said the Lord!"

Consistent with this view the denomination, in its "Doctrinal Instruction for Baptismal Candidates," lists the following among the distinctive Adventist teachings that the candidate should clearly understand and accept:

"The Christian should recognize his body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore he should honor God by caring for his body, abstaining from such things as alcoholic beverages, tobacco in all its forms, and from all unclean foods." Church Manual (1951 ed.), p. 54. Almost exactly the same language is included in the Baptismal Vow that candidates are called upon to take before the whole church immediately preceding their baptism and admission to the church. See Church Manual, p. 57.

Now, it is true that though the church explicitly calls upon the baptismal candidate to abstain from all unclean meats, it does not disfellowship a member for falling back into the practice of eating such meats. The Church Manual, which authoritatively sets forth denominational teachings and practices, lists seven specific "grievous sins" for which a member may be disfellowshipped (see pages 224, 225), but eating unclean meats is not one of the seven.

To some, this fact may seem an evidence of inconsistency. We think, rather, that it is an evidence of the mercy and compassion of the church. It is one thing to call upon a candidate to order his life according to a certain code, it is something else to dismiss him because he failed after becoming a member.

But let no one hasten to conclude that because the church, mercifully conscious of the frailties of its members, does not dismiss them for failing to live up to all they vowed, therefore those points on which they failed are inconsequential. Let us cite an undebatable exhibit in illustration: The church calls upon the baptismal candidate to give obedience to the law of the tithe, and rightly so, for the Lord declares that those who hold back the tithe "rob" Him (See Malachi 3:1-11). But the church member who stops paying tithe is not therefore subject to expulsion from the church. However, he is properly the object of serious and earnest labor. And, of course, the same is true of the one who returns to eating "unclean" meats.

There are some matters on which we believe that the best interests of the individual member and of the church as a whole are served by leaving the judgment in the case to God alone. Both the eating of unclean meats and the failure to pay tithe we place in that category. But, we repeat, this fact does not justify anyone's concluding that the church considers these acts of minor importance. Undoubtedly, we all will agree that a failure to pay tithe, for example, is a sin against God. And why? Because such a failure is disobedience of an express command of God.

I have always hesitated to place the label "sin" on any act that the Bible does not explicitly thus label. In this sorry old world we have already too many sins without self-righteous people inventing any more. But it is always proper to call most sober attention to the grievousness of any course of action that flies in the face of a divine command. Doubtless one would not have to search far in our denominational literature to find the eating of unclean foods labeled a "sin." Nor would I know how, successfully, to challenge the label. The day we say that it is sinful to disobey some of God's commands, but not other of His commands, we take an untenable position.

One more question remains for consideration. "Would we never, under any circumstance, be justified in eating pork, even if our life depended upon it?" The fact that there might be a possible exception to a command should never be used as an argument to weaken the command. The fourth precept of the Ten Commandments categorically declares that on the Sabbath day we should "not do any work." But we know that there are lawful exceptions. The eighth command forbids stealing, yet a hungry person passing through a field might, with impunity, pluck sufficient food to relieve his hunger.

Whether, under some abnormal condition, an exception might properly be made in regard to the prohibition of unclean foods, I am not able to say. No power resides in me to grant indulgences or exemptions. I believe that those who find themselves in dire circumstances must discover the possible exception to this or any other particular command, in prayer to God.

Let us never forget that we walk a treacherous path when we seek to discover a working policy for our routine living in terms of some direful and wholly abnormal situation. We should seek first to settle the basic questions at issue by the light shining from the Holy Word, rather than by the murky and distorting rays of a singular situation. When we have established the principles involved and the normal course we should follow, then let us leave to God and the future the answering of questions as to what we should do in unusual and desperate circumstances.

Those who do not wish to give obedience to the Sabbath command like to raise the question as to how the Sabbath could be faithfully kept at the North Pole, for example. They want to know just how the Eskimos would keep it. I have always replied that we should not go to the Eskimos but to the prophets for our basic belief on the Sabbath. Having established that, we should seek to discover, by God's grace, the answer to difficult problems that may present themselves in obeying the fourth command under singular circumstances. The same reasoning holds in the present instance.

7. Living The Christian Life

How To Raise Spiritual Level Of Church

A sister writes that she is much troubled over the spiritual state of the church. She feels that many in the church have never been truly converted and that they lack the presence of God's Spirit. Since she joined the church three years ago she says that she has been hoping, praying, and waiting for something to happen that would bring new spiritual life to the church.

There is no question but that conditions in our churches at large are not altogether as God would have them. I do not know that they have ever been, or that they will ever be, this side of the kingdom. Our Lord spoke about the wheat and the tares growing together until the harvest, and this keeps us from too great discouragement when we see the mixture of good and evil in the church. Even a down pouring of the latter rain will not fully relieve the situation, for Mrs. White tells us that the latter rain may be falling all around us and we not realize it.

Right now I am reading the book of Acts again, that story of the first years of the church when God's mighty Spirit was present to work in such marvelous ways through holy apostles and others. Yet I do not find any record of perfection. Instead, there is the record of the murmuring that took place, almost at the outset, between the Greeks and the Hebrews, because the Greeks thought "their widows were neglected in the daily ministration" (Acts 6:1). In fact, it was this experience that caused the apostles to set apart the order of deacons!

Then there were Paul and Barnabas, who were unable to work together. Think of two mighty men of God having a falling out!

Then there was the Corinthian church where sad and sordid sins were being committed. And in that same church there was a Babel of tongues so that Paul had to remind them that "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Now these things, and much more that might be quoted, were written for our admonition. They serve a double purpose, first to warn us against false steps; and second, to protect us against a feeling that God has deserted us, and the Advent Movement has apostatized, simply because there are evident imperfections in it. If God could do a mighty work through a very human company of men and women in the first years of the Christian church, He can do a similar work in the last years of His church on earth, despite human frailties.

Now, my words are not to be interpreted as in any sense condoning, or even acquiescing in, the conditions which we would all like to see improved. I am simply stating certain facts of scriptural history in the hope of helping you to keep from discouragement in your religious experience. Whenever I am tempted to feel a little troubled in my heart as to the vitality of the spiritual life of our churches I need only to contact the Gentiles round about me to become aware of the wide gulf between the spirit that generally pervades our organization and that which pervades worldly organizations. Unquestionably God is with us. I believe He will continue to be with us until the end, and then will take out of this world all who have loved and served Him in sincerity.

Let us never forget a few simple facts. I think they will help us to keep our spiritual bearings. The first is that God raised up this movement at a certain time to do a certain work. He has not taken from us our commission, nor taken from us His Divine Spirit. The second is that God has revealed to us certain great truths, the Sabbath, the sanctuary, and the Second Advent, for example. These are truths despite the frailties of those who are commissioned to preach them. These teachings will remain truths to the end of time, even if there be some within the camp who fail to live up to the standards of the church. The third is that God has told us clearly through the Spirit of Prophecy that the remnant church, this Advent Movement, is not Babylon. It is a movement that God is leading and will continue to lead until the end.

I am sure higher spiritual levels ought most earnestly to be sought by every one of us. We ought never to be content with our present state. And right here I have a suggestion. If, as seems evident from your letter, you have a deep burden for the church, why not begin to make that a very special subject of prayer? Why not intercede with God for new spiritual life and vitality in your local church? Why not come to your pastor with your burden of heart. Perhaps you have. I think you will find that his mind and spirit will be very receptive to your expression of sincere longing for a higher level of spiritual life in the church, provided always that that desire is free of any harshly critical attitude toward the church. We must be ever on our guard against the devil's temptation to take a critical attitude toward the church. I do not say that you have this attitude. I am simply making a general statement of principle.

Now, my sister, if you continue fervently in a spirit of prayer and intercession for spiritual progress in the church, I think you will discover other members whose hearts are touched in the same way. Why not persuade them to join with you in prayer and very particularly to join with you in attending the midweek prayer meeting? What wonderful revivals can come to our churches if those whose hearts are deeply burdened pour out their feelings in our midweek prayer meetings and persuade others to come with them to those services!

Here, I think, is a very practical suggestion. If you made yourself a committee of one to bring others to the prayer meeting, working in sympathetic understanding with your pastor on the whole matter, I believe you would find a wonderful opportunity for grappling with spiritual problems which you describe as existing in the church. The only way we can solve spiritual problems is on our knees and in sympathetic labor for the erring. We shall never solve them by militant criticism or by merely decrying them.

You say you have been a member of the church about three years. I am glad that you are a part of the Advent Movement, though sorry that you have not found it more heavenly. But I am heartened to believe from what you write that your faith and confidence are strong that this movement is of God and has a great task to perform for Him in the world.

May your faith remain strong and may God make you an effective servant of His in strengthening the spiritual tone of your church.

Three Steps For Spiritual Health

One of our doctors writes: "I am in a dangerously back sliding state." He asks for spiritual help.

No one has ever slipped back a great distance spiritually in one day, but thank God, we can return the whole distance into fellowship with God in one day-yea, in one hour. Never forget that the spiritual life owes its whole significance to a very personal relationship between a man and his God. We can't hope to reason this all out, but we can prove it to be a fact for our own lives.

Here is the first step: In the privacy of your own home-indeed, in a privacy that excludes everyone, unless it be your wife-get down on your knees and talk to God with all the earnestness that you are capable of. Tell Him about your situation, about your realization of your spiritual state, and about your conviction that you are far from happy in such a state. Tell Him that you greatly desire to come into fellowship with Him again, and that you are determined to stay on your knees and talk to Him until help comes to you. If you pray with that utter sincerity that can come from the heart of a man who greatly wants a different state of affairs for his life, you will discover that the backsliding condition is being changed completely. You may not obtain a full realization of the change in one prayer or in one day, perhaps, though some have. Even prophets have had to pray seven times in order to obtain their full answer.

The second step is this: Set aside some time every day for private devotions, the reading of God's Word and prayer. Your soul can grow only if it has something to feed upon. Be sure to begin and end the day with prayer. Spiritual living is fellowship with God, and prayer is central to the fellowship.

Here is the third step: Get back to church, sit up on one of the front seats, and join in all the songs and the prayers. Then find some church activity in which you can engage. An inactive Christian is like an inactive limb of the body. Such a limb, as you well know, grows weak and finally becomes useless. Part of the secret of growing in grace is engaging with ardor in the life and work of the church.

A Christian Witness In The Army

One of our young men in the Army writes of his earnest desire to live so that he may be ready for the coming of Christ. But he is troubled over the fact that he seems to lack courage to witness for Christ. He also expresses a great desire to gain a "victory over appetite," lest he be found unready at the day of the Lord.

There is no simple formula for developing courage in either worldly or heavenly matters. Courage is a quality that grows in the soul of a man who provides the soil and the nutriment for it. The soil in which courage can grow is the conviction that there is something worth being courageous about, that there are certain great values worth living for and dying for. The nutriment on which courage grows large and strong is activity and exercise. We never know what we can do until we try. That principle applies over the whole range of life, and most certainly in this matter of courage. Our colporteur brethren generally testify that they have to gather up their courage to knock at the first door in the morning. But it doesn't take nearly as much courage to knock at the second door, and by the time they have reached the fourth or fifth door they have developed a real measure of confidence. I think this is a good illustration.

In your case the problem of displaying courage is in the matter of witnessing for Christ. You have not been accustomed to speaking on this subject. Your own voice sounds strange to you when you talk on the theme. You probably have not discovered all the words and phrases and lines of thoughts that naturally are called for in such a discussion. In other words, you are talking a rather strange language, and so you feel hesitant and fearful. There is no remedy for this except exercise and repetition of the endeavor. In time you will discover more exactly how to introduce the subject, how to develop it, how to meet the questions or objections of those with whom you speak. Familiarity breeds confidence. And familiarity with the subject of salvation and witnessing for Christ comes only from practice.

This is not to ignore for a moment the constant need of prayer and private devotion. These are taken for granted. But your trouble is not in this area. You have no hesitancy or difficulty in praying to God in private or of studying His Word. But you may pray and study for years and still be confronted with the same hesitancy in witnessing. You must make a beginning somewhere, and you must keep on resolutely practicing the art of witnessing if you would attain to perfection in it.

And now with regard to the problem of appetite. I think that the same principle applies here as with every other temptation. Certainly there is no easy way to victory over any prevailing weakness. We do have God's assurance that with every temptation there is provided a way of escape. We must claim this assurance. At the same time, if we are defeated by a temptation, we can always claim the promise that if we "confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1: 9).

Although we ought to give no countenance to any act or course of life that would lead us in the wrong direction, I think we ought always to be on our guard lest the devil tempt us to feel that we are sinners above all other men because of this or that failing in our lives. If he can tempt us to discouragement, he has succeeded in his worst designs on us. I would not minimize for a moment the fact that we must come behind in no good thing and that we should be obedient on the principles of healthful living as on all other matters that affect our bodies and souls. Yet I cannot permit myself to feel that any mistake or blunder that I make indicates that I am hopeless in the sight of God. It is the set of the will, the day-by-day determination to do the will of God, that really determines our standing in the sight of Heaven. If we stumble as we go along during the day, we rise and go on again with our eyes always set toward the kingdom. We rejoice to continue our journey even though we have stumbled.

Your letter clearly reveals that your eyes are set toward the kingdom and that you have but one plan and purpose, and that is to reach there. God honors that desire and that determination. It is not the stumbling that really counts in the last analysis. It is our reaction to the stumbling. If we say, in the words of Scripture, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall rise," we shall go on to victory and to the gates of the New Jerusalem.

Right here apply, also, the words of the apostle Paul: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12-14).

Success to you, my brother, as you journey along the road toward heaven. Remember, the Lord will not let you be tempted above that you are able, and that with every temptation He has prepared a way of escape.

A Soldier Asks Four Questions

One of our Adventist soldier boys stationed overseas writes a long letter in which he asks four questions.

Question No. 1

First, your question about buying cigarettes for a soldier friend. You say tobacco is rationed and that he wishes you to use some of your ration coupons to buy extra cigarette packs for him. You add that though you don't smoke, you don't like to let your cigarette ration go to waste. You wonder whether you will be doing wrong in using those coupons to buy cigarettes for someone else.

My answer must be that I think it is wrong to buy the cigarettes. It is a very good thing to let some things go to waste. I would pour out all the liquor in the world into the ocean if I had the privilege to do so. The waste would be enormous in terms of dollars, but I think it would be a very worth-while waste. I'd set a match to all the storehouses of tobacco if I were privileged to do so. The fire loss would be very great in dollars, but I think it would be a worth-while loss. Paul spoke of some things that he had formerly counted gain and now counted loss, and such things he was very ready to have go to waste.

In a matter like this we should ever remember that one of the most effective ways in which we can preach the truth we believe is by the witness of our lives. Certainly our witness against tobacco is hopelessly blurred if we buy cigarettes for a friend.

Question No. 2

You ask, "When I refuse a drink, or a woman that is offered to me, how can I still keep on good terms, as we call it, with my friends here at camp?" I'm not sure that you can always "keep on good terms" with others if you fail to go along with them in their program of life. The Bible and sacred history alike bear testimony to the fact that godly men have not always been able to keep on good terms with others when they refused to do what others did. So don't expect always to be able to do what even the greatest of saints have not been able to do. True, it is a real handicap not to be on good terms with those you must associate with constantly, but that is part of the price we must ever be ready to pay in order to live godly lives in Christ Jesus in this present evil world. And surely it is not too high a price.

However, the testimony of history is that a godly man has frequently been able to command the highest respect of others, even when he declined to go with them in all their practices. Though men may themselves engage in evil habits and practices, they generally know, deep down in their hearts, that they are not following the best course of life. Such men, even if they may not openly admit it, have a real measure of respect for the man who does live up to the highest standards of conduct. If you must choose between having a sense of close fellowship with your associates or having their profound respect, always choose the latter, and you'll be on a safe road.

Right here let me offer a bit of counsel. Some church members who have lived uprightly before evil associates have had only themselves to blame for their failure to win the enthusiastic respect of those associates. The reason is they were proud of their goodness, and that pride was evident always in their very manner and in the overtones of their speech.

What poor children of the dust we are. If the devil cannot tempt us to sin in the matter of gross things like drunkenness and immorality, he may tempt us to sin in the matter of pride. And never forget, a man may be as sinfully proud of his good habits as some people are of their bad ones. If you go about with a "holier than thou" attitude, you will have no one to blame but yourself if other soldiers around you refuse to be "on good terms" with you. A Pharisee is never a very lovable person, even though as touching the law he may be blameless. A smug, self-righteous pose will at best irritate your fellow soldiers, and at worst infuriate them.

A man who would live godly in Christ Jesus and bear the best witness before men must do at least two things each morning. First, he must make the resolve, by the grace of God, to live that day in righteousness and holiness before Heaven. Second, and of equal importance, he must realize anew each day that of himself he can do nothing, that whatever success he has in living the good life is because of the mercies of God, who has imparted to him strength for that day. This very real consciousness of our complete dependence upon God for holy living and that of ourselves we can do nothing, is the one true antidote for pride and pharisaical self-righteousness.

Let me offer you another and related suggestion. Sometimes those who are resolved to live godly lives in the presence of ungodly companions feel that they must, as we say, work very hard at their religion. They mistakenly think that they should constantly have a grave countenance and that even the most healthy, wholesome laughter is out of place. This view of religion is a false one. If you go about looking as if you had lost your last friend, you probably soon will.

You need not be glum in order to be good. You can be radiantly happy and still be holy. Indeed, the one who is in true fellowship with God is a radiantly happy person. There is a sparkle to the eye, an expression to the face, an overtone to the voice, that is appealing and infectious. The Christian who is surrounded with this kind of atmosphere provides the perfect answer to those children of earth who, deceived by the devil, would confuse debauchery with a good time.

A worldly acquaintance of mine once asked me what I did for a good time," seeing that I didn't smoke or go to drinking parties, and so forth. I explained that among other things I had a good time going to prayer meeting. He looked at me incredulously. Then I added that one of the things I liked about going to prayer meeting was that I never had a splitting headache or a bad taste in my mouth the morning after. That was a new idea to him. I smiled when I said it, and he smiled in return. Thus we were both happy and on good terms. I think he saw religion in a new setting. At least he realized that a person could enjoy life without becoming drunk.

Question No. 3

You ask, "Is it wrong for me as a Seventh-day Adventist to go to church on Sunday at any time?" There is no simple Yes or No answer to this question. I would say that under ordinary circumstances we should eschew attendance at the services of the Sunday keeping churches. There is always the mixture of truth and error in the doctrines set forth in those churches. And then there is the wrong witness we may bear to others if we are regularly found in attendance. However, the Bible, as well as the experience of godly men in all ages, reveals that there are certain exceptions to rules that may rightly be made at times.

You are in the Army. That is an abnormal form of life in more ways than one. You are not the master of your own time or pattern of life. The United States Army has thoughtfully endeavored to give attention to the spiritual needs of its soldiers. It has provided chaplains who have been of inestimable value and aid to our Adventist boys as well as to other boys in the Army, and we may be truly thankful for that aid. Those chaplains seek from time to time to offer some kind of spiritual service in religious meetings.

I believe that under these unusual circumstances there would be nothing necessarily wrong in going to a Protestant chapel to join in singing Christian hymns and listening to the Word of God read on Sunday.

I believe that you can avoid any possible false witness by taking appropriate opportunities from day to day to bear testimony before fellow soldiers as to what your hope and faith in God are. You may talk to them about the coming of the Lord and about God's holy Sabbath day, the memorial of His creative power, and about other doctrines, such as the resurrection, when those who have served God aright will come forth to immortality. Of course, the ideal is for our soldiers, as far as possible, to secure passes for the Sabbath day, and to attend the Adventist services in the nearby city. That is what our soldiers generally seek to do. However, there are times when an Army camp may not be anywhere near an Adventist church.

Question No. 4

You said you are engaged to a Catholic girl. You ask whether, if you marry her, your marriage would be happy. You confess that you are aware that you should marry within the faith.

There is only one clear answer to give as to whether you should marry outside the faith, and that answer is an emphatic No, an unqualified No. The prophet asked, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). The answer is No. My letter would be far too long if I attempted here to set forth all the reasons why you should not marry outside the faith. Let me sum up the reasons in this brief sentence: Happiness in marriage is in ratio to the degree of fellowship of spirit that can be developed through the years of marriage. A deep, strong difference of religious belief and ideals is an almost hopeless barrier to the true development of a sense of fellowship. Of course, above and apart from all this, there is the fact that you are married to one outside the faith, you will find yourself under constant temptation to give up the faith. What more reasons need I offer than these?

Heartless Criticism

A sister writes of having adopted a child and of how this child has been a source of heartbreak to her and her devout husband, who has long been an active church officer. To make the burden heavier, various church members have been free to offer critical comments to the effect that the child probably had not received a good home training or he would not have turned out so poorly. The mother writes that because of their adopted child's conduct and the harsh criticism, both she and her husband are broken in health. She wishes that our people could realize what damage heartless criticism can bring.

I wish so too, for this is not the only such letter I have received. There is no way of knowing in this particular instance how well you have cared for the child you adopted—perhaps only God and you truly know. Certainly other church members are scarcely able to pass accurate judgment. In this case how could they know the inherited weaknesses that probably were resident in the child that this couple lovingly adopted? The critics, almost certainly, had little or no experience in adopting children and discovering in dismay, perhaps, that the children seem most difficult to understand, because their natural tendencies may be alien to those of their new parents.

Most criticism springs from one or the other of two sources, or perhaps from a combination of both, ignorance and conceit. We often criticize because we do not know all the facts. If we really knew more, we would generally say less. Indeed, if many of us would say less, we would have opportunity to learn more. Is there a reader who has not found himself occasionally embarrassed, at least inwardly, when further facts about a matter made his earlier, and perhaps dogmatic remarks, seem a little silly? All of us need to remember the admonition of James: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1: 19).

Again, our criticism often reflects that deep-seated pride and conceit that so taint the children of men. Some are conceited about their looks, some about their accomplishments, and almost all of us about our opinions. When we criticize the conduct of someone else, we are generally saying in effect that if we were in that person's place, we would do much better than he did. But how do we know we would? Do we certainly know why he did what he did? What makes us so sure that our judgment in the circumstances would have been better, our conduct superior? Our sureness almost always proceeds from the innate conceit of the human heart that

leads a man to think that he is better than others. When we begin to see criticism in that light it will help us mightily to check the display of this vice. A poet exclaimed, in one of the saddest of all poems written,

“Alas! For the rarity Of Christian
charity Under the sun!”

As members of the body of Christ we will wish to refrain from criticism and harsh judgments, not simply to conceal our ignorance and our conceit, but also to give expression to true Christian ideals. We cannot help with criticism; we may sadly hurt. Compassion and a loving desire to help are the true motives that should actuate us in a situation that seems in need of correction. Love one for another is still the mark of true discipleship. And let us remember that this principle applies whether we are tempted to criticize an individual in the local church, a leader in the movement, or the collective decisions of the movement. In a day when the devil is seeking with intensity to tear the world apart we need to press together. Thus only can we reach the ideal Heaven has set for us.

Victory Over Smoking

A man whose family are in the church, and who is under conviction, realizes he must give up smoking. He seems troubled as to how to do it, and writes in deep sincerity: “I want to give up smoking; pray for me.”

You say that you “want to give up smoking.” That is naturally a man’s first expression of feeling as he realizes that smoking is not consistent with Christian living and with his making preparation for the coming of the Lord. Unfortunately, a great many people never get any nearer to the kingdom of God than wanting to. People have often said to me: I want to do good. I wish I could be a Christian. I wish I could live the right life.” But many times they go no further than that and fade back into the world. I repeat, it’s not enough that we should want to do what is right, we must will to do it. In fact, there is no hope of success unless there is a resolute action of the will.

You are under conviction that by smoking you violate God’s command that we keep clean our bodies, which are the temples of the Holy Ghost. Then why not make a solemn covenant with God that, come what may, you will have nothing more to do with tobacco? That makes a clean break with the filthy weed. The very moment that you have made that compact, setting your will to do the will of God, I think you should gather up all the tobacco you have in the house and throw it in the fire. God will not honor your compact if you keep temptation within arm’s reach.

The testimony of all those who have made this resolute, clean-cut decision concerning tobacco is that they have found in the making of the decision a strange new strength to face the temptation. What’s more, they have found new satisfaction in praying to God for victory over the temptation, because they are praying to One with whom they have made a compact, calling on Him for strength to maintain the holy agreement.

It’s a wonderful thing that a poor human being living in this little world can enter into a covenant with the Ruler of the universe and be assured that God is interested in enabling him to keep that covenant. We have repeated promises in the Bible that God is able to keep us from falling and that with every temptation He has prepared a way of escape. We read that we can be more than conquerors through Jesus Christ who loved us. Now these are very real promises. But, I repeat, they have meaning only for the man who has set his will on the side of God and given himself wholly to God. None others rightly can claim those promises.

Perhaps you may say that your will is weak and you don’t know how you can withstand temptation. Well, perhaps your will is weak. That is true of multitudes of poor human beings. But your will won’t be any stronger by not exercising it. You will never have victory by staying in the attitude of simply wanting to do right. The only hope for the human will is to put it on the side of God and the angels. We have God’s promise that He can and will keep us from falling. And even if we be overtaken at times by a temptation, if our heart is resolutely set on God, and we claim His promises to forgive us and to lift us up again, we can rise from where we have fallen and go on. The man who simply wishes is like the traveler who stands by the side of the road looking toward a beautiful mountaintop, longing to reach there, but never taking a step. The man who sets his will on the side of God is like a traveler who sets his face resolutely toward the mountaintop and firmly starts out to reach there. The result is that he takes one step after another up the road. He may stumble over an obstacle at times, but keeping his face toward the mountaintop, he rises to his feet again and goes on. God can’t bring any of us finally to the mountaintop of heaven unless our faces are set toward heaven and our feet are moving in that direction. Indeed, it is God who gives the strength for our feet to move, but He will not make any man walk toward heaven who is not determined that he is going to go to heaven. The decision to reach there is a personal one.

The Folly Of Debt

A brother writes to discuss what he believes is the folly of those who borrow money, not for emergencies, but simply for living, in order, as he states it, “to keep up with the Jones’.”

Borrowing, I have almost concluded, is a kind of malady that afflicts certain individuals, and I am not at all sure that anything I might write would contain enough medicine to cure the malady. Someone has well remarked that it is not hard to live within one’s income if one does not spend too much trying to hide the fact that his income is small.

Those afflicted with the malady of going into debt might be divided into three groups. The first group consists of those afflicted with a kind of exhibitionism. Realizing their inadequacies, their “smallness,” and their lack of “weight,” they seek to offset

these deficiencies by the size and weight of the automobile, for example, that they buy-on installments. And if the installments-on the car, and other things-come too high there is ever the grave temptation to borrow.

But exhibitionism is not the only explanation for this grievous disease that gnaws on the pocketbooks of some. There are those afflicted with a desire for excess of convenience and comfort. They must have all the latest laborsaving devices in their homes, even if they must labor overtime to pay the installments on such devices. This is no attempt to play on words. It is a hard, stark fact. Unfortunately some have a passion for comforts and conveniences that goes beyond the total income the family can produce. Debt is the result. Perhaps they did not intend to go into debt, but they were beguiled by salesmen's stories about the ease of paying on installments. And with debt there often comes further borrowing. It is a vicious cycle.

We grant that laborsaving devices have much to commend them. They are good servants, but poor masters. Furthermore, the comfort of new and improved furniture is very satisfying to the human anatomy-and spirit. If men cannot ride on an Arabian Nights carpet, they wish to be sure at least that they sit on foam rubber. But we would think that even the softest seat would seem hard if it was not paid for.

Then there is a third group, the most pathetic of all-people who seem unable to resist buying almost anything that appeals to them. Window shopping is, for them, economic poison. They are the opposite of the man who said he enjoyed window shopping because it helped him to realize how many things there were that he didn't need in order to be happy.

Now, I don't plan to start a campaign against comfortable furniture, or laborsaving devices, or anything else that Adventists may wish to purchase. But when these become a snare and a temptation to us, so that we live beyond our means, then something needs to be said. I think that there is a great deal of good religion in living within one's income. Frankly, I'm a little afraid of the man who, in the absence of accidents, illness, or other emergencies, routinely runs beyond his income and borrows from this one or that, in order to live up to the standard that he would like to be accustomed to. I cannot escape the feeling that there is something warped in his sense of values, something lacking in his character development.

There-are two sad sequels that often follow this borrowing program. One is that such a person is never able to be of strong financial help to a church. Let us never forget that here is a consecration of our means as well as of our hearts that is needed if the church is to carry on its work. Though salvation is free, church buildings are not, missionaries' tickets are not, to say nothing of endless other items in the great and complex church program. A man who lives beyond his means cuts himself off from doing real things for the church that greatly need to be done.

The other sad sequel is this: Such a person finds himself under an increasing temptation to try to escape some obligations that he has incurred, some debt that he has promised to pay. Unfortunately, the name of the Advent Movement, at times, has been blasphemed among the Gentiles because a person known to be an Adventist has failed to meet his bills. The person who falls into the habit of neglecting to pay his honest debts becomes properly a subject for church discipline. That is how serious this whole matter can become. Let us live within our means, far enough within so that we may give valiant support to all the calls that come for the work of God, and have a little besides for emergencies.

Don't Depend On Feelings

A sister writes: "There is something that troubles me. I'm not as close to God as I would like to be. I read my Bible a great deal and pray, and try to do all I can to live right. Because of long illness I'm not able to go to church. Perhaps I depend too much on feeling."

Let us thank God that He makes us conscious of our need of further growth in grace. I feel sorry for those who lack that consciousness. They are on dangerous ground. There is no state so dangerous as that of being satisfied with one's spiritual condition. Our God, who is infinitely resourceful, employs many ways to bring to our spiritually dim minds this realization of need for a higher level of Christian experience. The very fact that He thus troubles us is the strongest evidence that He is seeking to work out a plan for our lives and that He considers us infinitely worth saving. It is in this context that we ought ever to view the matter. Thus we can receive from the troubling of our spirit new hope, new assurance, that God is with us, and that heaven is our grand destination.

You say, "Perhaps I depend too much on feeling." There is no greater mistake that a Christian can make than to equate high spiritual attainment with high and joyous feeling. Let us never forget that there is a mysterious interlocking of body and spirit. They react upon each other. When afflictions are acute, when life's woes pour in upon us in floodtide, there comes in varying degree a temptation to doubt the genuineness of our religious experience. Some meet this temptation with essentially the words of Job: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Some, at the other end of the scale, actually become more or less despondent. The remainder experience varying degrees of spiritual blurring until the affliction be past.

I repeat, no greater mistake could be made than to measure the genuineness and worth of our religious beliefs and Christian experience by the subjective yardstick of our feelings. Some people are born with abounding health, both of body and mind, and with a personality that seems to be a joyous blend of the least-tainted genes transmitted from our Edenic parents. When such people take hold of Christ and His salvation they find that life reaches its maximum and that every day that follows is a day of light. Even if they are not always on the highest mountaintop, they are rarely, if ever, down in a dark valley.

Such people have probably never taken time to analyze their state. If they did they would realize that their perennially elevated spirits rest on two pillars, one physical and earthly, the other spiritual and heavenly. The danger for them is that if the first pillar is suddenly undermined by sickness or some other great adversity, they are likely to lose their sense of spiritual balance. They are tempted to doubt the reality of the second pillar.

On the other hand, those who have never been able to rest their weight upon a pillar of abounding physical vitality, and who seem to have been born to adversity, do not necessarily find in calamity a temptation to doubt the reality of the Christian faith that they have believed and practiced. That is one of the few compensations that the chronically afflicted can have.

Evidently, my dear sister, your affliction, though now long standing, came upon you in later years. You earlier had bright decades, joyous, bubbling hours when the skies were promisingly blue and the songs of the birds seemed always harmonious. Yours is the experience of many, for only a minority stand at one or the other extreme that I have just described. You are one of a multitude of God's elect who have watched one of the two supporting pillars of joyous life crumble, and you are tempted to think that with everything resting on one lone pillar you are in a precarious position. Indeed, when the winds of adversity blow wildly you may imagine that the pillar sways with the tempest, and may even collapse. If you are like many, you may find that the black clouds of affliction so completely hide the foundations of your faith that you are tempted to feel that no pillar exists.

At the very outset you have this significant fact to give you pause amid such troubling of spirit. Countless good men and women before you have experienced the same trials of their faith-and have come through their afflictions with a better faith than they had ever known in the past. And what was the secret of this triumph of faith over adversity? The answer is ready: They had grasped firmly this prime truth, that their surety of salvation rests upon a sublime fact, not upon sublime feelings.

Let us never forget, in days of joy or hours of grief, that our hope of deliverance from a world of sorrow, sickness, and death rests on the fact that God was manifest in the flesh, that He lived here a sinless life, that He died for our sins, that He rose triumphant from the grave, that He ascended to the right hand of the Father to make intercession for us, and that He will come the second time without sin unto salvation to take us to Himself. No link in this divine chain depends for its strength upon our feelings. When God set the vast plan of salvation in motion He foresaw the victorious end of that plan-a great company of the redeemed from among men.

The whole of Christ's earthly life, till His ascension, was open for all to see. A great cloud of witnesses could testify to the truth of His claim that He was the Son of God. The disciples went forth, not as the preachers of abstract moralizings and ethereal ethics, but as witnesses to the great fact that there had lived on earth One who was morality incarnate, the embodiment of ethics, who was indeed the Way, the Truth, and the Life. They were witnesses to the fact that Christ, by His words and deeds, had fulfilled the forecasts of Moses and the prophets that a divine Deliverer would come. They were witnesses to the fact that Christ possessed power to forgive sin, the cause of all woe. Finally, they were witnesses to the fact that Christ, who had staked His breath-taking claims on His power to rise from the dead, had, indeed, risen. They had seen Him after His resurrection, they were eyewitnesses. They had "heard" Him, they had "handled" Him (1 John 1:1).

No wonder they could sing at midnight in prison, after having suffered most painful beatings. Their confidence in a divine fact, or series of facts, was so great that they could rise above feelings. Why be depressed at the thought of further troubles, even at the prospect of martyrdom? They had a holy contempt of death. They were sure that Christ had broken the bands of death, and they remembered His words: "Because I live, you shall live also" (John 14:19).

Absolute certainty that they had "not followed cunningly devised fables" marked the faith and the preaching of the apostles (2 Peter 1:16). Paul in the dungeon, awaiting execution, gave typical expression to this certainty when he wrote: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

Let us thank God anew that our hope of life everlasting, our assurance of the reality and truth of our holy religion, rests not upon so unstable a thing as feelings, which may rise and fall with our blood pressure, the fluctuating tone of our digestive tract, or the variable functioning of our endocrine glands. Not until the day that these vile bodies of ours are changed like unto Christ's glorious body, will feeling consistently blend with divine fact to testify to the surety of our salvation. Until that day we have the fact that God was manifest in the flesh for our salvation, a fact more surely established than that Julius Caesar or Charlemagne lived. It is our privilege to say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed." And knowing that, we can face the darkest hour, the most tormenting affliction, with inner calm and peace. We can even make them serve their divinely appointed purpose the further preparation of our lives "against that day," the great day of our deliverance.

Believe Your Sins Are Forgiven

A mother writes to express her distress of mind because she feels that she has never really been born again. She feels that she is constantly committing "some small sin or another," and is making no progress spiritually. She is confused and bewildered about the whole matter of conversion and wonders whether she will be saved in the day of God.

Your letter fails to reveal any valid basis for your feeling that you are so dreadful a sinner that perhaps you may have committed the unpardonable sin. You say that you rise each morning to care for your husband and children and go about your homework. And then, on the Sabbath you teach a class. What is there about your program of life that makes you feel that you are in such a dreadful spiritual state? I grant that none of us ought to hold on to even a "small sin," to borrow your phrase, but even very saintly people commit small sins from time to time. Yet that does not ruin their faith or hope of salvation or lead them to feel that they have committed the unpardonable sin. When they fall before a temptation they call on God for forgiveness, and He forgives them.

Remember, God does truly forgive sins. Unless we believe this there is no point in our practicing our religion. There is no meaning, indeed, to religion. If we confess our sins, God has promised to forgive them. We take that as the beginning point and with courage and absolute sincerity come to the throne of grace and claim forgiveness. From that point we move on to the next, namely, to claim from God spiritual strength to overcome where formerly we fell. God has promised that, and it is for us truly and wholeheartedly to believe and act upon it. The third step is this: If any of our sins have caused injury and trouble to others, we are to

make confession to those we have wronged and seek to make restitution. Remember, however, that confession should not go any further than the persons who are directly affected by one's wrongdoing.

Then day by day we must remember that if we are to maintain our relationship to Heaven, we must read the Word of God and spend time in prayer. Thus we strengthen our spiritual nature by living in the atmosphere of heaven. Furthermore, throughout the whole day we should find occasion from time to time to lift our hearts in silent prayer to God for a few moments to thank Him for His mercies and to claim a continuation of His sustaining strength. If the devil comes in with a strong temptation, one of the finest ways to meet that temptation is immediately to lift our heart in prayer to God, and then follow that, perhaps, by singing a hymn. There is nothing like singing a stanza of a good hymn to clear the atmosphere and to bring in a feeling of inner calm and a sense of the presence of God.

It is unfortunate when a person holds the idea that there is something so mysterious and difficult about being born again that he can neither understand it nor apply it. The very contrary is the case. Being born again means simply surrendering our lives completely to God so that our old nature is crucified and a new nature is born. That simple dedication of life can come to us at any time we fall upon our knees in utter sincerity and talk with God about our great need and of our decision to give our lives entirely to Him. That is the essence of being born again. But once a person is born again he must feed on the Word if he is to grow and become strong. That is why Bible study and prayer are so necessary.

Now, my dear sister, in addition to what I have here written, I would suggest that you secure, if you do not already possess it, a copy of Mrs. E. G. White's little book *Steps to Christ*. It goes into more detail in a very simple, understandable, and encouraging way. A copy of the book can be secured for a very small cost. You should have one to read.

Confession When Wronged One Has Died

A sister writes to say that at the time she joined the church, years ago, she sought to make all things right, first by confession to God, and then by confession to people whom she had wronged. Recently she heard a sermon that brought to her memory an incident of many years before in which she had dealt wrongly with a certain person. She immediately wrote a letter, hoping thus to make the matter right. But the letter came back with the word that the woman had been dead many years. Now our sister says that she feels tormented by the question as to what her spiritual state is, inasmuch as it is not possible to make this matter right. She says she is even tempted to feel that she may have committed the unpardonable sin.

Let me try to set before you a few elementary facts on the matter of the Christian life that I trust will relieve your soul and so channel your thoughts as to save you from spiritual distress. When we accept Christ He forgives all our past sins—sins we have committed directly against Heaven, and sins that involve our fellow man as well. The proof of the genuineness of our acceptance of Christ is revealed, however, not simply by confessing our sins to God, but by confessing to our fellow man in those instances where we have injured him. You did this, so far as your memory recalled. Beyond that God did not expect anything of you. That you have recently recalled an incident of the long ago does not alter what I have just said.

The fact that this person you wronged is now dead, obviously makes impossible your confessing that wrong to her. And since it is impossible for you to confess this wrong to the person, God does not hold you accountable any further in the matter.

In other words, we are never accountable for anything that it is not within our power to do. Let's be sure on that point. It would straighten out the thinking of a lot of troubled people if only that point were kept in mind. You confessed all of your known sins to God. That is the heart and essence of the matter of confession. If not only this one individual, but all the persons you had wronged, had died by the time you were converted, you still would be accepted of Christ. Remember always, that the essence of our sin is our violation of the laws of Heaven, and it is to God that we turn for a forgiveness that can affect our eternal destiny. I would not minimize for a moment the obligation and the significance of confession to our fellow man. I simply say that where this is impossible, that fact does not in any way impair the forgiveness that you claimed from God when you confessed to Him. That being so, you have no occasion for distress of mind, much less for any fear that you might have committed the unpardonable sin.

Remember this also. I think it will help you in many instances. God is not seeking to find some opportunity to accuse and condemn us. Rather, He is seeking by every possible way to save our souls and to bring us to heaven at last. The devil would fain torment us by bringing to our memory all the mistakes and blunders of our past days. What we need always to remember in those instances where the devil comes with his temptations, is that our eternal destiny is not determined by our past, but by our present and our future relationship to our God.

Paul gave us a good rule when he said: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13, 14). Paul had much in his past that might easily have tormented his mind and brought him to despair, for he had been a party to the death of Christian martyrs. But he experienced the forgiving grace of God and turned his back on the past. Indeed, he forgot all about the past in anticipation of the crown of life that was to be given to him at the day of the appearing of his Lord. Certainly it was not possible for him to ask forgiveness of those whom he had put to death.

Let's keep our eyes on the future and on Christ. Having done all that we can to make things right, let us go on with quiet confidence and trust in the power of our God to keep us and finally to save us literally out of this evil world at the glorious appearing of Christ.

Stiff Necks And Broken Hearts

A church officer, whose duty it is to stand before a large church quite regularly, writes of the "terrible state of half warmth that seems to have settled like an inky pall about our members in general, and keeps them imprisoned in inactivity." He feels that he

must therefore present to them certain strong statements from Sister White's writings. However, he thinks that this generates a spirit of hostility. He believes that the "shaking time" is here. He looks forward to "thinning ranks in the remnant church." He believes that it is our duty to "rebuke and exhort with all authority."

You have told me something of your burden of heart, and of your endeavor to bring renewed conviction to the hearts of the church members where you are located. I'm glad your heart is deeply stirred. Certainly there's a great deal of spiritual improvement that is possible for many of our members. However, let us never forget this point in all our desire to bring reform and spiritual progress: We must deal tenderly and compassionately with those whose faith and fervor are not so great as ours. The Master thus dealt for three and a half years with those who were finally to be the great apostles. We should never use the Testimonies, or the Scriptures for that matter, in a way that will discourage people or drive them away. It's our business always to try to warm their hearts, and thus to win them for active service.

We have spent much money in all our conferences to bring men into the church. We should try every possible means under God to hold them in the church. I know that one can easily discover in his mind good reasons and great justification for speaking out forthrightly and, as they say, letting the chips fall where they may. But if we look back through the record of the life of our Lord, we will discover that almost all of His preaching was marked by compassion, by a wooing tone. He spent more time presenting the glories and the worth of the better life than describing the torments of hell. It is the goodness of God that leads poor, stiff-necked sinners to repentance. Stiff necks are cured by broken hearts, but we break hearts only by a presentation of the love, the mercy, and the goodness of God.

So, my dear brother, don't reduce in any way your great burden of soul for more spirituality in your church. But do make sure that in your endeavor to produce this, you follow a course that will be most effective in lifting men up rather than in driving them out.

Living With Non-Adventist Husband

A newly baptized sister asks: "What shall I say to my husband when he invites me to go to the theater or some similar place? How shall I explain my new view of life in a way that will help him to feel that I have made a good decision and that will lead him to respect me more than ever before?"

Patently there is no one answer that can be given. As with many other situations, circumstances largely shape the form of the reply.

In the first place, the answer would differ somewhat if the husband is sympathetic to the truth than if he is not. In fact, if the husband is sympathetic, the wife may simply speak on this wise: "You believe that I have made a good decision in joining the Adventist Church. I know you want me really to live my religion, don't you? And I know that you want me to train the children in the same way. In the Adventist Church we believe there is something better and more worth while than the theater. I appreciate your inviting me to an evening's entertainment, but I'd rather spend the evening with you and the family together at home. You are very good company, and I see too little of you in the day."

If the husband is unsympathetic or perhaps hostile, the case is confessedly much harder. But even then there is something that the wife can say that may help to explain her stand and ease the situation. Let me offer a suggestion or two as to what she might say:

"It's very thoughtful of you to invite me to go out with you tonight. I really do appreciate it greatly. But I know that even though you may not be interested in the church I have joined, you wouldn't want me to be a hypocrite. That's about the worst thing anyone could be, isn't it? Now, the Adventist Church doesn't believe in the theater, and so I do not. You wouldn't want me to believe one thing on Sabbath and another thing during the week. I know you wouldn't. And I really believe you feel that a little religion would be good for our children. They're the most precious things we have in the world. But how could I make a success of teaching them religious ideas if I acted the hypocrite, and really led a double life so far as religious principles are concerned? Since I've joined the Adventist Church I am more interested in you and the children than I ever was before. I really want to make the home the happiest, the most delightful, place in the world. You don't have to take me out to the theater in order to be thoughtful of me. I am happy if you stay at home with me this evening."

Now, I'm not so presumptuous as to say that such a statement by the wife would be certain to ease the situation or change the husband's attitude. In instances it probably will not, for sometimes the husband is wholly unreasonable besides being unfriendly to the church. In such cases the unfortunate situation is one that must be borne with as much grace and tact as the Lord gives us. There are crosses to bear in following Christ. And this may be one of them. It is still true that we are not worthy of Christ unless we are ready to choose Him before all else, even our companion in marriage.

Should We Serve God From Fear?

A doctor writes: "The realization has come to me that I am a Seventh-day Adventist mainly because I feel it a duty and because of fear of the present and fear of the future, rather than from love for Christ. This is entirely wrong. Seeing life from beginning to end, and the sickness, suffering, sadness, and sorrow in the span between, the love of Christ seems to lose its power. Skepticism creeps in. What cure do you recommend for such an eternally fatal disease?"

You do not say why fear of the present and fear of the future prompt you to be a Seventh-day Adventist. The religion of Jesus Christ is one that frees us from the bondage of fear. I know that there is a certain approach to religion that has been made by various preachers in terms of presenting religion as a kind of insurance policy against hell-fire. That is a poor approach, certainly a wholly inadequate one. Unquestionably a man who is right with his God will not suffer hell-fire at the last day, but the man who lives in conformity to the will of God simply to escape the horrors of hell-fire has a most unsatisfactory basis for his religion. All

such a man needs in order to forsake his religion is enough skepticism to lead him to feel that there is no such thing as a last judgment day, when hell-fire will be meted out.

The true and only valid reason for being a Christian in general and a Seventh-day Adventist in particular is that a man has a great desire for something higher and better, happier and holier, than this world can offer. In other words, a feeling of dissatisfaction with all that this world holds and offers and stands for should be the prime motive prompting a man toward religion. That is the negative aspect of the prompting. The positive one, of course, is the conviction that by turning to religion, that is, turning to God, a man prepares himself for citizenship in a better world that God is making ready for His children. Or, to state the matter in its most personal, positive form, the chief motive for being a Christian should be the desire to have a rich and growing fellowship with the God of the universe. The essence of all true religion is fellowship with God, and, by extension, fellowship with all holy beings.

I cannot quite understand why sickness, suffering, and sorrow should cause the love of Christ "to lose its power." Christ left on record the declaration that in this world we will have tribulation. The Bible is explicit in declaring that our world at the present time is largely under the control of Satan because the evil multitudes of this earth have given themselves over to Satan. Hence there is an unceasing controversy going on between the forces of good and evil until God shall declare, "It is done." Hence, when you see sorrow and suffering you are seeing simply what the Scriptures declare we must expect to see. Only as we keep in mind the fact that a controversy rages in the universe can we calmly maintain our faith and trust in God while viewing the sorrow and suffering of the world. Christ did not promise that we would escape the grave. He promised that we would come forth from the grave. Now, if we cannot escape the grave, we cannot escape all the sorrow and suffering that the grave signifies, or of which the grave is the climax.

The simple cure, my dear doctor, for the disease of skepticism is, first, by a re-examination of the evidence in support of the claims of Scripture in general and of our Lord in particular. Those claims can stand scrutiny. Then, second, a more earnest and frequent communion with God in prayer. There is a mysterious readjustment of our viewpoint that takes place when we pray in sincerity and earnestness to God. The fact of suffering and sorrow we frankly admit. But as Christians we seek to interpret this fact in the setting of God's great plan for the salvation of man.

Relative Importance Of Heredity And Environment

A sister raises the question: "Which is more important in determining the character of a child, heredity or environment and training?"

The question, a very old one, has provoked endless discussion and a variety of answers. Some devout parents, impressed that environment and training are the one real explanation of character, have often grieved their hearts away in self-condemnation because they felt that a failure on their part explained the waywardness of their child. On the other hand, cynics, with that dogmatic confidence in the correctness of their viewpoint that is peculiar to cynics, often explain everything in terms of heredity and find in that explanation a complete alibi for every failing and foible of their lives.

It is easy to see how cynics come to their conclusion: it is a satisfying one to reach. Since the day that Adam set the pattern of blaming his mistakes on someone else, his numerous progeny have ever tended to follow his example. Adam blamed his wife. His children blame him, or at least ancestors descended from him.

But it is not so easy to understand why believers in God and the Scriptures permit themselves to conclude that environment and training, or heredity, for that matter, are the real explanation of conduct. The Bible tells us of the first two sons to be born on this earth, Cain and Abel. They had the same heredity, the same environment, and the same training. One was the first martyr, the other the first murderer! For those who believe the Bible story, that record of the first family ought to put an end to all easy dogmatism about the primacy of heredity, or environment, or training.

We are too likely to discuss this whole matter in complete forgetfulness of another factor, the free will of man, which, unless we are automatons, finally determines our character and our destiny. Why did Lucifer become Satan? Not from bad heredity, or evil environment, or faulty training. Of that we are sure. He turned to evil for reasons inscrutable to mortals. Rightly do the Scriptures speak of the mystery of iniquity. The only part of the mystery that we can fathom is that every rational being is possessed of free will. He can turn to the right hand or to the left, as he desires. That is what makes him a free moral agent; and, in turn, morally accountable for his deeds.

It is true, of course, that heredity can place handicaps on a man. Someone has well observed that each of us is an omnibus in which all our ancestors ride. But we do not need to let those ancestors drive from the rear seat.

It is true that environment can place a heavy handicap on a man. "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" But out of Nazareth came Christ, the personification of all goodness.

No, neither heredity nor environment nor training finally decides the character or the fate of a man. To believe that they do is to free man of accountability, to damn multitudes in advance, and to reserve heaven for a hand-picked few who were so fortunate as to have good ancestors with good environment and training, who in turn were so fortunate as to have good ancestors with good environment and training, who in turn-but why go on? The whole idea sounds silly. It is.

Salvation is offered to "whosoever will." And the Lord reminded the blue-blooded Pharisees that the harlots and publicans would go into the kingdom ahead of them. Salvation is explainable, not in terms of biology but of theology, not in terms of environment but of the energizing power of the Spirit of God.

True, there is a sense in which biology comes squarely into the picture. Only those who are born again, only those who have become children of God, have hope of heaven. There is also a sense in which environment plays a part. Only those who sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, only those who dwell in the environment of heaven in their thoughts, will ever reach literally that blest abode. But scientists and sociologists know nothing of that kind of heredity and that kind of environment.

And how do we become sons of God? By an act of our free will. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:2). "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

The devil has ever tempted men to feel that they are the victims of circumstances, hereditary or environmental, and that there is no use in seeking to change their lot. And how willing men have been to accept that view of the matter. Long before our day the saying was abroad: "The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jeremiah 31:29). But God rebuked that view and declared, "Every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eats the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge" (verse 30). Then follows immediately the promise of the new covenant, which is the promise of re-creation, the promise that we may become children of God.

We may have victory over every inherited weakness, for we have the assurance that we can be strengthened with might by the Divine Spirit in the inner man. We may rise above the unholy environment in which we are compelled to live, for though our feet must be on earth, our minds may soar away to commune with our Father in heaven. The glory of the gospel is that it considers the basest of men potential candidates for heaven. The power of the gospel is that it can energize men to travel the upward road to heaven.

The view of the cynic has no warrant in Scripture. Nor does the Bible justify the view of the devout parent who feels that because his children have strayed from the way, therefore he must have failed in some respect. The facts are he may have done all within his power to save his children.

This is not to minimize the high value of right environment and proper training of children—far from it. I am here seeking only to keep the picture in balance and to help godly parents from condemning themselves when they need not do so.

Some parent will probably remind me now of the words of Holy Writ: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). Taken alone, that text would seem to make the child's future depend wholly on the actions of the parents. But no action of a parent, good or bad, can eliminate the child's free will, the power he has to go wrong despite good training, or to go right despite bad training. Often a Bible writer makes a general statement without taking time to mention the limiting points involved. Paul said, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient" (1 Corinthians 6:12). But none of us would say that Paul justified any and every possible act. We read his statement in the context of his whole writings. Even so with Solomon's statement.

The individual who possesses free will, and we all do, is free to decide his destiny no matter what his training, environment, or heredity. We may help him to decide rightly, but the actual deciding is his.

Help For Our Youth In The Cities

A mother in Israel writes: "For some time I've had a burden for our young people working in the towns and cities. Could you write a short article and ask our brothers and sisters to open their homes to our young folks who are working in their towns and cities, so they would have a place to go at nights and particularly Sabbaths and Sundays, where they could be 'mothered' and helped by advice, especially those who large church quite regularly, writes of the "terrible state of worked and lived in cities for years, gone to church and helped in Sabbath school, known all the brothers and sisters, but are very seldom invited to any of their homes. Our young folks need our help and love more now than ever before."

This sister has called attention to a real need and offered a practical suggestion as to how to meet it. Many lay members in our churches wonder what they can do to aid the cause of God. Here is one way! In your church may be one or two or a considerable number of young men and women who are living in what to them is a strange city. They may have gone there perhaps to work or to receive specialized training in some school. But anyway, they are not living among their old friends or with their families. Probably they have only a room to which to go after the church services. All around them is a roaring city, filled with every kind of noise and sight that is alien to the Sabbath and, in many instances, alien to all holiness. Only spiritually stalwart youth long maintain a vigorous Christian life under such conditions.

Why not find one or more such young people and invite them to your home after the church service? Place them at the table with your family. And in the afternoon gather around the piano and sing some good Advent hymns. Place some of our papers in their hands to take with them from your home. And don't be in haste to send them away. Why not have them tarry for a closing Sabbath song and prayer and evening meal? Not infrequently it would be practical to have them join you in a social evening. Thus on Saturday night, which the world devotes to hilarity, and often to debauchery, they would be surrounded by Adventist standards. If you follow this suggestion, you perhaps may not see any great results from your efforts. Only the recording angel will know how much you may have contributed to steadying the steps of some young person, who, but for your solicitous attention, might have wandered far from the church and all that the church stands for.

This suggestion has double force in relation to our young men who are called to serve in the armed forces. Military life in itself presents an abundance of temptations to youth. Let us make our homes garrisons of grace and heavenly hospitality for our youth whose days of military leave bring them to our city and church.

"I was a stranger, and you took me in." Thus our Lord describes in part the activity of those who finally merit the glorious invitation: "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

Jury Service And Murder Cases

A pastor writes: "I have searched to discover whether or not a Seventh-day Adventist should serve on a jury in which capital punishment is the possible outcome. It seems that there is very little material on this matter. One of the sisters in my church expects to be called on a jury in a trial of a person charged with murder."

So far as some of our people are concerned, there are two questions before us: (1) Whether an Adventist should serve on any kind of jury; (2) Whether, if ordinary jury service is proper, an Adventist should serve if the jury must deal with a person accused of murder.

I do not believe that the denomination has ever taken the position that jury service, as such, should be considered wrong for Seventh-day Adventists. However, this should be qualified by a statement that we have consistently taken the position that it is wrong to serve on the Sabbath.

Now as to serving if the case involves murder. It should be remarked first, that in most States a jury's task is simply to weigh the evidence and decide whether the accused is guilty or not. Then the question as to whether a person found guilty of murder should be executed, depends on the judge. It is routinely his task to pass judgment.

Even though a jury may find that, according to the evidence, the accused is guilty of murder, the judge may find that certain extenuating factors justify giving him a prison term instead of death.

In some instances the law with regard to jurors reads that their decision can mean life or death for the accused. For example, the law in certain States is that, under certain circumstances, if the jury does not recommend leniency, the judge is required to pronounce the sentence of death.

The question then before us is this: What should be the relation of an Adventist to so solemn a responsibility as that of deciding the life or death of a murderer? So far as I can find, the denomination has never gone on record either for or against capital punishment. I hope it never does. Here is a question where the individual conscience must be given opportunity to settle the matter. Good men have held opposite views on this tragic question, and doubtless there will never be agreement. So far as the principle is concerned, I have never believed that the infliction of capital punishment was a sin. The Bible declares: "Who sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Genesis 9:6). Accordingly, it would seem that we cannot declare that the State is doing wrong when it takes the life of a murderer. And of course the State executioner simply carries out the mandate of the citizenry, which in turn acts through its judges and juries. Hence I do not believe that it would be a sin for an Adventist to serve on a jury in a murder case.

How Shall We Salute One Another?

A fellow editor writes us concerning the fact that some of our people who write to him address him as "Dear Sir." He also remarks that some conclude their letters simply with "Yours truly." Then he adds: "I suppose there is nothing wrong with Adventists addressing each other 'Dear Sir' and ending the letters with 'Yours truly,' for those are respectable titles. But I am wondering what is happening to the old fashioned 'Brother' and 'Sister' appellations and 'Christian greetings' or at least 'Sincerely.'"

I agree with our brother editor that, after all, "Dear Sir" is a rather coldly formal, even if very proper, greeting. And the same may be said of "Yours truly," as the parting words of a letter. One of the unique possessions of a Christian is that he belongs to a wondrous family, part in heaven above, and part on earth beneath, a family composed of the children of God. It is through Christ that we who were far off have been brought nigh, that we who were strangers have now become a part of the commonwealth of Israel, for, "If you be Christ's then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). In a day when the world is divided into hostile and suspicious fragments through the working of the evil spirit from beneath, it is time for us to emphasize anew, and ever keep in our consciousness, that we belong to the family of God.

One is our master, even Christ, and all of us are brethren. Let us meditate more on this truth. Let us talk about it more. Let us salute each other more often as "Brother" and "Sister." It will help to keep clear in our minds one of the most primary truths of salvation and, what is more, will give us a keen consciousness of interdependence and of fellowship one with another. It is hard to look a member of the church in the eye, salute him as "Brother," and still hold in one's heart any ill feeling toward him. The hope of removing church tensions lies in this very area of realization that, through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, we live in a new relationship to all others who, with us, have availed themselves of the gift of our Lord.

I think, therefore, that the closing words of our letters ought surely to be something warmer and richer and more meaningful than the trite and perfunctory business phrase "Yours truly."

Nursing In Catholic Hospital

A brother states that his wife does private-duty nursing in a Catholic hospital-there is no Adventist hospital in the area. He wonders whether she is thereby giving her aid and support to the Catholic Church.

Perhaps I can best approach your problem by way of an illustration. Take the matter of our Adventist relationship to the tragedy of war. We don't believe in war as a way of settling any problem. Hence we don't feel that we should give our aid and strength to the machinery of war. But in the application of this general position we do not feel to withdraw ourselves altogether from everything and everyone connected with the war effort-a position taken by certain extreme pacifist groups. We willingly and gladly wear the uniform of our country and engage in a wide range of activities. We focus particularly on the care of the sick and the wounded, even though we realize that when they are restored to health again they will take up gun and bayonet in readiness for further conflict.

Some pacifists chide us for our degree of cooperation with the machinery of war. We believe that, all things considered, we are fully justified in our course. Very particularly do we feel justified as regards caring for the sick and wounded. Such individuals have a claim upon our mercy and our aid, no matter what they may have done in the past, or what they may plan to do in the future.

Your wife, as you state, is doing "private-duty nursing." Most obviously, therefore, her ministrations are to an individual. If that individual happens to be in a Catholic hospital, I don't think the fact of the present residence of the sick person should determine your wife's course of action. Nor do I believe that she needs to feel that she is thus giving support to the Catholic Church.

Incidentally, Bible prophecy reveals that in the very last days apostate Protestantism will be as militant an adversary as is Catholicism. And both will seek secular support to carry out their program of opposition. But if you eliminate Catholic, Protestant, and secular or State-owned institutions, there would be few hospitals left.

All of these reasons lead me to believe that your wife may rightly go forward with her special-duty nursing in the Catholic hospital.

I might add, of course, that if in the same area there were an Adventist institution that needed nurses, and your wife decided, for monetary or other reasons, to fill nursing calls from the Catholic hospital, we would be confronted with another kind of question. For certainly one of the first duties of a Seventh-day Adventist is to support the institutions the denomination operates. But, as your letter states, there is no Adventist medical institution nearby.

When Is Re-Baptism Needful?

A brother writes that he was baptized at the age of nine, and adds: "Although I meant to hold to this truth all my life-and still do-I was not at peace with God and man at baptism. Odds with my two older brothers were not cleared up. Later in life I have seen God's way more clearly, of course; and in following the light that comes to me I have been blessed. Since then, as before, I have failed many times. Nothing ever came to the attention of the church, as far as I know, that caused them to question my membership. My name was always in good standing. But I wonder whether there is some reason that I should again go through the ordinance of baptism.

You raise a question for which I fear there is no clear-cut Yes or No answer that can be given. The denomination has never taken a dogmatic position on the matter of rebaptism in instances such as the one you here discuss. We have largely left the matter to the individual, in counsel with his pastor. Speaking personally, I have rather hesitated to suggest rebaptism except in cases of outright apostasy, or of some out breaking sin that openly gives the lie to our ear witness to our Lord in baptism. Nothing in your letter suggests that such a sin is involved in your case.

There are times, of course, when people actually drop out of the church, work on the Sabbath, smoke or drink, or do other things that clearly reveal that they have denied the faith into which they had been baptized. But where one has stumbled along, as it were, with more or less of a Christian experience, the matter is quite different. I do not conclude from your letter that at any time you have turned completely away from the Lord.

Certainly, whatever else you do, don't let the memory of your past failings rise up to depress your spirit and make you despair. Be thankful that the dear Lord has not let you turn very far to the one side or the other and has lifted you up each time that you have stumbled and failed. God must do that for all of us. Let us rejoice in His mercy, His long-suffering, and His power to raise us up. And under the motive power of such rejoicing go on courageously toward the kingdom. You should turn to your Bible and read right here Paul's words in Philippians 3:13, 14.

Judging by the letter you have written, I would say that your need is not a new baptism but a new measure of courage and faith in God.

Work On War Weapons

A church member, trained in physics, has a government job in a research laboratory where war weapons are tested. He is troubled as to whether he is doing right.

The question you raise has presented itself from time to time in variant forms. I was once the pastor of a church in a city where most of the brethren of the church worked in the nearby navy yards helping to build battleships. I always told them that the question of whether it was right or wrong to rivet battleships was one that they must decide in their own conscience in their communion with God; that I was not authorized to decide the matter for them, and that I would not attempt to do so.

When we explore this matter of the degree of cooperation with the government that a Christian should give, we run into a very wide range of conscientious difference of view. Far on one side are Christian people who feel that they can cooperate to the extent of taking a gun and a bayonet and rushing at the enemy. There are others at the opposite extreme who feel that they cannot cooperate with the government even to the extent of planting potatoes on a government project in wartime because the potatoes will probably be used to feed the army and keep the war going. You may laugh at this latter position, but remember, my brother, there are some very devout, conscientious people who take exactly that position. Among Adventists the generally agreed upon position is perhaps about halfway between.

Now, in view of the fact that God has not given us specific light on just where the line should divide, what else can I say to you than that you must commune with your own spirit and with God and find the answer for yourself as to whether you ought to continue working in that research laboratory. Certainly for me to attempt dogmatically to answer you would be to make a pretense of knowledge that I do not possess, and of spiritual authority that I do not have.

How To Differ As Christians

A worker of some years' experience writes as to what he believes is one of the major problems in carrying on the work of God. He feels that at times there are divisions and cliques because of differing views as to how a conference or institution should be administered. He believes that if workers could live together more peaceably and work together more harmoniously the message would be spread much more rapidly.

Why confine your comments to workers? There are also difficulties in some local churches. However, the basic problem is hardly a new one. The twelve apostles had much vigorous discussion among themselves as to who should be the greatest in the kingdom. Two of them even drew their mother into the controversy by asking her to make a special plea for them.

Paul and Barnabas had a sharp difference of opinion on a matter of evangelistic procedure. Barnabas was "determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them... . And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other" (Acts 15:37-39).

On another occasion Paul, while at Antioch, took issue with Peter over a question of church procedure. As Paul states the matter: "I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed" (Galatians 2:11). John tells of an experience in a certain church: "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrophes, who loves to have the pre-eminence among them, receives us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and forbids them that would, and casts them out of the church" (3 John 1:9, 10).

More such depressing items could be recited, though some may wonder why I recite any of them. I answer: In order to see our present-day problem in proper perspective. The Scripture record was given us for a purpose. If it chronicled only the good things about God's men in past days, we might be overwhelmed with discouragement when troubles arise in our day. The Bible account is clear beyond controversy that even the greatest of Bible characters were less than perfect in their relations one with another.

All through the history of the church there has existed the problem of church members, and also worker groups, finding difficulty in laboring harmoniously. The way some of us speak at times, one hearing us might judge that we are far more ready to die for the great cause of God than to live for it. Sometimes it seems so much easier to love God, whom we have not seen, than our brother, whom we have seen. Certainly we are a strange mixture of earth and heaven, with the earthy part too often predominating.

I have sometimes wondered how the Lord is able to accomplish anything in this evil old world with His people so defective. But let us take heart; God has had long experience in dealing with people who are less than perfect. Never is the wisdom and infinite resourcefulness of God more fully revealed than in His ability to accomplish a great work in the world despite the limitations, the frailties, and the follies of us poor creatures through whom He has to work.

Let us be thankful there is a Jordan to cross ere we reach the Promised Land. In that fabulous stream the last traces of earthiness will be washed away from us. The tainted clay of this world will never grow the flowers of Eden.

Our goal in the Advent Movement should ever be increasing harmony and good fellowship. I do not mean by this that there does not now exist in our local churches and in our worker groups a large measure of harmony. I believe there does. But the unity of spirit, the oneness of heart, could be increased if we kept ever clearly in mind a few elementary truths.

First, let us remember that those whom we are tempted to criticize or their words, deeds, or policies are almost always sincerely striving to do the right thing, even though sometimes they may be mistaken. If we are ever ready to credit good intentions and sincere purpose to others, we have at once removed much of the potential friction and strain.

Closely related is this point: We should never forget that our critical judgment of another is at best a finite moment. We could be mistaken. If we will quietly recount the past, the number of times that we have been mistaken, it will tend mightily to reduce the vigor and dogmatic certainty of our judgment on others. Even the pope sharply limits his claim to speak infallibly and to dogmatize with certainty. We all believe he should renounce the claim completely. But we have occasionally heard critics in our ranks speak with as complete assurance that they were above error in their judgment as any papal prelate ever displayed. To say the least, such persons are following a bad precedent.

There is a third point we should never forget. The time to speak is before an action is taken, whether by the local church or by a conference organization. Some remain silent while the discussion is on, and then criticize the action after it has been voted. I have never been able to understand this course of conduct. I know that some defend such a course on the ground that their remarks would not be heeded, even if given. If so, then why say anything afterward? Why not a vow of silence forever?

I believe that each member, when given the opportunity to express his view on a matter up for consideration, ought to say in sincerity and charity what he believes on the matter, or else hold his peace afterward. Let him be direct but restrained, let him endeavor to convey to others the reasons why he feels as he does regarding the matter under consideration. If his reasons are valid and if they are clearly presented, they cannot fail to have some effect.

We all may well remember the parliamentary procedure that Benjamin Franklin followed. He never announced dogmatically his view. He simply remarked: "It seems to me at this present juncture that the following is the best way to proceed." Thus his hearers were not called upon to accept the unpalatable idea that an infallible viewpoint had just been stated in contrast with their pathetically finite ones. Furthermore, Franklin thus made it easy for himself to reverse his position if he discovered later that there was something faulty in what he had once thought correct. That is a most important point. Half of our disputes would be solved if we refrained, as did Franklin, from cock surely walking out on a limb. And the farther out we go, the more likely it is that the limb will break, dropping us unceremoniously and painfully to the hard facts below.

Finally, let us ever remember that a loyal, unified, rallying around a less-than-perfect plan or policy can accomplish vastly more for the cause of God than endless disputation among brethren in an endeavor to have a program voted that certain ones may believe is the ideal. We lose nothing by this; we may gain much. Certainly the cause gains much.

To sum up: Each time a matter is before a church assembly let us calmly and restrainedly present our views, and then go along wholeheartedly with whatever plan is finally voted. If time-reveals that our plan might better have been followed, our brethren will give us more attention when we speak on the next matter. But if time proves that our reasoning was pointless, or worse, then let us hope that those who heard us have forgotten, and let us speak the next time with even more restraint and modesty. Wisdom was not born with us, and it will not die with us!

Reading The Works Of Infidel Authors

A brother notes that in various of our denominational works there are found quotations from authors who are well known in history as infidels and sometimes dissolute men. He cites specifically Gibbon and Byron. He quotes certain statements by Mrs. White which condemn these men, and "many others." This brother wonders whether we are not going contrary to her counsel when we encourage the reading of any works by such men, and whether even by quoting them we stimulate our people to read their works.

If the denomination were to understand Mrs. White as you do, I'm afraid our Adventist literature would be much the poorer, and the students in our schools would be robbed of many literary productions of great value. I do not believe that Mrs. White's words call for so drastic a move as your letter implies, that is, the elimination of everything that any man who happened to have been an infidel or wastrel might have written.

Let us examine her words in the references you cite: "Byron had intellectual conception and depth of thought; but he was not a man according to God's standard. He was an agent of Satan. His passions were fierce and uncontrollable.... Gibbon the skeptic, and many others whom God endowed with giant minds, and whom the world called great men, rallied under the banner of Satan." Testimonies, Volume 4, Pages 519, 520.

In her book Fundamentals of Christian Education, to which you also refer, Mrs. White has a chapter entitled "Books in Our Schools" (pp. 167-173). The chapter opens thus: "In the work of educating the youth in our schools, it will be a difficult matter to retain the influence of God's Holy Spirit and at the same time hold fast to erroneous principles. The light shining upon those who have eyes to see, cannot be mingled with the darkness of heresy and error found in many of the textbooks recommended to the students in our colleges." Page 167. "The less the productions expressing infidel views are brought before the youth, the better." - Page 168. "Let believers in the truth for this time, turn away from authors that teach infidelity." - Page 172.

These statements are typical of what Mrs. White said on this matter of infidel and dissolute writers. Should we conclude from her words, as you seem to do, that she put a ban on reading, and thus on quoting, anything that Byron or Gibbon or "many others" may have written? If so we are faced with great embarrassment. Mrs. White spoke most highly of Uriah Smith's Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation. But Smith must have read Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire most carefully, for he quotes from it repeatedly.

But our embarrassment goes further. Your reasoning seems to call for us to read, or quote from, only those authors whose lives, and writings, are wholly consistent with our conception of moral values and with our belief in God. If so, then all of our academies and colleges have ever stood indicted, for the English departments in these schools have introduced their students to portions, at least, of the writings of Byron, for example, and the writings of "many others" who fall far short of holy standards. But there is no record that Mrs. White ever leveled any general criticism at these English departments because of this. Here is a most important point to remember. Does this therefore make her inconsistent with herself? No! It is not hard to find a harmony between her denunciation of various writers who would subtly lead the reader into infidelity and immorality, and her failure to rebuke our English departments for tutoring their pupils in certain productions of some of these writers.

I think the harmony is found in this fact: Men who have written infidel works have sometimes also written other works that are wholly free of the atheistic taint. Likewise some men who have by their lives, if not by some of their writings, taught loose moral standards, have also written certain works that are free of that taint. Fallen man is a sorry mixture of good and evil. So long as we are in this tainted world we must repeatedly pick and choose clinging to that which is good and spurning that which is evil. This certainly is true in literature. Let me illustrate.

One of the most soul-stirring of poems is "The Prisoner of Chillon." You doubtless have heard the opening lines more than once at one of our college commencements:

"My hair is gray, but not with years,
Nor grew it white
In a single night,
As men's have grown from sudden fears.
MY limbs are bowed, though not with toil
But rusted with a vile repose....
But this was for my father's faith,
I suffered chains and courted death."

The poem exalts the courage and fortitude of a prisoner who refused to give up his faith under persecution. The author? Byron, the wastrel; Byron, the rake!

The “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is often called the most musical poem in our language. One could hardly go through English in our schools without being required to read it, for it is deathless English. But its author was Coleridge, of whom a biographer declared: “As for his moral strength, the most charitable comment is silence.”

Again, there is Shelley, whose “Ode to the West Wind” is studied in our schools-and what a beautiful poem it is! Yet he deserted his wife in favor of another woman. A biographer remarks: “Shelley had no objection to free love openly avowed-indeed, he was heartily in favor of it.”

And what would we do without some of the immortal lines of Robert Burns, the Scotch poet? For illustration, his touching poem “To a Field Mouse,” prompted by seeing a field mouse run in terror as his nest was turned up by Burns’s plow! Or those lines from another poem, which, adapted to halting English, read in part:

“Oh would some power the gift to give us,
To see ourselves as others see us.”

But after we have read and thrilled to lines like these we generally add mournfully, as my devout Scotch-Irish father always did: “Poor Bobbie Burns.” His life was tragic. He never mastered himself. The stories of his affairs with women are part of the folklore of the English language.

Or look at the great Puritan poet Milton, whose *Paradise Lost* is the epic poem of the English language.

Most of us have studied it in school. Probably you have read at least part of it. And doubtless you have heard one of our ministers quote the opening lines of Milton’s sonnet that was inspired by his visit to Italy after a massacre of the Waldenses:

“Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughtered saints,
Whose bones lie scattered on the Alpine heights.”

But during at least part of his life Milton was guilty of conduct that would have made him the object of discipline, and probably expulsion, if he had lived in our day as a member of the Adventist Church.

If we turn from poets to other writers we are confronted with the same strange mixture of good and bad. John Locke, the English philosopher, wrote much on the rights of man. Thomas Jefferson, who drafted the United States Declaration of Independence, drew heavily on him. But Locke, though not an atheist, had journeyed halfway to that destination-he was a deist. Jefferson himself was a deist, whose religious views were discussed critically-and for good reason-by the clergy of his time.

Many things that Benjamin Franklin wrote are well worth reading. In fact, most of us have quoted one or more of his sententious sayings at times. But we are scandalized by some things he said and did.

And so I might go on-and on. My guess is that you may not even have heard the sorry side of the story regarding some of these great literary characters. Many people have not. I presume that is true of the majority of our youth educated in our schools. I learned about this side of the lives of most of these men long after I left college. And for that I am thankful. I would not even have referred here to the seamy side if it had not been necessary to make clear my point.

Now why is it that so many of us who were trained in Adventist schools know little or nothing about these literary characters except worth-while selections from their writings? The answer is simple: Our teachers presented for our study only these worth-while selections. Hence, we suffered no moral contamination, no taint of infidelity, as a result of the English classes we took. That is my memory of our schools.

Of course, it could easily have been otherwise. What if our teachers had followed the procedure often employed in secular schools? For example, what if they had encouraged us to read extensively in the writings of these literary men, announcing that the varied writings were available in the college library? And what if they had held up these men as really quite fine people, had made light of their moral defections, and presented as quite stimulating their often times skeptical views of life? But I am happy to say that my devout teachers never did this.

I accept fully, and would fervently commend to our people, Mrs. White’s counsel that we eschew all literary “productions expressing infidel views,” and all books that teach any departure from high morals. Surely we should not employ in our schools any “textbooks” filled with the “darkness of heresy and error.” If the good and the bad are hopelessly intertwined in an author’s work, then we have no option, we must eschew his work. Fortunately, it is generally possible to have the benefit of the good without having to read the bad. For that we may truly be thankful.

Let us ever read Mrs. White with care lest we make the path of the education of our youth, and the path of all of us heavenward, more difficult and austere than it need be.

On Entertaining Strangers

A brother asks how we who live in modern times shall apply the Biblical command to “entertain strangers.” He asks specifically about giving rides to hitchhikers and giving money to down-and-outers.

The question of Christian hospitality takes on a new form in our modern times. I am sure that every good injunction of Scripture must be understood in terms of the conditions and situations that exist in the day in which a particular person lives.

Otherwise we would be in hopeless difficulty in carrying out many admonitions of Scripture. In the light of all the warnings from the police, I think it would be a manifestation, not of Christian hospitality, but of folly, to make a practice of giving rides to hitchhikers.

Now as to giving money requested by down-and-outers. In general I would hesitate to do this, and for a very good reason. Down and-outers are where they are, not because of lack of money, in most instances, but because of a lack of something in their character or nature. Oftentimes they have tried to supply the lack with alcohol, the net result being something disastrous for them and for society. We rarely help such people, in any genuine sense of the word, simply by giving them a handout. We merely prolong them in their present state and perhaps ensure that they will purchase another bottle of liquor. I do not mean by this that we should refuse to give a human derelict a meal. Far from it. I am trying to deal with the basic problem of how to give real and lasting help to such persons.

There are, fortunately, in our modern society both State and private organizations set up for the express purpose of aiding those who are in a destitute state. There are the State organizations that all of us today are aiding through our heavy taxes, and the private ones we aid through our gifts to Community Chests and in other ways. Thus, in general, a more satisfactory work can be done for most down-and-outers by seeing that they are put in touch with some such organization. There they will receive new clothing, if need be, the possibility of a job, if they are willing or able to take one, and other help appropriate to the situation. Within limits, our own Dorcas Societies can do a certain amount of this good work, though I doubt if any one organization can compass the whole complex problem that presents itself in connection with certain types of cases.

In the matter of most kinds of charitable work, the homely saying applies that it is good to have a warm heart, provided you keep a cool head. Otherwise, ironically, your charitable aid may serve only to lead the indigent beneficiary to continue in his woebegone state.

8. Marriage And Morals

Expensive Weddings

A sister writes: "I am troubled over the elaborate weddings of many of our Seventh-day Adventists. It makes our stand of no wedding rings because they are expensive and because they are unnecessary adornment, look ridiculous in the face of the expensive and ornate nature of so many of our weddings. It also is a poor contrast to our ideals of simplicity and thrift.

"In my opinion, it would be a great relief to many of the parents and even the girls themselves to have this discussed so that, without losing face, they could return to the simple and uncluttered wedding services, which would be more in keeping with our profession."

This is not the only letter of this kind that has come to me, and doubtless it will not be the last, for it discusses a trend in our Adventist social life that has gained great momentum through the years. Let me try to approach this matter sympathetically. Most of us who are older have had the experience of helping to plan for the weddings of sons and daughters. It is an experience we face with mingled feelings-some of joy and some of sorrow. Perhaps it is a daughter who has been our dear delight, the apple of our eye. We have memories of her as a babe, then as a little girl whose childish chatter strangely warmed our hearts, then as a teen-age girl, mysteriously changing from childhood into beautiful young womanhood.

And now stands before us a bright-eyed youth asking for her hand in marriage. We think him doubtless a good boy, yet scarcely good enough for our daughter. But we conceal our feelings, and perhaps a few questionings, and give them both our blessing. We begin to think of wedding plans. Nothing is too good for this daughter perhaps an only daughter, an only child.

This is the background against which plans for the wedding service are generally laid. Thank God that He gave us a great love for our children, even a fiercely burning love that makes our own interests and comforts secondary to their happiness and their future.

But what we need to remember is that even the highest and the finest of our emotions need to be kept in check and in balance. It hardly makes sense to let our intense fire of affection consume our limited resources, even throw us into debt for a time. Affection can rightly and successfully be shown without going to this extreme. At the very outset, when we are contemplating plans and expenditures for the wedding, we ought squarely to take stock, not only of our financial resources, but of the standards that we as a people ought ever to maintain in connection with weddings as well as every other phase of our living.

Great material display is never in order when Adventists are planning any program, any activity. For great display means great expenditure. We are a people who believe that our resources should first and before all else be dedicated to God. Remember that simplicity, with dignity, can give rare beauty to a wedding.

There is still another point to remember: Our sons and daughters ought not to acquire at the very outset of their married life a false idea of material values. Too often, as we all know, the wedding is conducted on a scale much beyond that on which the young couple are going to live that is, if they plan to live within their income. The principles of thrift and simplicity need to be taught at every stage of life, and certainly at this important stage when a new home is being set up.

Parents could maintain and illustrate these principles of thrift, and yet reveal to the beloved child their evidence of affection, if part of the money often needlessly spent on display were placed to the credit of the young couple in a savings account in a bank. Money is not the whole of success in married life-far from it. But the lack of it can create grave problems in the new home. The couple that starts out, not only with a joyous wedding service, but with a little savings account, coupled with counsel to save the money for a rainy day, is doubly blessed. Marriage counselors testify that many strains and stresses in married life arise over the lack of a sense of monetary values. Probably in a number of instances such lack of a sense of values is given an unnecessary impetus by the display that marked the wedding.

I do not wish to be critical, nor to sit as a judge on how much ought to be spent on a wedding. Nevertheless I believe, and most earnestly, that there is need for a reform in our ranks on this matter of expenditures for weddings, and the needless display that often accompanies such expenditure.

Backsliders And Mixed Marriages

A brother whose wife has left the church and whose children are rapidly drifting away also, grieves over the harsh attitude manifested by some church members toward backsliders. He refers to the fact that his daughter has married a non-Adventist. Then he goes on to take issue with the church rule that forbids our ministers to officiate at mixed marriages. Though he does not approve of such marriages, he thinks that a minister's refusal to officiate only antagonizes the church member involved and makes it harder for him to render spiritual help at that home in the future.

It is true that some of our people do not take the right attitude concerning backsliders. I fear that sometimes we tend only to drive them further from the church. Such an attitude is not in keeping with the principles of the Advent Movement or the counsel that has been given to our people by the leadership of the movement.

However, I cannot agree with you that our ministers ought to be free to officiate at mixed marriages. I grant there is a certain force to the argument you present, but all things considered, the church is most certainly right in forbidding our ministers to officiate at such marriages. We bear a certain witness in connection with every activity in which we engage as ministers. The over-all effect of our officiating at mixed marriages would be that many would gain the impression that we saw nothing amiss in such a union. Confessedly the situation is a difficult one at best, and that is true in many, many situations where sin has so sadly entangled the activities of mankind. But for one of our ministers to officiate at such a marriage, invoking the blessing of God upon the union, could only add to the difficulty of the situation by making the minister appear to be endorsing such a union when in truth he does not. That would be compounding the spiritual felony of false witness by adding to it hypocrisy.

Attendance At Mixed Wedding

A brother asks whether he should attend his daughter's wedding, seeing she is marrying a non-Adventist.

I cannot see in the fact of your daughter's failure to marry in the faith any sufficient reason for your not being present at the wedding. You have borne your testimony to her as to the standards of the church in this matter, so that she knows clearly how you stand and why. To add to that by staying away from the wedding, the greatest event in her life, would not strengthen your testimony. On the contrary, it would only tend to embitter her and make more difficult the task of maintaining fellowship with her and with her husband, whom you should rightly seek to bring into the truth.

Should We Have Children?

A sister inquires whether, in these troublous last days of earth's history, we should have children.

This is a question that has been raised by devout Adventists from time to time throughout all our history. I'm glad that our believers of a day past did not decide against having families. If they had, where would we be today, or rather, where would we not be?

There are two texts of Scripture that come to my mind in this connection. One is the original command of God to be fruitful and to multiply and to replenish the earth. I do not find anywhere in the Bible an intimation that this command has been revoked. The second text is: "Occupy till I come." We are to go along in honesty and uprightness, carrying on all the normal activities of life till the Lord shall declare that time has ended. If at that last moment of time we find we have babes in our arms, let us thank God for the babes and believe that He will save both them and us.

Adultery And Divorce

One writing from a far land describes the following case and asks for counsel: A couple had been married a few years when one spouse broke the seventh commandment. There was immediate repentance and a complete turning from the sin. Not long ago, though many years after the one act of infidelity, the innocent spouse was informed of what had occurred. Since then the couple has lived together. But the innocent spouse expresses inability to feel the same toward the erstwhile guilty spouse, and asks whether divorce is proper.

Christian ministers have quite uniformly viewed the words of our Lord, on the matter of divorce, as permitting, but not commanding, the innocent party to secure a divorce. The whole tenor of Scripture is on the side of forgiveness. We are commanded to forgive others, even as our Lord has forgiven us. That is of the very heart of the gospel. Indeed, the forgiveness that God extends to us is our only hope of salvation. Furthermore, the forgiveness of God takes fully into account all the frailties and weaknesses of men. The psalmist well expresses it when he declares: "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust." (Psalm 103: 13, 14). The pity, the mercy, the forgiveness of God stems both from His innate nature of love and also from His understanding of how weak and frail we are. If we are not able to display, as children of God, this Godlike quality toward others, then, says the Holy Word, God will not forgive us. And there the matter stands.

I think the situation you describe is far from being a hopeless case, as is true in some instances. The guilty party was overtaken by sin, has contritely turned away from it, and has never repeated the offense. That in itself shows strength of character and resoluteness of purpose. A sin confessed, put away, and kept away from the life, by the grace of God, means development of character and growth in grace.

You say that the innocent party is now unable to feel the same toward the other party, even though willing to forgive. I'm glad God doesn't forgive us that way. How dismal would be our state if He did. What mockery there would be in the forgiveness! The sins of all of us crucified God's only begotten Son. If God forgave our sins but kept thinking of us in terms of the dreadful anguish we had inflicted on His Son, and held toward us some strange feelings, how could we ever be happy in heaven? No, the Lord says that He forgives our sins, that He puts them behind His back, or, in another figure of speech, that He casts them into the depths of the sea. He declares that the former things shall not be remembered, nor brought into mind.

We have never enjoyed any genuine growth in grace unless we have gotten that heavenly viewpoint of forgiving the past, "forgetting those things which are behind," and setting our face to the future. The innocent party needs very definitely to remember that in the sight of God all sins are grievous. The sin of adultery is not singled out by Heaven for special abhorrence above all other sins. Indeed, our Lord said to the abominably hypocritical scribes and Pharisees that the "publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you." Evidently, then, there are worse sins even than violations of the seventh commandment, grievous as that sin is. And yet the Lord forgives all and is ready to save all who come to Him in sincerity.

You ask, "Do you think that God would approve of breaking up this home since according to Scripture there seems to be grounds for divorce?" I've already touched on the point of the permissiveness of Christ's words concerning separation, and made clear that the words do not have the quality of a command. Furthermore, if I understand your letter rightly, the innocent party has known of this past sin, has forgiven it, and since then has lived with the erstwhile unfaithful partner for some undetermined period of time. If I am right in this deduction, then I would say that neither in the sight of God nor of the law is the innocent party justified in securing a divorce.

Let me stress again with all the earnestness that I can command, that I believe divorce is a last resort, a resort that should be employed by the innocent party only when every other possible means has been exhausted. Your letter reveals that other means have not been exhausted, that apparently the guilty party has taken the honorable Christian steps to remedy the situation as far as possible. The course of action for the innocent party is clear, I believe. That course should be not only to forgive, but in Christian love and by the grace of God to forget the past and go on, arm in arm, in fellowship with the repentant and forgiven spouse. That course holds for both the greatest possibilities of genuine joy and peace of mind.

Cruelty And Divorce

A sister describes the case of a wife who has been repeatedly brutally treated by her husband. She implies that the church offers to such wives no protection, because it gives them permission to secure divorce only in case of adultery.

Sometimes a wife's life may actually be endangered because of a brutal husband. To such I offer the answer provided by the Church Manual, in the section entitled "Divorce and Remarriage":

It is recognized, however, that sometimes there may be conditions that make it unsafe or impossible for husband and wife to continue to live together. In many such cases the custody of children, the adjustment of property rights, or even personal protection may make necessary a change in marriage status. In such cases it may be permissible to secure what is known in some countries as a legal separation. However, in some civil jurisdictions such a separation can be secured only by divorce, which under these circumstances would not be condemned. But such a separation or divorce, in which 'unfaithfulness to the marriage vow' is not involved, does not give either one the scriptural right to remarry unless in the meantime the other party has remarried, committed adultery, or been removed by death. Should a member who has been thus divorced remarry, he (or she), if a member, shall be disfellowshipped. And the one whom he (or she) marries shall also be disfellowshipped from the church."

How To Resist Unholy Desires

A brother inquires: "Suppose I have a momentary desire for a woman who is very fair to look upon, even as David had. But unlike David I resist that desire, and the sinful act is not committed. Have I nevertheless sinned because of the desire?"

The heart of the whole matter is this: Is the -momentary desire," of which you speak, an expression of your conscious will or simply a temptation from the devil? I think we can find our way through to a correct answer by remembering that man is constituted of body, soul, and spirit. We may let the body so dominate through long years that the will is finally submerged. There are many sorry exhibits of that. We can also so live that the higher faculties of man dominate and keep our bodies under, as Paul declared. (See 1 Corinthians 9:27)

Paul stated that a constant war goes on between body and spirit. At conversion God gives us a new heart. He does not give us a new body. We still have these old bodies with all their inherited desires and tendencies and weaknesses. However, God has promised that He will so strengthen us with might by His Spirit in the inner man that we may have victory over every temptation the devil brings to us, over every evil desire that he seeks to stimulate within us. (See Ephesians 3:16.)

The devil knows all about our inherited weaknesses, including those in the realm of moral relationships between the sexes. The functions of sex, which God intended should be a blessing to man, a bond to bind hearts and families together, the devil has twisted to an evil end and made an occasion for corruption in the world. The Lord has allowed Satan to tempt man, and I think some of those temptations are in terms of an evil stimulation to the body. Hence, I believe that what you describe as a "momentary desire," is, to begin with, simply a temptation from the devil in the form of an unholy stimulation of your physical being.

But almost instantly the mind is made conscious of that stimulation, and your will is called upon to make a decision in the matter. It is this first moment of awareness, when the will is called upon to make a decision, that a man either sins or resists sin. Thank God you are not a sinner simply because the devil, in his never-ending attempt to ruin your soul, seeks to stimulate you to evil. Through the enabling power of Jesus Christ you can resist every temptation, every evil desire. It is your privilege, at the very first

moment that your will has opportunity to act, to call upon God for grace and victory. In response He will strengthen your will, enabling you to become more than conqueror through Jesus Christ who loves you. (See Romans 8:37.)

Here is a helpful statement from the pen of Sister White: “No man can be forced to transgress. His own consent must be first gained; the soul must purpose the sinful act, before passion can dominate over reason, or iniquity triumph over conscience.” - Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 177.

Some of God’s very great saints have left on record that Satan sorely tempted them to indulge in impure thoughts, that indeed the devil stimulated their physical being to desires that could have led them into sinful acts of the gravest character. But these same holy men have also left on record that through Jesus Christ they resisted temptation, and came off victorious. Their testimony can be of real strength to us today who must meet the devil’s temptations.

Every encounter the Christian has with the devil precipitates a fight. The fight begins the first moment he is conscious that the devil is confronting him and seeking to make him stumble on the path. If at that first moment of awareness he calls upon the strength of God, he may be sure of victory, and that which goes with victory, the commendation of Heaven. The Christian must be constantly on guard, ever ready to fight the good fight of faith and ever conscious that his strength is in God.

Let us not forget, either, that the devil in a very subtle way seeks often to discourage a Christian by making him confuse the fact of temptation with the fact of sin. Temptation is an act of the devil; sin is an act of our free will. Let us be ever in the mood of readiness to fight the devil whenever his evil shadow falls athwart our path. Thus we will be safe. In this connection let me suggest a good text of Scripture. Job declared: I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?” (Job 31:1). It is the set of the soul, the resolute decision of the will as a working program of life that prepares a man against moments of temptation.

In the light of this let me answer your further and related question: “A man responds very quickly at times to the stimulus of the appealing beauty of a woman. Is it a sin for a man to notice a woman’s charms?”

Obviously, we cannot walk about with our eyes shut. The question is, What shall we see with these eyes of ours? Two men can look at the same scene and have different reactions in their innermost being. Earth’s sad history reveals that most men have looked upon women with less than holy eyes and often only with a desire that is ungodly.

I like to think that my great Mother Eve was the fairest of all God’s creation, and that her beauty was not primarily of form or face, but rather an ineffable charm that radiated from her truly spiritual nature. She was a daughter of God. Only as we think of our Mother Eve in that way can we see her in her true beauty. Now, my brother, it is our business, as sons of God, to think of Eve’s daughters today as being daughters of the Most High God. And even if they fail to measure up to that, we must never forget that God’s plan of redemption envisages bringing them into the family of heaven, once again to be true daughters of the King.

It is for us constantly, by God’s grace, to discipline our hearts and our minds to realize that we, as sons of the King, have a holy and chivalrous duty to protect the daughters of the King. Paul counsels us to view “the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity” (1 Timothy 5:2). Why not include in your prayer as you rise each morning this appeal to your great Father in heaven: “Dear Lord, enable me for this day to look at women only through the eyes of Jesus Christ.” That prayer may be repeated as one walks the street. As a man prays that prayer in sincerity he discovers that something mysterious and beautiful takes place in his life. He sees in the beauty and charm of women whom he meets, some remnants at least of the beauty and the charm of our Mother Eve, who walked in sinless perfection in Eden. And there increasingly grows within him the resolute decision to guard and protect the little of heaven’s beauty and charm that is left to the human race, rather than to deface and defile it. Let us never forget that all of us who name the name of God are workers together with Him toward conserving and protecting all the beauty and the love that has come down to us from Eden. Workers together with God against that great day when all of Eden’s loveliness will be fully restored to God’s children. And in that glad day we shall walk in the light of His presence, forever free of all temptation.

9. Proper Sabbath Keeping

Bids Opened On Sabbath

A brother inquires whether it would be right to bid on a construction job, seeing that the bids will be opened on the Sabbath. He explains that he can send in his bid by mail and does not have to be present when the bids are opened.

I believe that an Adventist is justified in sending in a sealed bid in harmony with the terms that you describe. We have constant dealings with the world. We send in orders by mail to different companies. We may reasonably presume that some of those orders are filled on the Sabbath day. Certainly on the law of averages, some of them are. Yet none of us feels it necessary to make a stipulation that the order shall not thus be filled. I think your sending in a bid is essentially in the same category. Our responsibility in relation to the fourth commandment is that we shall not work, and that we shall not require any employee of ours to work, on the Sabbath. Beyond that I do not believe that the fourth commandment obligates us. By sending in your bid ahead of time you are not engaging in any work on the Sabbath day, nor requiring anyone else to engage in it. The fact that those who receive the bids see fit, when those bids are in their possession, to examine them on the Sabbath, is a matter for them to answer for. We have nothing to do with that decision.

I venture a suggestion that might help you, in submitting your bid, to make transparently clear your Sabbath position. You might state in your covering letter that you are a Seventh-day Adventist and thus cannot involve yourself in any secular business on the seventh day of the week; hence that you will not be present if any business is transacted regarding the bid on that day; furthermore, that your bid is placed with the explicit understanding that if it is accepted, you will carry on all of your business dealings regarding it on some other day than the seventh day of the week. Following this suggestion you would not only be clearly abstaining from work

yourself, or from commanding anyone else to work, but would also be bearing a clear witness as to your relationship to the Sabbath day.

Investments And Worldly Alliances

A brother writes that he has inherited some stock of a large American corporation, and asks: “Will my retaining this stock cause me to violate the counsel against ‘business ties with Sabbath breakers,’ and particularly against going into partnership with those who are not Adventists?”

I do not believe there is a true parallel between holding stock in a company and being a partner with someone in a business. The reserve funds of various of our institutions are invested, in part, in the securities of great corporations in the country. Of course one might sell such securities and invest only in government bonds. But the person who thus invests faces another question, asked by some: Does not such investment make one morally responsible for all that the government does? To that question, however, most of us unhesitatingly answer No. By a parity of reasoning, I believe we may return a No to your question.

Now, it is true that the investment of money in the securities of a company enables it to operate. Hence no Adventist could rightly buy the securities of a distillery, for example.

But making possible the operating of a company and determining the working policy of that company are two different things. It is right at this point, I believe, that any possible parallel between stock ownership and partnership breaks down. When one is a partner in a business concern, he is actively and directly involved in its affairs. He determines policies, he hires and fires. He is both morally and legally responsible for what is done. If one is a stockholder in a great corporation, he certainly is not in this position. True, the corporation may operate on a six-day week rather than a five-day one, and thus be open on the Sabbath day, but the stockholder has had nothing to do with determining that matter.

On a question like this there will always be honest difference of opinion, and the individual must use his best judgment in the light of his private communion with God. Let us always remember that there is a practical line of distinction that must be drawn somewhere in regard to our endless contacts with the world. Otherwise we drive ourselves into impossible situations. There are a few among us who won’t mail a letter at such a time in the week that the letter likely will be in transit on the Sabbath day. There are those who will not ride a streetcar to church, even if it means being unable to get to church. They don’t want to make the motorman work.

There have been conscientious objectors who would not engage in any kind of work for the government in wartime, because, they reasoned, that was helping the war effort. The denomination has never been able to follow that tight kind of reasoning, nor do I think it should.

There’s a practical line certainly somewhere that divides between what obviously ought not to be done and what may reasonably be done without violating the spirit of a divine command. It is our business constantly to seek to discover that dividing line and to stay safely on the right side of it without going to extremes that would lay on us a yoke of bondage that neither we nor our fathers could bear.

Sunday Keeping And Salvation

A correspondent writes as follows: “One of our evangelists was asked this question in a public service: ‘Millions of people have been taught to keep Sunday as the Sabbath. Are they all lost?’ He answered, ‘No, they will not all be lost. Those who have honestly kept Sunday as the Sabbath will be saved.’

I objected to this answer for the following reasons: 1. I do not believe that we have the right to say what God will do about that in the judgment. 2. We teach that we will be judged by the law, that the law has never been changed, and that the transgression of the law is sin. The breaking of the fourth commandment, whether ignorantly or not, is, therefore, a sin, and forgiveness of which is in the realm of God. We, therefore, do not have any right to say definitely that any person or group of people will be justified of this sin in the day of judgment. Don’t you think the evangelist could better have answered, “I do not know; that is up to God.”

To agree with you would be to raise a grave question as to the possibility of salvation of the overwhelming majority of those who have named the name of Christian through the long centuries. I must disagree most fully with what seems to me to be the clear implication of your argument; namely, that ignorance of the law is no defense in God’s government any more than in man’s, and therefore we can never be sure that the ignorant transgressor will reach heaven.

There is no true analogy between an earthly government and the heavenly in this matter. Ignorance does not excuse a man legally in the courts of earth. But ignorance does excuse a man morally in the courts of heaven. When Paul spoke to the Athenians he said, regarding their worship of God, “Whom therefore you ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men every where to repent.” (Acts 17:23, 30.) The Revised Version reads, “The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked.”

Christ declared, concerning the unbelieving in His day, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin” (John 15:22).

Add the further testimony of James: “Therefore to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

We do not know how the Scriptures could be plainer that moral accountability exists only where an individual has knowledge.

Place alongside these Bible passages the statements by Mrs. White on this subject, particularly as it relates to knowledge of the true Sabbath. The status before God of those who had been keeping Sunday was a question that early presented itself in the Advent Movement. In 1847 Mrs. White had a vision, which led her to say:

"I saw that God had children who do not see and keep the Sabbath. They have not rejected the light upon it. And at the commencement of the time of trouble, we were filled with the Holy Ghost as we went forth and proclaimed the Sabbath more fully." Early Writings, p. 33.

Further on in this same book Mrs. White, in speaking of Christ's work of atonement in the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, declares:

"This atonement is made for the righteous dead as well as for the righteous living. It includes all who died trusting in Christ, but who, not having received the light upon God's commandments, had sinned ignorantly in transgressing its precepts."-Ibid., p. 254.

For the first several years after our forebears began to keep the Sabbath, they celebrated it from six o'clock Friday evening to six o'clock Saturday evening. When they grasped the Biblical meaning of "even" they realized that they had been profaning certain hours that really belonged to the Sabbath. Did they therefore stand condemned before God? Mrs. White quotes the angel as declaring to her, If light come, and that light is set aside or rejected, then comes condemnation and the frown of God. But before the light comes, there is no sin, for there is no light for them to reject." - Testimonies, Volume 1, Page 116.

In view of these passages from Holy Writ and the Spirit of Prophecy, we believe that an Adventist evangelist is fully justified in saying that a person, simply because he has kept Sunday instead of the Sabbath, has not therefore jeopardized his hope of salvation.

Obviously only God knows how "honestly" a person has kept Sunday. That is true both as regards those who lived and died before 1844 and those now living. A Sunday keeper may respond to a presentation of the Sabbath truth with the declaration: "But I don't see it, and I shall keep on worshipping on Sunday." Is he speaking "honestly"? Or is he offering an excuse and seeking to deceive his own heart? That is the kind of question that God alone can answer.

The testimony of many now-devout Sabbath keepers is that they could not "honestly" see the binding claims of the Sabbath when it was first presented to them, and so stated to the evangelist, and that the conviction of its truth broke upon them at a later time. We wonder what might have been the sad results if the evangelist had challenged their honesty during this period!

God has given me no powers of divination. He has given me no authority to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart. To the simple, unqualified question, Will God condemn those who have honestly kept Sunday as the Sabbath? I can only answer, No. True, if I were asked that question in an evangelistic meeting, I would probably wish to add an explanatory comment on the significance of the word honestly, and the danger of willful blindness and self deception. But that would be going beyond the simple question before us.

Traveling On The Sabbath

A brother inquires whether it is right to travel in a car on the Sabbath day; for example, to a relative's house.

He believes Mrs. White condemns this, and states that he has read in her writings of how she and her husband were traveling by horse and buggy and stopped at a home over the Sabbath, then continued their journey the next week.

If transportation today were by horse and buggy, I would have a simple, direct answer for you, because the Sabbath commandment explicitly declares that our animals, as well as we, should have a chance to rest on the Sabbath.

But today no animal is involved, only a gasoline engine. Therefore, the question narrows down to whether a trip on the Sabbath day would take our minds away from the spirit of the Sabbath and turn them to worldly things. I believe that too often such trips by automobile do that very thing, and in those instances it is patently wrong to travel on the Sabbath. But I can think of people, particularly those living in cities, who take their car and go out into the country for the Sabbath afternoon to enjoy the beauties of nature and to let their children roam about in the woods and over grassy fields. In instances like this God can be glorified and our own spiritual living enriched.

The purpose of the travel and the effect of such travel upon our spiritual experience must be the prime measure of the propriety of journeying on the Sabbath.

Church Treasurer's Work On Sabbath

A sister recently elected assistant treasurer in her church inquires: "Is it all right to count money, file tithe envelopes, and write church receipts on the Sabbath?"

In general I would say that the routine business of counting money, filing tithe envelopes, and writing church receipts certainly ought not to be done on the Sabbath day. However, I think there are instances when it is proper simply to count the total of an offering on the Sabbath, because the news of the total may prove of great inspiration to the worshipers at the Sabbath day services. For example, a report on the total received in a Thirteenth Sabbath Offering can bring a great deal of cheer to the membership. Incidentally, simply counting the money is something that can be done rather quickly and without great effort, but the small amount of labor involved is contributing in a direct way to the spiritual objectives and success of the Advent Movement.

Limitations On Sabbath Work

A brother inquires whether it is right for an Adventist to work for a public utility, such as a gas or electric company, on the Sabbath in case of an emergency.

I see no greater reason for a man's working on the Sabbath in a public utility company because of an emergency than I do for his working, for example, on a street-building job on the Sabbath day in order to deal with an emergency of a broken-up street. Nor do I see anything different in working in a public utility job on Sabbath from working on that day as a cook in a restaurant to deal with an emergency when some other cooks didn't arrive and people wanted their dinner. Neither do I see any difference in working as a traffic officer in an emergency on the Sabbath day, because people would be stalled if there were not an officer at the intersection to direct

them. In fact, I could think of endless emergencies that might appear to justify a man's working at times on the Sabbath in order to do a helpful deed for others-or at least what he considered was a helpful deed.

But where would all this lead us to? Ultimately it would lead to our complete forgetfulness of the Sabbath. We must draw the line somewhere, and that line I think should be drawn where the Bible draws it. Deeds of mercy, deeds that would save lives, et cetera come clearly within the boundary of acts proper to perform on the Sabbath day. But when we begin to expand our ideas of what's proper on the Sabbath to emergencies in endless secular activities, I think we make meaningless the commandment against working on the Sabbath day.

Lending Machinery To Non-Adventist

A brother writes regarding proper Sabbath observance in relation to lending farm machinery to a neighbor.

If I rightly understand you, the question at issue is this: A neighbor borrows certain of your farm equipment before the Sabbath comes on and then proceeds to use that equipment on the Sabbath. In the light of this fact, you wish to know if it is right to lend this equipment to him.

I know of no standards of the church that give any clear answer on this particular question, and so what I say is my personal observation. I don't believe that you are committing any sin if on any day other than the Sabbath you lend to a neighbor your farm equipment, even though he may, in turn, use it on the hours of the Sabbath day God has not made you accountable for how your neighbor keeps the Sabbath day. You are accountable for how you and your family keep it. You are also accountable for those who are in your employ or under your direction-you must not cause them to violate the Sabbath. But you are in no sense accountable for your neighbor. If he asked to borrow your horse and then used it on the Sabbath, you would do wrong to lend him the horse, for your beasts are to rest as well as you. But the mechanical equipment that you might lend him has neither a physical body to become weary nor a spiritual nature to become defiled.

We need always to be careful lest we fall unconsciously into the same wrong mood that many Sunday keepers have fallen into. Namely, of thinking that we ought to determine what our neighbors shall do on a particular day of the week.

If I were in your position I would lend the implements to the neighbor. At the same time I would remark to him that I would not use such equipment on the seventh day of the week, but that if he wanted thus to use it, it was a matter between him and his God. Thus I would bear witness to the Sabbath and at the same time give him a lesson in the principles of religious liberty. I might, thereby, also stir up his conscience and his mind to investigate the matter of the Sabbath.

Renting Property To Non-Adventist

A brother inquires: "Would it be all right for an Adventist to rent his farm to an unbeliever or a person who did not profess to keep the Sabbath? The part of the fourth commandment that is not clear in my mind is the phrase 'the stranger that is within thy gates.' I know if I were living on the farm, it would be clear, but I would like a clear-cut understanding on the matter if the farm is to be rented." He prefaces his inquiry with the expression of the hope that he may have a formal pronouncement from headquarters on this matter, presumably an action taken by the General Conference Committee.

I do not believe that the church has at any time made an official pronouncement on this question. Indeed, on many questions the church purposely refrains from making such pronouncements. On a great majority of questions that involve the application of divine principles, the individual himself, in prayer to God and in the study of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, must find the answer. Indeed, in many instances the answer is one that must be adapted to different circumstances and situations.

The particular question you raise has come to me at various times. My answer has always been this: In view of the fact that we are not required to be conscience for another, that every man must answer for himself before God, we are therefore not accountable if a man to whom we rent a piece of property fails to give obedience to God in the matter of the fourth commandment. I do not think that the phrase "the stranger that is within thy gates" applies here. I have always understood "the stranger" to be a person who had been taken into the household of an Israelite and who was therefore under the direction of the head of the house. When you rent a piece of property to anyone your relationship to the one who may live on that property is entirely different from the relationship you might bear to someone who is dwelling in your home and who is under your direction.

I think that what the Lord was trying to make clear to the Israelites was that by no subterfuge could they declare that they were obedient to the fourth commandment because they themselves refrained from work while they sent out into the field to labor some individual who was sitting at their board and dependent upon them for a home.

Sabbath Work In First-Aid Station

A pastor writes: "One of our members works every other Sabbath in the first-aid department of an airplane factory. He claims he is justified in this because he is engaged in a work of mercy. Can you throw any light upon this question?"

There will always be a twilight zone in the matter of what is proper to do on the Sabbath day. But I cannot honestly believe that anyone can justify working on the Sabbath in the first-aid department of an airplane factory. A factory is not a hospital. The business of a factory is to carry on commercial activities, and if someone is injured as the result of such labor then, of course, the first-aid department comes into the picture.

I think a hospital is entirely different. It concerns itself wholly with the care of the sick, not the manufacture of some commercial product. I'm afraid that if we justified service in a first-aid station in a factory, we would soon go a long distance beyond that.

The mere fact that there are some points of similarity between a hospital and the first-aid department of a factory is not sufficient, I believe, to justify a person's working in such a department on the Sabbath. All the moral and spiritual problems of life are in varying degrees made difficult of solution because of certain similarities between that which is proper and that which is not proper. We must look beyond the similarities to the dissimilarities. The fruit on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil undoubtedly had many similarities to other fruit!

Of course, I am giving you only my personal conviction. The church has never set out to make regulations on every last possible detail of Sabbath keeping. And I hope it never does. The book containing the regulations would be very bulky, and after it was written there would still be endless details that needed discussion. We must use sanctified common sense, building on the principles we know.

Delivering Newspapers On Sabbath

A mother writes regarding her boy who is delivering newspapers daily to the homes in his neighborhood. The paper is published five days a week and Sunday. Thus his only problem is on Friday evenings in wintertime when the sun goes down early. She suggested that he find someone else to deliver the papers Friday evening, but he felt that to hire someone else to do it for him would be the same as doing it himself. She asks what is the right of the matter.

I think the question hinges on whether the Friday evening substitute boy is employed by your son. If so, then I think that such employing of a substitute boy would be a violation of the fourth commandment. We have always held as a people that it is wrong for an Adventist to have men working for him on the hours of the Sabbath.

However, in a case like you present, I'm not at all clear that your son is employing this substitute boy. I think the real test of whether your son is the employer is this: From whom does the money come that pays that substitute? The answer is, From the newspaper office. The newspaper is paying a certain amount to have its newspapers distributed each evening. That amount is not affected by whether a different boy distributes each evening or whether two boys divide the task between them, or whether one boy does it all. The fact that the newspaper office may make its payment for the task through the hands of one of those distributing the papers does not, to my mind, change the basic facts of the case. Because of this fact that the money comes from the newspaper office, I believe that the other boy, on Friday evening, is really working for the newspaper and not for your son. That this other boy is really working for the newspaper becomes transparently clear when we think of this fact: any legal accountability for that non-Adventist boy while he was distributing the newspapers would be an accountability on the part of the newspaper office, and not on the part of your son.

It seems to me that when an Adventist boy wishes to take such a task that involves Friday evening or Sabbath day hours, he should make clear to the newspaper office that he cannot work on any of the Sabbath hours, but might be able to recommend someone not of our faith who would wish to take the job for the Sabbath hours. Thus, I think, he would keep his witness clear before the worldly publisher with whom he was dealing. The fact that that publisher might wish him to pass on the money to the non-Adventist youth for his services is, I say, a secondary point.

I cannot see any real difference between a newspaper situation and the kind of situation that confronts numbers of our people who find it necessary to make arrangements with someone else in a large concern to work on the Sabbath day while they work on Sunday. We find nothing wrong in such a procedure.

In the difficult task of living in the world, yet not being of the world, we must proceed very carefully lest, at one extreme, we violate our conscience and the witness we should bear, or, at the other extreme, withdraw ourselves by an unwarranted kind of logic and piety, to the extent that we are no longer able to carry on lawful pursuits in the world.

I appreciate the devout desire on the part of both you and your son to do that which is right. That desire must control us in everything. I do not say that I have given the kind of answer to which no one could possibly take any exception. I doubt if such an answer could be given on this and a variety of other cases, but I've tried to give you the best help I could. In the last analysis, the matter is one of individual conscience.

Attending Certain Services On Sabbath

A sister writes that a dear relative is to graduate on a Friday night from a secular college. She wishes to know the position the church takes as to her attending such a service. She also inquires about the propriety of attending marriage ceremonies or funerals on the Sabbath.

Your letter brought back to me a memory of more than forty years ago when I was scheduled to graduate on a Friday night from a secular school to which I had gone for business training. I had to tell the school that I was sorry, but neither I nor my family could be present, and that they could send my diploma to me in the mail. And why? For the simple reason that we believed attendance at a secular function on the hours of the Sabbath was contrary to the Sabbath commandment. That commandment calls on us to turn aside from all of our own activities and interests for the twenty-four hours of the holy Sabbath. I don't know what more there is to say on the matter than that. Once we begin to encroach on the hours of the Sabbath, no longer making it a holy day set apart for heavenly thoughts, plans, and activities, I don't know where we would stand.

You ask also about attendance at marriages and funerals on Sabbath. The church has never made any explicit statement on these. If the marriage is celebrated in a church, I would view the matter in quite a different light than if it is performed by an officer of the law in some place other than a church. In the last analysis marriage is, or ought to be, conceived of as a divine institution, and the celebration of the marriage service, a religious affair. I would not sit in judgment on any member if he attended a church-held marriage service on a Sabbath. You see, there are some matters that must be left to the individual conscience. I place this matter of a

marriage service in a church on the Sabbath in an essentially different category from a graduation service, and for the reasons just given.

Now as to a funeral. I would put that in a category all its own. We certainly are not doing our own pleasure or carrying on our own activities by attending a funeral service. The mind certainly is not led away to frivolity and earthly interests, but rather the contrary. It is the almost standard practice, furthermore, for a minister to preside at the service and to focus on the Scriptures in his service.

It is true that many, if not most, of our churches discourage the holding of funerals on Sabbath. And I concur in this, because a funeral involves considerable labor. But the church does not condemn such services. Certainly it would not therefore condemn attendance at a Sabbath funeral.

Consignment Selling And Sabbath Keeping

One of our ministers writes regarding a member who is in the clothing business. This member is thinking of merchandising his clothing by sending it, on consignment, to retailers. The question posed is this: If the clothes are sent on consignment, are not the retailers simply agents of this church member, and would he not be violating the Sabbath if these agents sold his clothes on Sabbath?

The fact that goods are sent on consignment does not necessarily make the consignor accountable for the activities of the consignee. In other words, the consignee is a legal entity who is free to sell at such hours as he desires, being obliged only to remit to the consignor the money for the goods sold or to return the goods themselves. On this view of the matter, I would say that our brother is free to consign his goods, even though the consignee may decide to offer the wares to customers on the Sabbath.

The principle of the Sabbath law is that we ourselves shall not work, nor shall we require or cause anyone else to work on the Sabbath. Obviously, the work that another man, exercising his free will, may decide to do on the Sabbath is not our moral responsibility. In fact, I don't believe we need to concern ourselves in any degree with the schedule of hours that a consignee may decide are the hours on which he wants to conduct his retail business. He is certainly not an agent of the consignor in the sense that either his pay or his hours are determined by the consignor.

We may rightly take heart from the fact that this church member is spiritually sensitive on this matter of proper Sabbath observance. Would that more of our members had a scrupulous concern for the Sabbath. Rightly guarding God's holy day can mean much to our religious life. Indeed, if we do not guard the Sabbath we shall soon disregard it; and that is the halfway station to abandoning it.

However, in the particular problem before us, unless we keep clearly in mind this basic point of the Sabbath law, namely, that we shall not require anyone else to work on the Sabbath, I hardly know how we can maintain working relationships in the complex business world. Otherwise, I fear we might easily find ourselves unable to have any dealings with the world around us.

Buying On The Sabbath

A sister asks for light on the matter of "buying on the Sabbath," adding: "I have been taught from childhood that it was not right to buy even a newspaper." She states that "some members" in her church "go to outside restaurants to eat." on the Sabbath, and inquires if that is right.

You say that you were taught as a little girl that one must not even buy a newspaper on the Sabbath. You have been taught rightly. The principle underlying all true Sabbath keeping that we shall devote the Sabbath day wholly to the things of Heaven, except to the extent that it is absolutely necessary to care for life and health. It is always proper to care for the sick on the Sabbath day, whether they be in the home or in the hospital. Even then, if attention is given to the matter, work may be reduced to the minimum without reducing essential care that should be given to the sick. It is also very proper for us to do a sufficient amount of work around the house to make it look in order. Beds should be made, dishes from the dining table should be cleared away, etcetera. On the other hand, we should certainly not engage in any house cleaning, as that term is normally understood, on the Sabbath.

Most certainly we ought not to buy things on the Sabbath day. We have the secular days of the week in which to engage in all shopping. Some have raised the question as to the propriety of purchasing medicine at a drugstore on the Sabbath day. I think that if there is an emergency and life or health would be risked if there were delay, one might easily justify purchasing medicine on God's holy day. It is always lawful to do well on the Sabbath. However, I think that if we carefully measured all the factors, we would rarely find it necessary to make even a purchase like this on the Sabbath.

You refer to the fact that some church members go out to restaurants on the Sabbath day, and you wonder whether this is right. I have been asked this question numbers of times, and there is only one reply that I can give: If a person is away from home traveling he often has no option but to go to a restaurant on the Sabbath in order to satisfy his hunger. In such an event I think that there can be no criticism of his action. On the other hand, to go to a restaurant in one's own community simply to obtain a variety of food or to find a new setting in which to dine, or for any other of a variety of reasons, is, I believe, contrary to the spirit of the Sabbath day. Certainly on the Sabbath, above all other days, we should try to be removed from the world, its influences, its atmosphere, and its music—some restaurants feel that they must serve along with their food a strange brand of sounds they call music. Furthermore, by purchasing a meal in a restaurant when it is possible for us to eat in our own home, we are most obviously engaging in unnecessary commercial transactions on the Sabbath day.

In our poor earthly state most of us find it difficult at best to divorce, completely, our thoughts, and our plans, from earthly things on God's holy day. Our goal ever should be to keep ourselves in an environment and in a program of activities that will aid us in every way toward the goal of heavenly thoughts and desires on the Sabbath. Better a most sparse meal in the quiet of our homes, preceded by a prayer of thanksgiving to God, than the finest meal in the finest restaurant on the Sabbath day. After all, our first

thought on the Sabbath ought to be of spiritual food, rather than of physical, though there is certainly no sin in having adequate, nourishing, and appetizing meals on the Sabbath.

Uncalled-For Zeal In Sabbath Keeping

A brother writes requesting that his Review subscription be stopped because he does not wish to have his mail traveling on the Sabbath. He asks, "Is not the mailman our servant? And does not the Sabbath command forbid making our servant work on the Sabbath?"

I appreciate your earnest and sincere endeavor to give the most careful observance possible to the Sabbath day. Would that more of our people were sincerely conscious of the need of guarding the sanctity of the Sabbath. Many are too easygoing in this matter. However, I am not able to agree with you regarding the matter of the mails on the Sabbath day. I wonder whether you have taken the time to think this through to the end. For, after all, if your reasoning is valid on this point, then it ought to be valid on similar points.

To begin with, you would virtually have to discard any use of the United States mail. Your letter to me traveled on the Sabbath day. I received it this [Sunday) morning. Doubtless you use electricity in your home. Most everyone does. But the electricity we use on the Sabbath represents the labor of men in the electrical companies' plants. If you are living anywhere near a town, you are, of course, using the city water system, the city sewer system, and the city gas system. But all of these are maintained by the labor of men on the Sabbath day.

It is hard to believe that the most ardent Sabbath keeper among us, even you yourself, would refuse to use these city services on the Sabbath day. Then why refuse to use the mail?

The solution of your problem is to be found in a little different understanding of the Sabbath commandment. That commandment prohibits our working on the Sabbath or requiring anyone else to work, such as a manservant or a maidservant. Certainly, if we compel others to work on the Sabbath day, as would be the case if they were our servants and certainly if they were our slaves, as was often the case in Jewish times, we would be morally responsible for their laboring. But in the case of the United States mail, the city gas, electric, and sewer service, we are not requiring anybody to work. They are working of their own free will. They are not our servants. We do not hire them. They would continue to work whether we mailed a letter or used any city services of any kind. Hence, because they are entirely of their own free will they, not we, are responsible to God for what they do on the Sabbath day.

It is true that when we commit a letter to the mail, it may actually be handled by mailmen on the Sabbath, but that is something over which we have no control. You certainly had no control over your letter to me after you dropped it into the mail, and it actually was handled on the Sabbath day. But the fact that the mailmen handle it on the Sabbath is not your responsibility. So far as Adventists are concerned, mailmen may stop working on Friday night and not begin again until Saturday night, but they do not wish to do that. Of their own free will they continue working on the mail, and they are, as we have already said, personally responsible for their deeds. We do not tell the mailmen when they must deliver the mail at the end of the journey. We do not tell them how rapidly they must carry it along the way. We do not say anything to them. They are answerable, not to us, but to government officials.

We should always guard-against the danger of placing upon ourselves, unnecessarily, the problem of the conduct of others.

Sabbath Deportment

An elderly sister, with a grown family, is troubled over the fact that at the home of a favorite son on Sabbath days there is often conversation and laughter alien to the Sabbath, and outings that generate an earthly atmosphere. Included, often, are reminiscences by the son as to what he did in earlier years when he was not a church member. She is also troubled by the feeling that she herself has not always been free of guilt in the matter of the example she has set before her family.

There are many of our people who need help on this matter of proper observance of the Sabbath. Surely it is not right for our people to go out to have a "good time" on the Sabbath and to laugh and joke. Neither do I think it is good for one who has come into the faith to regale his friends with what he did when he was in the world. Paul said, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

I note that you feel troubled in your own soul about your lack of complete freedom from all guilt in some of the matters that you are writing about. Well, my dear sister, God is ever ready to forgive us and to blot out all the past. Not only that, He has promised to strengthen us with might by His Spirit in the inner man to live more successfully for Him in the future. When we are with others on the Sabbath day, we can seek, tactfully, to turn the conversation into different channels, if it is moving in the wrong direction. It is remarkable what the example of one good person can do toward giving a right tone to a whole group of people. If we make a matter like this the subject of special prayer, and are constantly conscious of the need of witnessing aright in certain situations, God will most surely enable us to witness as we should and quite possibly to help others to live as they ought.

Sabbath Missionary Work

A local elder in one of our churches writes to me as follows: "A good brother in our church protests vehemently once every so often against distributing our Faith for Today Bible cards and other literature on Sabbath afternoons from house to house. He never has nor ever will do any missionary work. An article on this subject might be very timely. Any statement on proper Sabbath afternoon missionary work, such as distributing cards for the Bible course and other of our fine literature would help. These unruly elements can bring in confusion, especially to new members. This particular brother says that the Sabbath was given for resting, and it is Sabbath breaking to go from house to house."

Let me say at the outset that if this “good brother” does not wish to engage in any kind of literature distribution on the Sabbath afternoon, that certainly is his privilege. I hope the church will never fall into the mistaken Position of trying to force any member to engage in any line of church work. But the right of this brother to refrain from working does not carry with it the right to raise a tumult in the church when others work. That is a point that is too often forgotten by those who feel that they wish to exercise what they believe to be their liberty in the gospel in relation to church life.

The church does have a right to devise programs of activity for the membership, and to encourage all of them to carry out those programs. For any member to set himself up against the organized program of church life to the extent of denouncing and seeking to tear it down and to keep other members from engaging in the work, is going far beyond the bounds of that liberty which each member should enjoy. There would soon be no church organization, but only a collection of individualists meeting together as they saw fit, if there were no well-defined plans to give expression to the great objectives of the church. The Advent Movement is not a mere collection of individualists, each doing that which seems right in his own eyes. It is a body whose parts are coordinated and whose head is Christ. In union there is strength, and union reveals itself in united endeavor, coordinated labor, and service.

What now of the argument that this “good brother” uses to justify his opposition to distributing various kinds of literature on the Sabbath? He declares that it is Sabbath breaking to go from house to house. This is indeed a heavy indictment of the program of literature distribution on the Sabbath. Will it bear examination? I think not.

The Sabbath commandment opens thus:

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall thou labor, and do all thy work” (Exodus 20:8,9)

Lay alongside this the words of Isaiah: “If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable. And shall honor him, not doing your own ways; nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words” (Isaiah 58:13).

These two passages, and others that might be cited, reveal that the essence of the Sabbath command is, that on the seventh day of the week we should cease from all our labors.

To reason that we must not only refrain from all our secular activities on the Sabbath, but also be in a quiescent, inert state on that day, is to fall into the same erroneous pattern of thought that distinguished the Pharisees in Christ’s day. They carried their reasoning so far as to indict Christ for healing a man on the Sabbath day. Certainly there was exercise involved in Christ’s healing a man, but it was a kind of labor and service well within the bounds of the Sabbath command. Christ stated the matter tersely when He declared: “Wherefore, it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days” (Matthew 12:12).

Strangely enough, the Pharisees were willing to admit that in an emergency, if a sheep fell into a pit, it could be lifted up on the Sabbath day. Christ simply used that specific incident to show how much more worth while it was to lift up men on the Sabbath day, and hence how “lawful” to do so.

Now, in going out to distribute literature on the Sabbath day, are we engaging in our own private, secular work? The answer is No. Are we finding our “own pleasure” or speaking our “own words?” Again, the answer is No. No private, secular, selfish desire prompts us to engage in this missionary literature distribution. It is true there is pleasure in it, but it is the pleasure of the Lord’s work.

And what do we seek to do by distributing literature? The answer is evident: We seek to bring healing to the souls of men, we seek to lift them up from the pit of sin into which they have fallen. If it be lawful to lift up a sheep, why not a man? If it be lawful to bring physical healing to a man, why not also spiritual?

Would to God that all of our people everywhere would use at least a portion of their Sabbath afternoons in ringing doorbells, placing truth-filled literature in the hands of men and women, and saying to them some word that would quicken their hearts and lead them to God.

This, Sabbath breaking? The question answers itself. We know of no better way to keep the Sabbath day than by laboring for souls. Indeed, how much better would be the level of Sabbath keeping in our ranks if the afternoons of that holy day were devoted to well defined missionary labor rather than to idle driving about or sitting in groups conversing on many topics that are out beyond the bounds of Sabbath conversation.

On with missionary literature distribution! On with the signing up of cards for Faith for Today and Voice of Prophecy! On with endeavors to find men and women willing to take Bible studies! That is our business as the Advent people. More strength to the arm of the missionary leaders in all our churches, and the home missionary secretaries in all our conferences. Let nothing be said or done in any of our churches that would minimize the vast importance of having our people going from home to home.

Now, after saying all this, I do not for a moment question the right of anyone who, feeling weary in spirit or body, wishes to use the hours of the Sabbath afternoon to rest in quietness. In some instances it is a church member’s duty thus to do, for some are frail and must husband their limited resources of physical and nervous energy. But I am not here dealing with these special cases. I am thinking of the general average of our membership, who, living today on a forty-hour week, with mechanical devices of every kind to remove much of the drudgery of life, are tempted to fritter away the Sabbath hours in idle, empty conversation or aimless activities. Their number is large, very large, and to all of them this appeal for missionary service on the Sabbath day is addressed.

10. Suffering And Bereavement

Why God Permits His Children To Suffer

No question more frequently comes to me than this: Why does God permit suffering to darken my life, or the life of one of my loved ones? Following is a composite of the many replies made.

We know that God is working out all things for our best good. But do the Scriptures offer any specific light on the varied reasons why God permits suffering, and just how He employs these afflictions for our best good? Without attempting any exhaustive or dogmatic statements on this difficult problem, let me set forth some of the reasons why God afflicts us:

Because of Sin

1. Perhaps God has brought these troubles upon you because of your sins. Repeatedly do the Scriptures reveal that God brought punishment upon His children in the form of great afflictions, to turn them away from some sinful course into which they had fallen. He did this with individuals, and also with the whole people of Israel collectively. So often has God employed this means that we cannot safely disregard this possibility when troubles come upon us. The time of affliction is a time for searching the soul; it is a time for us to pray, as did David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23, 24).

Because of Temptation

2. Perhaps God has brought affliction upon you to save you from temptation. Your life may be upright before God, and you may be walking in His fear; but there may be some temptation lurking close by that has a peculiar attraction for you. Perhaps God has raised up the barrier of affliction to protect you from this particular temptation to which your nature is susceptible. There comes immediately to mind in this connection the confession of Paul:

"Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

It may be the temptation to pride, as was the case with Paul, or some other temptation, it matters not which, that God desires to save us from, and thus brings upon us some affliction.

The Small Boy and the Truck

I recall an incident that came under my own personal observation. I was seated in a car parked near the entrance to a home, and just off the edge of a much-traveled highway. Looking out through the rear window, I saw riding on his tricycle the small boy of the home. He was coming through the gate and descending the gentle slope that would quickly bring him onto the paved highway. At that same moment a large truck swung around the curve at high speed. It was evident that only a moment would be required for the boy to cover the distance from the gate out onto the highway and into the path of this death-dealing machine. There was no time to act. It seemed that a tragedy was almost instantly to be enacted before my eyes. But when the little fellow, in the exhilaration of his ride, was within a foot of the highway, the front wheel caught in loose sand and threw him to earth. I don't believe he even heard the roar of the truck as it passed close by him; his mind seemed altogether occupied with the tragedy of falling into the sand, with the resultant scratches that had come to him. Doubtless to his childish mind a very great tragedy had occurred, and everything was against him. He did not know that his fall had saved him from death.

Many times have I thought of this incident, and of how it possibly illustrates the place that afflictions may fill in our lives. We may be traveling along, unconscious of the danger that confronts us, moving thoughtlessly out onto the busy highway of life. But God sees what we cannot see, some thundering temptation that is ready to meet us and crush us if we are allowed to go on in the direction we are going, and so He takes the solid ground from under us for a little while. Our step suddenly becomes uncertain, and we are brought down into trouble or affliction.

Suffer Rather Than Sin

But in the midst of suffering there is a great truth that we may well contemplate, and that is, there is something worse than suffering -there is sin; and it is better that we suffer than that we sin. It is better that we endure the bruises that come from God's upsetting our plans betimes, than the destruction that would come from continuing in a path that would lead us into sin.

Or perhaps the temptation may not be of so dark a hue, but rather the more subtle temptation to become content with this present world. It is then that God often brings the affliction of poverty. I recall the words of one religious writer who thus commented on some of his own experiences during his years of preaching:

"I once preached in a section where life had formerly been a hard taskmaster. Clearings had to be made in the primeval forests, swamps had to be drained, and the good people could barely make a living. Then the malarial fever epidemic came. Hundreds of these brave, hardy people lost their lives. The churches were crowded. They remained crowded for many years afterward. Today that section is a beautiful stretch of country, with concrete highways and flourishing towns, but there is a decline in spirituality, an increase in ritual and formalism. The rising generation seems apathetic...."

“The phenomenon is quite ordinary. What I have just described happened in scores of sections of the country. In the first struggles of pioneering, in the storm and stress period, people felt the need of supernatural support, and the church was the logical place to go. Today we are surrounded with luxuries of every kind.... We feel more or less independent of God and man.”

God might have brought the Israelites from Egypt into Canaan by a very direct route that would have taken but a few days. Instead He led them through a waste and howling wilderness, where dangers beset them on all sides. At the end of their wanderings Moses explained that God had brought them through such a tortuous route that they might learn “that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live.”

To Develop Rare Qualities

3. Perhaps God has permitted affliction to come upon you to develop some rare quality of soul. We can never hope to understand in this present life the mysterious way in which character is developed, how the experiences of life build within us qualities that mark us as distinct from all other persons. Nor can we hope to understand how it is that oftentimes deep afflictions have served to develop in men and women the rarest of Christian qualities. But the experience of every one of us will testify to the fact. God may see within us some latent quality that needs only the right opportunity in order to be brought to a full and rich development. And God may see what we generally cannot see, that perhaps only through a period of affliction will opportunity be provided for the growth of that trait of character.

There is one quality of soul that all of us must develop if we are to be ready for heaven, and that is strong and unswerving faith in God. But how would most of us ever develop this necessary virtue if we were not put to the test at times, if our path were not mountainous on occasion, or if we were never called upon to enter the valley of dark shadows? If everything were always clear before us; if there were nothing to perplex or try us. If our finances and our families were always safe and secure, pray tell what real opportunity would there be for developing an implicit faith that God is guiding us and that He will fulfill for us all His promises?

For example, how could a man with a secure bank account ever prove in his own experience God's promise to provide him with daily food? He may believe this promise theoretically, but the blessedness of knowing from actual experience the reality of this promise is reserved to the man whose resources have been swept away and who has none but God upon whom to call. We read that God has “chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith.” There may be a closer connection between these two facts than is directly set forth in the statement. It may be that the very lack of material resources of the poor places them in the position where they are led to put God to the test, with the result that faith is made strong. How can we ever hope to know in a personal way the truth of the many promises of God, that He will never leave nor forsake us in the hour of darkness and sorrow, unless, having been brought to such an hour and having called upon God for the fulfillment of His promise, we have received the assurance in our souls that God is with us? It was out of the hard experiences of life, when danger and death constantly threatened him and he had none but God to rely upon, that David could write: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me” (Psalm 23:4).

To Provide a Testimony to the World

4. Perhaps God brought affliction upon you to provide a testimony to unbelievers. It is not remarkable that we should love God in prosperity. What the world needs is proof that we love Him in adversity.

And here, of course, comes to mind immediately the classic case of Job. The experience of this man of the land of Uz has come down through the centuries, and provided direct light on this most perplexing of questions, Why do troubles come upon the righteous? It was not because Job had fallen into some sin; it was not because God had to save him from some temptation to which he was peculiarly susceptible. The record declares that he was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. God desired to provide through him a testimony to angels and to men, that love and obedience to God are displayed by His children, not because of the favors they receive from Heaven, but because they sincerely desire to live in harmony with God's will. What a mighty testimony it must have been to those who heard Job declare of the Lord, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him”! That represents the pinnacle of faith. Only adversity could ever have presented an opportunity for Job to display such faith.

Early Christian history tells us of pagans who were converted as they witnessed the manner in which martyrs serenely went to their death, with songs of praise and faith in God on their lips. The manner in which they related themselves to the darkest of afflictions -persecution and death-was the strongest kind of testimony that could be borne before a hardened heathen world.

Declared Paul: “I would you should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places” (Philippians 1: 12, 13).

Christ's disciples, in common with the Jewish notions of the time, believed that afflictions were always an evidence of God's disfavor; and so when there came before them the man blind from his youth, they asked Christ: “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” Christ returned the emphatic answer: “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.” (John 9:2, 3.) Evidently in the wisdom of God this man had been permitted to suffer with this affliction from birth, in order that a mighty testimony might be offered to all Israel of the divine miracle-working power of Christ.

Because God Loves You

5. Perhaps, if no other explanation seems quite to satisfy, we may settle upon this: That God has brought affliction upon you because He loves you. “Whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives” (Hebrews 12:6). We are exhorted not to rebel or repine under such afflictions, but to “endure chastening.”

It is in the light of these thoughts that we are enabled better to understand why God oftentimes fails to answer our prayers in the way that we request. Until the chastening has accomplished what God designs it to accomplish, should we desire that the affliction be taken from us? A realization that the Lord permits troubles to come upon us for the perfecting of our characters and for the saving of us from dangers, should give us a spirit of resignation under the chastening of the Lord.

In the midst of adversity and affliction we must make certain that we give no room in our heart for a certain subtle temptation, the temptation to envy the wicked, who seem to be flourishing like green bay trees, and who, despite their godlessness, seem to be free from many troubles that beset us. The reason why they grow so luxuriously is because the soil of this earth and its sin-laden atmosphere provide the very environment suited to them. Children of God flourish better in an entirely different atmosphere, that of the new earth, where they shall grow up like calves of the stall.

Christ spoke of certain ones who were not true children of God, who were living for present fame and glory and the esteem of men, and declared, “They have their reward” (Matthew 6:2). And what a trivial reward it is! The child of God lives and works on a program that is also to bring a reward, not now, but in the hereafter. Our Father, who sees in secret, who knows the intent of our hearts, who has brought upon us afflictions to perfect our characters, will of a surety in the great day reward us openly, and give us the eternal inheritance promised to the children of God.

In the midst of the darkest affliction it is for us to remember that these trials will not last forever, that there is to be an end to them. And to remember, too, that “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17). Paul was willing to endure all the afflictions that came to him, because, he declared, I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). When we thus “reckon,” we have taken the greatest step toward not only enduring patiently, but actually glorying in tribulations.

Bodily Suffering, A Test Of Faith

A brother writes in great distress of heart over the fact that his beloved wife has so long been a chronic sufferer, despite all his supplications to God and the prayers of his brethren. He says the doctors confess they do not know what more they can do. He is troubled by doubts and inquires: “If I don’t see some results from prayer for my wife, then how can I have the faith to believe that when I confess my sins to God in prayer they are forgiven?”

If there was no record of God’s dealings with men in past ages I might be quite bewildered by your question. I do not know why the Lord lets your dear wife suffer so greatly, despite all the endeavors made in her behalf, both physical and spiritual. But this much I do know beyond all possible doubt, that the fact that the Lord allows her to continue to suffer does not thereby prove that He has not heard your prayers or that He does not love either you or her. We are here faced by one of religion’s most perplexing paradoxes, why a loving God should sometimes allow His children to suffer, despite their simple faith and trust in Him and their appeals to Him for relief.

We think of how devout were the martyrs of old. We are sure God loved them and has a special place prepared for them in heaven above. Yet we know that many martyrs rotted away in foul dungeons, or were tortured times without number. I’m sure that they prayed to God for deliverance, but God did not see fit to deliver them. Why? Only God has the answer. But we are sure that He does all things well and that there will be a satisfying answer in the day when we can talk with Him face to face.

Paul’s experience helps us to understand, in part, the problem of continued suffering. He speaks of his thorn in the flesh and of his thrice appealing to the Lord for relief from it and how mighty his prayers must have been! Yet the Lord did not deliver him. Paul explains that the thorn in the flesh was given him by God as one means for perfecting his character, and making him ready for heaven. So we find him finally declaring that he gloried in tribulation.

It is true that the Lord once used a miraculous healing as a proof that He could forgive sins. But we would be in a strange world indeed if there had to be a miracle of that character performed every time in order to prove to each individual, in every century, that God really forgives sins. It would indeed be a strange situation if there had to be a Red Sea rolled back for each person going on the road toward Canaan in order for him to believe that God was with him. It would also be strange if it was necessary for each one of us to witness the resurrection of Lazarus, or to place our hands on the resurrected body of our Lord, in order to be confident that the dead rise. Christ said to His disciples that they were to be witnesses of all the things that they had seen and heard. We are to accept their witness, because they were eyewitnesses. God never works extra miracles when enough have been worked in past ages to provide adequate grounds for having faith in Him.

I can sympathize with you, my brother, in your great stress of heart and spirit. Don’t let the devil persuade you to believe that God is not with you in your home, that He is not forgiving your sins. There is overwhelming proof that the Bible is true. In that Book we find all the ground we need for believing that when “we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” That Book also assures us that God is with us in the midst of suffering, trial, and even death. The record of the ancient worthies, as summarized in Hebrews 11, provides us with a great “cloud of witnesses.”

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1, 2).

We Sorrow Not As Do Others

An aged brother, with a pencil in his evidently shaking hand, wrote me from the Far West: "I just want to tell you that my beloved wife passed to her rest till Jesus comes. What is there about death that makes us so sad? It seems that a wound has been inflicted in my heart that time hasn't yet healed, and it has been five months. It was hard to give her up. I weep and shed tears till I feel I have no more ears to shed, but that does not bring her back. I will surely be glad when Jesus comes to put an end to all this sorrow."

I was deeply moved by your letter. It is in the presence of death that we are brought sternly to the realization that we live in the land of the enemy, in a world of sickness and death. What woe and multiplying tragedy grew out of Adam's transgression! We are his children and have walked in his ways, and behold the world we live in! Were it not for the grace of our Lord, who tasted death for every man, what hope would we have? But thanks be unto God that our Lord and Savior brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. And so we can say, in the darkest and the most troubled hour: I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1: 12).

I find nothing in the Bible that assures me there will be no occasion to weep while I walk through the valley of the shadow in this sinful world. Tears are part of the price we pay for our transgressions and the transgressions of all of our fathers before us. But those tears mysteriously serve a purpose in the plan of God. They are used of Him to make soft and mellow these hearts of ours, that we may be ready for a better world. But, thank God, I find in His Word the assurance that we weep not as do others which have no hope. Our sorrow at parting is eased by our confident assurance of meeting again. We part for but a little while and then at the day of our Lord-praise to His holy name-we meet to part no more.

And so, my dear brother, let not your tears keep you from seeing the promises of God. Look up, lift up your head, for the day of our redemption draws nigh. And as you look upward toward the light from the throne, may it transform your tears into a rainbow of hope -the hope of life everlasting for you and your beloved, who now rests for a little while.

Peace Amid Trials

A faithful brother in the church, who was passing through a very hard experience, and was far from home and friends, wrote for help and spiritual strength.

It seems to me that with our old world torn up as it is we can really begin to see new force and strength in the words of our Lord, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:28). We can also find new meaning in these words of our Lord to His disciples at the time He was about to leave them: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

The greatest thing that our religion can offer in these times is a sense of peace and quietness and assurance in our hearts. And this is because of the confidence we can have that above the troubled, shattered world is a great God who still rules the universe and who is solicitous about His children here in this world.

I think that our first business as we face the tensions of life each day should be to fix our minds on the fact of God, His compassion for us and the peace that He promises. I believe that it is a good thing for us to spend some time the first thing in the morning thinking very definitely on this. Then as we walk about in the day it is good for us to lift our mind betimes in a moment of silent prayer to God. This brings us a sense of communion with God, and it is this sense of communion that creates the sense of peace in our hearts-the peace that passes all understanding.

There is also another point that I think we ought to remember if we are to have the calmness of spirit that belongs to us as children of God. We should remember that it is the devil's chief aim to trouble our minds, to take away our sense of trust. He is most likely to make his attack upon us when we are weary in body, mind, and spirit. He comes along in the night seasons, when we may be weak after an exhausting day, and brings thoughts of trouble to our hearts. And those thoughts take on fearsome phantom shapes in the darkness. Right then it is we need to remember more than ever before that God lives in the darkness as well as in the light, that He never sleeps, and that His angels stand by our bedside as well as by our side when we are out on the road in the daylight. Someone has well said that we ought never to believe our night thoughts, that they are the worst liars in the world. I think this is because of the fact that the devil comes in the darkness to give us thoughts of doubt and trouble when we are weary.

I have found in my own experience, when disquieting thoughts press upon me in the night seasons, that repeating some heartening words of Scripture or humming in my mind an inspiring hymn soon calms my spirit. It seems that the very notes of the hymn, even though they are not made audible, jam the thought waves that the devil would seek to generate, and thus put my mind at rest. This is a simple kind of treatment, but it works.

Sometimes we simply have to carry on a debate with our own thoughts, or if you want to make it more personal, a debate with the devil, in the darkness, telling him to be gone, that we know that these troubles and thoughts are from him and are intended only to shake our faith in God. The very act of resolutely expressing such thoughts, even though they are only for our mind's ear to hear, does something for our spirit. Then repeat the simple act of quoting words of Scripture and humming a happy Christian hymn in your mind. No one will hear you. No one will tell you the next morning that you talked in your sleep. That is one of the remarkable things about our minds. We can carry on a conversation with ourselves and with God-and, if need be, a debate with the devil-without any human ear hearing us.

Perhaps you experience a sense of loneliness and depression, not simply in the night season, but in the daytime as you walk the streets of some far-off city. I can understand when you say that you feel more forlorn and alone in the midst of a great city, and jostled by multitudes, than you ever felt in a quiet, deserted lane of the country village where you were brought up. All of us who have to travel much bear testimony to that distressing fact.

Happily, the simple suggestion I have offered you concerning singing and praying in your heart in the night season on your bed is also effective on the busy street of a city. The cadence of majestic Scripture and the harmony of holy music in your mind's ear will quite shut out the raucous noises of the city and lift you above its hard sidewalks to the banks of the river of life. Yet no one who passes you will hear your voice, and think you strange. You have simply availed yourself of the high privilege of holding communion with your God in the sanctuary of your soul. Next time a wave of depression and dejection comes over you as you walk the streets of a far city, try singing to yourself such lines as these:

“O let me walk with Thee, my God,
As Enoch walked in days of old;
Place Thou my trembling hand in Yours,

And sweet communion with me hold;
Even though the path I may not see,
Yet, Jesus, let me walk with Thee.”

When we have enlarged our sense of communion to such a degree that we feel full trust in God, we will find ourselves rejoicing amid the blackest experiences. That was what Paul did. He rejoiced even in persecution, because he was confident it better fitted him for service for God. And Paul was the one who declared by Inspiration, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” This must be true, for it is in the Book of God. What's more, those who have had closest communion with God testify most ardently to its truth.

11. Theological Questions

What Genesis 1:1 Reveals

A brother inquires: “What time is referred to in the phrase, “In the beginning” (Genesis 1:1)? Does this mean about six thousand years ago, or some moment of time far earlier than that?

I'm afraid that no dogmatic answer can be given, and for the simple reason that neither the Bible nor Mrs. White is specific as to either God brought this orb, called earth, into existence at some time previous to Creation week, or on the first of the seven days of that week. He may have seen fit to create the raw material of this sphere at an earlier time, and then, at the hour that seemed good to Him, to change miraculously this inchoate mass, “without form and void,” in a mighty week of Creation. Good men among us are not agreed as to the moment of time indicated by the phrase “in the beginning.” Fortunately, it is not the chronology, but the fact, of Creation that is eternally important in the Genesis narrative. Indeed, an excessive preoccupation with the time aspect of the text has led some to miss the really primary truth that Moses is seeking to present in Genesis 1:1.

We clear the way for seeing most sharply this prime truth when we remember that the real controversy between creationists and evolutionists is not as to when this earth came into existence, but how it did; not as to when living creatures appeared on it, but how they came to appear.

This verse brings into sharp focus one of the age old controversies between Bible-believing Christians on the one hand and skeptics, atheists, and various shades of materialists on the other. The latter group, who seek in different ways and in different degrees to explain the universe without God, contend that matter is eternal. If this be true, and if matter has the power to evolve, first into the simplest forms of life and then into the more complex, until man is reached, God is indeed unnecessary.

Genesis 1:1 affirms that God is before all else and that He is the one and only cause of all else. This verse is the foundation of all right thinking in regard to the material world. Here is set forth the impressive truth that “in the formation of our world, God was not indebted to pre-existing matter.” -Testimonies, vol. 8, p. 258.

Pantheism, the ancient heresy that robs God of personality by diffusing Him throughout all the universe, and thus makes Him synonymous with the totality of creation, is also exposed and refuted by Genesis 1:1. There is no basis for the doctrine of pantheism when one believes that God lived serene and supreme before there was a creation and thus stands above and apart from that which He had created, though ever interested in that creation.

No declaration could be more appropriate as an introduction to Holy Writ than this: “In the beginning God.” At the outset the reader is introduced to an Omnipotent Being, possessed of personality, will, and purpose, who, existing before all else and thus dependent on naught else, exercised His divine will and “created the heaven and the earth.”

No discussion of secondary questions regarding the mystery of a divine Creation should be allowed to blur the fact that the real dividing line between a true and a false belief on the subject of God and the origin of our earth is acceptance or rejection of the truth set forth in this verse, “In the beginning God.”

Theologians have long speculated as to how the mighty miracles of Creation were performed, hoping thereby to discover more of God's mysterious ways than Infinite Wisdom has seen fit to reveal. But all speculation is idle. We know nothing of the method of creation beyond the terse Mosaic declaration, “God said,” “and it was so,” which is the mysterious and majestic overtone of the Creation anthem. To set down as the basis of our reasoning that God must have done thus and so in creating the world, else

nature's laws would have been violated, is to darken counsel with words and to give aid and comfort to the skeptic, who has ever insisted that the whole Mosaic record is incredible because it allegedly violates the laws of nature. Why should we attempt to be wise above that which is written in the Scriptures? Let us never forget that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God.

Nor should we move into speculative areas as to when the matter constituting our planet was brought into existence. On the time aspect of the creation of our earth and all upon it, Genesis makes three statements:

1. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).
2. "And the evening and the morning were the first day" (Genesis 1:5, and the parallel phrases in verses 8, 13, 19, 23, 31).
3. "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made" (Genesis 2:2).

Related scriptures add nothing to what is set forth in these Bible passages regarding the time involved in Creation. To the question: When did God create "the heaven and the earth"? I can only answer in terms of the texts quoted in 1 and 2 above. And to the question: When did God complete His work? I can only answer, "On the seventh day God ended his work." (Genesis 2:2), "for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day" (Exodus 20:11).

These remarks regarding the Creation account are made, not in an attempt to close the discussion, but as a confession that I am unprepared to speak with certainty beyond what is clearly revealed. The very fact that so much rests upon the Creation record—even the whole edifice of Scripture—prompts the devout and prudent Bible student to conform his declarations to the explicit words of Holy Writ. Indeed, when the broad fields of speculation tempt him to roam afar in uncharted areas of time and space, he cannot do better than to meet the temptation with the simple rejoinder, "It is written." There is always safety within the protecting, bounds of scriptural quotation marks. And in thus doing we give no aid or comfort to the evolutionist. His theory breaks against the solid rock of Scripture: In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

The Hebrew Of Exodus 20:10

A brother writes that he has been informed that if the original Hebrew is literally translated, part of the Sabbath command will read thus: "The seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord thy God" (Exodus 20:10). He is greatly troubled, because it seems to him that the definiteness of the seventh-day Sabbath thus disappears.

First let me confess that I am not an authority on Hebrew. I must find my answer to the first part of your question by inquiring of someone who is well schooled in this ancient language. The answer is that "a Sabbath" is a possible translation of the Hebrew, for the definite article "the" is not present in the original. However, in the Hebrew there are other means of showing definiteness than by the definite article. The construction in Exodus 20: 10 is such that definiteness is possible, though in the context, not probable.

However, granting for the sake of argument that "a Sabbath" is a correct translation in this text, this still does not take from the Sabbath command its definiteness. The point of controversy between Sunday keepers and Sabbath keepers is not over whether a Christian should rest – "not do any work" - one day in the week, but which day of the week that should be, the first or the seventh. The commandment answers explicitly, "the seventh day." The command divides the week into two parts: (1) "six days shall thou. . . do all thy work," (2) "the seventh day ... thou shall not do any work. And why this prohibition of work on "the seventh day"? Because it is a "Sabbath of the Lord." The word Sabbath is from the Hebrew Shabbath, which means "rest." Thus the command prohibits work on "the seventh day" because it is a rest day of the Lord. This takes us back to the origin of the Sabbath, when God "rested on the seventh day" (Genesis 2:2).

It is therefore plain that the contrast is not between "the" and "a," but between "work" and "rest." "Six days," says the command, are work days, but "the seventh day" is a rest day. That "the seventh day" is uniquely God's rest day is made evident in the opening words of the command: "Remember the Sabbath [rest] day, to keep it holy." In this sentence the Hebrew has the word "the" Luke 2:11 is translated from the Greek: "For unto you is born a Savior." We do not therefore conclude that Christ was simply one of many saviors. We capture the meaning of the angels' words when we put the emphasis on the word "Savior." Christ came, not as a military conqueror or an earthly king, but as a Savior. Numerous other passages deal with the uniqueness of His salvation, and with the fact that we can be saved by none other.

Thus with the matter of the fourth command. The seventh day was blessed and set apart, not as a work day, but as a rest (a Sabbath) day.

The variant use of "the" and "a" in connection with the word Sabbath" in the fourth command in Exodus 20 finds a parallel in the statements concerning the Sabbath in Exodus 16. Note for example: "A Sabbath unto the Lord" (Exodus 16:25). "The Lord hath given you the Sabbath" (verse 29). In the twenty-fifth verse the definite article "the" is not in the original, in the twenty-ninth verse it is, and the translators of our King James Version made their translation accordingly. But the reader of verse 25 is in no doubt as to the particular day intended for the Sabbath. That day is uniformly described in the sixteenth chapter as "the seventh day." (See verses 26,27,29.)

No, we need not fear that the definiteness of God's holy Sabbath is endangered.

Was Pentecost On Sabbath?

A sister states she has told her non-Adventist friends that in the year of the crucifixion Pentecost came on Sabbath, -not Sunday. She says that she reached this conclusion from reading certain books written by Adventist ministers. She notes that an article in the Review states that Pentecost came on Sunday that year. Now she feels embarrassed and wonders whether we are going back on something we formerly believed. Must she now tell her neighbors and friends that Adventists are uncertain about the Bible? "What am I to do?" she asks.

Please don't let yourself become upset or in any way concerned about the question of the time of Pentecost. This is one of those questions that in no way affect the great pillars of our faith.

Apparently lying behind your perplexity is this assumption: Adventists should have all the answers on questions dealing with the Bible. If we don't have all the answers the public will conclude that we don't have any of the answers. Now, my sister, that assumption is false, as I am sure you will agree on second thought. The Advent Movement has never claimed that it had all the answers. Always remember that the reason for its existence is not that it has all the answers but that it has certain great Bible truths that are present truth for the last days. If someone asked me why some of our books say one thing on Pentecost and some of them another, I would tell him frankly that it is because we are finite, fallible men. That ought to be a sufficient answer for any reasonable person.

I think there is a further possible reason underlying your perplexity. Sunday keepers have generally tried to find an argument for Sunday keeping on the ground that Pentecost came on that day in the crucifixion year. Patently, if we could prove that Pentecost came on Sabbath we could demolish at one stroke the whole argument. And perhaps, so someone might conclude, even build a counter argument for the Sabbath! Now if the Review says Pentecost was indeed on Sunday, then are we not conceding something to the opposition?

To which I would reply: Even if it were true that Pentecost came on Sabbath, why demolish an unsound Sunday keeping argument, only to rear in its place an unsound Sabbath argument? The claim for the sacredness of a day of the week must rest upon a command of God and not upon the coincidence of the occurrence of a certain event on a certain day in a certain year subsequent to the command. The Sabbath rests upon the command in the Ten Commandments, and that command is neither weakened nor strengthened by any coincidences in events subsequently. Sunday lacks a divine command and cannot validly substitute for this an incident in history.

Let me add, now, a comment as to whether Pentecost in the crucifixion year came on Sunday. The rule for determining the date of Pentecost was this: From the day of the offering of the first fruits the Jews were to count fifty days, the fiftieth day to be Pentecost. Now Christ, by rising from the dead, became the "first fruits of them that slept." Type here met antitype. Christ was raised on Sunday morning. This would bring Pentecost on Sunday also. See Leviticus 23: 15, 16; The Desire of Ages, pages 785-787. There have been some theologians through the years who have held that Pentecost came on Saturday, as they would express it. This divergence of view, it seems, has been due to the fact that there has also been a dispute through the years as to the day of the week on which the Passover came in the crucifixion year. But that disputed point need not here trouble us.

If you will refer to the History of the Sabbath, by J. N. Andrews and L. R. Conradi (1912 ed.), you will find they state (p. 102) the rule I have just given for determining when Pentecost comes, which means that they must certainly have held that Pentecost in the crucifixion year came on Sunday. You will also find that on pages 171-173 they examine the argument for Sunday that is based on the Sunday Pentecost. Nowhere in that examination do they declare that Pentecost came on Sabbath. Their book is perhaps the classic work of Seventh-day Adventists on the Sabbath question. It would seem, therefore that the Review article has excellent precedent.

Let us thank God, my dear sister, that the great truth of the Sabbath stands fast, even though finite, fallible brethren may differ at times on some quite irrelevant detail that merely touches the edges of this great truth.

Speculating On Unfulfilled Prophecy

A brother inquires: "What do you think of the enclosed statement by one of our members as to how certain Bible prophecies are soon to be fulfilled because certain specific events are occurring in the world?" The enclosure was typical of certain material that has been written on unfulfilled prophecy-definite, detailed, even dogmatic.

To a certain type of mind great happenings in the world present an almost irresistible temptation-the temptation to speculate on just how the particular happening of the moment is related to the closing events of earth's history, and of just what will develop out of any particular situation that arises in the world.

This is well illustrated by the statements made by a few of our people during and following the first world war. Some said that this was the last war this earth would witness. There were a few who seemed free to dogmatize even on the details of how the war would shape the closing events and merge into Armageddon.

When the war ended and the League of Nations was formed, there again were a few who hastened to dogmatize on what this new development meant, some even going so far as to declare that this was the means through which the pope of Rome would come into the leadership of the nations of Europe. The pope was pictured at the head of the League table, discussing the affairs of the world.

When the Interchurch World Movement was launched, that ambitious project to federate all Protestant bodies, there were again a few who felt free to speak with great certainty on the precise relationship that this happening bore to prophecy, some going so far as to picture the exact way in which Protestantism would be bound together by this new movement and would finally persecute the people of God.

In the depression days the United States set out on a bold program of economic recovery, known generally as the NRA. There were a few among us who were ready to say just how the NRA was related to certain prophecies in the book of Revelation, and of exactly the way in which this governmental move for restoring prosperity would result in persecution.

That the war came to an end instead of merging into Armageddon. That the League of Nations failed to prove a dominating force in world affairs, with the nations going their own nationalistic way; that the Interchurch World Movement died before it was scarcely born; that the NRA died similarly-these are simple matters of record. They prove more eloquently than could any studied line of reasoning the grave danger of speculating concerning the exact outcome of notable happenings in the world.

The fact that the detailed and even dogmatic forecasts in connection with the first world war proved so mistaken, put a great, though not a complete, check on speculative souls when the second world war broke.

There is no reason to doubt the sincerity or devotion of the layman or minister who falls before this temptation to speculate on unfulfilled prophecy. In fact, it is the very devotion and sincerity of such an individual that often give to his dogmatic forecasts a ring of certainty that causes the listener to accept such unsupported predictions as gospel truth. If the failure of time to prove the predictions of such persons true reacted only against the individual himself, small harm, perhaps, would be done. But this is not the case. When events fail to work out exactly as someone has declared they must and will, there are always those whose faith is thereby weakened regarding the whole subject of the great time prophecies and the signs of Christ's coming.

Of course, such a weakening of faith is unwarranted, for all should be able to see that there is a clear distinction between the definite signs of Christ's coming as marked out in the prophecies, and the detailed speculations of a few individuals regarding the exact outcome of particular happenings. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the faith of some in the general subject of prophecy is injured by the failure of speculations to prove true. At the same time, the skeptic is provided with what he believes is just another reason for making sport of the whole subject of religion in general and prophecy in particular.

But there is an even more serious possibility-yea, even probability-in connection with these speculations and forecasts in the present troubled state of our world. There is a very real danger that unnecessary handicaps may be placed upon the work of God, and persecution unnecessarily provoked because of unwarranted declarations concerning the future in relation to present events. We live in a time of unstable emotions on the part of the great masses of the people throughout the whole world, in a day when intense hatreds can be quickly generated and translated into action against this or that party or group that arouses the ill will of those in the majority. Too many illustrations of this from all corners of the earth come immediately to mind to require any added proof here. But it is this very state of affairs in the world that should cause us to exercise the greatest good judgment in all our utterances. If ever there was a time when, in our speech, we should follow the scriptural injunction to be wise as serpents as well as harmless as doves, it is now.

We have a message that must be preached, and with courage we should preach it. But there is a very wide difference between the proclaiming of the great time prophecies, with the related Bible forecasts of conditions in the last days, and the unwarranted speculation on particular happenings of the day. Surely we have a sufficiently positive and startling message for the world when we stay by the clear statements of prophecy. Of course, to a certain extent we must deal with unfulfilled prophecies; but if we will confine ourselves to what is stated by the prophet, we shall be safe. The temptation is to fill in details where the prophet is silent.

Sir Isaac Newton, who was as devout as he was learned, well remarked in his *Observations on the Prophecies* that "the folly of interpreters has been, to foretell times and things by this prophecy [of the Revelation], as if God designed to make them prophets. By this rashness, they have not only exposed themselves, but brought the prophecy also into contempt." - Page 251.

With such a wide field of fulfilled prophecy to expound to the world, how unfortunate that any should fall before the temptation to wander off into speculation on unrevealed details of unfulfilled prophecy, or to attempt to construct out of some present happening a whole chain of closely connected links to tie together that happening in direct and logical relationship to the day of Christ's coming! It is not a sufficient defense for a person who thus makes predictions to inquire, "Well, is not my explanation of the outcome of these present happenings plausible and reasonable?" Experience proves that too often in this uncertain world what is plausible and apparently reasonable today becomes impossible tomorrow. Where the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy are both silent as to the details of future events, reverence and a realization of the blunders of those who have speculated in the past prompt us to be silent also.

Fortunately, there are not many who allow themselves to fall before this temptation to speculate. Unfortunately, it takes only a few such to bring great perplexity, embarrassment, and even confusion to many. It is one thing to view with godly fear the events of our present troubled day as playing a part in the last act of this world's sinful drama, and to declare with confidence that all these events provide increasing evidence that the day of the Lord is near and hastens greatly. It is an altogether different thing to single out some particular happening, and dogmatically attempt to find in it the key to unlock the mystery of all the remaining details of this world's history. We will never go astray, nor will our message ever be brought into disrepute, if we confine ourselves to the definite utterances of the prophets. And, what is more, we will not lack for an effective, a timely, and a soul-saving message for the world in these last days.

In a closely related category is the tendency of a few to give credence to unsupported bits of hearsay concerning what Mrs. White is supposed to have said at some time or other about future events. A short time ago a worker wrote in to say that in his part of the field a stir was being created by the circulation of the story that Mrs. White had foretold by name the man who would be in charge of the United States Government when Christ returns, and that this forecast was to be found in one of her manuscripts.

It is unfortunate enough to have some one wander afield in idle speculation about future events; it is tragic when an attempt is made, even though unwittingly, to obtain the support of the Spirit of Prophecy for such speculations. Is it reasonable to believe that an important revelation to the messenger of God concerning the events of earth's last hours would await the light of day until someone heard of it through the precarious process of word of mouth, and began to broadcast it? The question answers itself. Why turn aside our ears unto fables?

We need to be careful lest our pious desire to learn more fully God's purposes for this world be displaced by an idle curiosity to discover what God has not seen fit to reveal. Let us not add to the words of the prophets, lest we come under the judgments God will meet out to such. And let us not assume the role of prophets ourselves, by attempting to dogmatize on the exact outcome of various happenings, lest we be found guilty as false prophets.

The Nature Of Christ

A correspondent writes in some perplexity regarding the nature of Christ as touching the question of whether He inherited a sinful nature, seeing He was both human and divine.

The question you raise is in an area where we can never hope to be dogmatic in our answers, because it is a question that deals with the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. No matter how we try to analyze this question or to describe the nature of Christ in relation to sin, we are left in a hopeless dilemma so far as our poor, finite minds are concerned. If we think of Christ as having no relationship to our frail natures, then it is inconceivable how He could be tempted in all points like as we are. On the other hand, if we think of Him as being filled with all our sinful desires, then we are unable to believe that He could be entirely sinless.

Only God knows the answer to these mysteries. Paul speaks of "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3). But just what we are to understand by "the likeness of sinful flesh" is not revealed in Scripture. Even though Mrs. White discusses this point at times, the essential nature of this mystery still remains, and the same dilemmas perplex our minds. In the nature of things it and the same could not be otherwise.

Here is a case where we must hold at one and the same time apparently-note the word apparently, not actually-contradictory statements, believing that in a better day than this, when we are under the tutelage of our divine Lord in heaven, we shall find the harmony between them. We must believe that Christ was sinless, for He who knew no sin bore our sins on the cross. That, the Scriptures declare. We must also believe that He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, and that He came in the likeness of sinful flesh." The Scriptures also declare this. What an amazing mystery! But how spiritually satisfying that our Savior should understand all the torments, all the spiritual anguish, of our temptations-He who never yielded to temptation and who is able to save us out of temptation.

He is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. Here is a simple statement of truth, basic to the gospel, which we may all understand and experience in our lives. It is on such great truths as this, which reveal what Christ can do for us as a result of His being manifest in the flesh, that should absorb our time and spiritual meditation. Satan, who is ever seeking to waylay even the most devout, will, if possible, so cause us to focus our thoughts on the inexplicable mystery of Christ's nature and His earthly and personal relation to the baleful mystery of sin that we shall miss the great truth that He was victor over all sin and will make us more than conquerors also.

Let us keep in the foreground of our thinking such words as these from the apostle Paul:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law ["the just requirement of the law," RSV] might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:14).

As regards the great mystery of our Lord's nature, even as with certain other mysteries presented in the Bible, we are on far-safer ground when we simply contemplate in awe the mystery, rather than attempt to solve it.

Is Man A Sinner By Nature?

A brother inquires as to the Adventist teaching concerning man's sinful state. He has always thought of each individual as in a state of "colorless neutrality" as regards sin until he comes to the age of responsibility, and that then his sinful state is the result only of his own wayward deeds. He says, 'I can't believe that opposite my name on heaven's record book is the charge that I stole fruit from the Garden of Eden. That cannot harmonize with page 276 of Early Writings, where Mrs. White speaks of certain slaves who will not arise in either resurrection. This group of slaves provides us with a test case by which to judge whether or not man is essentially evil. Doesn't her statement really prove that man is essentially neutral? These particular slaves had no opportunity to learn of God. Hence He could not take them to heaven, but neither does He consign them to punishment."

The question you raise is a very ancient one, as you well know. It happens to be a question that the Adventist denomination has never attempted to answer in any precise way. In fact there are a number of areas in theology where we as a people have, thus far at least, never felt it necessary, or perhaps should I say wise, to attempt an exact formulation of belief. Nor do I know of any statement by Mrs. White that would give a full and wholly satisfying answer to the question you raise. I feel quite sure that the one reference you make to her writings, that is, regarding certain slaves, really does not help us greatly. I think she is dealing, rather, with two other points, first, the low mental level of certain slaves that made them incapable, perhaps, of grasping truth, and second, the lack of opportunity to receive truth. I fail to see how a discussion of these two points provides any satisfying answer to the basic question you raise. Actually, I think the case of those slaves proves the opposite of what you affirm. Is not death the essence of the punishment for sin? Without sin there would be no death. If those slaves, during their lifetime, were not morally responsible for their acts, then why did God allow death to come upon them? The only answer I know is the statement of Holy Writ, "In Adam all die," which surely indicates that those slaves bore some real relationship to Adam's deed of disobedience.

You are correct if you hold that Adventists give no unqualified support to the doctrine of original sin and total depravity, any more than we give support to Calvin's doctrine of the irresistible grace of God, the predestination of some for salvation and the reprobation of others. Conversely, we give no support to the view that a man can work out his own salvation and can finally become a person blameless in nature and acceptable to God. Somewhere between these two extremes is our view of man. I don't think we are exactly in the middle between the two extremes either. Rather I believe we veer a little toward the Calvinistic side.

My own reasoning runs about as follows: Man is incapable of lifting himself above the low level on which his sinful ancestors have moved. If he were, there would be no need for the death of Christ. That inability on man's part is made very clear, I believe, in the

seventh chapter of Romans, which reveals that even though a man may wish not to do certain things, he nevertheless goes forward and does them, and ends by exclaiming, "O wretched man that I am!" That much, I think, is plainly evident from Scripture. And because of that I could not subscribe to the idea that every man's state at the outset is "neutral."

I don't believe we find our way out of this bewildering and mysterious problem in terms of a discussion of possible original neutrality for each individual. Rather, I think the way out is in terms of the free will that God has given to each man. Because of this we might say, in a sense, that at every moment of decision man is in a neutral position, he can decide to go in one direction or the other. You know, of course, the quaint old illustration of the meaning of the doctrine of election. God is always voting for us, the devil always against us, and our vote breaks the tie. Though sin has tainted man's nature "for as in Adam all die"-God. has not permitted sin to overrun or damage man's will to the extent that it can no longer function.

Hence each man can decide for life or death, can decide whether he will be a child of God or of the devil. If because of immaturity, physical or mental or other handicap, the will has no normal opportunity to function, then God makes exceptions. In such instances He employs, of course, His own infinite resourcefulness to decide whether, as in the case of the babes of Christians, the children will be given to the parents for eternity, or whether, as in the case of certain slaves, they will be allowed to be as though they had not been.

I think this question is in the same category of insoluble theological problems as the question of the free will of man versus the sovereignty of God. In this latter problem we accept both the free will of man and the sovereignty of God, and await a future day to understand fully their true relationship. In the case before us I believe what I feel is clear Bible teaching, that every man born into this world since Adam lives on a different plane from that on which Adam moved in Eden, that indeed "the whole world lies in wickedness." Consistently, I believe, further, that man is incapable of lifting himself out of the pit even though there may stir in his heart the desire to rise. But I also believe that every man is to some degree lighted by that Light from above and may set his will on the side of God so that God may revitalize him, give him a new heart and spirit, and enable him to become a child of God.

The Mystery Of The Trinity

A church member writes that he has been hearing of late certain new ideas concerning the Trinity. Evidently some whether clergy or laity, he does not indicate-are attempting to go into detail as to the relationship of the divine Father and Son both before and after the time of Adam's fall. He asks for light on the matter.

Through the long centuries of the Christian Era devout men, and some not so devout, have from time to time speculated on the nature of the Godhead. Not infrequently churchmen have even engaged in most bitter controversy over the mystery of the Godhead. One of the chief causes of the split between Eastern and Western Christendom, which occurred in the eleventh century, was over one aspect of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Such speculation is both profitless and dangerous. The Bible does not say a great deal that throws light on the mystery of the Godhead. Indeed, I don't believe it would be possible for the Bible to throw much truly helpful light on it, and for the simple reason that the Godhead involves mysteries so profound that human language is incapable of explaining them, and human minds are incapable of understanding them. "Can thou by searching find out God? Can thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job 11:7). To which Isaiah replies, "There is no searching of his understanding" (Isaiah 40:28).

On some great Bible questions silence is golden. It is more honest to admit the darkness of our own understanding than to darken counsel with words. On great mysteries of Scripture it is often far better to admit that there are apparent contradictions than to make the inevitably inadequate attempt to remove them. I confess frankly that I cannot explain how there is but one God and yet three persons in the Godhead. Nor have I ever heard anyone explain it satisfactorily. Yet I believe it. And why? Because the Book of God so declares. Someday, when by God's grace I reach that better land, I hope to begin to understand the mystery and remove the apparent contradiction.

Let us never forget that an apparent contradiction in a doctrine we believe may be strong proof, not that we hold to the incredible and irrational, but that we stand at the entry way to greater truth than men have hitherto grasped. When certain men began to believe and advocate not only that the world is round but also that men do not fall off the under side of it, they were not guilty of entertaining irrational, contradictory views, as some declared. Instead they had hold of two great truths, and awaited only a knowledge of the third, the law of gravity, in order to make clearly reasonable their belief in the first two. Gravity explained how people down under do not fall off the earth! Perhaps in the heavenly school our minds may become able finally to comprehend a mysterious spiritual law of gravity, shall I say, that enables three to be held together as one. In the meantime let us not attempt to speak of the relationship these three bear one to the other beyond the few brief and awesome statements found in God's Book.

You may be interested in what the Seventh-day Adventist statement of belief says regarding the Godhead. I give it herewith:

"2 That the Godhead, or Trinity, consists of the Eternal Father, a personal, spiritual Being, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite in wisdom and love; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, through whom all things were created and through whom the salvation of the redeemed hosts will be accomplished; the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, the great regenerating power in the work of redemption. Matthew 28:19.

"3 That Jesus Christ is very God, being of the same nature and essence as the Eternal Father. While retaining His divine nature He took upon Himself the nature of the human family, lived on the earth as a man, exemplified in His life as our Example the principles of righteousness, attested His relationship to God by many mighty miracles, died for our sins on the cross, was raised from

the dead, and ascended to the Father, where He ever lives to make intercession for us. John 1: 1, 14; Hebrews 2:9-18; 8:1, 2; 4:14-16; 7:25.”

The 144,000

A devout brother writes: “I find that our lay members are puzzled in regard to the 144,000 referred to in the book of Revelation. I have just replied to one man who wrote to me to ask if the martyrs of the Dark Ages will not be included in the 144,000, and if not, why not? Another question he put to me is, ‘Will the 144,000 be the only ones living when Christ comes?’ Can you give me some light?”

The only sources of information regarding the 144,000 are a brief passage in the book of Revelation and certain limited comments in the writings of Mrs. White. These comments are neither extensive nor precisely definitive in their nature. It is this very fact that has led to differences of views among us concerning the nature of this special company of saints.

It is proper to have an interest in any subject mentioned in the Bible or in the Spirit of Prophecy. However, the interest should be confined within the limits of the information that Inspiration has given us on the subject. If those limits are small, we should be content with them, awaiting the day when God will enlarge the borders of our understanding of spiritual mysteries. The trouble is that some devout souls feel restive when they are in a very restricted area in their Bible study. Finding no Bible texts that they can use as tools to break down the limiting walls of their knowledge, they are tempted to call on brooding speculation to do the task. It must be admitted that speculation can most effectively remove boundaries and enable the mind to soar east and west and north and south and up to the illimitable spaces above. Unfortunately, speculation lacks chart and compass-the speculator is freed from the shackles of confining space, only to discover that he has no base for his feet.

I have no new light to offer on the nature and status of the 144,000. I would refer you to the brief inspired declarations on the subject and leave the matter at that.

Speaking personally, I have never felt tempted to spend extra hours exploring a subject like that of the 144,000 and for this reason: I have always been able to find in the Bible innumerable subjects that can be explored with the light of related passages of Scripture, so that I can keep enlarging the borders of my understanding without drawing on the false light of speculation. Thus my mind is enriched, my spirit strengthened, and my understanding of the will and purposes of God ever increased. Why, therefore, should I consume in speculation the hours that could be so profitably used in exploring the numerous clearly understandable portions of Holy Writ?

What all of us need to do is to spend more time on the great elementary teachings of the Holy Word regarding salvation, so that we can be sure of entrance to heaven. If we can but enter and be seated on the last row back, let us thank God and be content. Then, if our Lord graciously calls on some of us to come forward to a special, favored status, we can go forward and hear from His lips the explanation of why we have been thus chosen. Until that day, let us content ourselves with thanksgiving to God for the clear and unmistakable declarations of Holy Writ that all of us have been chosen for salvation if we are but willing to respond to the invitation.

However, this emphasis on the danger of speculation and on the value of a simple striving to enter in through the heavenly gates does not warrant the conclusion that we should not solemnly study what the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy specifically say regarding the 144,000. If we confine ourselves to those statements, and to their practical implications for our lives, we shall be edified. Certainly we may properly seek to measure up to the requirements of those who shall belong to that select company. For example, we read of them: “In their mouth was found no guile” (Revelation 14:5).

How much of sorrow and tragedy would be removed from our homes and our churches if our lips spoke only those words that were true and uplifting. How much nearer heaven we would be every day of our lives. It is in the sense of striving to measure up to Heaven’s highest standards that the messenger of God makes the statement: “Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand.” - MRS. E. G. WHITE in *The Review and Herald*, March 9, 1905, p. 8.

False Views And True Adventism

A brother inquires: Would you describe as a real SDA a professing SDA who bitterly and completely denies the precious truth concerning the sanctuary?

I think that we place this and similar questions in the right focus when we ask ourselves: What is it that makes an Adventist different from those of other religious groups? Central to the answer is this, that he holds to certain distinctive doctrines. Our religion does not consist of emotional excitement, or of a series of airy platitudes. We hold to definite beliefs, which, to borrow the words of Holy Writ, we describe as “sound doctrine.” Doctrines are to a religious edifice what steel girders are to a material building. Without them the edifice would soon lose its shape, and collapse. There has been for years a trend in Protestantism toward minimizing doctrine. That is understandable, for doctrines have little point apart from the Bible, but the Bible has been gravely discounted in most Protestant circles. Adventists do not share this attitude toward either the Bible or doctrines. To do so would be to destroy the Advent Movement.

Now, the doctrine of the sanctuary has from the first been central to all our teachings. By a change of figure, we might describe it as the keystone of the arch of doctrine. Obviously then, a person who denies the sanctuary doctrine is something less than a wholehearted and doctrinally intelligent Adventist, no matter how much he may protest that he is a loyal member of the church.

Free Will And God's Foreknowledge

An inquirer, apparently not an Adventist, raises the question as to why God, who is omniscient, permits to be born those who He knows will choose evil and whom He will have to "consign to oblivion-or worse."

Your question is as old as Christianity. Perhaps it will never be answered to the full satisfaction of all, if for no other reason than that we can never hope to fathom the mind of God or the mystery of sin and salvation, of character development and free will.

You say, first: "It is my understanding that when a person is born into this sin-cursed world he has a free choice between doing good and doing evil throughout his lifetime. If he does good, he will be blessed with eternal salvation; if he persists in evil, he will receive eternal damnation."

It is true that a man has free will, that is, free choice. But it is also true, according to my understanding of the Scriptures, that the taint of sin is upon us from birth, that the whole human race was lost when Adam rebelled against God. The psalmist wrote: "Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). However, when man sinned he did not forfeit the power of free will. He could still set his heart to do right.

But, you may ask, what would be the point of his thus setting his will if God had fixed his status as that of a lost man? The answer is that though all men forfeit their right to life through Adam's transgression, all men may obtain everlasting life through Jesus Christ. As Paul declared: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Thus man may exercise his free will and decide either to continue on in the ways of evil or to accept the offer of Jesus Christ to walk in the ways of righteousness.

You next declare that God is omniscient, and thus knows the end from the beginning. This leads you to conclude that "even at the moment of conception, Jehovah must know whether the child to be born will ultimately be blessed or eternally damned." Accordingly, you pose the question: "With this foreknowledge, why does Jehovah permit the birth of a person He will later consign to oblivion-or worse?"

In all my thinking on the subject of salvation I, of course, take the Bible as my guide. Otherwise, I am at the mercy of airy speculations that lead me nowhere. Now, when I open my Bible I find that there is not only an omniscient God and a finite man in the picture, but also a fiendish Satan. I read of a rebellion in heaven, with some of the heavenly host deserting to Satan, and of a warfare that he has carried on against mankind since the day he drew Adam and Eve into rebellion. I read also of Satan's controversy with God concerning the reasons why men are loyal to Him. My reading of the Scriptures leads me to conclude that this world of ours, which is in rebellion against God, is a spectacle to the whole universe the heavenly hosts and the hosts of Satan. Now, obviously, something new and strange in the universe would inevitably cause questioning on the part of rational beings. We can imagine their saying, What is this new force operating? What is this thing called sin? Is Lucifer's rebellion against God based on valid grounds?

Viewing the problem in terms of my human limitations, I believe that only by God's permitting sinful beings to run their course over a sufficient time, and a sufficient series of generations, could there be provided unanswerable proof that sin is something inherently evil and destructive, which by its very nature leads only to death. If God had instantly destroyed Satan and all those associated with him, might there not have arisen in the minds of other heavenly beings the awful suspicion that God is an arbitrary tyrant? Accordingly, they would have served Him ever afterward from fear, not from love. Needless to add, all worth-while meaning would thus have been taken from the very idea of God and heaven. I cannot conceive of satisfactory relationships between sentient beings except on the basis of free will and mutual trust.

Let me focus now directly on your question: "Why does Jehovah permit the birth of a person He will later consign to oblivion-or worse?" The facts are that in the absence of a plan of salvation, every child that God permitted to be born He would later have to "consign to oblivion-or worse." The plan of salvation was God's answer to the rebellion of Satan, a divine means whereby sinful man might return to God. Yet in devising this plan God did not wish to vitiate the principle of free will, on which, I believe, His whole universe rests. The plan must not have the quality of compunction, else Satan could charge that men were in some way forced to return to God.

Now if God permitted to be born only those who would accept the plan of salvation, what would become of His purpose to permit men free choice to decide for or against Him? Would not Satan then have most plausible ground for contending that God so feared that if men were not hand-picked before birth they would decide against Him? What is more, would not the whole heavenly host be tempted to feel that God feared to let His government be on trial in terms of the free choice of His creatures? Indeed, how could sin have a chance to provide a full demonstration through a number of generations of men if God permitted only certain predetermined children to be born?

The head of a political, or other, organization might claim that all who were under him were willingly loyal to him. Would we therefore necessarily conclude that he was a beneficent leader? That would depend. We certainly would not so conclude if, upon investigation, we discovered that he had arbitrary power to admit to the organization only those who he knew for certain were agreeable to his views.

Now I know that analogies have limitations. But this analogy is the best illustration that presently comes to my mind in support of the answer I am seeking to give to your question. I see in the fact of God's not predetermining what kind of children should be born, an evidence of His settled purpose to provide full proof to the universe of the true nature of sin and to permit all created beings to have the fullest right to the exercise of free will, even from the moment of conception, shall I say? Unless the

holy beings in the heavenly universe have an opportunity to see the full out workings of sin, how can they be prepared for all the eternity of the future to agree that God was just when He finally and forever destroyed all who persisted in sin?

God is not the author of sin, but God had to grapple with it when it came into the universe. I confess that my explanation of how He has dealt with it is inadequate and does poor justice to the dimensions of the problem and the mystery of sin and salvation. However, I hope that at least in part I have provided an answer to your question.

Bible Skeptics Answered

A doctor writes, asking for an answer to the atheistic arguments presented in a newspaper "Letter to the Editor," which he clipped and enclosed. The clipping reads: "I have read the entire Bible and recall no condemnation of human slavery but many cases of endorsement, such as when the captured enemy were made slaves by God's command. Also I note that although slavery was rampant during the time of Jesus, He never uttered any condemnation of it. Paul says, 'Slaves, obey your masters.' The best thinking of an illiterate, superstitious tribal people of two thousand years ago cannot serve as a moral or social code for the present age. The average person of today is far above the writers of the Bible in his treatment of his fellow men."

The argument presented in the clipping you enclose is the stock in trade of the infidel. You will find it set forth at great length in Tom Paine's Age of Reason. Here is the way I would reply: God deals with men as He finds them. God found Israel in the darkness of Egyptian bondage with wholly perverted and distorted ideas and ethics. To have reined them up at the outset to the highest ethical standards would have brought only bewilderment and confusion to their minds. Such standards would have seemed to them unreasonable, impossible. They would have rebelled altogether.

For example, the custom at that time was that when a man was slain, a blood relative avenged his death. This seemed entirely proper to the thinking of that age. Only by a process of gradual education could that thinking be changed. Meanwhile, God sought to soften the impact of that custom by establishing cities of refuge. In that day it was the accepted code that conquered people should be slaves, that indeed a man who couldn't pay his debts could be enslaved. God did not attempt instantly to force Israel into a wholly new pattern, but He did set forth certain procedures for modifying the hardship of the slave, and as regards fellow Israelites, the freeing of the slave at the seventh year.

When the Pharisees called Christ's attention to the fact that Moses allowed a bill of divorcement, Christ declared that Moses allowed it because of the hardness of the Israelites' hearts. Then our Lord added immediately that in the beginning it was not so. That, I think, gives a clue to the whole problem of Old Testament standards. The ancient Israelites had hearts made hard by long rebellion and by living in the midst of a hardened world. God made concessions to that hardness, but the ultimate goal was to restore men to the original Edenic standard.

We must never forget that light can do one of two things for the human eye-it can illuminate the path or it can blind the eye. A person when first coming out of a dark cavern finds that the bright light of day serves only to blind him. Israel had come out of the dark cavern of a heathen environment. Only gradually could God give light to them lest they be blinded, and stumble and rebel against Him altogether.

It is true that neither Christ nor the apostles made a frontal attack upon many practices of the world in which they lived. Because a general does not lead his army in a direct assault against a city, it does not follow that he has no long-range plan to capture the city. Frontal attacks can be dramatic, but also costly in men and in the bitter hostility of a conquered people. Wise generals have found that they need only to cut off reinforcements from a city and it will ultimately fall into their hands.

There is something of this wise strategy revealed in the way Christ and the apostles dealt with the customs and practices of their day, which often stood in the way of the triumph of the holy standards that Christianity sought to promote. If Christ and His apostles had spent their time fighting slavery, for example, they would have appeared to be simply disturbers of the political and social order. But they wisely chose not to follow the negative course, which would merely have earned them death before they had ever gotten beyond their negative onslaught. Instead, they chose to present certain new and challenging ideas, which if accepted and practiced would ultimately result in the overthrow of the entrenched and evil customs of that ancient civilization.

For example, Christ by His very life, and by His compassion for the needy and unfortunate, quietly but mightily rebuked the rich, who so often ground down the face of the poor. Who could ever forget His parable of the rich man and Lazarus? Who could forget His words: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"? Or His words: "One is your Master, even Christ; and all you are brethren"? Or the impressive example He set when He washed the disciples' feet-the Master becoming the Servant?

Now when the disciples went out to preach Christianity they did so in terms of presenting to the world the spotless life and teachings of Christ. Thus they brought to all men a wholly new code of human relationships. Paul well sets forth this new, strange idea of a heavenly democracy in these words: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). How could men possibly take hold of Christianity without coming to the realization that it demanded a wholly new view of one's fellow man?

For an exhibit of how the apostle Paul sought to show this new relationship of man to man, read his letter to Philemon, whose slave Onesimus had run away and come to Paul. Since Philemon had accepted Christianity, he could hardly resist Paul's persuasive appeal to apply Christianity to his dealings with his slave. Paul appealed to Philemon to take back Onesimus, "Not now as a servant [doulos, "slave"] but above a servant, a brother beloved." (Philemon 1:16). Strange that infidels are able to find Paul's command to the slaves to be obedient to their masters, but are unable to find his appeal to Philemon. Paul started, not with an attempt to raise rebellion in the heart of the slaves, but to encourage compassion and Christian brotherhood in the heart of the masters. The wisdom of that course is evident to all.

But lest the infidel think that he can score at least a partial victory by an indictment of the Old Testament, with its evident concessions to human darkness and hardness of heart, let me add this to what I said at the outset:

In addition to the clear evidence in the Old Testament that God sought to mitigate the hard lot of the slaves that Israelites might have, there is Positive evidence that He set before Israel a higher level of human relations. God said to Abraham: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect.-In other words, the goal set before Israel was that they should emulate in their lives the ways and practices of God, so that they would ultimately be like unto Him.

God declared that He would be a husband to the widow and a father to the fatherless. There are repeated declarations in the Old Testament that the fatherless and the widow were to be given special regard. Heaven's wrath was ever upon the oppressor of the poor and the defenseless. Through the prophet Micah God set this code before men: "To do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8). If all men dealt justly and loved mercy, would anyone be oppressed by his fellow man? Through Isaiah the Lord uttered a rebuke to those who went through the form of religious fasting, but at the same time were guilty of violence, and then added: "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou sees the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from your own flesh?" (Isaiah 58:6, 7).

Much more like this might be quoted. Hence, it is clear that though God made concessions to Israel's spiritual blindness and hardness of heart, He ever and anon kept setting before them a better and higher standard, even the standard of perfection. What strange eye defect is it that enables skeptics to see God's permissives to sinful men, but not His sublime and perfect standard, which He ever encourages men to reach? What weird mental malady permits infidels to become fervently indignant over the fact that Christ never campaigned against slavery or other injustices, but causes them blandly to pass by the standard He set for all who would enter heaven? We would ask them to focus for a few moments on the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, in which Christ declares that those who finally enter heaven will be the merciful who feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and care for the sick and imprisoned. See also James 1:27.

And why do atheists forget that though the Lord patiently bore with the defects and hardness of Israel, He clearly warns us against following in their steps? (See 1 Corinthians 10:1-12.)

The skeptics, in their affected holy indignation, are forgetful that God is merciful and long-suffering; He makes concessions to men's weaknesses while ever pointing them to something better and higher. Do the skeptics think that they could improve on this divine method?

Tithe And Federal Taxes

A brother writes to ask about the payment of tithe on one's income before Federal income tax is deducted. He states that some in the church who have high incomes find that their tax is so large that a 10 per cent subtraction from income, before tax, is a heavy charge. He declares that a person who is in the highest tax bracket, and must pay 91 per cent on the top part of his income, would actually be paying out more than his whole income if he paid tithe before subtracting his tax. He wishes to know what the denomination says on the matter.

Let me begin my reply by quoting the text of an action taken by the General Conference in 1943 Autumn Council assembled:

"WHEREAS, The Lord says that His people are to bring all the tithe into the storehouse and receive from Him a blessing; and.

"WHEREAS, Throughout our history the visible blessing of the Lord has rested upon this people as a result of their faithfulness in recognizing God's ownership by the payment of the tithe; and,

"WHEREAS, It is our understanding that Government taxes on earnings or salary whether withheld at the source or otherwise, should not in any way diminish that portion of the income which we recognize as being the Lord's; therefore,

"We advise all our believers that according to our best knowledge we should adhere to the principle under which this denomination has carried forward its work from the early days, and not permit income tax or any other expense from the salary to affect that portion reserved by God for Himself. This would mean paying tithe on the full salary and earnings before any deduction and payment has been made by way of income taxes."

With this action I find myself in full agreement. I see no reason for deducting, before paying tithe, the Federal taxes any more than the city, county, or State taxes. All taxes are levied on the assumption that in return for the tax paid the citizen receives certain services. These services run all the way from sewer and garbage disposal, through police protection and park beautification, to Federal aid and national defense. If all these services ended, we would soon return to the tribal or family pattern and spend our time and money providing as best we could the various services and protection we needed. And that certainly would cost money.

I do not believe that the mere fact that the tax grows higher as the income rises is in itself a valid argument to offset what I have said. Those who declare that to pay tithe on the income before the high tax is paid might wipe out all spendable income, have forgotten an important fact. Let us imagine that a married Adventist brother in the United States receives a one-million-dollar income in a year, that he has no deductions, and that he files a joint return. (To keep our illustration simple we will ignore the \$1,200 exemption allowed on a joint return.) The total Federal tax that could be assessed against this one-million-dollar income would be \$859,640. Now according to the General Conference recommendation, he would pay \$100,000 tithe, that is, 10 per cent on this one-million-dollar income. But that \$ 100,000 is a tax-deductible item. If the brother did not pay this tithe, then this \$100,000 of his income, as well as the remaining \$900,000, would be subject to tax. Hence he would actually have, for his personal use, not this

\$100,000, but only \$9,000, for the Government would collect \$91,000 of the \$100,000 as a Federal tax. Hence the brother's "take home pay" from his income of one million dollars is reduced only \$9,000 as a result of his paying his tithe on the one million dollars. Or let me state it this way: While the tax on one million dollars is \$859,640, the tax on \$900,000 is \$768,640, that is, \$91,000 less-the amount by which his tax is reduced by his paying \$100,000 in tithe.

The same rule applies with regard to a man's freewill gifts to the church, to educational institutions, and to various other tax exempt organizations, up to a possible total of 30 per cent, or \$300,000 of his one-million-dollar income. If he gives this \$300,000, the Government tax applies, not to the one million dollars, but only to the \$700,000 remaining. Actually, the higher the tax, the lower, percentage wise, is the amount that comes out of a man's net income as a result of his gifts to the church. Those in the high-income bracket really have an incentive to faithfulness in tithe paying and liberality in offerings.

Weapons Of Warfare In Heaven

A sister inquires: "What kind of weapons were used in heaven during the war in which Satan was cast out?" She also asks what happened to the ark when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem.

I know nothing more concerning the war in heaven than is contained in the brief record of Scripture, and that record is open for all to read. It makes no mention of weapons. I think it is profitless for us to attempt to find answers to questions of this character. The Bible warns against trying to be wise above that which is written. We are capable of understanding things only within the context of what we see about us and of experience. We can but dimly comprehend life in any other world than ours. That there was war in heaven is evident from the text. Exactly what form that conflict took, we know not. But we do know that it ended victoriously for God. That is the great truth that the revelator is seeking to present. Milton, in his *Paradise Lost*, describes the climax of that great war in these dramatic words:

"Him the Almighty Power Hurl'd headlong flaming from the ethereal sky, With hideous ruin and combustion, down To bottomless perdition; there to dwell In adamant chains and penal fire, Who dares defy the Omnipotent to arms."

Now, of course, this is poetic license, with a bit of bad, sulphurous theology thrown in for good measure in the closing lines. Milton was simply drawing on his imagination, as anyone else must do if he is to go beyond the brief declarations of the Bible. But to build on the imagination is a very unsatisfactory foundation for any kind of scriptural belief. Let us be content with the glorious fact that God was victorious.

You ask also regarding the ark. Mrs. White states that it was hidden before the destruction of Jerusalem, but that in the last climactic hours of earth's history it will be brought to light again. See *The Review and Herald*, March 26, 1908. See also the *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1109, where the quotation from the *Review* is given.

Why Was "Strong Drink" Permitted?

A brother asks for an explanation of the permission given to the ancient Jews to spend money "for wine, or for strong drink." (See Deuteronomy 14:26).

Let me confess at the outset that this is a hard text, but no harder than some other texts in the Old Testament. For example, those texts that permit slavery, polygamy, or the securing of a divorce on grounds other than adultery I think there is only one answer to the problem represented by these texts. It is the answer that our Lord gave regarding the Mosaic permission to secure divorce on various grounds: "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives" (Matthew 19:8).

The Lord "suffered" the ancient Jews to do many things that were short of the heavenly ideal. He dealt with them as He found them at a certain time in history, and carried them along as rapidly as they were willing to be led, seeking ever to bring them onto higher and still higher ground. He gave them certain light, as much light as they could stand. Always remember that light can do two opposite things: it can light the path or it can blind the eyes that one stumbles and falls. It all depends on how much light is suddenly presented. As I have more than once stated: If a person has come out of a very dark cave, he can stand only a little light without becoming blinded. Israel had just come out of the darkness of Egypt and could not stand even to look upon Moses face, which gave but a mild reflection of the glory of God.

When the Christian church was founded, the same problem of limited capacity to understand Heaven's principles was evident. Though Christ had instructed His disciples for three and a half years, He declared, at the close of His ministry, "I have yet many things to say, but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4: 18).

12. Ellen G. White

The Inspiration Of The Prophet

A brother writes to confess his confusion of mind as to the relation between the inspiration of the prophet-specifically Mrs. White-and the frail humanity of the prophet. In other words he wonders how we can know when Mrs. White is speaking by inspiration and when she is simply giving to us her own finite thoughts as a human being. He inquires: "May we, as we read her writings, say: Here she speaks by inspiration, there she is expressing only her own thoughts?"

I don't know that it will ever be possible for us finite creatures in our sinful state to know in all instances where inspiration ends and the finite aspect of the prophetic messenger begins. When God said to Moses to take off the shoes from his feet because the ground whereon he stood was holy, there is no record that God marked out with stakes or in any other way the dividing line between

that holy ground and the unsanctified desert. There must have been a dividing line somewhere, but I'm sure that Moses erred on the safe side in walking a long distance away from the burning bush before he put on his sandals again.

Or let me state the matter another way. When a light shines brightly, it illumines a certain area, but ultimately we come out to the periphery, where there is shadow and darkness. I think of the revelations God gives to His prophets as so many lights that shine in a dark world. While we are standing safely near the light we have no question about the shadows. But with a revelation, as with any other light, we finally reach the far edge of the circle of light, where the shadows begin and the night comes on. In other words, there is a point where inspiration has finished its task of lighting the way; for we must remember that God has not given all light on every detail to us.

I am thoroughly persuaded that the light that comes down from God to illumine a prophet's mind is a pure light, free from all error and all distortion. I feel that while I'm walking in that light I can be safe and sure in my path. Beyond that I can't be sure. I have never tried too hard to discover just where the divine ends and the human begins. I'm afraid I might find myself confused and bewildered. That applies to the Bible prophets as much as it applies to Mrs. White.

I never cease to marvel at the contrast between the power of Elijah on Mount Carmel and the weakness and fallibility of Elijah a few hours later when he argued with God and made a very great mistake in arithmetic. He thought that he alone served God, but God informed him that there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Skeptics jeer at this fallibility of Elijah and would throw a shadow over all his life, even over Mount Carmel. But I am unimpressed by such jeering. I am sure the light on Mount Carmel was from Heaven and thus his message to those sullen Jews was from Heaven. I am equally sure for the Bible so declares-that his later discussion with the Lord was a display of his own thinking and that he was grievously mistaken in his conclusions.

I am fully persuaded that when Mrs. White declared she had a message from God for the Advent people or for some member in the Advent cause, she meant what she said, that she said the truth, and that therefore that message should be received as from God. Indeed, I believe that when we read any of her books, consistency calls for us to take the position that the entire writing is inspired even though each chapter may not specifically declare that its message came from God. Otherwise we fall into the modernist error of picking and choosing inspired parts. Modernists say, not that the Bible is the Word of God, but that it contains the Word of God. And they, of course, feel they must decide which parts are truly inspired. How can we claim to be able to do with Mrs. White's writings what we declare the modernists are incapable of doing with the Bible? Or how can we consistently reason that God guided the minds of the ancient prophets from the first to the last of the books they wrote, thus giving us sure guidance through them, but that He failed to do that with the prophet He gave to the remnant people today, thus leaving us in uncertainty?

When Mrs. White wrote, for example, a personal, informal letter to some friend or relative, I do not believe that there is necessarily any inspiration in it, nor did Mrs. White so claim. Nor need we attempt to take the impossible position of trying to square every remark she ever made or every act she ever performed, with an idealistic conception of infallibility and perfection. Why claim more for her than for Elijah? She made no such claim.

I think we need have no perplexity or fear whatever as to the divine origin of Mrs. White's revelations. I believe them firmly and fully and thank God for them daily. There would really be no Advent Movement today if it had not been for the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy to guide us through the troubled years of our history. Of that I am also fully persuaded.

Are Mrs White's Writings Applicable Today?

A brother inquires: "I would like to know whether the writings of Mrs. White were for the age in which they were written, or whether God spoke through her for all His people down to the close of time. Are the Testimonies, which all members are urged to possess, which are supposed to be a guide, and from which our ministers quote, as wholesome and pure and binding today as they were in the day in which they were written? Do you consider the attached quotations, which are from the pen of Mrs. White, as sound advice for our young people today?" Accompanying the letter were several pages of quotations from Mrs. White's published works that discuss standards, especially in regard to social activities and sports, and plead with our youth to flee the pleasures of the world.

I believe that in general we should view Mrs. White's writings for the church in the same way that we view the writings of God's prophets of former ages. Was the Bible written for a particular time, or was it written for all time? The answer to that question is the answer, I believe, to the question you raise concerning Mrs. White. However, we all know that some Bible statements have special significance for a particular time, rather than for other times. For example, Paul's statement that he would not suffer a woman to speak in the church. Only recently I answered a question from someone who was troubled by this text, and wondered whether it applied today. I replied that the principle Paul was discussing still applied today; namely, that all things be done decently and in order. In his particular day the application of that principle called for silence on the part of women in church, but the application of the principle in our day does not require that. This, I believe, is as good an illustration as I can find of how the principles set forth by the prophets apply in all ages; but the application of them may differ with different times and places.

I see no reason for raising any question concerning the principle set forth by Mrs. White in the quotations you enclose. Believing as I do that she had the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy, I believe what she wrote. That does not mean that I cannot inquire into the particular setting of any statement that she made, even as I inquire into the setting of the statement Paul made concerning women speaking in churches. I am not thereby questioning Mrs. White's inspiration; I am merely seeking to discover how a statement made by her applies.

I think some of her statements with regard to certain activities that brought forth those statements. At one time she wrote something very critical of bicycle riding. That was in the early days of bicycles, when there was literally a craze for bicycle riding, tournaments, and races. We can easily see what Mrs. White was dealing with. The simple act of bicycle riding was not the object of her censure. Rather it was riding in a certain context, the context of overdoing, of excitement, of competitive sport. This is an illustration of what I mean when I say that we sometimes need to know the historical setting in order to escape giving a wrong interpretation to Mrs. White's words.

So much for the clarification of this point as to how to understand certain of her statements. Of course, the real question is, What shall we do with her counsel? Would that our people, particularly our youth, gave more heed to what she has written regarding sports and pleasures. What a change it would make in their lives.

Since the quotations you enclose from Mrs. White's writings deal with sports, let me enlarge a little on the broad subject of sports and pleasures. Sports and worldly pleasures invite from every side. They seem to be the devil's chief devices for keeping our minds turned away from serious questions that affect our eternal salvation. The problem is not new; it is very ancient. The ruins of the great cities of the Roman Empire reveal the remains of vast amphitheaters, where every kind of pagan entertainment was offered. There stand revealed also the ruins of vast stadiums, in which sports of every description were held. When the holy apostles warned against the pleasures of the world, they must surely have had prominently in mind these great centers of pleasure and sports.

The apostles well knew that the Spirit of God does not hover over such places, that the angels of God do not abide there, and that therefore the child of God should not be found there. And have the angels of heaven changed their habits since that time? The question is as elementary as that, regarding many matters of entertainment and sports. The distinguishing mark of the Christian is that he walks, not alone, but with the angels. If we would but keep that simple fact in our minds, it would save us much hairsplitting over the question of social activities and amusements. To our youth and some who are older, who ask in a tone of incredulity: "What's wrong with it?" we would respond with the question: "Do you think your guardian angel would enjoy going there with you?"

If ancient Rome had allurements to entice from heavenly thoughts the minds of men two thousand years ago, how much more does our modern world have them? At least men were not enticed in ancient times if they stayed home. Today the temptation is real and ever present in our parlors. The radio and the television offer us sports and pleasures, drama and prize fights, for the mere turning of a knob.

To those among us who might quibble, contending that there is a vast difference between what the television presents and what the theater shows, let me present this item of news: The movie makers and theater owners are in great distress because of the slump in attendance at movies since the advent of television. Did the former movie-loving multitudes suddenly desire a much higher grade of entertainment and hence turn in droves from the movie houses? Let those believe that who can. The explanation for the slump in movie theater attendance is obvious: People can now obtain from their television essentially the same kind of pleasure and excitement that they formerly enjoyed at the theater without having to leave their own homes. Are we joining with them in that kind of pleasure in our homes?

But whether we find such pleasure in our parlor, or at a theater, or at the sports arena, the result is the same. We acquire a feverish taste for unheavenly food, a kind of food on which the spiritual life cannot thrive. We shall grow in grace, ready for the day of our Lord, only as we breathe the air of heaven and partake of the food of heaven. Separation is still the price of holiness, and that separation includes our withdrawal from a wide range of earthly pleasures and activities.

Perhaps some may exclaim that such a withdrawal cuts us off from almost everything. True! And so does climbing a high mountain. We have joined the Advent Movement because we seek to ascend to heaven. Right now we are in transition. We have left the valley, its people, and its pleasures, and are getting us up into the mount. Soon we hope to complete the journey. Soon we anticipate being gathered into the circle of the good of all the ages, into the fellowship of an innumerable company of angels, and into the presence of God Himself. Yes, the price of holiness is separation. But the reward of holiness is a new and holy fellowship forevermore.

Faith, Reason, And Revelation

A brother wishes to know whether we are to consider that all that Mrs. White wrote is to be accepted literally today.

Your question is one that presents itself from time to time in connection with statements in the Bible as well as in Mrs. White's writings. Much of our difficulty would be cleared up if we kept in mind the fact that the prophets of God set forth, not only principles, but sometimes also specific applications of the principles to particular times and situations. Now, obviously there is a difference between a principle and the specific application of it at a particular time. The principle endures, but the application may change. Let me cite an illustration from Scripture:

It is a divine principle, often enunciated by the prophets, that mortal man should display reverence in the presence of God, but the application of that principle to man's conduct in the presence of God may change with different times and in different lands. When Moses drew near to the burning bush the Lord instructed him to take off his shoes from off his feet, for the ground whereon he stood was holy. Only thus could Moses rightly display an attitude of reverence in that Oriental land. I do not believe the Lord would make that statement to us today in the Western world. I would imagine His saying to us to take the hat from off the head, for that is what we Occidental men do when we come into a holy place.

There is another point that we ought all to remember if we are to reach safe conclusions regarding the application of inspired instruction. Namely, that circumstances, as well as time and geography, can alter cases. That is well illustrated in the matter of the show bread, which, according to the Mosaic law, was to be eaten only by the priests. But our Lord mentions the fact that David and his men, when famished, partook of the bread and evidently were blameless.

The same rules apply to the writings of Mrs. White. We find, for example that she set down, early in her years of writing, the divine principle that we should care rightly for our bodies. In those earliest writings she presented a certain application of this principle; namely, that it would be better not to go to the regular physicians. In recent times a few of our people who seem to have an antipathy toward the medical profession have quoted some of those earlier statements by Mrs. White and have thought that she supported their anti medical position. But her early statements with regard to doctors are simply an application at the particular time, and under the particular circumstances, of the principle that we should care rightly for our bodies. When she wrote those statements doctors were not really aiding men to get well, but rather lessening their chances, by prescribing many dreadfully poisonous drugs. The principle Mrs. White set down remains the same today as when she first stated it; the application of it-the caution about doctors-obviously changes if the doctors change. Mrs. White herself consulted regular physician in later years. Whether Mrs. White would criticize present-day physicians, and on what points, it is idle to speculate. But this much is certain: the practice of the doctors in the 1860's, of prescribing heroic doses of such deadly drugs as opium and strychnine, finds no true parallel today.

There is another illustration in the counsel she gave concerning dairy products. Mrs. White wrote most stringent statements against dairy products in her earliest testimonies. She wrote much less stringently later on. Here is a case where we have the prophet herself, in a sense, changing her position, or so it would appear, and critics seek to make capital out of it. But a careful study reveals that Mrs. White has not contradicted herself; she has not gone contrary to her enunciated principle that we should care rightly for our bodies, and that central to such care should be the right kind of food. When we look into dairy conditions at the time she first wrote, as compared with dairy conditions today, we easily see a reason for the change in emphasis in her writing. And only as we see this can we refute the critics.

Though it is true that changing conditions and circumstances may change the application of a divine principle, the heavy burden of proof, rests upon the man who declares that conditions have sufficiently changed to require a changed application of the principle. In other words God's prophet need not defend himself for what he has written in application of a principle, but the uninspired sons of men, living at any subsequent date, must show just cause why the principle should no longer be applied as the prophet originally applied it.

Right here, of course, is where we come into the debatable realm of the use of reason. I believe that reason should always be second to faith and humbly restrained in the presence of inspiration. But I do not think that reason is necessarily evil. God gave us our leads and intended us to use them. And if we use our heads while bowed on our knees, we will greatly reduce, if not wholly eliminate, the tension between reason and revelation.

There seem to be a few among us who study the Spirit of Prophecy with an eye to discover, not how they may learn the will of God for them, but how they may find reasons for carrying out their own wishes. Then there are a few at the other extreme who declare with what seems, sometimes, a slightly holier-than-thou note, "I am just simple enough to believe that Mrs. White meant what she said and that is that."

I think both extremes are wrong. One unduly exalts human reason, and the other debases it. I am afraid of my reason when I find it inventing arguments to enable me to do what I have always wanted to do, and the doing of which is apparently contrary to the revealed will of God. The Bible has much to say against the validity of human reason, as opposed to the mind of God. On the other hand, I am afraid of those sincere, ardent souls who would shut off the intellectual processes when viewing the text of inspiration. What strange, fanatical excesses have plagued the church through the centuries as a result of that attitude!

It is hard to improve on James White's phrase concerning the place of reason in such matters. He spoke of the use of "sanctified common sense." Unquestionably Mrs. White always meant what she said; but it does not therefore follow that I immediately understand all she has said, or that I can always hope to understand or to apply rightly her words, merely by looking at one isolated statement. The careful, conscientious student of Scripture never thinks of doing that with Bible writers. We must compare one statement with another.

While we are in this mortal state we shall never discover exactly the middle of the road between these extremes. But I think if we keep ourselves constantly aware that there are extremes, and seek to avoid them, and if in humility we constantly fall on our knees to plead for wisdom from above to direct rightly the operations of our minds, we shall not go far astray in applying the text of inspiration to our times and to our own lives.

Reason Versus Revelation

A brother writes that during his rather brief period of church membership he has read extensively in Mrs. White's writings "and finds many of her teachings both unreasonable and unscriptural. His problem, he says, is how to react such teachings without rejecting the Adventist belief that Mrs. White holds a "peculiar position" in the church.

You say that you find many of Mrs. White's teachings "both unreasonable and unscriptural." Evidently I am to conclude from your letter that you believe that your human reason is an adequate and wholly safe guide in determining whether Mrs. White is reasonable, and that your understanding of Scripture is a wholly safe guide in determining whether her understanding of Scripture is correct.

My dear brother, the problem you raise lies at the heart of the whole modernist mood toward the Bible. I've talked with quite a few modernist theologians, and they say the same things about the Scriptures that certain critical Adventists say about the writings of Mrs. White. The similarity between the reasoning of the modernist and the critical Adventist always startles me. The modernist asserts that his reason is his safe guide, and, consequently, if there is something in the Bible that seems to him unreasonable, therefore it is

unreasonable. And if his mind is unable to harmonize the statement of one Bible writer with the statement of another, he does not hesitate to say that one is contradicting the other, and therefore both statements cannot be accepted.

And how do Bible-loving Christians meet the modernist's attack on Scripture? By challenging the validity of his reason. We declare that revelation stands above reason. In so doing we do not make unnecessary or meaningless the faculty of reason. We simply assert that reason can be tainted with evil, the same as every other faculty of our being, and thus the wisdom of man becomes foolishness with God. We assert that inasmuch as the Bible gives clear evidence that it is a book written by inspiration and its source is God, we shall not put it again and again to the test whenever our human reason-fails to see the reasonableness of some particular statement within its pages. Rather, we believe, we should humbly confess that our reason is faulty, and that what appears to be unreasonable or contradictory may indeed be a higher reason than we understand.

In other words, as Bible-believing, Christians we hold firmly to our major premise that the Bible is the Word of God. We hold this because of adequate proofs, and holding this, we logically go on to challenge our reason and not the Bible when we are tempted to conclude that the Bible is unreasonable or contradictory. This is the classic position taken by conservative Christendom through all the centuries. I do not see how any other position can be taken if we are to preserve the Bible against an endless series of indictments by poor human reason until the last man has done his last bit of reasoning in the history of mankind.

Likewise, I think that our first concern in regard to Mrs. White's writings should be whether there is sufficient evidence to justify her claim that she possessed the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy. The claim is either false or true. If false, we can quickly dispose of the whole problem by denouncing her claim and eliminating her writings from our libraries. But if we feel there-is evidence to support her claim, consistency demands that when we are tempted to conclude that a statement in her writings is unreasonable or antis question our reason rather than her-statement.

My dear brother, we don't have to go very far to find arresting exhibits of the undependability of human reason. The judges on the Supreme Court bench may decide four to five on a certain case, five saying that one conclusion is reasonable and four saying that it is wholly unreasonable. Nor need we search long in the history of religion to find sobering exhibits of how good men-yes, often most pious men-have differed in their interpretation of Scripture; which simply means that their reasoning was not always valid.

Mrs. White holds a "peculiar position" in our church because we believe that she possessed the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy. But to say that we believe that she possessed that gift, and then to add that her writings, which are the gift in action, are often "both unreasonable and unscriptural" is to me an impossible position to take. All we need to do is to look at our modernist friends to see the result of taking that kind of position. They will tell you ardently that they believe in the Bible, and then they will add immediately that they believe some of its statements are unreasonable and also contradict other statements in the Bible. We consider their position as untenable because it tends ever to debase the Scriptures, and thus to remove them from their unique position as the authoritative guide for our lives.

So, my dear brother, at least this much can be said in response to your inquiry: The problem you raise concerning inspiration is certainly not new, or minor.

Long ago I settled for myself the question of whether there is sufficient evidence to warrant my accepting Mrs. White's claim that she possessed the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy. As I have viewed her lifework in relation to this Advent Movement, and studied the whole sweep of her writings, I have come firmly to the conclusion that she was what she claimed to be, a handmaiden of the Lord who was in the true succession of those who have had the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy.

I freely grant that there are some statements in her writings that seem to my finite mind not altogether reasonable, and some that I cannot at this moment fully harmonize with certain statements in the Bible. I say that frankly and without embarrassment, and add immediately that there are some passages in the Bible that do not seem to me reasonable and that I cannot harmonize with certain other passages in the Bible. I think that even the most devout of Christians would make such a statement concerning the Scriptures. But we do not therefore give up the Scriptures. We give up, rather, our overconfidence in our own reason and in the validity of our interpretation of some particular scripture. I do likewise in relation to the writings of Mrs. White. I know no other truly reasonable course to follow.

FOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT MRS. WHITE

An inquirer writes: (1) "I have always understood that Mrs. E. G. White spoke and was commanded to write by divine authority." (2) "I have met church members who did not believe in her divine connections at all." (3) "Some discard her writings because, as they say, Mrs. White is dead now. Times and living conditions are different today. We live in a modern age that she never knew about. We cannot attract and hold new converts if we use her teachings." (4) "The big question in my mind is this: Is our Seventh-day Adventist denomination deliberately letting down the bars and lowering our former high standards?"

1. You are correct in understanding that "Mrs. E. G. White spoke and was commanded to write by divine authority." This has ever been the position taken by the church. We must either take that position or reject her as a fraud, for she declares repeatedly in her writings that God gave her messages for the church. Unless we thus believed concerning her how could we maintain that the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy has been manifested in the remnant church?

2. There is nothing new in the fact that some in the church today doubt Mrs. White's claim to inspiration. There have always been those who discounted that claim when they did not openly oppose it. James White, in one of the first pamphlets ever published by our people (*A Word to the Little Flock*), tells of the skepticism of some. None of the prophets of God escaped such skepticism. In fact, the writings of the Bible prophets have been the object of more skeptical attack than anything Mrs. White ever wrote.

Some claim that there are contradictions in her writings, and a lack of harmony with the Scriptures in various instances, and therefore she may be discredited. I like to think that there are not many among us who take such a position. But all such should remember that atheists have used exactly the same kind of arguments against the Bible writers, the only difference being that their arguments are more extensive and, if anything, more plausible. Note that I did not say true, simply plausible. No one will question this statement who has read the writings of a critic of Mrs. White and a critic of the Bible like Thomas Paine.

But do we therefore discredit the Bible? We do not. We refuse to focus on the few instances in which dark and apparently contradictory statements are found. We take the Bible as a whole, we note its grand theme and message, we observe its effect on the lives of those who follow its teachings, and from all this we draw the conclusion that the prophets and apostles wrote, as they claimed, by inspiration of God. The devout Seventh-day Adventists, with full intellectual honesty, can as rightly do the same regarding Mrs. White's writings.

3. I have never been able to understand why we should discard Mrs. White's writings simply because they were not written within the last year or two. True, some things she wrote did have a local application, even as was true of the Bible.

But that does not mean that her writings have no significance for us. About the year 1902 the manager of one of our sanitariums wrote Mrs. White as to whether she thought he should buy an automobile to bring patients from the station to the sanitarium. That was in the days when cars were in the experimental stage and were very costly and undependable. Also, the roads were bad and cars often broke down trying to travel over them. Mrs. White counseled him against buying, declaring that it was an unwarranted luxury and that he would set before our people a wrong example.

Now obviously we would not want to quote her 1902 letter as proof that no one should buy a car today. On the other hand, we do not need therefore to conclude that her writings are out of date. We see, instead, in her counsel in this instance, certain principles regarding careful spending, and setting a right example. These principles are the enduring aspects of her message to the manager, and any unprejudiced person should find little difficulty in discerning this fact. The particular incident of the car purchase is little more than the framework in which is placed a picture of principles that are enduring. The framework has a useful function in holding the picture in place, but it is not the picture. Why throw away the inspired painting simply because the frame, constructed out of finite human incident and action, seems now out of date?

Inasmuch as counsel for the children of men must necessarily be in terms of the concrete experiences of men, how else could a prophet present great principles for our guidance than by using the framework of passing incidents? Prophets do not live in a vacuum. If we are to discard Mrs. White's writings because they are interwoven with particular time-dated incidents and experiences, then with equal logic we must discard much that the Bible prophets wrote. And indeed that is exactly what many skeptics do. We think them mistaken, and they are. We think likewise that Mrs. White's skeptics are mistaken.

4. To the last question: "Is our Seventh-day Adventist denomination deliberately letting down the bars and lowering our former standards?" I would respond emphatically No. The standards of the church are set forth in the Church Manual, which can be changed or revised only at a General Conference session when representatives from the whole world field are present. By that Manual all the ministry are governed, and all our membership should be. Though there have been changes in the Manual at times, those changes have never been in the direction of lowering standards, rather the reverse. That is specifically true regarding belief in Mrs. White's writings.

If a member, or a minister, lowers the high standard by his words or deeds, we may rightly grieve. But such an individual lowering should not be held against the church as a body. All through the history of Christendom there have been those who failed to measure up to the high standards of Heaven. That was true—even in apostolic times. It will be true till the end. We cannot safely focus our eyes on the member who lowers the standard. Our eyes must be lifted upward to heaven and to the divine standard for all our lives, even God's holy commandments and the example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

MRS WHITE AND HYPNOTISM

A brother inquires as to whether Mrs. White unqualifiedly condemns hypnotism, and what position the denomination takes on the matter.

There has been much discussion of late regarding the possible value of hypnosis in the treatment of the sick. A hundred years ago there was a similar great interest. Inasmuch as hypnosis had then come into vogue as a result of the special activities of a man named Mesmer, it was often described as mesmerism. More or less related was an allegedly scientific study of the mind known as phrenology.

It is both interesting and significant that from the very earliest of her writings and onward through the years Mrs. White spoke out unsparingly against hypnotism. It was because of this, and because today there is a great revival of interest in hypnosis, that the General Conference made a statement on the matter at the 1955 Autumn Council. This statement, drawing on Mrs. White's words, warned our Adventist medical men and institutions against the use of hypnosis.

The question as to whether Mrs. White does really condemn hypnotism unqualifiedly, grows out of her statement in volume 1 of the Testimonies, page 296 "Phrenology and mesmerism are very much exalted. They are good in their place, but they are seized upon by Satan as his most powerful agents to deceive and destroy souls."

Certainly this brief passage, standing alone, seems to condone a certain use of "mesmerism." And if so, then Mrs. White in this one passage seems definitely to go contrary to the wide array of explicitly condemnatory declarations that she made on the subject over an extended period of years. We know of no other line in her writings that speaks of mesmerism, that is, hypnotism, in other than condemnatory language.

Shall we say, therefore, that Mrs. White contradicted herself, that she really believed that hypnotism had a certain proper place? Such a conclusion is not at all necessary. All of us know that certain Bible passages, standing alone, seem to go contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture. And what do we do in those cases? Do we quickly decide with the infidel that the Bible contradicts itself? No. We follow the sound principle of interpretation that the brief difficult passage that seems contradictory, should be interpreted by other, more detailed and often more explicit statements. We never allow ourselves to forget that though God inspired the prophets in a miraculous way, He did not see fit to perform continuing miracles to protect the writings of the prophets from clerical errors in copying.

Hence, at times we find that what seem at first to be contradictory statements on the part of Bible writers may be explained simply as clerical errors in the transmission of the writing. A choice illustration of this is John 3:13:-And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." The clause "which is in heaven" has perplexed Bible readers, for Christ was on earth at the time He uttered these words to Nicodemus.

The difficulty, however, immediately vanishes when we discover that the most ancient Bible manuscripts-not known at the time the King James Version was brought out-do not contain this clause. Hence it is not found in the various modern translations of the Bible that are based on all the manuscript knowledge now available.

Here seems evidently to be a clear case of error in transmission of manuscripts. Somewhere along the line the clause crept in. However, this lone passage, though it explicitly declares that the Son of man "is in heaven," has never caused any Christian to believe that Christ was not actually on the earth at the time of Nicodemus. We have simply allowed the difficult clause to remain unexplained and have accepted the vast array of Bible passages, which make clear beyond all doubt that God was, indeed, manifest in the flesh.

Her Testimony Against Hypnotism

Returning, now, to the apparent conflict in Mrs. White's statement concerning hypnotism. Let us look at the record in support of my introductory statement that Mrs. White, through all the years of her writing, took a position consistently opposed to hypnotism.

Almost immediately after she began to have visions, some declared that these visions were the result of mesmerism, and a certain noted mesmerizer claimed she was an easy subject, and that by hypnotizing her he could easily give her a vision. The story of this incident is found in Early Writings, page 21. Here is what she said to the hypnotist: "I told him that the Lord had shown me in vision that mesmerism was from the devil, from the bottomless pit, and that it would soon go there, with those who continued to use it."

In 1849 Mrs. White wrote that some ministers, attempting false revivals, employed mesmerism, and thought it was the power of God. She declared that they were under the "deception of the devil." (See Early Writings, pp. 43, 44.)

In 185P she had a vision dealing with spiritualism. In this vision she tied together spiritualism and mesmerism. (See Early Writings, Page 59.)

In 1862 she declared that mesmerism was one of the ways through which Satan comes in contact with men, (See Volume 1, Page 290.) We shall return to this reference a little later, for it is in this extended discussion of "the science of the human mind" that there is found the difficult passage mentioned above.

In 1889, in a letter to a physician Mrs. White rebuked him for using a "mesmeric influence" on his patients.

At the turn of the century she wrote to another prominent physician, who was then the medical superintendent of one of our large sanitariums. It is plain from what she writes that she is dealing with the matter of hypnotism. Note these lines:

"I am so weighed down in your case that I must continue to write to you, lest in your blindness you will not see where you need to reform. I am instructed that you are entertaining ideas with which God has forbidden you to deal. I will name these as a species of mind cure. You suppose that you can use this mind cure in your professional work as a physician. In tones of earnest warning the words were spoken: Beware, beware where your feet are placed and your mind is carried. God has not appointed you this work. The theory of mind controlling mind is originated by Satan to introduce himself as the chief worker, to put human philosophy where divine philosophy should be.

"No man or woman should exercise his or her will to control the senses or reason of another, so that the mind of the person is rendered passively subject to the will of the one who is exercising the control. This science may appear to be something beautiful, but it is a science which you are in no case to handle." -Medical Ministry, Page 111.

Counsel to Publishing House

Mrs. White's continued condemnation of hypnotism is revealed in a letter she wrote in the year 1901 to the managers of the Review and Herald for accepting as commercial work the printing of books on hypnotism. At that time our major publishing houses sought to augment their volume of business, and thus their income, by taking in commercial work. Mrs. White inquired:

“Shall its managers consent to be the agents of Satan by publishing books dealing with the subject of hypnotism? Shall this leprosy be introduced into the office? Shall the institutions which have been kept before the people as holy unto the Lord become schools in which the workers eat the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge?”

“If you should gain millions of dollars by work of this kind, of what value is this gain when compared with the terrible loss that is incurred by giving publicity to Satan’s lies?” - Letter 140, 1901.

In 1905 Mrs. White made this further statement: “Men and women are not to study the science of how to take captive the minds of those who associate with them. This is the science that Satan teaches. We are to resist everything of the kind. We are not to tamper with mesmerism and hypnotism, that science of the one who lost his first estate, and was cast out of the heavenly courts.” - Medical Ministry, pp. 110, 111.

This traces Mrs. White’s statements from 1845 to 1905. They are clear,- numerous, and emphatic. All of them bear the same testimony, a withering denunciation of hypnotism. How then are we to explain the one brief, perplexing passage from volume 1, page 296, that apparently gives at least a partial endorsement to hypnotism?

This statement appears in the heart of a chapter in volume 1, pages 290-302, entitled “Philosophy and Vain Deceit.” It is an indictment of Satan in his devious attempts to control the human mind. The three opening sentences present the theme of the chapter:

I have been shown that we must be guarded on every side and perseveringly resist the insinuations and devices of Satan. He has transformed himself into an angel of light and is deceiving thousands and leading them captive. The advantage he takes of the science of the human mind, is tremendous. Here, serpent like, he imperceptibly creeps in to corrupt the work of God.”

A Reasonable Solution

The clue, I believe, to the solution of the difficulty growing out her one apparent endorsement of hypnotism is found in comparing her article in volume I, which was written in 1862, with something that she wrote in 1884, in the Signs of the Times, under the title, “Sciences, Falsely So Called.” In her Signs of the Times article Mrs. White draws heavily from her 1862 statement. Here, in parallel columns, are the perplexing portion of her 1862 statement and that part of her 1884 statement that obviously deals with the same point. I have italicized the key sentences:

The Testimonies statement, 1862

He works cures, and is worshiped by deceived mortals as a benefactor of our race. Phrenology and mesmerism are very much exalted. They are good in their place, but they are seized upon by Satan as his most powerful agents to deceive and destroy souls. - Testimonies, Volume 1, Page 296.

The Signs statement, 1884

In many cases the imagination is captivated by scientific research, and men are flattered through the consciousness of their own powers. The sciences which treat of the human mind are very much exalted. They are good in their place but they are seized upon by Satan as his powerful agents to deceive and destroy souls. - Signs of the Times, Nov. 6, 1884.

Note that in her 1884 statement Mrs. White did not use the words, “phrenology and mesmerism.” She wrote, instead: “The sciences which treat of the human mind.” We earlier noted the opening sentences of the 1862 statement, which declared in part: “The advantage he [Satan] takes of the science of the human mind, is tremendous.” Mrs. White was not indicting any and all study of the human mind and its operations. That is evident from her 1862 statement, “They are good in their place.” But it is a significant fact, we believe that the 1884 statement “They are good in their place,” does not have as its antecedent “Phrenology and Mesmerism,” but simply the general declaration: “The sciences which treat of the human mind.”

All this leads to the conclusion that in connection with the publication of the 1862 statement, there may have been a clerical error of some kind. As earlier noted, there have been errors of copyists in connection with the transmission of the Bible manuscripts, and there are a few definite instances where errors of a similar kind have occurred in connection with the publication of Mrs. White’s writings. Fortunately, in some instances we have had her original handwritten manuscript that enabled us to make the correction.

A Question of Antecedents

I believe that an entirely reasonable explanation of the difficult 1862 passage is to be found in the assumption that the word “they” in the sentence, “They are good in their place,” really should refer back, not to “phrenology and mesmerism,” but to the general field of the “sciences which treat of the human mind.” No one will question that Satan has sought to seize upon all the sciences that deal with the human mind in order to pervert them to his own ends. Mrs. White’s 1884 statement is both a warning and an encouragement. It warns us against the dangers that lurk in the study of the sciences of the mind and also assures us that “they are good in their place.” Thus, if rightly used, they can render a proper service for the doctor, the minister, and others.

Right on this point it may properly be remarked that there has unfortunately been much loose talk as to the propriety of Adventist doctors or ministers studying the subjects of psychiatry and psychology. Some have sought to prove by Mrs. White’s writings that we should shun such subjects. But the term “phrenology” stands for something quite different from what it did in 1862 when Mrs. White spoke critically of it. At that time “psychology” was about in the same category with phrenology. The present sciences of psychiatry and psychology, when studied within the framework of the basic premises that control Adventist thought can

indeed serve a useful purpose. There would be a sad lack in the circle of our medical men if we had no well-trained psychiatrists, who in turn quite frequently have associated with them well-trained psychologists.

Nor would I say that psychology may not be rightly included as a subject for study on the part of the minister. Certainly the mind of man is a part of the whole man. Why go up only as far as his neck in studying the man? But it is proper to remark here, with all the emphasis I can command, that too many textbooks in this field are written by men whose basic premises are certainly not in line with those of Adventists. Hence we must be on our guard when we read text books that deal with the operation of the human mind. In many such textbooks there are areas of subjective thinking and speculation that are not found in textbooks on the heart, lungs, liver, stomach, or other parts of the body.

Those of our ministers who study the subject of psychology need always to remember that God is the author of the human mind, and that the true functions and operation of the mind can rightly understood only in the setting of revelation. We must ever guard against the subtle implication in too many works on psychology including some that deal with pastoral counseling-that if we can discover how a man got into his wrong pattern of thought, we can reorganize him and put him on the right track without fail. The trouble with that reasoning is that there is just enough truth in it to make it plausible and thus deceptive.

Unfortunately, there is much more to the problem of man than showing him how he got on the wrong road. There is the problem of the free will of man and the interaction of man's free will with his sinful heart. We are not, in the last analysis, very logical creatures, even though we do have minds. We are often creatures of our sinful desires. Indeed, our minds are often the servants of our passions and our prejudices.

If we are to walk safely in the area of psychology and all related subjects that deal with the mind, we must ever remember that we deal with two mysteries, the mystery of iniquity-how sin taints and distorts a man's vision and desires. And the mystery of godliness -how God, in a manner beyond scientific analysis or comprehension, can enlighten the eyes of a man's understanding and empower him to walk in the way of righteousness.

Rightly employed, "the science of the human mind" may have a proper place in pastoral service, but at best it should have definitely a secondary place. Wrongly employed, it can become a snare and a delusion to the minister and to those to whom he ministers. And, if we read Mrs. White's writings correctly, such delusion reaches its most sinister form when "the science of the human mind" is so debased as to have one mind control another-that is, to employ hypnotism.

Coming back now to the specific problem of hypnotism: For any thorough-going Adventist Mrs. White's unqualified and repeated indictment of it settles the matter. However, quite apart from what she has written we may rightly view with alarm any procedure that would bring the mind and will of one man under the control of another. The will is the fateful control center of human destiny. God has given to each man free will, the right of choice, the power to decide on a course of action. On that fact rests the doctrine of the moral accountability of man, before both God and men. Remove man's power of choice, his freedom of action, and you have removed from him his true dignity, his moral significance.

Surely God must have placed great importance on freedom of will. How else can we explain His long-suffering in permitting evil men to exercise their free wills for so many millenniums? It is an awesome fact that though God is omnipotent, He has never attempted to overwhelm our wills, or to make us mere automatons who, willy-nilly, do as He might bid. One of the paradoxes of redemption is that when we become servants of God-for we are bought with a price-we truly become free. That is why the Bible says so much about the liberty of the gospel.

On the other hand, as the Scriptures make plain, the devil has ever sought to control and dominate men's wills, so that they are mentally and morally his abject slaves. That is one of the terrifying facts about man's mortal enemy.

A Long, Wrong Step

When physicians move beyond the circle of long-established techniques and therapies for the diagnosis and treatment of diseases, and seek to employ hypnosis, they most certainly take a very long step. They move into an area unmarked by dependable or truly objective clinical data; an area where subjective opinion rules, and where the approved, objective results of scientific work are exchanged for speculative theories.

Physicians-may rightly be concerned about the minds as well as the bodies of men. All success to our diligent Christian psychiatrists. But to seek to control the will and the mind of a man is, I believe, a wrong road to travel in any attempt to care for either the bodies or the minds of men.

Some among us will be tempted to feel that I am out of my depth in discussing the whole subject and am therefore out of order in speaking so positively to our doctors. I willingly grant that I know little about the mysterious subject of hypnotism and man's will; I insist only that all others, doctors included, are in essentially the same position. We deal with a mystery when we deal with the free will of man, which so primarily controls his life, his personality, and his eternal destiny. I might add that through the centuries ministers have probably had the closest acquaintance with this mystery. And to the degree that we are acquainted we utter a warning.

To those who feel that any warning word here offered is naught but an exhibit of that mood that holds back great scientific progress-in this instance, progress in medicine-I reply with a statement recently made by Dr. Walter C. Alvarez, emeritus consultant in medicine, Mayo Clinic-a physician highly respected in the medical profession.

A Medical Authority Speaks

"Every so often there is a flare-up in interest in hypnotism and one reads of operations performed during a hypnotic trance; also of babies brought into the world while the mother was freed of pain.

“People are now writing to ask me if hypnotism will cure their nervousness or their tendency to alcoholism, or if it will help them to lose 75 pounds of weight!

“I have been reading articles and looking through a few books on hypnotism and the impression I get is that the procedure will give a woman a strong suggestion that she should recover but, like all suggestions, its effects are likely to fade. Hence, I do not feel like having my patients treated with this method.

I would suspect that there are grave defects in the technique because, although for a hundred years, again and again, men have become enthusiastic and have used the method and publicized it widely, it has never been used by the rank and file of neurologists and psychiatrists.

“That it has dangers is shown by reports of persons who have remained nervously upset for some time after a short period of hypnosis. Before me is a letter from the mother of a young woman who 18 months ago went up on a stage to be hypnotized.

“The mother says that ever since, her daughter has been ‘completely haywire.’ She considers herself in love with the man who hypnotized her and is giving him all the money she can lay her hands on. She has left her lovely home and has deserted her husband and two children.

“Naturally the woman’s family is heartbroken over the affair. Without knowing all the details, no one can say how much of this tragedy is due to the hypnotizing and how much to an ordinary ‘case’ on an interesting man, but certainly, getting hypnotized ‘for fun’ did this woman no good.

“I think people would be wise to wait a while to see if the present flare-up of interest in hypnotism gets stronger or if the fad fades out, as it has always faded out in the past. “Reprinted by special permission of the Los Angeles Times (from the issue of Oct. 13, 1957) and the Register and Tribune Syndicate.

Evidently Dr. Alvarez hardly shares the enthusiasm that some manifest in hypnotism!

Adventist physicians and Adventist medical institutions should be in the forefront in battling for the health of men, ready to employ the very latest of soundly approved, clinically established medical procedures. But hypnotism, I believe, cannot thus qualify. Even today, with all its bizarre results, it is not an objectively established medical procedure. And certainly it cannot be described as among the latest techniques. Satan was busy with it ages ago, and Mesmer did not enhance its standing medically when he dabbled with it 150 years ago.

www.CreationismOnline.com