



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Flirting with the Enemy
2. Reaching the Mind
3. Getting Rid of the Enmity
4. Saying No to the Emotions
5. Confusing Possibility with Responsibility
6. Attacking the Last Generation
7. Finishing the Reformation
8. Can One be Loyal to Laodicea?
9. Return of the True Remnant

FLIRTING WITH THE ENEMY

LIFE on planet earth today is a despairing scene of righteousness in reverse. The deeds of carnal excess, immorality and unspeakable perversion have produced a baleful harvest.

We are daily reminded by commentators that over a million American teenage girls become pregnant each year, and four out of five of them are unmarried. Polls reveal that almost 80 percent of young people see nothing wrong with premarital sex. Homosexuality and abortion are legally approved and publicly practiced with a minimum of outraged protest. Godly families and individuals find themselves almost beleaguered in an alien world of entrenched evil. Perplexed parents wrestle with decisions about their children's education, and how they can be protected from permissive sex education which also provides the tools for illicit indulgence.

For the first time true Christians are beginning to understand what Jesus meant when He said, "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16:15. Even though all is not grossly obscene, there is a fleshly flavor to those things which occupy the time and thought of most Americans today. The glittering, artificial world of entertainment has confronted many sincere Christians with a crisis of conscience. Even that which passes for innocent family fare is serving the purposes of Satan's artfully structured campaign against truth. Beyond the rock-porn music, the drugs, the alcohol and the sex, lies a shadowy realm of compromise in which the church and the world carry on a cozy camaraderie. This is the sphere of the "highly esteemed." Here is where the children of the flesh and children of the spirit sit together to watch the nightly offerings of the television networks, and to applaud the glittering stars in their tawdry roles.

In this exciting dimension of life, there are no restricted sections for Christians and non-Christians. All crowd the same bleachers to scream support for the idolized performers on the stage and field.

Is it important that we talk about this comfortable collusion between such ideological enemies? I think so. Something is wrong when saints and sinners enjoy the same brand of entertainment and laugh at the same jokes. Indeed, I believe that a proper understanding of this paradox can lead to the salvation of millions who now perceive no inconsistency in such congeniality. It will be the purpose of this book to show that Satan's last-ditch attack against Seventh-day Adventist Christians will be based upon an incongruous, cordial relationship between the church and the world.

We shall learn why Satan is so determined to make God's people sin, and why he always attacks them through the medium which appeals to man's strongest emotions. James wrote: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this ... to keep himself unspotted from the world." James 1:27. If the secret of a true relationship with God is to resist even the smallest contamination of the world, we certainly need to find out what the "world" consists of and why it is such an enemy of God. Spots of worldliness here and there cannot be a part of true religion. A clean separation is required.

A great controversy has been raging for six thousand years between Christ and Satan, the flesh and the spirit, and the church and the world. Eyewitness reporters have preserved careful accounts of the tides of warfare as Satan's army has repeatedly laid siege to the camp of the saints. Those records have been divinely protected in order that we might be able to study the tactics of our great enemy. Never has it been more important to recognize the weapons and the battle plans of the one who is committed to our destruction.

We can truthfully say that one of the chief themes of the Bible is God's salvation plan to produce a holy, obedient people, and Satan's program to make man disobey. Very early in the conflict Satan charged God with making impossible demands. The law was ridiculed as too strict for fallen man to obey. By these accusations, he sought to justify his own course of disobedience. Convinced that neither Adam nor his descendants would ever be able to overcome sin, Satan gloated over the prospect of forcing God to change His plan and take sin into heaven, or else to concede that His plan of salvation was a failure because no one could qualify for entrance there. Thus was born Satan's obsession to fulfill his own prediction, and to keep every human being under the bondage of continued transgression.

Clearly then, the human race is the focus of a tremendous controversy. Since the justice and integrity of God has been challenged before the universe, the issues to be settled are of eternal cosmic concern. The outcome of the conflict will either jeopardize the security of an ageless future for billions of beings, or it will eternally remove all grounds for questioning ever again God's dealing with His creatures.

What a staggering thought it is that you and I are to play a crucial role in the outcome of this awesome contest! Every time we fight our own little battle against temptation, we are truly a part of that larger conflict, the results of which will affect God's honor throughout the inhabited universe. The great controversy between Christ and Satan is not being fought on some faraway galactic battlefield millions of light-years from planet earth. It is taking place this very moment in the arena of your heart and mind.

How few there are who understand the vast consequences of these personal struggles against Satan's wiles! But Satan himself is fully aware of what is involved. This is his last chance to attack God's character and government, and there is no lack of determination and zeal to keep every soul from claiming a total victory over sin.

REACHING THE MIND

IT should be a surprise to no one that the great deceiver directs most of his sneak-attacks against the human will and conscience. If he is to alienate us from God, Satan must somehow gain control of that citadel where all the life functions are centered. As a master of the mind sciences, Satan understands and uses the avenues of the senses to communicate his message to the brain. Without question, the most effective way for him to lead into transgression of God's law is through the appeal of the sensory powers.

By means of the corrupt channels of communication which dominate our present evil world, Satan accesses the powerful visual and auditory paths to reach and captivate the mind-the control center of all decision and action. Understanding the vulnerability of that mind, he has exploited the natural laws which God set up for the protection of our mental and physical powers.

One of those laws decrees that by beholding we become changed. Our loving God intended that this divine principle would operate for man's total sanctification and perfection. By choosing to look at scenes of purity and righteousness, human beings could cooperate with the Holy Spirit in restoring the image of God to fallen man. Notice the beautiful possibility that the Creator opened up for every individual. He made the mind with the fantastic ability to fully conform to the messages communicated through the five senses. As the network of ten billion brain cells conveys the sights, sounds and sensations of the outside world, that data feeds into the memory base of the brain. There a permanent record is kept of the sum total of all sensory information obtained. From this pool of stored knowledge, the thoughts and imagination are drawn, and commands are sent forth to each organ of the body to perform its appointed function.

Through the process of this marvelous computer power operating under the influence of the Holy Spirit, God has promised that His own mind can be reproduced in those who will consent and cooperate with Him. But everything depends upon the willingness and ability of the person to choose the right pictures and sounds to be transferred into the brain. Only those whose minds are fully under the control of God will be able to make the right decisions all the time.

Somewhere in that soft mass of miracle cells, God buried deeply and securely the power of free choice. In that center of reason and will, no outside force is permitted to intrude. Here the final decisions are made as to what the eyes will gaze upon, the ears listen to, and the tongue speak. In this cloistered sanctum of the mind, the deliberate choice will ultimately be made as to whether this brain and body will receive immortal existence or suffer an everlasting death.

Can't you imagine how Satan exulted when he understood for the first time how God's defense hinged entirely upon man's free-will choices? If nobody cooperated with God by allowing the Holy Spirit to monitor those messages into the brain, then none would be able to gain the victory over sin. With delight Satan recognized that God had left the way open for him to have equal access to the avenues of the mind. All he needed to do was entice people to feed their sensory powers with evil sights and sounds. Since God had created the mind to be molded by external influences communicated through the senses, Satan would have one last opportunity to win his war against God. He had failed to take God's place in the temple in heaven, but he still had access to the human temples of those whom God was depending upon to vindicate Him. By controlling their bodies and minds, Satan could still frustrate the whole plan of salvation. If God could produce no one with victory over sin, He would be acceding to Satan's accusation of requiring too much from His creatures.

I hope by now we are beginning to understand why the devil is so intent on using physical appeals to draw us into sin. There has been an unfortunate attempt by many in the church to downgrade any attention to these external stimuli. It has been made to look like nit-picking or legalism for anyone to be concerned over what we see, hear, touch or eat. Yet we can see that these are the most popular attack routes to corrupt the mind. As we proceed with our subject, we

shall discover that these sensitive lanes of temptation are not automatically secured by an initial commitment to Christ. There are deliberate and determined actions that we ourselves must take in order to be properly protected. The real secret of victory in the mind is to rightly understand the strength of a sanctified will. The more we study about it, the more amazed we are. The will actually contains the main switch which directs all the actions of the human organism. Here is a sovereign personal power that God Himself will not interfere with. It is one of the great distinguishing factors between man and beast. An animal may look very much like a human being, but he has no power of will, conscience, or reasoning mind.

Some time ago, I read about a scientist who was experimenting with a monkey to discover what human characteristics it might possess. The research scientist was trying to get the monkey to put some simple puzzles together. There was very little cooperation, and the man finally decided that the monkey might be embarrassed by his presence, so he slipped out the door and knelt down to peer back through the keyhole at the monkey. Imagine his surprise to see the monkey on the other side peeping through the same keyhole at him. So he found at least that monkeys have the human trait of curiosity. Unlike the monkey, though, we have a will and a power of choice.

Whether you are saved or lost will be determined entirely by the decision of that will. If you choose to be saved, no devil can stop you from being saved. If you choose to be lost, God Himself cannot prevent you from taking such a step. You might ask, "How can Satan hurt me then if he cannot interfere with my will?" Although the devil can't keep you from choosing to be saved if you want to be, he can make an indirect attack upon your will through your emotions. The greatest enemy of your will is your dependence upon feeling. It is possible for your emotions to be so affected, so deeply stirred, that they will completely overrule the will. As long as the kingly powers of sanctified conscience, will and reason are ruling over the emotions, they are very wonderful. Emotions serve a place in religion, in love, and in friendship, but powerful emotion can suddenly surge out of control, paralyzing the will completely. One of the greatest dangers we face today is the snare of Satan to weaken the will through unsanctified, uncontrolled emotions.

The devil knows how strong those tides of human passion can be, and he has learned that certain sights and sounds have a fascinating appeal. He has fabricated an illusory society that flashes and glitters. Just turn the pages of modern magazines and you will see where the most attractive ads are to be found. The forbidden pleasures of sin are usually advertised with the sharpest colors, the loudest music, and the brightest lights. Our enemy is lurking at every gate of our senses hoping that his emotional appeals will open the way for him to enter our minds.

Now someone may ask the question, "Why is it that the most alluring things are also the wrong things, as far as God is concerned?" I believe we can answer that question. Suppose we put down a column of figures on a board with several digits in each number. Then draw a line to add up and get the sum of those figures. How many possible wrong answers could we get? We could come up with multiplied millions of wrong answers. But how many right answers could we get? Of course, only one would be possible. The devil is able to paint his pictures with false colors and deception. He can use tinsel, false excitement and lying delusions in presenting his temptations. God will only use one picture to attract us and that is the true picture. Things are not

really what they seem to be when it comes to dispensations of the evil one. There is a false security and counterfeit peace which stems from the devil's masquerade of carnality. 9

GETTING RID OF THE ENMITY

THE Bible designates two things which are at absolute enmity with God. It should be forever settled that no type of truce or compromise can bring these adversaries of truth into harmony with heavenly things. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Romans 8:7. "Friendship of the world is enmity with God." James 4:4.

Don't miss the amazing relationship between these two definitions. This enmity has always been at the heart of the great controversy. The disobedience of Adam and Eve corrupted their natures to such a degree that they could no longer obey the law of God. Paul stressed that the carnal mind "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Romans 8:7. So the major effect of sin was on the mind of man. It could no longer love and harmonize with the things of God. That fallen mind was now more drawn to love the flesh and the world than to love spiritual things. No wonder, then, that the carnal mind and the world are both described as the "enmity." They are intimately related. Satan uses the "world" and its attractions to assault the minds of all Adams descendants, because their fallen nature makes them easy targets for such appeals.

In the Bible we are admonished, "Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15. James wrote, "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." James 4:4. Here the lines are drawn so that no one can misunderstand-either, we love God or we love the world. WE CANNOT DO BOTH! To love the world is to be an enemy of God-to be separated from Him. Here are two relationships which cannot co-exist. It must be one or the other. Paul described the enmity this way: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and: these are contrary the one to the other." Galatians 5:17.

The ability of man's fallen mind to turn back from its captivity to Satan is rooted in the promise of a Redeemer. God opened that door of deliverance when He said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." Genesis 3:15. This was the first indication that the human family would have another probation. Through Christ, the seed of the woman, man could break with his self-imposed servitude to Satan, and make the decision to obey God once more. Without a Saviour to provide the power, fallen man had no hope of ever feeling enmity against Satan. Not one of us, in the flesh, has the ability to choose not to sin.

The sinful nature which we inherited from Adam carries with it a predisposition to disobey God. We have no choice about being born with that nature, but now, through Christ, the promised seed, we do have a choice as to whether we continue yielding to the weaknesses of that nature.

Through conversion and sanctification, we may have the carnal mind totally transformed into the mind of Christ. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Philippians 2:5. "But

we have the mind of Christ." I Corinthians 2:16. "Christ hath suffered for us ... arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." I Peter 4:1.

This brings us back to the marvel and mystery of the mental process through which the Holy Spirit is able to effect this change. We often speak of giving the "heart" to Jesus, but we really mean that the mind has been yielded. Conversion involves a decision of the will to allow the Holy Spirit to exercise total control of all brain functions. Henceforth, the messages sent forth through the maze of neural connections will be in obedience to the brain's Spirit-charged command center. For as long as we consent, the power of God will continue to flow through the nerve communication system to every part of the physical organism, producing obedience. This is what it means to have the mind of Christ.

Ellen White wrote:

"The brain nerves which communicate with the entire system are the only medium through which Heaven can communicate to man and affect his inmost life." Testimonies, Vol. 2, p. 347.

But even though the converted mind is no longer carnal, the inherent fallen nature is not removed from the child of God. This is what produces the titanic life-or death struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. By exploiting the weaknesses of that fallen nature, Satan's goal has always been to gain access to the mind and wrest away the central switchboard so that he can start manipulating the lines of communication to the rest of the body. So the real struggle is for control of the mind. Whoever rules there will also be able to dominate every other area of life.

While the Holy Spirit abides at the seat of reason and choice, Satan can find absolutely no entrance. Unless the will is influenced to make a deliberate decision to change masters, the mind of Christ will prevail. The interesting thing is that both Christ and Satan have access to the mind through the same physical pathways of the five senses. Those sensory faculties are absolutely helpless, in themselves, to offer any defense against outside invasion, because they function on the level of the fallen nature. Only as they receive orders from the Spirit-fortified brain are those ports of entry able to close the door against Satan's intrusive efforts.

Now we will be better able to understand why the "carnal mind" and the "world" are both defined as enmity against God. Satan's only hope is to get rid of the mind of Christ, the converted mind, and put the carnal mind back in command. But he can do that only by securing the consent of that precious sovereign will which God placed in each brain package. To entice the will to let him come in, Satan is confined to the appeals he can make to the fallen nature through those physical senses-sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. Here is where the world enters as a part of the enmity to Christ. The Bible uses the term "world" to describe every external, fleshly influence which the devil has devised to attract the soul into sin.

In his perverse wisdom, Satan has produced in this electronic age an unbelievable array of exotic temptations. He knows that they must be alluring enough to overwhelm the mind. In order to capture the will of committed Christians those glittering attractions must be cleverly disguised to make sin appear unobjectionable. Satan has no qualms about using subterfuge and deception. As a master psychologist, he conceals the ugly and evil under a gleaming facade of beauty. Our

Lord warned that even the elect would be almost overcome by the last-day delusions of the great counterfeiter and deceiver. (Matthew 24:24.) The servant of God wrote:

"Satan will try to deceive, if possible, the very elect. Most seducing influences will be exerted; minds will be hypnotized." Testimonies, Vol. 8, p. 293.

Again she wrote:

"Cheap unsatisfying pleasures are made all in all in this degenerate age. Satan throws his glamour around these amusements which eclipse eternal things ... worldly pleasure will appear more desirable than the heavenly birthright." Upward Look, p. 39.

In anticipation of that "hour of temptation" when Satan will consolidate all his weapons against the remnant, warning after warning has been woven through the inspired counsels of God. Especially are we urged to be on guard against those infatuating attempts to breach the barricades of the mind. Since the mind was made to conform to the messages communicated through the physical senses, those avenues must be especially protected and defended.

"For thousands of years Satan has been experimenting upon the properties of the human mind, and he has learned to know it well. By his subtle workings in these last days, he is linking the human mind with his own, imbuing it with his thoughts; and he is doing this work in so deceptive a manner that those who accept his guidance know not that they are being led by him at his will. The great deceiver hopes so to confuse the minds of men and women that none but his voice will be heard." Mind, Character and Personality, p. 698, 699.

It would be well for us to think deeply about the deceptive ways in which Satan can manipulate people's minds without them being aware of it. It is frightening to realize that we can be unconsciously influenced to think Satan's thoughts by allowing wrong sentiments to reach the brain. In these days of subliminal advertising and out-of-control media entertainment, Seventh-day Adventist Christians have never stood in a more threatened position. It is only by cooperating with heavenly agencies that the mind can retain its heavenly mold.

God's secret for victory has always involved a separation from those sights, sounds and sensations which mesmerize the mind. From Eve and David we learn how dangerous it is to linger and look upon that which can lead to sin. Like Joseph, we must often turn and flee physically from the magnet of inviting temptation. The emotions can be overpowered and the will paralyzed if we allow ourselves to smell the aroma of sin, or gaze on the beauty of sin, or listen to the soft sounds of sin. In order for the converted to stay converted, there must be a deliberate withdrawal from the presence of recognized evil. How thankful we can be that God always opens our eyes and makes us aware of the enchanted ground. Total victory is available only through surrender of self, renunciation of the world, and dynamic decision and action.

It is the will which is responsible for deciding and acting against temptation. The power to deny self and say NO to the most alluring form of sensual appeal has been made available to every child of God. This is how Moses "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer ... than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Hebrews 11:24, 25. This was

the secret of Joseph's strength. Potiphar's wife said, "Lie with me. But he refused." Genesis 39:7, 8. How that word rings and resounds with the power of a committed will. They refused! God did not refuse for them. He gave them the desire and the strength to resist, but that refusal sprang from their personal decisive choice to obey God rather than self. God had given them a mind to reason with, to choose with, and to refuse with!

Were those horrendous spiritual tests in line with Satan's usual method of trying to make people sin? Indeed Moses and Joseph were confronted with such an overpowering appeal to the natural, carnal appetites that we almost tremble for them as we read the account. The place, time and circumstances of their temptation must have been adorned with all the powerful factors that Satan could put together as an appeal to youthful emotions. But they refused! Thank God! Had they made the slightest concession to the flesh, their wills would have wavered, and the rest of the story would be quite different in the Bible. A little leaven of sin can gradually break down the spiritual barriers and invade the soul.

Now consider the example of another young man who faced the same physical temptation that Joseph faced, but he did not turn and flee from it. Samson started out with all the assets of a holy, consecrated life. He had been separated by special vows of devotion to God and his people. Then slowly the Nazarite youth began to incline to the indulgent lifestyle of the neighboring Philistines. Little by little his association with the enemy of Israel led to admiration for them, and especially for one designing ' woman named Delilah. By each succeeding compromise, he breached the conditions of his dedication to God. Finally, only one outward symbol remained to remind him that he had been set apart for a special work of deliverance for his people—his unshorn hair. Inevitably the cascade of capitulation led to that tragic moment when he weakly betrayed the final secret of his miserably desolated life.

Like so many other stories in the Old Testament, this one was also written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Samson teaches us that we cannot gain the victory over a foe that we secretly admire. We can't mingle with the impure and remain pure. We can't tease and trifle with sin without being contaminated. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition." I Corinthians 10:11.

What "things" is the inspired apostle referring to? What happened to the Israelites which provides counsel and direction for us today? Read the previous verses and you will discover that Paul is talking about breaking God's law. The very words used in the recital exposes the nature of the transgressions which served so effectively in destroying thousands of them almost on the borders of Canaan. Notice what forms of temptation were the most successful in drawing them away from God—"fornication," "play," "lust," "eat and drink." Does that sound familiar? All those words are associated with physical pleasure and entertainment. They ate and drank and lusted and "rose up to play...and the people were naked." Exodus 32:6, 25.

If we tried to describe the vulgarized world of media entertainment today, we could think of no better words than those used in this description of Israel's folly. When all other Satanic programs failed to halt them in their march toward the promised land, the enemy played his trump card, and assailed their senses with wine, women and nakedness. Those whose minds were not

fortified with an unwavering faith in God's law of love were swept into an orgy of uninhibited sexual indulgence.

Inspiration reveals that this will be a final resort of the enemy in seeking to destroy modern Israel. "By worldly friendships, by the charms of beauty, by pleasure seeking, mirth, feasting, or the wine cup, he tempts to the violation of the seventh commandment.... So now it is by leading the followers of Christ to associate with the ungodly and unite in their amusements that Satan is most successful in alluring them into sin." Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 458.

If our great enemy was able to destroy three thousand of the Israelites at Sinai through feasting, playing and nakedness, how many Seventh-day Adventists will fall prey to these devices just before the heavenly Canaan? We have proven that Satan's frontal line of attack is emotional and mental. Today he has a million times more equipment to corrupt the morals and destroy spirituality through the avenues of the mind than he did at Baal-peor. God's servant tells us that two subtleties will be the most successful in alluring God's people into sin-association with the ungodly and uniting in their amusements.

Just as Israel of old represented God's only earthly means of communicating His message, so there is only one people today who have the fully restored truths of history to share with the world. We need have no illusions about the type of attacks we can expect from our great enemy. They will be launched against the mind, and they will contain the very same elements which worked so well to keep Israel out of the promised land.

Satan is more desperate now than ever before in trying to prove that God's law cannot be obeyed. The great experiment will soon be over. In his limited, remaining time, Satan is determined to throw everything in his arsenal against the little remnant who still believe that total victory is possible. He has no problem with those who already agree with him. Most of the Christian world, and many Seventh-day Adventists, believe that sin is of such a nature that it can never be overcome in this life. If God is able to vindicate and defend His character against the charges of Satan, He will have to produce a people who have overcome all sin. His gospel is designed to accomplish that very work, but only those who believe it can be done will cooperate with Him in such a purifying program. Those who see the required righteousness of the saints as totally imputed and never actually experienced, will certainly make no provision to live without sin. Only those who do believe it possible to live holy righteous lives will "make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Romans 13:14.

Right now would be a good time to pause and ask yourself whether you belong to that little company who will have the privilege and honor of vindicating God before the universe. Do you believe that the gospel of Christ is able to destroy all the works of sin in your life? Will He give you power over some sins, but for some reason, deny you the victory over others? Can He abide in the heart which is tolerant of even one sin? I hope your answers to these questions remove every tiny doubt that you can be a part of this grand cosmic experiment to cleanse the universe of sin.

SAYING NO TO THE EMOTIONS

JESUS taught that it is our responsibility to say no to those things which appeal to the self-nature of fallen man. "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Mark 8:34.

Surely our Lord establishes in these words that there must be a constant resisting and rejecting of those things which cater to the physical propensities. Do we imagine for a moment that there will be no struggle or battle involved in this process? The clamor of fleshly desires will turn every life into a battlefield. Satan will take the opportunity to display before the senses those physical attractions which six thousand years of experimentation have proven to be the most powerful in securing the consent of man's will. Whether a person is converted or unconverted, his fallen nature is tempted by those appeals of the flesh. James describes it this way: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." James 1:14. This is just another way of saying that the sinful nature is strongly drawn or "enticed" by such attractions.

Now let's answer an important question. What does it mean to deny self, and who has the power to do it? The dictionary defines the word "deny" in this way: "withhold, refuse to grant, disallow." Can't you see how the will is being appealed to through the fallen nature? Some answer is required-either to refuse or accept. Jesus said that if any man chooses to follow Him and be a Christian, there is only one possible answer to be given. Self must be denied. The will must withhold and refuse to grant the urgent petitions of the self-nature to indulge the flesh!

This self-denial will never be easy, but it is possible, by the grace of God. We can choose our own master. As free moral agents, we can also decide which rules to order our lives by. God has given a simple and complete blueprint in the Bible for living the Christian life. The road map to heaven is laid out so clearly that anyone can understand and follow it. Because we have the power of choice, we are not forced to accept the conditions of salvation. If we don't like the rules in the Bible, we can simply reject them. God will never compel us to follow them. He gives us perfect freedom to accept any lifestyle of our choice. If we decide to go along with the crowd in the broad road, and live by their uninhibited standards, no one can stop us. We can even sit down and make up our own rules if we so choose. But one fact must be clearly understood: we will never get to heaven by that route. If we are saved **IT WILL BE ON GOD'S TERMS ALONE!**

Are those terms too demanding? Do they require more than we can give? No. They are simple enough for every person to fulfil if the mind is yielded to Christ. Only two choices finally present themselves to each individual. There are two roads before us-the broad and the narrow; two natures struggle to control us-the spiritual and the fleshly; two voices appeal to us-Christ and the world. There can be no mixture of these two inviting alternatives-no pleasant blending of portions from both sides. It must be one or the other and nothing in between. To accept one is to deny the other.

We have no choice about making the choice! Some things we can't control, but this decision about who rules the mind and will has been left for us to settle. And settle it we must! We didn't make the choice to come into this world, but if we are not in the next world, it will be our decision alone.

The truth is that all of us are running a race which will decide our eternal destiny, and there are no second prizes or consolation prizes. We either get everything in the end-eternal life-or we lose everything and suffer eternal death.

What a tremendous responsibility rests upon everyone who is engaged in this great marathon event which will determine our destiny! There is a legend about a pack of dogs who were chasing a little rabbit. According to the story, one of the dogs said to all the others in the pack, "Look, you fellows drop out and let me have the glory of making this catch. Let me show you how this thing should be done." So all the others dropped out and the one dog kept on in hot pursuit of that little rabbit. But the rabbit was faster than the dog and made a rapid getaway. Finally the dog came limping back to join the pack with his tail between his legs, and the other dogs asked, "What happened?" According to the legend, the dog gave this answer, "Well, he was running for his life, and I was just running for my dinner." Doesn't that bring a great truth into focus? The little rabbit knew that his very life depended upon his speed and effort. The dog might not have been deeply concerned because he had very little to lose.

Now I've seen some people running this race of life as though they didn't care whether they won or lost. Their interest seemed to be very shallow; they were apathetic about the way they lived; they were swayed by impulse and tides of circumstance. How very earnest we should be about winning this race for eternity! Life and death are the results of our efforts in this contest. Everyone of us is in the midst of battle day by day. There can be no idle bystanders or neutrals in this fight. Every soul will be on one side or the other. Much of the struggle revolves around our own will. Every day we have to choose whether to do right or do wrong. Every moment we are either following emotion or following conviction. We must live either by impulse or by principle. Either Christ or Satan will be at the control center of our life.

Would you like to know who will dominate your life today? The one who is loved the most will always be in charge. Every sin of every person involves one of two things. Either we are trying to please another person or else we are trying to gratify our own selfish impulses. In other words, all sin revolves around either loving someone else more than God, or loving ourselves and our own flesh-pleasing more than God. Think about it for a moment. Every immorality and impurity is rooted here. Who will take the first place? Christ? Or you? Or another person? The Christian life demands total surrender to one Master. If we are willing to give Him first and best of everything-if we love Him that much, there will be no problem with sin. The fact is that we either accommodate self or deny self.

But here is a most important fact to remember: only the regenerate, spiritual mind has the ability to say no to self. Those who have the mind of Christ, by being partakers of the divine nature, can be "more than conquerors," can be led "always to triumph," and can be "saved to the uttermost" from Satan's most virulent attacks.

"The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan.... Without a personal acquaintance with Christ, and a continual communion, we are at the mercy of the enemy, and shall do his bidding in the end." *The Desire of Ages*, p. 324.

What a contrast in the two possible responses to temptation! We are either "impregnable" to the enemy or we are "at the mercy" of the enemy. The difference is conversion and being in "continual communion." How very necessary it is for every Christian to be in a state of constant surrender to the will of God. Without a daily feeding of the soul through prayer and Bible study, no one can be that impregnable fortress against sin.

But let's return to the crafty attempts of Satan to displace God's control of the mind. Even though all the organs of perception are assailed, it is the organ of sight which seems to be the most responsive to temptation. Jesus said, "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." Matthew 6:22, 23.

Do you understand the implication that the eye can defile the whole being by what it allows into the mind? Consider adultery, for example. Like all other sins it begins with the thoughts or the imagination. Paul speaks of sin as "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Ephesians 2:3. It is very likely that the largest number of evil thoughts are generated by illicit looking, and the overt acts of sin proceed from those wicked thoughts. So what we look at and how we look has a direct bearing on the actual physical sins committed. Jesus said, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Matthew 5:28.

It is almost frightening to realize that guilt can be imputed even before the act is carried out by the body. The sin may already be mentally committed and perhaps the body is only waiting for an opportune moment to execute the physical violation. But mark this down and never forget it: **MOST SIN, WHETHER OF THE MIND OR BODY, HAS ITS ULTIMATE ROOTS IN THE SENSORY PERCEPTIONS.** This helps us understand why Jesus said people could be cast into hell who did not control the eyes and the hands. Yet the impression is quite general among Christians that little needs to be said about these areas of conduct lest we be found "majoring in minors."

Has Satan indeed exploited the highly emotional physical senses in order to gain control of the mind and will? We have dramatic evidence on this point in the book of Genesis. He used it almost exclusively in his first temptation to make a human being sin. Read the story of Eve as she confronted the serpent at the forbidden tree and you will see how powerfully Satan baited that temptation with sensory appeal. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." Genesis 3:6.

Here we have the unusual combination of sight, taste, and hearing. She saw how beautiful the fruit appeared. Satan always makes the path of sin attractive. Right and wrong can never be tested by what it looks like, feels like, or tastes like. Feelings can be generated and controlled by what we allow ourselves to look at or listen to. Satan spoke flattering words which appealed to Eve's ego and vanity. What she heard and saw influenced her feelings to such a degree that she became blinded to right and wrong. Inhibitions fell away and deliberate disobedience followed quickly. The fruit tasted so good that she could not believe that it was wrong to eat it.

In this story from the Garden of Eden, the pattern of Satan's future temptations is clearly set forth. The Old Testament is filled with recitals of Satan's conquests and the same sordid plot of sensual appeal lies behind most of them. Just as Eve stood before the tree looking, so David looked one day onto the roof next door, and saw a beautiful woman bathing. The incident wouldn't even be recorded in the Bible if David had been ruled by principle instead of impulse. The problem was that he kept looking until he was blinded just like Eve. This man of strength and character gazed so long at that which was forbidden, that he became a puppet of clay in Satan's hands. He sent for the woman, committed adultery, and finally murder, in order to get what his excited emotions demanded.

Did the evil one continue to attack God's people through the avenue of their senses? We could talk about dozens of such tragic experiences of compromise and defeat. It happened often to Israel as they journeyed toward the Promised Land. Many times they were enticed by the fleshly forms of pagan temple worship. Repeatedly the nation was punished for accommodating the altars of Baal and bending to the sensual customs of sun worship.

We can delineate only briefly the circumstances which reveal God's utter abhorrence for everything that related to Baal worship. He commanded His people to destroy every pagan altar and burn all the gods to ashes, "The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee.... Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it." Deuteronomy 7:25, 26. He also commanded "that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise." Deuteronomy 12:30.

God forbade Israel to bring any of the objects of Baal worship into their tents or homes, and He especially commanded that none of their pagan customs ever be used in connection with His worship. Does God still feel the same toward those glamorous appendages of heathenism today? If so, how does He relate to the pagan Sunday which was transferred directly from Roman sun worship? And what does He feel regarding Christmas and Easter with all their symbolic links to idolatry and immorality? And what about the wedding ring which represented special devotion to the pagan sun-god? It is hard to imagine how divine approval could ever be extended to these accessories of ancient blasphemy just because they are now attached to modern forms of Christian worship.

I've often wondered how the watery rationalizations of modern theologians sound in the ears of angels who watched Israel sell out to the false gods for whom those customs were invented. Has the passing of a few years or a few hundred years caused the heavenly witnesses to forget the way in which they evolved from the rites of Satan-worship to rites of Christian worship? Has time removed the revulsion which God expressed for those same symbols as they were utilized in earlier orgies of Baal worship? We often hear this explanation: "I know these customs come from paganism, but we aren't observing them to honor Baal or Ishtar or Mithras. We are using them to worship Yahweh, the true God."

That may be true, but it ignores the repeated commands of Jehovah to reject everything related to those despised practices. We are not to measure them by our easily impressed senses, but by the declared counsels of the unchanging God. The beautiful forms of nostalgic pagan holidays and

customs have blinded us to the extreme measures which God used to utterly annihilate every vestige and reminder of the counterfeit religions in which they were honored.

In order to preserve His people from being overcome by the highly sensory appeal of those pagan forms of worship, God allowed them to have no relationship with the nations around them. Intermarriage was forbidden. All the tribes who inhabited Canaan were to be driven out, or else totally exterminated. We almost shudder at the radical processes by which God protected Israel from contamination by contact. Sometimes entire tribes were ordered killed—including women, children and infants. They had become so hardened in rebellion and sin that they could not be permitted to remain as a source of temptation for Israel. We can only understand such drastic action in the light of God's concept of holiness by separation. God had only one way to communicate His truth to the inhabitants of the earth—His people, Israel. The vindication of His character required a people who would overcome sin, and reflect His righteousness to the world. Because He understood the weakness of fallen human nature and its powerful response to external stimuli, God provided the conditions under which the Israelites could maintain a victorious, sanctified experience. He ordered them to remain apart from the corrupt influences of the heathen nations.

Does God have the same plan and purpose for modern Israel? Is He still seeking to produce a remnant who will disprove Satan's charges against Him? Is it necessary today for His people to maintain a distinct and absolute separation from the fallen, satanic world of the flesh in order to reveal His perfect righteousness?

"The warnings given to the Hebrews against assimilating with the heathen were not more direct or explicit than are those forbidding Christians to conform to the spirit and customs of the ungodly." Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 458.

No one can believe that the nature of today's carnal society is measurably different from the perverse neighbors of ancient Israel. Our highest social and professional leaders have given approval to the same vices which led God to destroy those nations. Homosexuality, incest, fornication, Satanism, astrology and a dozen other current evils were the basis for capital punishment under the theocracy of the Old Testament.

Because immediate execution is not decreed in the New Testament, are we to believe that such sins are more acceptable to the same God today? Do we indeed find similar drastic measures commanded by Jesus in avoiding pollution by those practices? There can be no question that He recognized the dangers of sensory temptation, and laid down safeguards that sound almost as extreme as those which governed His people of old. "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. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, 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, 30.

In these verses, Jesus was talking about the things the eye focuses on, and the occupation of the hand, but the forceful language indicates that the faculties will need to be rigorously curbed and disciplined in order to remain pure. What a contrast to the easy-going, accommodating spirit of

many present-day religionists! No emphasis is placed on such efforts to control the way we act, what we look at, how we eat or dress, etc: With an air of great spirituality, young people are admonished that to give attention to these things is "behaviorism" and "works oriented." Such concern can be destructive of the beautiful righteousness by faith experience, which, we are told, consists of nothing more than belief in the objective work of Jesus on the cross.

The words of our Lord indicate that He recognized the avenues of attack which Satan would still be following in attempting to conquer the mind and will. They also reveal the urgent necessity of strong, determined action in plucking out and cutting off every influence which might lead into sin. Indeed it is better to lose the physical organs of perception than to lose both body and soul in the fires of hell.

CONFUSING POSSIBILITY WITH RESPONSIBILITY

BUT where do we hear such warnings about changing one's lifestyle in order to be prepared for heaven? To even suggest, as Jesus did, that what we see, hear or speak could have anything to do with whether we go to heaven or hell is counted today as legalistic and fanatic.

It is assumed that sanctification is an imputed, passive experience just like justification. Christ does it all and we simply believe that His holiness and righteousness have 's been credited to our account. Salvation according to some people consists totally of Christ's work in our behalf, and any concern of our own to do the works of Christ is an attempt to earn salvation. That false premise is demolished by statements such as these:

"The work of gaining salvation is one of co-partnership, a joint operation. There is to be cooperation between God and the repentant sinner. This is necessary for the formation of right principles in the character. Man is to make earnest efforts to overcome that which hinders him from attaining to perfection. But he is wholly dependent upon God for success. Human effort of itself is not sufficient. Without the aid of divine power it avails nothing. God works and man works. Resistance of temptation must come from man, who must draw his power from God." Acts of the Apostles, p. 482.

"Many never attain to the position that they might occupy, because they wait for God to do for them that which He has given them power to do for themselves. All who are fitted for usefulness must be trained by the severest mental and moral discipline, and God will assist them by uniting divine power with human effort." Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 248.

These statements point up a most important spiritual principle about gaining the victory over sin. It is faith in the power-packed promises of God which brings deliverance from bad habits and sins. But faith without works is dead. After claiming the victory on the basis of God's promise, we must demonstrate that faith by acting on His Word. Those who have asked for deliverance from tobacco, must then act as though it is done. They must throw away the cigarettes and refrain from ever taking them into their hands again.

According to Sister White, it is only when we begin to exert all of our effort against the sin over which we have claimed the victory that the power flows into our life to resist the temptation.

Indeed the only true evidence of our faith is a confident, deliberate course of action which denies the possibility for the flesh to prevail against the promised power of God.

"The Lord does not propose to perform for us either the willing or the doing. This is our proper work. As soon as we earnestly enter upon the work, God's grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never as a substitute for our effort. Our souls are to be aroused to cooperate. The Holy Spirit works the human agent, to work out our own salvation." Testimonies to Ministers, pg. 240.

Very simply then, we can say that God provides the POSSIBILITY for victory, but we possess the RESPONSIBILITY for it. He places the power over sin within us and we show our faith by using the power to actively and aggressively resist the sin. When victory results we do not take credit for it, but glorify God who provided the deliverance. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I Corinthians 15:57.

Satan would be more than delighted if we simply relaxed and waited for God to extract us from every dangerous circumstance of temptation. Thousands have made no effort of their own, feeling that it would be stealing some honor away from God to put forth any kind of resistance in the flesh against sin. When total victory doesn't come through such a passive program, they are comforted that God has deliberately ordained that some sin remain in the experience of the saints.

On an alarming scale, Seventh-day Adventist Christians have been assured that such sin, though willfully practiced, cannot take away their security in Christ. This is probably one of the most deadly doctrinal errors now permeating the remnant church at all levels. Because it is so subtly woven through many of the popular books of Adventism, it has produced an almost permissive slackness concerning the practice of sin. Believing the enormous lie that sin doesn't affect their relationship with Christ, more have become less and less troubled by increasing lapses into worldly compromise and conformity. At the same time, they become righteously indignant at the "legalists" in the church who put everybody on a guilt trip by their negative attitude toward those little things like drinking coffee and eating out in restaurants on the Sabbath.

Are we talking about real things that are happening in practically every congregation? Of course we are. One large portion of our membership can't understand why the other portion should be so distressed over a small amount of sin, because they have been convinced that it hasn't separated them from Christ!

Much more needs to be said about the presumption of loitering on the fringes of Satan's disputed territory. It is off limits for any Christian to remain where it is questionable. God had a reason for separating His people as far as possible from the sources of temptation. Some professed Christians seem to seek out test situations in which to exhibit their great faith in the keeping power of God. There is no promise of victory in such presumptuous action, Deliverance from sin is not a onetime, forever-settled transaction which guarantees no future failure. It is a continuous abiding in the imputed and imparted merits of Christ plus a deliberate closing up of every recognized route of temptation.

Wrote the prophet:

"We have a work to do to resist temptation. Those who would not fall a prey to Satan's devices must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts." *Mind, Character and Personality*, p. 107.

I can never forget the conflict in my own self-nature at the age of eleven when I placed everything on the altar for God. Satan understands the point of greatest weakness in every human being, and upon that point he will rally all his evil resources for a final face-off battle. My weakness was reading exciting novels and drugstore magazines. It was a fierce struggle, but finally the decision was made! Fifty years have not dimmed the memory of how I loaded those comic books and magazines into my little red wagon, and pulled it up the road, through the gate, into the cow pasture behind the barn. There I dug a hole and buried those treasures of my past unregenerate life.

God gave me a glorious victory that day over those tantalizing publications, but I had to stop meeting the summer library truck as it pulled into the school yard next to my house every Thursday. I knew deep down inside of me that if I stood looking at those fascinating titles, they would end up on my desk at home.

God gave me the victory and showed me how to keep it, but He could not make the decision for me not to meet the library truck. That responsibility was mine. I'm still tempted by exciting adventure books and TV programs, and if I ever gave Satan a tiny advantage, he would sweep me back into that slavery again. That's why I have never had television in my home. God has given me enough wisdom to recognize the danger of trifling with something that could lead into sin. How thankful we should be for that wonderful reasoning mind which can, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, make choices to act against sin.

Genuine conversion will make us willing to give up the enjoyment of sin. Too many people play games with the flesh and the world, and end up testing themselves beyond their strength. How foolish it is to believe we can take fire into our bosom without being burned. God will not work miracles to save us from dangers we create for ourselves. Do not pray for a pure mind while you feed your eyes on scenes of immorality and impurity, or while you mingle with the near-nude crowd at the pool or beach. Stop making the silly excuse that you can control your thoughts and emotions under all circumstances. No one has the strength of victory who does not have the Holy Spirit in control of the mind. And it is certain that the Holy Spirit would never send messages for the eyes to look at scenes of provocative nudity, or violence, or sin. Neither would He order the feet to walk into the theater or the rock concert!

If you are praying for God to save you from weaknesses of the flesh, apply yourself also to help answer that prayer. Inspired counsel tells us how many fail in this respect:

"So many invite the enemy to tempt them. They place themselves in circumstances where they will be entrapped." *Upward Look*, pg. 25.

"You, my brethren, fold your hands, and drift into evil practices, and then wait for God to work a miracle to change your characters and compel you to be pure and holy men. Will you expose yourself wantonly to temptation, expecting God to force your mind and inclination that you may not be corrupted? Will you take the viper to your bosom, expecting God to put a spell upon it so it will not poison you with its venomous sting? Will you drink poison, expecting God to provide an antidote?" Testimonies to Ministers, p. 455.

"You cherish the evil; you strengthen it. You love it better than you love truth, purity, righteousness. You do not take hold of divine help, wrenching yourselves from hurtful and dangerous associations. You tamely give yourselves to the working of an evil way, as though you had no free moral agency. Study God's Word prayerfully, meet its demands firmly, resolutely, as did Joseph and Daniel. Lay hold upon the help God has promised you." Ibid. p. 452.

The expression "wrenching yourselves" sounds very much like the words of our Lord. He spoke of "plucking out" the eye and "cutting off" the hand to get away from harmful influences. In our soft-sell age it is popular to believe that God wants us to be happy and, therefore, He would never make it necessary for us to exert such effort in living the Christian life. On this basis, truth and principle are often measured by the subjective test of joy, pleasure, or compatibility with those around us.

Is this not the root of many moral problems in the church? Why are there almost as many divorces in the Seventh-day Adventist Church as among the population at large? One reason is because the mind does not repel the first thought of sin. That initial attraction must be aggressively rejected. No matter how alluring it might be to the fallen nature, the spiritual mind must say no to that appeal. If the temptation is harbored, and that other person gets a second and third thought, the flame begins to grow. Husbands and wives look less and less suitable while the third party appears more and more desirable. Soon there is a divorce.

Almost any unscriptural divorce and remarriage situation is defended today by an appeal to feeling or reason. One question is assumed to lay the matter to rest and preclude any further discussion on the subject: "Do you think he is supposed to live alone for the rest of his life?" In other words, no proper solution would allow for less than another marriage partner. Without realizing it, we have substituted happy relationships instead of the Bible for testing standards of right and wrong. Gradually the strict scriptural admonitions on dress, diet, divorce, etc., have been rationalized in favor of practices more congenial with culture and personal gratification. We have made ourselves believe that happiness, peace, and unity are the highest aims of Christian living. Desirable though they may be, these are not valid tests for measuring truth.

Has this attitude affected the message of the Seventh day Adventist Church? To get an answer to that question, one needs to survey our official publications during the past several years. A large portion of the articles lean toward the more frothy aspects of an emotional love and grace relationship with little solid content about loyalty and obedience. My own search turned up very few discourses on Christian standards, and one of them warned of the terrible danger involved in seeking to 'uphold high standards. Another article darkly hinted of legalism and spiritual pride

which attended any efforts to eat, dress or act in a certain way. The negative aspects of a Christian lifestyle came through more forcefully than anything positive.

Just yesterday, I was interrupted in my writing by a phone call from California. The date was September 28, 1987, and the excited man on the other end was calling at 5:30 in the morning. He had a most interesting story to share with me. He was not a Seventh-day Adventist, but spoke feelingly about his deep, born-again relationship with Christ.

A few days earlier, this man had made a survey of all the private schools in his area. He had been greatly impressed by one of them which forbade the use of cosmetics and jewelry. Even though his own church approved of moderate adornment, the man himself had strong convictions that it was worldly and displeasing to God.

Upon further inquiry, he discovered that it was an Adventist school which took the stand against makeup and jewelry. Determined to get more information on the subject, he made the two-hour trip to Loma Linda where he approached the university librarian for help in locating source material in support of our teaching on artificial adornment.

She referred him to the file which he described as "The Herald and Review." There he spent a long time searching back through thirty years of the Adventist Review papers. By the time he reached the mid-fifties, only two articles had been found pertaining to the topic, and he told me in disappointment that they contained almost nothing of any substance to answer his questions.

He appealed once more to the librarian for further material, but she had none to offer. Nevertheless, she did suggest that he go to the nearby Adventist Book Center and ask for the book, *Colorful Cosmetics and Jewelry*, by Joe Crews. The man hurried to the store and bought the book. He read it through twice and called me immediately to express his delight. His plan now is to prepare a paper for his own church presenting the Bible evidence and appealing for them to take a stand against wearing makeup and jewelry. The man said, "I can't tell you how happy I am to find a church that has the courage to take a stand where the Bible does." He asked for all the additional information I could send him to help in preparing his paper.

Let no one bring the ridiculous charge that this church is putting out too much material on standards and Adventist lifestyle, and thereby projecting a legalistic image. It may be that legalism has resulted BECAUSE we have not provided material showing the beautiful relationship between our love for Jesus and our service for Him. Yesterday my new California friend could find almost nothing in our large university library on specifics of practical Christian behavior. He could have found hundreds of volumes on the theology of faith, imputed righteousness, etc.

The fact is that many in our beloved church have been intimidated either by an over-emphasis, or by a distortion of love, grace, justification and ecumenism. One popular book from our presses boldly proclaimed on its cover: "We are not given salvation because of our good deeds, nor are we deprived of it because of our misdeeds."

Ask Eve, or Achan, or Judas if misdeeds can affect our salvation. Why do we print such dangerous falsehoods? This lie has been Satan's stock in trade for six thousand years. Yet it would amaze all of us to know how steadily and stealthily this concept has gained ground in the remnant church. The leavening power of a little sin has not been properly portrayed. We all, ministers and members alike, need to be brought back to the Bible understanding of sin as an act of transgression against God's law. We have failed to expose the dangers, as well as the ultimate consequences, of acting contrary to God's revealed will. Our dereliction in this area surely is proven beyond question by the divorce rate among Seventh-day Adventists and the fact that nearly forty percent of our young people are not sure that fornication is a sin. How could the church with the Elijah message have such a dismal domestic record, especially considering that the Elijah message consists of two main parts-uniting the family and boldly condemning sin in all its forms? It is patently obvious that we have not defined clearly enough adultery and fornication in our churches. The world has a right to expect the last-day, true church to restore the great original principles of purity, modesty and morality. Yet we are just as far from those principles as some of the churches of spiritual Babylon, and often they seem to speak out and take stronger stands on moral issues than we do.

Why are we so fearful of assuming firm positions in the area of Christian standards? Is it because we are desperately trying to change our image in the eyes of the world? Because the evangelicals have accused us of legalism, are we now overreacting, and downplaying those very good works which have distinguished and identified us as the true remnant? This may appear very likely as we analyze further the potency of Satan's age-long warfare against the people of God.

ATTACKING THE LAST GENERATION

Now we are prepared to look into the classic strategy of Satan as he applies his sin-bait to earth's final generation of Seventh-day Adventists. While focusing on his refined, disguised appeal-package for the last days, we must not forget that he will use other weapons also to weaken the remnant. In fact, he has already shaken the faith of thousands by raising up articulate inside dissenters and critics of the three angels' messages. The true doctrine of righteousness by faith has been diluted by excluding sanctification; the Spirit of Prophecy has been attacked; the law has been downgraded; the judgment message has been emasculated-in fact, these sharp, frontal attacks on the basic pillars of the faith have yielded unexpected results in terms of apostasy.

"The demon of heresy has mapped out the world, and has resolved to possess it as his kingdom. Those who are in his army are numerous. They are disguised, and are subtle and persevering. They resist every divine influence, and employ every instrumentality in order to compass the ruin of even one soul. They possess a zeal, tact, and ability that is marvelous, and press their way into every new opening where the standard of truth is uplifted." *The Upward Look*, p. 275.

"Many will stand in our pulpits with the torch of false prophecy in their hands, kindled from the hellish torch of Satan." *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 409, 410.

Nevertheless, the great majority have not been influenced to give up their faith because of heretical teachings. It seems very likely that they will never be swayed from the truth by theological arguments against the foundational doctrines, at least not in their present state of mind. For these Adventists, Satan sees that another approach is needed to unsettle their faith. If he can't influence them to give up the Sabbath through intellectual appeals, he will use emotional appeals—the same kind that worked so well against Eve and the Israelites. If he can create an atmosphere that causes the spiritual mind to relax and allow him to start accessing even one of the five sensory lanes, he will have a chance to capture the main terminal of decision and will, the brain.

Look around you today and witness the most masterful array of satanic instruments and devices ever assembled at one time on this planet. Every one of them has been designed to get a small foothold in somebody's mind. Except for their more varied forms and sophisticated appeal they have been fashioned after the Eden model, with the object in mind to break down the enmity between the Christian and the world.

Right here it might be in order to make a few specific observations on what is wrong with the world. Consider these broad, basic factors which place the world in diametrical opposition to biblical principles:

ITS LANGUAGE. None can avoid the shock of exposure to the rapid deterioration of this medium. Not only are we hearing more profane and vulgar words in the market place where we all must interrelate from time to time, but the formal channels of radio, television and newspapers are being saturated with expletives which offend the spiritual senses. It has become popular and quite acceptable for media personalities to sprinkle their commentaries with gutter language.

An article entitled, A Protocol for Female Cussing appeared in The Washington Post July 8, 1987. The shocking thrust of the article was in defense of the, increasing use of profanity by women. The lady (?) columnist wrote:

"As long as women abide by certain conventions—what might be termed 'business swearing etiquette'—they can get away with, and even benefit from, the judicious use of profanity.

"This new linguistic license for women has come about because swearing in the work place is reportedly on the upswing among both sexes. The increase has been variously attributed to the trend toward informality, the decline of religion, the heightening pressures in the work place and, among the age group that can remember it, the revolution of the '60s. Whatever the reason, women have simply picked up the language of the locker room while they were learning the game from men. And, as many have found, colorful language often comes in handy."

Then follows a list of advantages for women who can master the indelicacies of proper swearing and cursing. Said the author, "Although cursing like a sailor is guaranteed to destroy one's femininity rating, it can be an effective strategy for some women."

Without question, the more we mingle with the world, the more our own conversation will be infected with slang expressions which unconsciously lead to larger infractions of God's "yea and nay" rule of communication.

Many Seventh-day Adventists have incorporated the polite swearing of popular "slanguage" without realizing that it is really taking God's name in vain. According to the dictionary, words like "gee," "golly," and "gosh" are actual derivatives of the names of deity. In many instances, substitute words are used instead of God's name—words which describe the attributes of God—and those synonyms are used freely in careless, casual conversation. Often such expressions are heard even from the pulpit. "For goodness' sake" is merely replacing the word "God" for one of His attributes. The same is true of such phrases as "for heaven's sake" and "for pity sake." If holy, sinless angels veil their faces when they speak His name, how much more reverently should fallen beings take God's sacred name and titles upon their lips.

ITS MATERIALISM. Every aspect of modern society is laden with this grasping spirit of self-aggrandizement. Success is measured by just one factor—income. When reports are given on the newscast about prominent people leaving positions in government or industry, there is the inevitable reference to their new salary which motivated their transfer.

Recognition of worth, merit, and success is always related to the kind of contract one can secure from the employing organization. Much of the media content revolves around strikes, union demands, and contract holdouts. From medical doctors to airline pilots to football teams, the primary goal seems to be mercenary; and materialistic. Rarely indeed is the professional or governmental public servant dedicated to the higher principle of serving others.

ITS DECEPTION. A recent issue of Newsweek, magazine featured LYING on its front cover. Most of the content focused upon the universally-accepted, unspoken principle of telling lies in order to achieve goals. The great majority of people take it for granted that subterfuge and deception is a standard element in the business world. Advertising is almost wholly based upon misrepresentation. Few ads indeed are totally free of distorted concepts.

During the Iran-Contra hearings, Americans were, shocked to learn that many functions of government are also rooted in covert actions requiring deliberate misrepresentation. Departmental policies require agents of this government to tell lies both to the public and to foreign powers. Listening to the logical explanation of why such lying was done under the prevailing circumstances, many Christians were almost persuaded that it's not really so bad after all. I had to resist the temptation to agree with Colonel North as he described the necessity of misleading everyone concerning the true nature of his operation.

Is the general public favorably disposed to all this business and governmental deceit and cover-up of the truth? The fact is that this lying format is a way of life for almost everyone. Each time I ride a plane, I watch the people around me with their heads buried in colorful, paperback novels. During that entire flight, they are living a lie. Their emotions are under the direct control of the author's imaginative fantasies. Between the novels and the television movies, their minds have been permeated with make-believe characters embroiled in fictitious plots, making the lies of real life almost innocuous and inconsequential in comparison.

ITS SELFISHNESS. Have you noticed that the most popularized concepts today are geared to making it to the top? There is a constant competition to be the greatest, the richest or the strongest. When legitimate means fail to exalt self, some people turn to crime or violence to achieve recognition.

All commercialized sports are based on the principle of self-exaltation at the expense of others, and at any cost. The newspapers are full of stories about fights, bribes, or drugs in almost every area of professional sports. Greedy players hold out for multi-million dollar contracts, and the more they can extract for their season of play, the more they are admired and idolized.

Even the most staid and respected brokerage offices of Wall Street have been exposed as accomplices in stealing millions from corporations of America in the ultimate scam scheme. And the epitome of selfishness and egotism is revealed in the televangelist scandal with its sordid revelations of sin in high places.

ITS PRIDE. Even some of the worldly commentators have observed the ridiculous tides of modern dress and undress. As styles shift back and forth, Christians are swept along in the wake of whatever is most popular at the moment. They struggle to meet the test of fashion, no matter how scandalous it is, rather than the inspired principles of modesty and good taste. Miniskirts come and go, and a very few men—many of them homosexuals—actually dictate the kind of clothes most Americans will be wearing during the coming season. Can we not understand why Sister White had so much to say about the subject of modest attire?

ITS SEX OBSESSION. This is probably one of the most obvious carnal manifestations of Satan's control of this planet. Filthy, obscene words, which were not even whispered among decent people a few years ago have now become the major topic on popular television panels. The most sacred, private acts and relationships have been lowered to the level of mocking, hilarious talk shows, and absolutely nothing has been spared.

Birth control devices have been advertised in the public media, discussed in high school forums, and explained to elementary school children.

Every aspect of advertising has been filled with sexual innuendos and double talk. It is now impossible for Christians not to see and hear snatches of evil elements from Satan's kingdom of darkness. But by God's grace and power, those wicked perversions can be screened from entering the mind which is under divine control. Yet few today seem to be taking firm, protective stances against these assorted, blatant attacks of worldliness.

Is it hard to understand why God always kept His people away from these corrupt influences? They will become a part of our value system if we do not devise special ways to protect ourselves. It happens automatically if we mix with them, listen to them, and erect no barriers of separation. This is the reason we can't recognize church members as readily as we could years ago; they dress, eat, and talk very much like the fleshly world around them. Most of the change can be credited to the mischievous influence of what is fed into the mind.

Many fail to recognize the destructive nature of indiscriminate reading habits. Minds have been disqualified for serious Bible study by dwelling on cheap, trashy themes. My own break with such literature came as a result of reading Messages to Young People when I was ten or eleven years old. No one had to prove to me that the statements were true. My compulsive addiction to exciting stories had robbed me of any real joy in Christ, and I knew they had to go. Words like these burned my conscience like fire:

"The readers of fiction are indulging an evil that destroys spirituality, eclipsing the beauty of the sacred page. It creates an unhealthy excitement, fevers the imagination, unfits the mind for usefulness, weans the soul from prayer, and disqualifies it for any spiritual exercise." Messages to Young People, p. 272.

For a while, I tried to rationalize my appetite for historical and religious novels, but deep inside I knew what they were doing to me. Three statements finally convinced me that there could be no compromise in my decision.

"The enormities, the cruelties, the licentious practices, portrayed in some of the strictly historical writings have acted as leaven on many minds, leading to the commission of similar acts.

"Books that delineate the satanic practices of human beings are giving publicity to evil. These horrible particulars need not be lived over, and no one who believes the truth for this time should act a part in perpetuating the memory of them." Messages to Young People, p. 284.

"Love stories, frivolous and exciting tales, and even that class of books called religious novels,—books in which the author attaches to his story a moral lesson,—are a curse to the readers. Religious sentiments may be woven all through a story-book, but, in most cases, Satan is but clothed in angel robes, the more effectively to deceive and allure." Messages to Young People, p. 272.

"Even fiction which contains no suggestion of impurity, and which may be intended to teach excellent principles, is harmful. It encourages the habit of hasty and superficial reading, merely for the story. Thus it tends to destroy the power of connected and vigorous thought; it unfits the soul to contemplate the great problems of duty and destiny....

"It is often urged that in order to win the youth from sensational or worthless literature, we should supply them with a better class of fiction. This is like trying to cure a drunkard by giving him, in the place of whisky or brandy, the milder intoxicants, such as wine, beer, or cider. The use of these would continually foster the appetite for stronger stimulants. The only safety for the inebriate, and the only safeguard for the temperate man, is total abstinence. For the lover of fiction the same rule holds true. Total abstinence is his only safety." Counsels to Parents and Teachers, pp. 383, 384.

Would this explain the weak witness of so many Seventh-day Adventist Christians today? How hard it is to deal with spiritual realities when the mind, like a garbage collection center, is overflowing with the refuse of all that has filtered through it. The Spirit of God cannot

communicate through physical nerve channels that have been deadened by such a surcharge of filth.

Try to visualize that your brain becomes a permanent repository of the essential ideas and principles which pour into it from all the books you read. If the sentiments contained in that reading matter are not true and pure and virtuous, then they leave a mental scar that may never heal. For years to come, there will be flashbacks of recollection, bringing fresh impressions of those impure sentiments. Even after my baptism, I still remember battling against those recurring memories of past reading material.

This brings into focus one of the most destructive effects of wrong reading habits. The way in which the brain is constituted, with its billions of neural connections and its memory bank, makes it almost impossible to ever blot out entirely the residual influence of that which is read. Once it has entered into the learning center of the mind, it becomes almost a permanent part of the knowledge pool from which all decision and action is drawn.

The fact is that when we open our minds to the concentrated thoughts and ideas of unchristian authors, we are also consenting for their mind-set to become a part of our own thought pattern. Eventually, it also translates into the kind of character we develop. What a solemn thought it is that every book we read is making us just a little bit like the person who wrote it, in both mind and character. In effect, we are allowing someone else to make the decision as to the kind of person we are going to be.

Word pictures have the same power to stir the imagination as real pictures do. This is why intense readers can be so deeply absorbed in the plot of their story. Their emotions are affected in the same way as television viewers. Mentally, they actually participate in all the actions of their hero or heroine in the make-believe situation. Pulse races, tears flow, and all the other physical reactions follow as they are vicariously involved in the good or evil being graphically described by the author.

Can it be a dangerous practice to yield the mind and emotions to the performance of all the deeds of imaginary characters in a book? In such cases, the writer is creating and controlling your every thought and mood. By his skill with words, he is pulling you into the scene and compelling you to share the joy, sorrow or guilt of every person being portrayed.

Does God hold us accountable for sins which are only carried out in the mind? Yes. He declared: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Matthew 5:28. Can we not see then how Satan is able to stir up sin in millions of minds by simply manipulating the thoughts and words of one unprincipled author? It is mind-boggling to consider how Christians can be so easily transformed into Satan's own image if they allow themselves to feed on the wrong reading material. Wrote the prophet:

"When the intellect is fed and stimulated by this depraved food, the thoughts become impure and sensual." Messages to Young People, p. 284.

Whether we realize it or not, the author of what we read is placing a mold upon our life which can produce eternal consequences. Many will be lost as a result of absorbing the doubts of skeptical writers. Others may be lost by saturating their minds with the permissiveness of so-called Christian authors who subtly communicate false, liberal ideas about God and the Bible. It is of the utmost importance that we carefully examine and test all our reading material by the apostle's rule: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Philippians 4:8.

Consider for a few moments the artificial, glamorized appeal of the theater. Almost one hundred percent of its adulterated fare is designed to destroy religious impressions. What possible reason would a Christian have for sitting under the hypnotic influence of its foul language and distorted moral concepts? What messages are being conveyed into the memory banks of the master brain computer? We have found that God created the cells of the mind to configure with whatever the communication lines bring in from the five senses. Why would one with a Christ-controlled, converted mind find such scenes enjoyable or entertaining? They could not. It is impossible for the mind of Christ to accept anything which is not pure and true and virtuous. Only the carnal mind delights in the kind of productions pouring out of Hollywood.

Are there sound principles behind the long-held position of this church against attendance at the theater? Did Sister White manufacture her strong prohibitive statements on this subject, or did she indeed receive them from the Lord? If the theater was a dangerous, questionable place for Christians a hundred years ago, has it become less objectionable today? These are issues that need to be settled by every Seventh-day Adventist.

Two very important principles make it impossible for the movie house to be a part of the Adventist lifestyle. How can a true child of God conscientiously patronize and keep in business an enterprise which spends ninety-nine percent of its time destroying everything which we are trying to build up one hundred percent of our time? It doesn't make sense. How can we support such an operation which is diametrically opposed to everything we stand for? There should be a tremendous moral aversion to helping maintain an institution which is corrupting and destroying so many minds.

The second principle involved in theater-going is the moral influence issue. Non-Christians who see a Seventh-day Adventist enter the theater do not assume that he is going in there to see that "one-in-a-hundred" picture which might meet the Bible test; he assumes that this professing saint of God is feeding on the same run-of-the-mill garbage that he enjoys. What a twisted testimony! And what a travesty on the pure, exalted religion of Jesus Christ!

If you want to read an amazing statement about the influence of television and movies, consider these words which were written under inspiration over fifty years before motion pictures were invented.

"By beholding we become changed. By the indulgence of impure thoughts man can so educate his mind that sin which he once loathed can become pleasant to him. Satan is using every means

to make crime and debasing vice popular.... The mind is educated to familiarity with sin. The course pursued by the base and vile is kept before the people in the periodicals of the day, and everything that can excite passion is brought before them in exciting stories. They hear and read so much of debasing crime that the once tender conscience, which would have recoiled with horror from such scenes, becomes hardened, and they dwell upon these things with greedy interest." Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 459.

Mrs. White could not have described the picture more perfectly if she had been viewing last night's Nielsen-rated detective drama in person. Not only are we made familiar with sin, but we become tolerant of sin as well. There are sound psychological reasons why the mind becomes totally conditioned by what is seen on television. The deliberate, fast-scene-changing of flashing TV pictures does not give the conscious mind time to evaluate or censor what is being viewed. Research has proven that the rapid-fire sequence of pictures actually bypasses the critical judgment of the conscious brain and feeds directly into the subconscious. Without our being aware of it, the mind is cleverly influenced to be more and more acceptant of what is seen and heard.

We may pride ourselves on being able to tune out commercials and programs we don't like, but they are scientifically designed, at the expense of millions of dollars, to shape our thinking **WHETHER WE CHOOSE IT OR NOT!** There is no such thing as innocent TV programming. Subliminal advertising has guaranteed that every viewer will be influenced, with or without his consent or agreement. Satan's messages are being communicated even through the most innocent-appearing ads and commercials.

A few days ago, a catalogue came in my mailbox from a company called Mind Communication, Incorporated. It advertised hundreds of subliminal audio and video tapes which were touted to be one hundred percent effective in providing "effortless self-improvement" for almost every character weakness known to man.

The tapes were described in these words: "A series of subliminal messages are hidden or 'disguised' within a background sound of music or waves. The messages are placed at a slightly lower decibel level than that of the music. The messages are then 'piggy-backed' into the listeners brain along with the music, but without the listener's awareness of having received them. The messages are just below conscious detection level."

The video tapes on weight control and smoking were described as so potent that "it is nearly impossible for the subconscious mind to resist the energy and power of our subliminal videos. These videos bombard and saturate your brain cells so totally that you become ready, able and willing to lose weight or throw away the cigarettes—now and forever."

Red-letter warning notices throughout the catalogue state: "Maximum strength weight-loss video tape causes weight loss in those who view and/or listen to it. Do not play in the presence of those not needing to lose weight."

We would be naive to think that such a powerful advertising tool is not being used by greedy corporations to sell their products. No one knows the full extent to which subliminal

commercials have invaded the world of media advertising. What we do know is that we cannot depend upon the conscience of big business to save us from subliminal influences; we must take steps to protect our own minds from unwelcome invasion.

What can we say about Seventh-day Adventist Christians who feed for hours at a time upon the polluted, filthy double-talk of soap operas and sitcoms? There is not a tiny chance that they can love spiritual things and carnal things at the same time. The Bible says, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." James 4:4. It is not presumptuous or judgmental to say that those people are not truly converted.

How Satan must rejoice as he watches the television set destroy the mind's ability to discriminate between the clean and the unclean. God's plea is ignored, "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways." Proverbs 23:26. No one could possibly believe the movie screen to be a reflector of God's ways.

David, whose eyes had led him to lust and murder, leaves this powerful personal testimony: "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes ... he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." Psalm 101:3, 7. If David could not resist the temptation which was unintentionally brought before his eyes, what can we say about those who deliberately bring the temptation into their living room through television? Undoubtedly more nakedness can be seen nightly on TV than David observed in his few moments of watching long ago, and the effect on the mind is just as demoralizing and enslaving as it was upon David. The fallen nature, for six thousand years, has been stimulated by exactly the same carnal appeals.

After he was restored from his terrible backsliding, David determined that his eyes would never again look upon evil. As a man after God's own heart, he would "set" no evil thing before his eyes. David was not talking about a TV "set," of course, but he was committed to follow no course that would bring such enticing scenes to his vision again. Neither would he allow him "that telleth lies" to "tarry in my sight." If David remained true to those principles, he certainly would never choose to attend a theater or feast on the common diet of modern television. And if we are going to be true to those inspired principles, we will not choose to look at those things either. It would be a rare mixture for even one out of a hundred of those media films to meet David's criteria of not being evil to the sight or telling lies to the ears.

The interesting fact is that most Seventh-day Adventists agree that there is almost nothing good coming out of Hollywood and its affiliated production centers. Yet surveys reveal that they reluctantly admit to watching, from time to time, their sex-saturated programs. The April, 1985 Ministry magazine reported on a study of Seventh-day Adventist families relating to Christian standards. To their surprise and dismay, the surveyors had to report: "The Adventist stand on movies appears a lost cause, with only a fifth of our youth in harmony with it, and less than half their parents supporting the traditional view.... As to divorce, jewelry, and the movies, our historical positions simply do not correspond to our members' general practice."

The fact is that every aspect of traditional Adventist lifestyle was found to be disappearing from the modern church, according to the compilers of the report. They urged that a research committee be set up to probe the reasons for such wholesale abandonment of our standards, and

to redefine for our members where the church stands on these issues, and the biblical basis for such a stand.

Later that year, The Adventist Review printed a similar appeal from the officers of the North Pacific Union Conference. President Richard Fearing stated that church standards would be emphasized in the next few years because "we are at a crossroads in this church as to whether we will go the way of what we classify as mainline, nominal Protestantism, or whether we will uphold the standards of Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy. We, in the Northwest, are going to hold to the standards of the church." (August 1, 1985, p. 14.) Jack Harris, Union Conference Secretary, predicted that there would be a "head-on collision between what is happening in our colleges and churches, and what the church has been teaching and preaching." He pointed to problems in the use of alcohol, attendance at movies and dances, increased wearing of jewelry, lax Sabbath observance and use of caffeinated drinks, as signs of spiritual declension.

A month after that challenging article appeared, an editor of The Adventist Review responded with an editorial of endorsement, applauding the leaders of the North Pacific Union for their bold stand, and closing with the words "May their tribe increase." Unfortunately, that gutsy example by the Northwest leadership was not acclaimed by too many others, and the tribe did not mushroom as Eugene Durand's editorial dared to hope. In fact, there ensued nothing more than what can be described as an embarrassed silence. Nevertheless, the words of Richard Fearing cannot be negated. We do stand at the crossroads on this issue. We either continue the course of gradual conformity to the popular Protestant position, or we draw back and take our stand upon the original Adventist foundation of high moral standards.

History reveals that every religious movement before us has followed exactly the same course that we seem to be now taking. The Ministry magazine article shows us moving rapidly to the side of the majority practices of our surrounding culture. It has certainly not taken us totally by surprise, because we understood very well from the inspired writings that such a deviation would take place. Sister White, with many tears, described the final movements of worldly compromise that would divide the church and bring a traumatic "shaking" experience. She wrote graphically about the "step by step" accommodations that would be made to social demands and worldliness. Literally hundreds of pages of counsel flowed from her pen against the very steps that we see being taken by the church and its leadership. All of us are acquainted with those statements, yet few seem willing to make them the basis of a strong public call to repentance and reformation.

In one instance, she was permitted to hear and record an actual planning session of the evil one with his demon followers. These are the words Satan used in addressing his evil angels:

"Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God will be our most effective helpers. Those of this class who are apt and intelligent will serve as decoys to draw others into our snares. Many will not fear their influence, because they profess the same faith. We will thus lead them to conclude that the requirements of Christ are less strict than they once believed, and that by conformity to the world they would exert a greater influence with worldlings. Thus they will separate from Christ; they will have no strength to resist our power, and ere long they will be ready to ridicule their former zeal and devotion." Testimonies to Ministers, p. 474. (Emphasis supplied.)

Notice how apt, intelligent, influential members will be used to convince others that we can have greater influence on worldlings by being less strict than in the past. How fortunate we are that God has exposed the tactics of Satan by giving us this amazing account from our enemy's own lips.

If you think Satan has not already launched that program of using influential people in the church to make the requirements seem too restrictive, take another look. From many quarters voices are proclaiming that we have been too strict and legalistic. We have lost our young people, they say, by speaking out against specific, popular activities such as movie-attendance and wearing jewelry. Don't condemn any particular practices. Just teach the youth the principle of love, and however they choose to apply it should be the accepted standard.

Please read the following paragraphs which were lifted from the Letters Column of a recent Adventist Review. Respondents were commenting on the subject of standards and how they should be applied to young people in the church. All of these statements were made by denominational workers who carry credentials from the General Conference, or from local conferences.

"Why not teach them how to choose appropriate dress and entertainment and quit trying to judge the rightness or wrongness of specifics?"

"Instead of emphasizing service and love, we seem to focus on dress, jewelry, movies or other behavior we think is 'wrong.'"

"I don't think we fully grasp the widespread frustrations youth—our future leaders—feel as they view the arbitrary standards we impose upon them."

"With 90 percent of our youth attending movies, and the majority wearing some kind of jewelry, we try to 'overcome evil with good' by asking them to draw the line SOMEWHERE, rather than telling them where to draw it. We discuss how a Christian chooses what to wear or what movies to see. They don't need standards preached.... If Christ accepts us as we are, don't we owe the same to each other?"

"We need to teach simplicity rather than 'no jewelry....' But we have majored in minors so long it will be difficult to change.... Basic values are falling while the church quibbles over rings and movies.... All movies are not bad; students should learn how to choose the good rather than categorically condemning the theater...."

When pastors and teachers, employees of the church, can boldly affirm in the Review their convictions against the historic standards of the church, how long will it be before those standards are quietly and officially ushered out the back door? Even more significantly, how long can an organized church continue to hold positions which are publicly rejected and denounced in its own journals by its own leaders?

Please notice the interesting fact that this is all being done in the name of spirituality, and by assigning legalistic motives to all who attempt to obey specifics of Christian lifestyle. In order to

guarantee the success of his program to infiltrate the remnant church with worldliness, Satan has succeeded in generating the incredible falsehood that those who take specific stands on standards are in the wrong-they are the bad guys-and only those who leave details to individual judgment are correct. This is not to say that love and relationship are not important, but to teach those principles WITHOUT making any application to real life leaves the young people still floundering. It is like teaching Baptists and Methodists the important principle of obedience without telling them which day the Sabbath is. We cannot assume that everyone will automatically be taught and convicted on how to apply the details.

No doubt mistakes have been made by some in their MANNER of teaching standards, leaving out the love motive, but a much worse mistake is made when we teach only love without the corresponding works of love. The truth is that we have miserably failed to give Bible reasons for our standards. This is why the youth have been confused!

Some of the Review respondents implied that there is no valid biblical basis for teaching against movies, jewelry, etc. One letter spoke of the "imposition of arbitrary standards." **HERE IS THE REAL PROBLEM!** I can understand opposition to applying specific standards if they are perceived as arbitrary. But this is a misperception. None of our standards are arbitrary. They are biblical! For forty years I have dealt with souls over these issues. As a pastor for eighteen years and a fulltime evangelist for twenty-two years, I found no difficulty in leading young people into a joyful acceptance of our standards, based upon loving God supremely. The only problem I encountered was when adults (parents, teachers, etc.) began to impute wrong motives to the youth for being so particular about their lifestyle. Finally they were able to convince the young people that it is legalistic to make such detailed application of principle to the daily experience-the same twisted idea that came through in so many of the Review letters. (August 27, 1987.)

The servant of the Lord minced no words in describing the deceptive manner in which compromise would infiltrate the ranks of God's people:

"It is conformity to the world that is causing our people to lose their bearings. The perversion of right principles has not been brought about suddenly. The angel of the Lord presented this matter to me in symbols. It seemed as if a thief were stealthily moving closer and still closer, and gradually but surely stealing away the identity of God's work by leading our brethren to conform to worldly policies.... The Lord calls for a reformation. In every place where believers have adopted worldly principles, He desires a voice of warning to be raised. 'Cry aloud,' He says, 'spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.'" The Upward Look, p. 202.

Some interesting facts are established by this inspired statement. We are told that right principles will be perverted very, very gradually, stealing away the "identity of God's work." This slow process will be accomplished by Satan "leading our brethren to conform to worldly policies." She calls for a voice of warning to be raised like a trumpet "in every place where believers have adopted worldly principles."

What a challenge to every watchman in Zion! Not one Seventh-day Adventist minister should disobey the command of God to "Cry aloud, spare not ... show my people their transgression." Isaiah 58:1.

In the name of love, some are sparing the "believers" by not addressing sins in the church. It is not kind or loving to withhold warnings and reproofs as conformity to the world, like a thief, is "stealthily moving closer and still closer." God's people, the most precious treasure in His sight, must be warned about sins which are separating them from their Saviour. If we truly love God, we will seek in every possible way to safeguard those who are the apple of His eye. He hates sin in His people. It will shut them out of Heaven if not recognized and overcome. To avoid the unpleasant assignment to point out sin as it appears in the church is to demonstrate a dangerous lack of concern on the part of watchmen. Ministers who shun this duty because it goes against their gentle natures will learn too late that their reluctance to lift up their voice like a trumpet was based on a selfish protection of their own feelings instead of love for God.

"If wrongs are apparent among His people, and if the servants of God pass on indifferent to them, they virtually sustain and justify the sinner, and are alike guilty and will just as surely receive the displeasure of God; for they will be made responsible for the sins of the guilty.... Those who have excused these wrongs have been thought by the people to be very amiable and lovely in disposition, simply because they shunned to discharge a plain Scriptural duty. The task was not agreeable to their feelings; therefore they avoided it." Testimonies, Vol. 3, p. 266.

"True love seeks first the honor of God and the salvation of souls. Those who have this love will not evade the truth to save themselves from the unpleasant results of plain speaking. When souls are in peril, God's ministers will not consider self, but will speak the word given them to speak, refusing to excuse or palliate evil." Prophets and Kings, pp. 141-142.

"While those who have yielding temperaments, who have not courage to condemn wrong, but keep silent when their influence is needed to stand in defense of the right against any pressure, may avoid many heartaches and escape many perplexities, they will also lose a very rich reward, if not their own souls." Testimonies, Vol. 3, p. 302.

Some pastors console themselves that they love the church members too much to point out their sins, when the truth is that they are fearful of becoming unpopular with those who need correction. They have no problem pointing out the sins of those who are not keeping the Sabbath holy, but they feel that it would be judgmental to identify sins in the church. But God says, "SHOW MY PEOPLE THEIR TRANSGRESSION." Isaiah 58:1.

Somehow sin among the saints has not been recognized as a great issue in the closing work. Though none should feel assigned to go about as a detective of the brethren or corrector of heretics, yet every faithful believer should weep in sorrow over the tragic drift toward the world. Those who are sealed will not only recognize the sins which are being committed, but will seek to correct them.

"The true people of God, who have the spirit of the work of the Lord and the salvation of souls at heart, will ever view sin in its real, sinful character. They will always be on the side of faithful

and plain dealing with sins which easily beset the people of God. Especially in the closing work for the church, in the sealing time of the one hundred and forty-four thousand who are to stand without fault before the throne of God, will they feel most deeply the wrongs of God's professed people." Testimonies, Vol. 3, p. 266.

Please take note that as the final events draw closer, the true and faithful in the church will be characterized by their "plain dealing with sins which easily beset the people of God.... They feel most deeply the wrongs of God's professed people."

We dare not oppose those who are led to deal with sins in the church. The sealing work and the Laodicean message requires that it be done. On the other hand, we cannot defend every self-appointed critic who raises a strident voice against wrongs in the church. True reformers will project love for the sinner, heart-broken sorrow for the sin, and deep loyalty to the advent message. But a genuine spirit of revival in the church will boldly address the sins which are being committed by the members themselves.

There exists in the Adventist church today an almost obsessive pride and confidence in the corporate structure of the organization. Any message of revival and reform is almost instantly and categorically rejected as an "attack" on the church. Even the most loyal, supportive members of the church have been branded as critical and judgmental because they expressed sorrow and concern over the alarming drift in standards. I understand why this reactive attitude has developed in the denomination. There have been unjustified attacks against the leadership of our church by a few radical dissidents and it is easy to assume that any negative observation is coming from an enemy of the truth. This false assumption has sometimes resulted in an unwarranted suspicion toward all independent or self-supporting missionary work which is not fully under the direction of the organized body.

It does no good to deny that changes have taken place, or to ignore the weaknesses that have appeared. Sin doesn't go away and revival doesn't come by pretending that all is well. I have before me right now copies of the Review and Herald from the 1940s when I was a college and seminary student. In those days our standards were carefully defended by church leaders and then were communicated to our people through the pages of the "good old Review." In the October 4, 1945 Review and Herald, a report was made of resolutions passed by the Southern California Conference in regard to Christian standards. It was emphasized in the article that these actions represented "principles held by the church through long years." Here is what appeared under the section on amusements: "Surely no one preparing for the coming of Jesus will be found at the theater, the carnival, the movie house, the opera, the circus, the dance, the card table or in attendance at commercialized sports.... We strongly urge separating from worldly associations at skating rinks and public bathing beaches."

The same article took a strong stand against jewelry and stated specifically, "No circlet of gold should be worn as a testimony to marriage vows." The church in those days also held adamantly against taking anyone back into membership who had remarried without clear Bible grounds. Look at the liberalization of the modern church on most of these issues. We have altered by official action our stand on remarriage, the wedding ring, and mixed swimming. And today, anyone who stands where the Southern California Conference stood in 1945 is looked upon as

out of the mainstream of Adventism. Our youth are transported by church buses to worldly athletic competition events. Movies are described in our own publications as matters for individual conscience to decide.

I do not mention these facts to be critical of the church, but merely to illustrate a most important point: We are fulfilling Sister White's prophecy that the line of demarcation would well-nigh disappear between the church and the world. She wrote:

"The line of demarcation between worldlings and many professed Christians is almost indistinguishable. Many who were once earnest Adventists are conforming to the world-to its practices, its customs, its selfishness.... Daily the church is becoming converted to the world." Testimonies, Vol. 8, pp. 118, 119.

Some would defend the changes which have been made as necessary accommodations to the spirit of the age or to cultural demands. Nothing could be more mistaken. We have been warned about the danger of such changes.

"We are to enter into no confederacy with the world, supposing that by so doing we could accomplish more.... No line of truth that has made the Seventh-day Adventist people what they are, is to be weakened. We have the old landmarks of truth, experience, and duty, and we are to stand firmly in defense of our principles, in full view of the world." Testimonies, Vol. 6, p. 17.

None of us should be ashamed to take a position exactly where God counsels us to stand-in defense of those principles which have made us what we are as a people. She says that no line of truth that made us what we are is to be weakened. Have we weakened that line of truth against the wearing of ornaments? Have we weakened the line of truth on modest dress, movies, competitive sports, divorce and remarriage? The easiest way to avoid answering those questions is to begin showing great indignation against the questioner for being "negative" and "critical" of the church. Many years ago the editor of the Review and Herald foresaw what would happen if we ever began to weaken that line of truth concerning the wearing of jewelry. He wrote with almost prophetic insight:

"If the mothers in Israel wear wedding rings, the daughters will feel that they are entitled by the same logic of reasoning to wear engagement rings. Others will feel that they should wear rings as family heirlooms, in memory of dead friends, etc. Where will the influence cease? Where should the line be drawn? Logically at the point of prohibition of all rings." Review and Herald, January 8, 1920, p. 6.

Thirty-seven years after F. M. Wilcox expressed those fears, another editor of the Review and Herald, F. D. Nichol, wrote a similar editorial in which he stated:

"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. We believe that 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. We are well aware of the reasoning employed to justify the drift away from the counsel given to our membership in the homeland; namely, that custom is changing in

America and that now a woman must wear a ring to avoid criticism.... So far as we know, those who make such statements do not provide any proof other than their personal impression. We doubt very much whether research would reveal that American women today are more given to wearing a wedding ring than in former generations." Review and Herald, January 24, 1957.

Notice how this great defender of our faith recognized that the argument about changing social customs in America was simply an effort "to justify the drift away from the counsel given to our membership in the homeland." Like almost everyone else in those days, he was very clear on the inspired counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy about wearing a wedding ring in this country.

Have the fears of those two editorial giants, F. M. Wilcox and F. D. Nichol, been confirmed by recent developments in the church? In his paper entitled, *The Wedding Band*, Ellen G. White, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Roger Coon, associate secretary of the White Estates, gives this startling picture of the leavening influence of the wedding ring:

"It has, indeed and in fact, opened the door to jewelry generally...and it has paved the way for the tacit acceptance of other rings (engagement rings, class rings, friendship rings, etc.) on the hands of Seventh-day Adventist church members. With the lessening of opposition to the wearing of the wedding band on the campuses of some of our colleges in North America in the early 1970s, we find a more complex problem with jewelry in the early and mid-1980s." (p. 16).

It is appropriate to ask why the relaxed attitude toward the wedding ring has led to the wearing of other jewelry. The answer has been spelled out very clearly in the General Conference officers' statement which was adopted by the 1986 Autumn Council. In that action they referred to "the apparent consensus among Seventh-day Adventists in North America and our historic position here which makes little or no distinction between the wedding band and jewelry that is worn strictly for ornamental purposes."

Since our members see no difference between a ring on the third finger or any other finger, it is not hard to understand why they are becoming defensive of other jewelry as the wedding ring becomes more common place. Roger Coon's description of the "tacit acceptance of other rings" is only a shadow of what will happen as the custom becomes more widespread in our church.

In May, 1987, a survey was made of undergraduate students at a Seventh-day Adventist university relating to the wearing of rings. Out of two hundred and eleven students who responded to the survey, seventy-four percent said they could see no difference between a wedding ring and an engagement ring. Over half the men students stated that they planned to give an engagement ring to their future wives, and seventy-eight percent of the females felt that if a wedding ring was acceptable, then they could wear an engagement ring as well.

Should these alarming figures give us serious second thoughts about the wisdom of setting up man-made distinctions which the Word of God does not do?

Because the wearing of the wedding ring opens the door to other symbolic jewelry and eventually to ornaments in general, we should begin looking at that custom in a new light. We must appraise it, not only by its inherent merits or demerits, but by the effect it will have upon

others. Some see no sin issue at all in wearing the ring. Does the Bible have anything to say about acts I which may not be sinful in themselves, but which could be a stumbling block to lead others into sin? Can we become accountable for the sins of someone else under such circumstances?

Every Seventh-day Adventist should consider the solemn answer to those questions. Paul wrote: "But when ye sin so against the brethren and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." 1 Corinthians 8:12.

What sin was he referring to? What had those Corinthian believers done to wound a weak conscience and to become guilty of sin against Christ? They had eaten food offered to idols. Was that a sin in itself? No, Paul pronounced that it was not wrong, and they had the liberty to eat it. THEN WHY DOES HE CALL IT A SIN? Read the chapter and you will find that Paul called it a sin because the eating of that food was influencing others to eat it also, contrary to their conscientious convictions.

DON'T MISS THIS PROFOUND PRINCIPLE! If it is a sin to influence someone, by your example, to commit an act which is not sinful in itself, it is certainly more of a sin to influence them by your example to do something which is a clear violation of revealed truth. When people use your wedding ring as an excuse to put on other jewelry, because their weak conscience is overwhelmed by your example, the Word of God declares that you are sinning against Christ!

Paul was so deeply impressed by the seriousness of this issue that he came to a conclusion which many consider almost radical: "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." 1 Corinthians 8:13.

In other words, he would run no risk of sharing the responsibility for another person's sin. He would simply eliminate forever even that innocent act which could be a stumbling block to that individual.

The General Conference officers have stated the matter correctly. Our people do not recognize a difference between the wedding band and other jewelry. Their conscientious convictions are based upon almost a century and a half of biblical and Spirit of Prophecy teaching. Who now would want to influence those people to violate their consciences either by precept or example? To do so is designated as sin by the inspired apostle.

Who, like Paul, would be willing to declare, "If a wedding ring make my brother to offend, I will wear no wedding ring while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend"?

Ellen White used the word "leavening" quite often in describing the effect of sin on the church. The dictionary defines it this way: "Any influence spreading through something and working on it to bring about a gradual change."

With that definition in mind, we can better understand this statement:

"I feel deeply over this leavening process which seems to be going on in the conformity to custom and fashion. Not one penny should be spent for a circlet of gold to testify that we are married." Testimonies to Ministers, p. 181.

Do you not see how we were warned that the introduction of the wedding ring would "bring about a, gradual change," as Webster put it? Sister White was not talking about the economy issue when she said not a penny should be spent for a wedding ring. She was talking about the more serious issue of opening a door, and starting a fermentation process which would penetrate and change the whole church.

Has it done that very thing? We have just presented proof that the prophetess had good reason to "feel deeply" over this small, but powerful, leaven which would have such far-reaching influence. When she said, "not one penny should be spent" for a wedding ring, it was just an emphatic way of saying that no one should wear one. She was troubled because of what that little deviation would lead to and how it would become a bad influence upon others. We should be even more concerned as we see how it is breaking down the conscientious convictions against jewelry which we ourselves have built up during all our past years of faithful preaching.

As late as 1977, Elder Neal Wilson, president of the General Conference, expressed convictions about the "leavening" statement on the wedding ring, and how it applied to the United States. At the North American Evangelistic Council of January 7, 1977, he clearly enunciated that the wearing of the ring was not imperative in this country. "There is a rumor that is circulating around, that the church leadership has sold out on the wedding ring. This is a very incorrect, unfortunate statement. Some people insist that wedding rings are as necessary here in America as overseas. This is debatable. We appeal to our workers, we urge our people to follow the counsel of Ellen G. White found in Testimonies to Ministers, p. 180. We discourage the wedding ring in North America. It is not imperative. Press the claims of the gospel upon the candidates." (White Estates File Document.)

Elder Wilson was concerned that our members not receive the impression that "church leadership has sold out on the wedding ring." He, like the Review and Herald editor quoted earlier, understood the inspired counsel of God against wearing the ring and urged our workers and our members "to follow the counsel of Ellen G. White found in Testimonies to Ministers, p. 180." That is the statement, by the way, which declares that "not one penny should be spent for a circlet of gold to testify that we are married." (Ibid. p. 181.)

Five years earlier, another president of the General Conference, Elder Robert Pierson, had used that same statement about the wedding ring as the basis for an impassioned appeal in the Review and Herald for a revival and reformation. In his heart-to-heart talk entitled, This Leavening Process, he wrote:

"When I see the extreme fashions, the rings, the necklaces, the large brooches, the locket, the highly ornamental watches, and the elaborate men's jewelry more and more apparent among us, it is not the precious stones that cause me most concern: it is that 'leavening process'-that pride, that love of self, the love of the world, that compromise-that these objects reveal, that makes me anxious for God's people ... too many of us are heading back into the world. If the love of the

world is in our hearts the love of the Father just can't be there too." Review and Herald, December 17, 1972.

Obviously, we have come to a time when the "old landmarks of truth, experience and duty" need to be reaffirmed and strengthened. Sister White indicated that "we are to stand firmly in defense of our principles, in full view of the world."

FINISHING THE REFORMATION

As the last manifestation of God's truth and God's character to the world, this remnant church carries a tremendous responsibility. As our name indicates, we are the remnant, or final end-piece, of a long illustrious line of loyalists whose minority voices have been heard in every generation since Christ was here. Those same neglected doctrines and standards which were so dear to our spiritual forebears have been handed to us to defend in the last generation. What a privilege!

The early church suffered and died for those principles. The Waldenses, Reformers and Puritans laid down their lives in defense of the original faith delivered to the saints. We are now charged with the protection and proclamation of the same pure gospel. Dare we dilute it or allow it to be changed?

Perhaps we need to be reminded of how those persecuted ancestors of ours exercised unbelievable courage in standing for unpopular truth. In 1593, the English Parliament branded as "disloyal persons" all who worshiped outside the Church of England. They did this because increasing numbers of ardent, reform-minded

Puritans were withdrawing from the state church and organizing independent congregations. Death or expulsion from the country was decreed against all who did not stay with the Church of England.

But the spirit of reform could not be suppressed. By the time Queen Elizabeth died in 1603, fully ten percent of the Anglican clergy were converted to the Puritan views. And when King James arrived in London that same year to assume the crown, he was immediately waited upon by a delegation of ministers who presented him with the "Millinary Petition," so-called because it was signed by one thousand members of the Church of England clergy. In the New King James Bible, printed by Thomas Nelson, a historical supplement in the back of the Bible describes some of the requests made by those concerned preachers in their Petition to the new king. "The Petition asked that the sign of the cross be abolished in baptism, the use of the ring be dropped from the marriage ceremony, and that the wearing of a cap and surplice—the loose fitting white gown worn by some of the clergy—be made optional." (p. 222).

Although it may seem puzzling to modern Christians that one tenth of the Protestant ministers of England should have been so concerned over such seemingly trivial matters as wedding rings and crosses, we need to understand the basis for their protest. They were living closer to the heathen origin of those practices, and held stronger convictions against mingling the holy and the profane. Sister White explains why they made these matters such issues of reform:

"The English Reformers, while renouncing the doctrines of Romanism, had retained many of its forms. Thus though the authority and creed of Rome were rejected, not a few of her customs and ceremonies were incorporated into the worship of the Church of England. It was claimed that these things were not matters of conscience; that though they were not commanded in Scripture, and hence were nonessential, yet not being forbidden, they were not intrinsically evil. Their observance tended to narrow the gulf which separated the reformed churches from Rome, and it was argued that they would promote the acceptance of the Protestant faith by Romanists.

"To the conservative and compromising, these arguments seemed conclusive. But there was another class that did not so judge. The fact that these customs tended to bridge over the chasm between Rome and the Reformation was in their view a conclusive argument against retaining them. They looked upon them as badges of the slavery from which they had been delivered and to which they had no disposition to return. They reasoned that God has in His Word established the regulations governing His worship, and that men are not at liberty to add to these or to detract from them. The very beginning of the great apostasy was in seeking to supplement the authority of God by that of the church. Rome began by enjoining what God had not forbidden, and she ended by forbidding what He had explicitly enjoined.

"Many earnestly desired to return to the purity and simplicity which characterized the primitive church. They regarded many of the established customs of the English Church as monuments of idolatry, and they could not in conscience unite in her worship." *The Great Controversy*, pp. 289, 290.

I have quoted at length so that you can get the inspired picture of why the religious ancestors of our own church rejected those worship customs which were tainted with Romanism and paganism. Even though the wedding ring and crosses were not specifically forbidden in the Bible, the reformers evidently knew the background of those customs and considered them "monuments of idolatry." They wanted nothing which would link them to the manmade traditions of the apostate Catholic Church.

Evidence that the heathen connection was well known by the Church of England leadership is fully established by the famous statement of John Henry Newman. After he forsook Anglicanism to become, later, a cardinal of the Church of Rome, he wrote: "Constantine, in order to recommend the new religion to the heathen, transferred into it the outward adornments to which they had been accustomed in their own. It is not necessary to go into a subject which the diligence of Protestant writers has made familiar to most of us. The use of temples, and these dedicated to particular saints ... incense ... candles ... holy water ... processions...the ring in marriage, turning to the east, images at a later date ... are all of pagan origin, and sanctified by their adoption into the Church." *An Essay On the Development of Christian Doctrine*, p. 373. (Emphasis supplied.)

Surely if this apostate of the Church of England understood the religious elements which had been inherited from paganism, the loyal Puritans would have been more aware of them. Newman said that it was the diligence of Protestant writers which had made these facts well known. No wonder the protesting Puritans felt uncomfortable about the use of the wedding ring.

It is significant that Ellen White enjoined the Puritan principles on dress as the model for modern Christians.

"Puritan plainness and simplicity should mark the dwellings and apparel of all who believe the solemn truths for this time." Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 189.

"Not one penny should be spent for a circlet of gold to testify that we are married." Testimonies to Ministers, p. 181.

"That ring encircling your finger may be very plain, but it is useless, and the wearing of it has a wrong influence upon others." Testimonies, Vol. 4, p. 630.

"To dress plainly, abstaining from display of jewelry and ornaments of every kind, is in keeping with our faith." Testimonies, Vol. 3, p. 366.

It was those courageous Puritan protesters against remnants of error and idolatry who made their way to this continent and established the Protestantism of America. How sad it is that their bold convictions did not continue to prevail among the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers. Some did hold on to the true faith and became links in maintaining and restoring those principles to the Seventhday Adventist Church when it emerged in the midnineteenth century. John Wesley was greatly influenced by the Puritan ethic of revival and reformation within the established church.

Our own church leaders in one of the earliest Review and Herald magazines paid tribute to Wesley as an ancestral champion of our view on high Christian' standards. In defense of the Adventist stand on jewelry': they quoted Wesley's appeal to the early Methodists:

"I exhort you to wear no gold, no pearls, or precious stones.... I do not advise women to wear rings, earrings, necklaces.... It is true these things are little, very little things; therefore, they are not worth defending; therefore give them up, let them drop, throw them away, without another word; else a little needle may cause much pain in the flesh, a little self-indulgence much hurt to your soul." (Review and Herald, July 10, 1855).

Today it is sobering to see how Wesley's fears were fulfilled. He was addressing a smaller church than our own, who held standards very little different from ours. Those early Methodists were instructed, not only against a wedding ring, but against drinking tea, dancing, etc. Yet, that little needle which Wesley referred to-that tiny bit of worldly leaven-has permeated the ten million member Methodist Church to such a degree that 82 percent of its ministers do not even believe in the inspiration of the, Bible anymore. Drinking, smoking and gambling are no longer foundational issues, even among the pastoral leadership of the church.

Some Methodist ministers are perceptive enough to recognize how this tragedy happened, and why, today the church is losing many more members than it is gaining. Dean M. Kelly, ordained Methodist minister; author and church growth expert, wrote an article for the Ministry magazine entitled, "How Adventism Can Stop Growing." It appeared in the February, 1983 issues

After citing the declining membership of his own church, as well as other large, formal, mainline Protestant churches, he gave this candid advice to the Seventh-day Adventist Church:

"If Adventists want to stop growing and begin declining like everybody else, all they have to do is to emphasize that abstinence from alcohol, tobacco and caffeine isn't really essential to salvation. Decide that vegetarianism isn't actually all that important, and foot-washing is a little tacky.... Recognize that membership in labor unions might not be altogether a bad thing, and that tithing, like the requirements already mentioned, can be a form of righteousness by works....

"The things that I have mentioned...are the things that make the Seventh-day Adventist movement unique, distinctive and demanding. They give it its bite, its convincingness, its seriousness. Each church needs its own way of insisting that 'you've got to live up to this to be one of us.' If you strip the requirements all away, you can render the movement feeble, pallid, and ordinary overnight. So there's the answer to the question: How can the Seventh-day Adventist Church stop growing? Be like the Methodists." (p. 7.)

Did you follow that amazing concession? Be like the Methodists if you want to lose power, vitality and membership. What did they do? They lost those unique high standards that demanded sacrifice and self-denial. Are we heeding the lesson to which he is pointing us? Are we able to learn from the record of our Puritan ancestors, from John Wesley, and from the example of these once-virile church giants which now sit in decay and apathy?

Perhaps I should also tell you that in the following issues of Ministry magazine, four strong letters of protest were registered against the article. Were they written by Methodist preachers? No, they were written by Adventist ministers who, believe it or not, contended that Kelly's position was too works-oriented. They were already busily rejecting the counsel of the Methodist minister by trying to emulate the Methodists. Perhaps they had read and believed that Adventist publication which declared, "We are not given salvation because of our good deeds, nor are we deprived of it because of our misdeeds." If so, Dean Kelly's final paragraph must have irritated them to no end. The Methodist advice to the Adventist ministry was this: "Now I know it's true that there is no particular thing you can do to commend yourself to God, but there are a lot of things you can do that will separate yourself from God. They are called sins." Shades of John Wesley! All Methodists haven't forgotten. Have we?

It would be a most profitable experience to follow the course of those dynamic religious movements through the years, and confirm the erosive process of compromise which finally did them in. But as a church, we have not yet been willing to face up to it. For some reason, we still seem to believe that more members can be acquired if we lower the restrictions and make it easier to qualify. That is surely the most popular road to follow, but is it the right one? Even if we could win larger numbers, they would be a weakness instead of a strength to the corporate body.

Sister White said:

"We are not to elevate our standard just a little above the world's standard; but we are to make the line of demarcation decidedly apparent." Fundamentals of Christian Education, pp. 288-289.

Again she wrote:

"The test of discipleship is not brought to bear as closely as it should be upon those who present themselves for baptism. It should be understood whether those who profess to be converted are simply taking the name of Seventh-day Adventists, or whether they are taking their stand on the Lord's side to come out from the world and be separate and touch not the unclean thing." Testimonies to Ministers, p. 128.

I'd like to suggest that there are four reasons for Satan's incredible success rate in sweeping so many Seventh-day Adventists into his snare of popular, worldly indulgences. First: We have been deceived into thinking that attention to external concerns is a form of legalism and totally irrelevant to salvation. Second: We have been deceived into believing that God does it all, and any effort on our part to overcome sin is an exercise of the flesh. Third: We have failed to understand that we are responsible for closing doors of temptation and removing ourselves from the circumstances creating the temptation. Fourth: We have been deceived into an accommodation of culture in order to appear less isolated, unfriendly and peculiar to the society around us.

How safe is it to seek a cordial coexistence with culture? Should there indeed be congeniality with those majority elements in society which dictate how people should live? I submit that we as Seventh-day Adventist Christians should make no attempt to tailor our standards in order to be more socially acceptable. There is not a country in the world whose culture is not carnal. We owe no degree of allegiance to the worldly lifestyle of an AIDS-stricken, entertainment-mad society.

I am fearful even to think about the future consequences of the seeds which have already begun to grow in our young people. Researchers from Andrews University reported that nineteen percent of Seventh-day Adventist youth see nothing wrong with premarital sex and another nineteen percent are not sure that it is a sin. This is almost forty percent of our total young people surveyed. We have no reason to believe that their confused moral values are not leading into the same promiscuous excesses as the rest of society. Adventist ministers are spending more and more time counseling those who have contracted venereal diseases as well as those who have alcohol and drug problems.

As the AIDS plague penetrates deeper into the heterosexual community, will our own college students be protected from infection? If nearly forty percent of them have no conviction of conscience to protect their virtue, how can they escape the predicted holocaust of death which no vaccine or treatment has been able to arrest? And what about those young people who will be at risk on our campuses because they innocently believe every Adventist college to be a "haven from the world"?

Please do not assume that I am placing the responsibility upon the colleges. The breakdown of morals really begins in the home and the church. The wicked, perverted principles of Satan have filled the minds of our boys and girls from their earliest years. How can one hour of Sabbath School each week counteract the twenty or thirty television hours of implicit (and often explicit) instruction in sin?

We must also ask what they are hearing in the church which prepares them to reject the entertainment of the world. Pastors and Pathfinder leaders often accompany our children to the exciting sports arenas where teams fiercely compete to beat each other down.

Incidentally, there surely must be a parallel between Intertestamental times and our own day. During those four hundred years between Malachi and Matthew, God wanted His people, the Jews, to be preparing the world for the first coming of Jesus. But history tells us that they became Hellenized, and were almost swallowed up by assimilation into the Greek culture. Especially were they fascinated by the great Olympic sports events of the stadiums. We are told that the Jews began to take part in the athletic competition, even to the point of exercising nude in the sacred temple precincts. Some of the priests were involved in the gymnastic activities. This hellenization program led finally to acceptance of many pagan practices. Parents changed the names of their children from the combinations of Yahweh to the names of corrupt Greek gods and goddesses.

Now we live in another special age just before Jesus is to come the second time. Again, we find the people of God obsessed with the spirit of rivalry and commercialized competitive sports. The "gods" of this age are the idols of baseball, basketball, football, and tennis. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has not gone as far as the Jews, but we have been so impacted by the frenzy that we have officially discussed the issue of ; intercollegiate sports as an accepted feature of our church and school system. Will this secularization affect us in the same way it did God's people of old? Will we be so busy practicing our games, and competing to "beat" the other team, that we have no time for sharing the good news about Christ's soon coming?

Should we not begin to speak out against these preoccupations that dull our spiritual sensibilities and open up avenues of the mind for Satan's influence? We need not apologize for writing articles and preaching sermons about the incredible emotional assaults of Satan against the senses. These things may not be tests of fellowship, but they might well be tests of obedience for these special times. It is a fearful thing to take pleasure in those activities that God hates. This is a mark of half-hearted Laodicea.

Someone might ask at this point, who then can be saved? If the mind can be so easily influenced, and the flesh has such incredible appeal, what hope do we have for victory? Not even the most concentrated forces of temptation can cause a person to sin unless he gives mental consent and physical cooperation to the tempter. All who are controlled by Satan must choose to be controlled by him. By choosing to cooperate with Christ, we are immediately allied to a source of irresistible strength and victory. We have the final word. A decision to serve Christ will bring to our side the same kind of angel messengers who ministered to Daniel and Joseph in their besetments.

It would be just as serious for us to underestimate the power of our ally as to misjudge the strength of our ' enemy. We have no cause to be discouraged. He that is for us is greater than he that is against us. The secret is in the will-the power of choice. Once we have made the decision to accept Christ as the Lord of our life, we also receive the insulating energy of the Holy Spirit to protect all approaches to the newly-committed mind. But we need to say it again: **THAT PROTECTION IS NOT AUTOMATIC.** The power is there, and the victory is there, but we must

exercise it in resisting the entrance of sin through the five senses. This is faith that works. We get no credit for the victory, because without Him we can do nothing.

Yet, after recognizing the glorious truth that all may have the victory, we must sadly confess that the majority in the church today are in the lukewarm state of Laodicea. They are not laying hold of the precious experience of true righteousness by faith. There is an alarming lack of concern over the honor of God's law, and reflecting God's character. It is all through our ranks, at all levels of laity and leadership. Few would deny this. We would be less than honest if we pretended that only the unordained church members are having struggles in keeping self under subjection to Christ. The fallen nature is waging exactly the same kind of battle against the spiritual mind in every single individual, no matter what our position in the church. Not one of us can retain the mind of Christ unless we are receiving the imputed and imparted merits of our Saviour on a continual, daily basis. How easy it is to start depending on human effort, neglect the personal hours of devotion, and begin deviating from the blueprint of God's Word. It is only as we saturate our minds with the inspired counsels of the Holy Spirit, and follow those counsels, that we can be true shepherds and administrators of God's work.

It is a tremendously weighty responsibility to be chosen as an officer or leader in the remnant church. Qualities of character and leadership are not conferred upon certain positions, but upon persons who meet the spiritual requirements of the office. The wisdom to be a good deacon, elder or conference president will accrue only to those who seek for it in a deep, personal way. In this time of compromise and Laodiceanism, we desperately need overseers who can lead us back to the "first love" experience in Christ. If leaders are "blind" and "naked" it bodes very ill for the lukewarm local body which gropes for direction from those over them.

CAN ONE BE LOYAL TO LAODICEA?

THE identity of this remnant church with Laodicea immediately raises some very troubling questions in the minds of many. Those questions have to do with loyalty and authority. Can a person be fully obedient to the Word of God and still be loyal to a compromised Laodicean Church which stands in need of repentance? Where does the final resolution of truth reside?

Admittedly, these are delicate issues and one runs the risk of being misunderstood for even raising the questions. But I believe they must be clarified in order to save thousands from fatal rebellion against the "pillar and ground of the truth"—God's church.

This is the day for extremism. Satan is seeking to divide the advent movement into equally-polarized segments where false emphases prevail. Just as there is a decided dichotomy over the issue of legalism and cheap grace so there are two extreme views on the question of final authority. One group believes that the organized church should receive no support because it has made regressive errors in directing the work. Therefore, no recognition of its administrative or spiritual authority should be granted. They believe it is now an apostate organization whose leadership can no longer be trusted to formulate policies, and that each person must decide truth for himself.

The other group argues that God is not leading individuals but a church and, therefore, He has unified that body by providing infallible direction. This group believes that whatever is officially voted becomes the voice of God upon the earth, and all private convictions or opinions should be surrendered for the sake of unity in the church.

Neither of these positions is correct. The truth lies in between, where corporate leadership is recognized and respected, but where limits are biblically applied to the actions of governing committees. Sister White wrote the equivalent of an entire book to correct the extremist claims of these opposition groups. In *Testimonies to Ministers* she presented the most balanced treatise on proper leadership that can be found anywhere. She clearly established that in the Adventist Church there can be only one final infallible arbiter of truth, and that is the Word of God.

We have been justifiably suspicious of the Catholic concept of settling questions of doctrine and religious practice by decisions of men, regardless of their hierarchial rank. We have looked with amusement and pity upon pronouncements of the Catholic Church, reversing the former "no meat on Friday" rule, and declaring certain highly revered "saints" to be no saints at all. It brought considerable confusion to the Catholic laity, but they adjusted quickly because they accepted the ecclesiastical doctrine of papal infallibility. Truth for them could be settled and sealed by an ex-cathedra decision by the head of the church.

The Catholic myth of infallible men speaking with divine authority has been rejected, not only by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but by Protestantism as a whole. The leaders of our General Conference would be the first to dispel such a misconception. Often they have appealed to the membership of our churches to pray for them as they come together to make decisions regarding the administration of the worldwide work.

In the Bible, we are admonished to pray for kings and magistrates, but how much more important it is to uphold our church leaders in prayer. No political group on earth has ever met to discuss matters which are of greater importance than the affairs of this church. Discussions between nations may take the headlines of the newspaper, but they are only significant as they relate to the accomplishment of God's work in the earth.

It is not vain on our part to recognize that the progress of this special, final message of truth is heaven's highest priority. The coming of Jesus, and the end of the great controversy is closely related to the proclamation of Revelation 14 to every nation, tongue and people.

Many times during the last forty years I have served on administrative committees and prayed with my brethren for God to give us wisdom to make right decisions. I have never had the responsibility of sitting on a General Conference Committee, but I can imagine the tremendous sense of urgency with which those members plead for God's counsel to prevail in their discussions. They understand very well their total dependence upon God to make right decisions. When special councils are held to decide issues within the church, the prayers of all our people should be ascending for God to guide the minds of those men who did not choose themselves to be in such sensitive positions.

Why do they need our prayers so much? Because we believe the General Conference Committee constitutes the highest spiritual authority on earth. Does this mean, therefore, that whatever decision they make about doctrine should be received as unquestioned truth? Of course not! No men are infallible. Our church has always urged that any teaching be submitted to the test of the Bible, and that no man or group of men should take precedence over the Word.

In the book, *Questions on Doctrine*, produced by the General Conference, we read the well-known, official stance of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on this issue:

"We believe that all theological beliefs must be measured by the living Word, judged by its truth, and whatsoever is unable to pass this test, or is found to be out of harmony with its message, is to be rejected." (p. 28).

"The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority-not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support." *The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

In defense of the inspired Scriptures as the last word on truth, Sister White pointed out that leaders of the work had made mistakes, and it would be disastrous to consider their human judgment as any kind of ultimate test for true doctrine. She wrote:

"Those who have not been in the habit of searching the Bible for themselves, of weighing evidence, have confidence in the leading men and accept decisions they make; and thus many will reject the very messages God sends to His people, if these leading brethren do not accept them.... Even if all our leading men should refuse light and truth, that door will still remain open. The Lord will raise up men who will give the people the message for this time." *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 106, 107.

"We must not trust to others to search the Scriptures for us. Some of our leading brethren have frequently taken their position on the wrong side; and if God would send a message and wait for these older brethren to open the way for its advancement, it would never reach the people." *Gospel Workers*, p. 303.

These statements do not indicate that the leading brethren or General Conference leadership should not be respected and consulted. They merely remind us that their decisions are subject to the higher authority of Scriptural truth, and no one should blindly accept everything that men decide without submitting it to the test of the Bible. She clearly enunciated this principle in *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 30:

"It is the duty of ministers to respect the judgment of their brethren; but their relations to one another, as well as the doctrines they teach, should be brought to the test of the law and the testimony; then, if hearts are teachable, there will be no divisions among us."

Again she wrote:

"Our church members see that there are differences of opinion among the leading men, and they themselves enter into controversy regarding the subjects under dispute. Christ calls for unity. But He does not call for us to unify on wrong practices. The God of heaven draws a sharp contrast between pure, elevating, ennobling truth and false, misleading doctrines.... I urge our brethren to unify upon a true, scriptural basis." Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 175.

Notice that she made strong appeals for unity of the church and brethren, but that unity was to be based on the authority of the Scriptures rather than the majority vote of church committees, or the opinions of "leading men." Six years before her death Sister White wrote in the Review and Herald: "We are not to put confidence in the counsel of men unless we have evidence that they are under the influence of the Spirit of God." (July 1, 1909).

There were times when she saw that the Holy Spirit was leading the General Conference Committee, and their actions were in harmony with the Word. In 1875 she wrote:

"I have been shown that no man's judgment should be surrendered to the judgment of any one man. But when the judgment of the General Conference, which is the highest authority that God has on earth, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be maintained, but be surrendered." Testimonies, Vol. 3, p. 492.

It should be noted that only private opinions or judgments were to be given up, but not biblical principles or doctrines. And it is important to note how the Spirit of Prophecy qualified even that kind of submission to General Conference actions. Nineteen years later she wrote that she did not approve of some of their actions of 1894, and the following year she wrote these shocking words:

"At the center of the work matters are being shaped so that every other institution is following the same course. And the General Conference itself is becoming corrupted with wrong sentiments and principles." Testimonies to Ministers, p. 359.

Then, in 1896, she wrote this strong testimony to the Review and Herald office in Battle Creek:

"Who can now feel sure that they are safe in respecting the voice of the General Conference Association? If the people in our churches understood the management of the men who walk in the light of the sparks of their own kindling, would they respect their decisions? I answer, no, not for a moment. I have been shown that the people at large do not know the heart of the work is being diseased at Battle Creek." Special Instructions Relating to the Review and Herald Office and the Work in Battle Creek, p. 20.

Nevertheless, the strongest qualification of the earlier 1875 statement was made in the year 1901 and was incorporated into the General Conference Bulletin of that year:

"That these men should stand in the sacred place to be the voice of God to the people, as we once believed the General Conference to be, that is past." (p. 25, col. 2, paragraph 1).

These statements should not be construed as disrespectful or disloyal to the church leadership, and neither should they be automatically applied to other periods of the church's history. We are simply establishing the principle that no inerrant committee is recognized within the framework of the remnant church. Like all other Protestant leaders, the officers of our General Conference would be horrified to discover that anyone looked upon them as any kind of infallible deciders of truth. Without, exception, they ascribe that sovereign role to the Scriptures. For this reason, we should give the strongest support to this special remnant church and the men who have been chosen for administrative positions. They carry heavy responsibilities which require greater than human wisdom. We should constantly uphold them in our prayers and with our encouragement.

The Lord desires to lead the minds of the committees who stand at the head of the work. As long as they act in harmony with the inspired counsels of God, they are to be accorded attention and respect as the highest authority of God on earth. But all of their actions and votes are—to be subjected to the final test of all truth—the Bible. No committee on earth, including the General Conference Committee, has authority to vote upon revealed Bible principles. Those principles are not subject to the vote of man. They can be approved or disapproved by the committee action, but they cannot be made less binding or more binding upon the consciences of men.

With these reasonable inspired principles our church has always been in agreement. Those who say that God will use some other organization to finish the work are mistaken. The final call for revival, reformation and separation from Babylon must come from within the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. They are wrong who contend that the church has gone too far in apostasy to repent. Such a scenario does not fit the biblical blueprint nor the Spirit of Prophecy. No other church is revealed in the counsels of God to receive the Latter Rain, the seal of God, and to give the Loud Cry.

There is no basis for the belief that God has rejected this church because of its lukewarmness. It is easy to forget, amidst the apostasy, that there are faithful shepherds and leaders who have not bowed the knee to Baal. They are grieved at the worldliness invading our churches, and are doing everything possible to stem the tide. We are clearly told that the church will not be spewed out, but only those people who will not be hewed by the message.

"God is leading out a people. He has a chosen people, and a church on earth, whom He has made the depositories of His law. He has committed to them sacred trust and eternal truth to be given to the world. He would reprove and correct them. The message to the Laodiceans is applicable to Seventh-day Adventists who have had great light and have not walked in the light. It is those who have made great profession, but have not kept in step with their Leader, that will be spewed out of His mouth, unless they repent. The message to pronounce the Seventh-day Adventist church Babylon, and call the people of God out of her, does not come from any heavenly messenger, or any human agent inspired by the Spirit of God." *The Remnant Church*, pp. 51, 52.

"Some have advanced the thought that, as we near the close of time, every child of God will act independently of any religious organization. But I have been instructed by the Lord that in this work there is no such thing as every man's being independent.... It is not a good sign when men refuse to unite with their brethren and prefer to act alone. Let laborers take into their confidence

the brethren who are free to point out every departure from right principles. If men wear the yoke of Christ, they can not pull apart; they will draw with Christ." Testimonies, Vol. 9, p. 258.

Whatever final work the Spirit will do in relation to this earth must be done through those who heed the Laodicean message. That message does not call for people to leave the lukewarm church of Laodicea, but to repent. God will spew out only those who do not apply for the heavenly eyesalve, the oil and the gold. Admittedly, the majority will reject the invitation, but God has never promised to finish His work by vast numbers. "There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few." I Samuel 14:6.

But here is a most important truth to remember: We must not try to ignore the fact that a Laodicean departure has taken place. God would not call for repentance if sins had not been committed which demanded such repentance. Doctrines and standards have been altered. To deny that we are guilty and need repentance is to negate what we have taught for over one hundred and forty years.

We have always applied the Laodicean prophecies to ourselves. We are Laodicea! We are the church that needs to hear the Straight Testimony. The trumpet needs to be blown in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is alarming that some still deny that the church has been guilty of anything which demands repentance. They charge that those who see things wrong in the church are "critics" and "judgmental" and are really trying to appear as the only ones who are righteous. Those who say that everything is great, and the church is not in need of repentance, are proving by such statements that they are the blind who stand in the greatest need of repentance.

The inspired writings do not tell us how Laodicea will respond except to say that the majority will reject the strong call to make things right, and the resultant "shaking" will cleanse and purify the church. The chaff will be removed, but the faithful minority will remain to be sealed and to give the Loud Cry. I do not speculate on how this traumatic purging will affect the organization of the church. That has not been revealed. Suffice it to say that the church will not fall even though it may seem ready to collapse. The "little company" will remain and go through in triumph with that host of others who will be gathered in from Babylon.

But as the sifting becomes more pronounced in the church, many sincere members perhaps wonder how to relate to leadership actions, especially when they might disagree with those actions.

Is it possible for committees always to make decisions which will be agreeable to all members of the body of Christ? It is entirely unlikely and probably impossible. In the administration of a worldwide church which seeks to coordinate workers in hundreds of countries and languages, insuperable problems are constantly confronted. Many of the decisions facing our world leaders are of secondary importance to the total membership. They have to do with only certain segments of the field, and involve policies of local administration.

From time to time, representatives serving on the General Conference Council bring specific problems from their division which may indeed affect the entire church. Usually the substance of such problems are either moral or cultural. In other words, they are either based on matters which

involve biblical principle, or else they concern optional issues where no violation of principle is at stake.

By perusing the minutes from past committees, it seems obvious that most decisions have to do with the latter class of actions. But even in these peripheral matters, some might disagree and take exception to the final vote. What is their duty after the action is taken? Individual judgments and opinions should be surrendered to the counsel of the brethren. For the sake of unity and order, there must be submission in these matters to those who have been placed in administrative authority.

Do those committees ever make mistakes? Without question! The men who serve on them are human and they lay no claim to infallibility although they pray earnestly for wisdom and guidance. Is it even possible for them to make a wrong decision concerning the more important issues of doctrine and principle? Sister White makes it very clear that this is a possibility, and consequently urged everyone to let the Bible, not the leaders, be the final test in such cases. In the area of morals and conscience, the true Christian is answerable only to God. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Romans 14:12.

It is largely because of an over-confidence in corporate accountability that great religious movements of the past have lost their power. From a position of primitive faith and dedication, many denominations yielded step by little step to the pressures of conformity and compromise. As the members, with their varying degrees of commitment, gave way to weaknesses of the flesh, the POSITION of the church came into conflict with the PRACTICE of the church. Then, to resolve the inconsistency, the ecclesiastical leadership gradually modified the doctrinal standards to harmonize with the way members were living at the grass roots level.

Satan's program of hammering away at the fallen nature to gain entrance to the mind has brought about the spiritual ruin of many religious groups. Soon there is an accommodation made by the corporate committees to conform to the majority practice of the membership. This is the exact way most of the reformation churches lost their strength and influence. How carefully we, as Seventh-day Adventists, should consider the appeal of those Union Conference leaders who stated that there is "a head-on collision between what is happening in our colleges and churches, and what the church has been teaching and preaching."

The Andrews University survey made the same kind of appraisal. "Our historical positions simply do not correspond to our members' general practice." Ministry, April 1985, p. 6. These statements are not attacking the church or its institutions, but they are recognizing that there is exactly the same dangerous breakdown of standards that preceded and precipitated a top level liberalization on the part of other church movements. We stand in a most dangerous position right now. As the president of the North Pacific Union stated in The Adventist Review, "We are at a crossroads in the church as to whether we will go the way of what we classify as mainline, nominal Protestantism, or whether we will uphold the standards of Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy." August 1, 1985, p. 14.

Let us not suppose that because we are fulfilling a special mission to restore the apostolic faith that our leaders could not come under pressure to lower the standards just like other movements

before us. Our General Conference Council is made up of human beings with the same fallen nature as were the members of all other church councils of the past. They are subject to the same errors of judgment and emotional influences.

Think for a moment. Just as churches are made up of individuals at varying levels of spirituality, so the controlling committees are composed of the same mixture. All are under similar stresses and temptations from Satan's specialized arsenal of sensory weapons, but all; have not responded in the same way. Some have not yielded at all; others have compromised a little, and some much. Those with televisions in their home may have, different convictions than those who do not. Those with sons or daughters who have been involved in divorce may have a different attitude than those whose children are happily married. All these pressing influences, and more, get through to the highest church councils just as they often surface in the local church boards. It is just as difficult for the General Conference leaders to separate their emotional feelings from biblical issues of principle as it is for our laymen to do it. By the grace of God, they do a wonderful job, but this is what makes all human committee work short of infallible. And, of course, this is why the Word of God must be the final test of authority in matters spiritual.

Surely it is most apparent how much we need to pray for those men and women who must make decisions affecting the entire corporate body of believers. Without question, Satan will make unprecedented attempts to influence their vote on matters affecting the spirituality of the church. Sometimes Satan so veils an issue that only he is aware of the implications behind a negative or positive vote.

Great struggles of conscience take place over the resolution of delicate problems involving political and cultural relationships in various countries. There is often a strong debate over whether policies should be applied to the world field or only to the geographical area where the problem has broken into the open. Local leaders sometimes are inclined to press for church-wide regulations to cope with a situation in their country or island which looms larger than life at the moment.

Should concessions be made for the world field in order to accommodate these complications peculiar to only one area? Surely this would be the quickest way to dilute the message and weaken the work in other fields. A test situation in Borneo may have nothing to do with the work in Russia or America. In countries where polygamy is practiced, policies must be formulated to meet the problem, but it would have little relevance to the rest of the world. If concessions need to be made (short of violating a moral principle) let it be done only for those affected, and not for the entire denomination. To mitigate our world stand on polygamy because we feel sympathy for a group of our members in one area who are placed under special trial would be a compromising move for the church.

The same can be said of countries where the Sabbath is a special problem. Our hearts go out to parents in certain countries where the children are forced to attend school seven days a week. We are tempted to back off from the strong biblical stand our church has taken on the Sabbath in order to spare our suffering people from imprisonment or even worse. But what a mistake it would be to change a Bible principle for reasons of feeling or circumstance. Any circumstance must be God's stance or it is wrong to accommodate it.

Then there are countries where cultural mores make it difficult for our people to conform to the church's stand on the wearing of jewelry. Local marriage customs may dictate wearing nose jewels, bangles, necklaces or rings. Again there is pressure on the governing body to make a denominational ruling which will allow for some leniency in the area of adornment in order to relieve a local situation. It should never be done. History has already taught us that such actions diminish the strength of any church, and lead to sterility and death.

Over and over we have witnessed the demise of vibrant, Spirit-filled religious movements because they yielded to the illusive appeal of lowered standards. Satan is gambling that he will be able to destroy the remnant by the same avenues of approach.

Will people be saved just because they belong to the true remnant which is identified in prophecy as keeping the commandments of God and having the spirit of prophecy? No. We have found that the majority of its members will turn against the truth and be shaken out. No one should find comfort in simply being a member of a certain organization or church-not even the remnant church. Not one person will find assurance of salvation outside a deep, personal, Spirit-filled commitment which is demonstrated by total obedience to God's will. The church is made up of people, and the church of the translation will be composed of people who are without spot and blameless.

What will enable that little company to resist Satan's relentless, unrestrained attempt to capture their wills at the very end? How will they maintain an unbending loyalty in the face of the most unimaginable opposition? They will do it through faith, prayer and Bible study. Those who endure to the end will have an unshakable faith in the message. Their experience with Jesus will be so real that no combination of demons will be able to weaken or destroy it. Though distrustful of the flesh, they will radiate a perfect assurance of salvation through the justifying merits of Christ's blood.

Because they will be sensitive to the deadly nature of even the smallest compromise, that triumphant last legion for Christ will stand without wavering upon the straight line of Bible principle. Drawing power from the promises of total victory, they will confidently affirm their faith in the righteousness of Christ to keep them from falling.

The trying of God's professed people during that fearful final phase of Armageddon will disclose both weakness and strength. At that time, the real tragedy of Adventism's dallying with the "new theology" will be revealed. Entire companies will find it easy to loose their last links with a law that has gradually grown burdensome and embarrassing. At the same time those who have delighted in the law as a character-expression of their dearest Friend will proclaim such an anointed message that entire tribes will accept the truth. As the true nature of sin is exposed, men will recognize the honor and integrity of God's moral law of the Ten Commandments. Only those who allowed the Holy Spirit to write the law into their mind and heart will receive the Latter Rain and give the Loud Cry.

Under the new covenant, God declares, "I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts." 3 Hebrews 8:10. We have already concluded that surrender of the heart to Christ actually signifies a yielding of the, mind through a decision of the will. Why does God use the

terms "mind" and "heart" in describing the new covenant experience? The answer to this question is very important. The Bible often uses the word heart as a symbolic representation of the emotional nature while the mind represents intelligence and willful decision.

The sealed ones of God will not only have a thorough knowledge of truth through searching the Scriptures, but they will also be bound to Christ in a deep, personal heart-experience of love and commitment. The combination of knowing and doing will distinguish them from the shallow sentimentalists whose counterfeit love produces no obedience. No definition of love which excludes law-keeping could be valid or biblical, just as no definition of sin is correct which does not include lawbreaking. John the Beloved's two classic statements on law and love have been lightly regarded by many in the remnant church today: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." I John 5:3, and "sin is the transgression of the law." I John 3:4.

Ellen G. White seemed to anticipate a time when John's definitions of law and love would be twisted to make sin appear less objectionable. She wrote:

"We are authorized to hold in the same estimation as did the beloved disciple those who claim to abide in Christ while living in transgression of God's law. There exist in these last days evils similar to those that threatened the prosperity of the early church; and the teachings of the apostle John on these points should be carefully heeded. 'You must have charity,' is the cry heard everywhere, especially from those who profess sanctification. But true charity is too pure to cover an unconfessed sin. While we are to love the souls for whom Christ died, we are to make no compromise with evil. We are not to unite with the rebellious and call this charity. God requires His people in this age of the world to stand for the right as unflinchingly as did John in opposition to soul-destroying errors." *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 554, 555.

Some modern exponents of Adventism define sin as breaking a relationship, and love as so forgiving and tender that it can tolerate disobedience. Let it be forever settled that such definitions are only half true, and therefore are very misleading. A true conversion experience will bear the sweet fruit of compliance with all of God's requirements. Unless the law is written into the mind through a knowledge of right and wrong, and is written on the heart by an obedient love, there can be no real salvation. The heart and mind both must reflect the character of God as revealed in the law. Those who have only a head knowledge without the love which produces obedience will miss heaven by eighteen inches—the distance from the head to the heart. Those who have only an emotional experience which does not acknowledge the requirements of the law will miss heaven by the same eighteen inches—this time from the heart to the head.

This failure to coordinate love and obedience is largely the cause for our complacent, self-righteous Laodiceanism. Some are lukewarm, even though they are proper and careful about keeping the law, because they lack the joyous assurance of Christ abiding in the heart. Others are lukewarm because they have a highly vocal, emotional experience which gives little or no credence to principles of sanctified Christian living. Repentance and reform are called for on the part of both these groups.

There is no way to separate these two aspects of truth. Just as the law of God was bound to their fingers and written upon the table of their hearts (Deut. 11:18) signifying both physical and

spiritual submission, God's people will be identified by their outward obedience and their inward devotion. True worship always involves both head and heart, mind and spirit. Concerning His Father Jesus said, "They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." John 4:24.

Is it possible to worship with a lot of fervency and emotional spirit, and yet lack knowledge of and obedience to the truth? Certainly the boisterous Baal worshippers on Mount Carmel prove that such is altogether possible. Jesus said, "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Matthew 15:9. People can have excitement and spirit in their worship, and yet be teaching false doctrine. The Master described such worship as vain.

But here is the serious question that every Seventh-day Adventist needs to face: Is it possible to worship God with a full theoretical knowledge of truth, and yet be lacking in the spirit of true worship? Indeed it is a deadly danger that we face as a church. By lack of that inward attitude of joy in Christ, worship services may become lifeless and almost mechanical; songs of praise may be turned into mournful dirges. In such meetings no revival is possible, and the dull spirit of Laodicea has full control.

I see four steps as absolute requirements in responding to the Laodicean call for repentance:

A HEARTFELT COMMITMENT TO FORSAKE THE PRACTICE OF ALL KNOWN SIN. No reservation can be permitted in this area. Known sin is not compatible with genuine revival and reformation. It is only when God's people become serious about dealing with a worldly lifestyle that the power of Satan can be broken. Because of deep-rooted deceptions over this issue, thousands of Seventh-day Adventists continue to believe that behavior patterns have little to do with salvation. Until this diabolical error has been corrected there will be continued game-playing and false security among our pastors and members. It goes without saying that this commitment must spring from a heart which is fully yielded to Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit.

A RETURN TO SERIOUS BIBLE STUDY AND A DISCIPLINED PRAYER LIFE. No stirring of new spiritual life is possible without the sanctified influence of these two ingredients. Social demands, work schedules and electronic entertainment have devastated the devotional habits of many Seventh-day Adventists today. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that most of our members depend upon their pastor to do the studying for, them and to tell them what to believe and not believe. No church can be strong and progressive whose members do not have deep convictions of truth based upon a personal study of the Scripture.

A SPIRIT OF CONTINUAL INWARD PRAYER AND PRAISE, because Christ, the hope of glory, has been enthroned in the heart. It is the absence of this sweet intimate awareness of the presence of God which robs many of their Christian joy. I cannot overemphasize the powerful influence of being in constant fellowship with Christ by having the mind stayed upon Him. It is altogether possible to train the thoughts in such a way that they spontaneously flood the conscious mind with sentiments of praise and worship. Instead of allowing the thoughts to ramble undirected, we may deliberately turn them into words and phrases of our most fervent feelings of devotion and love to God.

I believe that this experience is of special significance for Seventh-day Adventists who have been conditioned to be very restrained in their outward forms of corporate worship. We have often stifled the spirit of praise for fear of appearing too emotional or demonstrative. This has also cast an inhibiting influence over the mind so that we have lost some of the ability to praise and worship God in the spirit. For this reason, our services sometimes tend to be stereotyped and lacking in spiritual warmth and spontaneity.

This is not any kind of call to follow the noisy Pentecostal style of worship with its attendant confusion. But on the other hand, we should not become known as unemotional formalists who scrunch down in the pew if someone feels moved to say "Amen" or even "Praise the Lord."

I truly believe that if our heart experience is one of habitual inward praise, our Sabbath services will be more vibrant and satisfying. There should be restraint and reverence in the company of fellow-worshippers, but in the realm of the spirit, we do not have to be concerned about disturbing others. We can give unrestrained expression to our deepest emotional feelings. As I converse with God in my mind, and struggle to articulate my overflowing love and gratitude for what He has done in my life, tears often flow and a sense of ecstatic joy envelops my being. For years I assumed that all Christians were experiencing that same personal relationship with the Master through His indwelling Spirit, but, as a pastor and evangelist, I have learned that is not the case. I also believed for years that those deep, moving experiences were too private and personal even to share with other human beings. I felt, probably wrongly, that to talk about those precious seasons of intimacy would violate some unspoken confidence between Jesus and me. Now I am convinced that God is pleased for us to tell our friends what wonderful things He has done for us. "Talk ye of all his wondrous works." Psalm 105:2. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Psalm 107:2. And this brings me to the fourth prerequisite for revival and reformation.

A PARTICIPATION IN EVERY EVANGELISTIC OR WITNESSING OPPORTUNITY TO REACH SOULS WITH THE TRUTH. A tragic poverty of spirit is revealed when Christians refuse to share their faith. No religious experience will survive long in such a barren climate. Not only have individuals been separated from Christ, but entire churches have shriveled and disbanded because they lost their burden for souls. Some Seventh day Adventist Church boards have taken official actions against conducting evangelistic crusades. My own personal observation, as an evangelist, indicates that about eighty percent of our membership don't even bother to attend one meeting of a crusade. Even though decisions of eternal life are being made by souls who hang in the balance, only a fraction of our members are there to help love them into the church. What a tragedy! I cannot believe that the triumphant church of the translation will be made up of those who are so unconcerned about the salvation of others. We insult the Spirit of God and heap reproach upon the truth by pretending to be Seventh-day Adventists while refusing to do all we can to win souls for Christ. Nowhere is Laodicean apostasy more clearly manifest in the church than through the lack of love and concern for the unsaved.

RETURN OF THE TRUE REMNANT

SOME who read this book may feel offended, because I have identified some of the physical and spiritual enemies which assail the Seventh-day Adventist Church today. Others will feel that I should have said much more and said it more strongly. It is by no means a comprehensive study of all the dangers we face. Many other issues could have been considered, but my chief concern has been to expose the deadly compromises our people are making by the way they respond to the physical senses. As a movement and as individuals, we have gradually lost the adversarial relationship with the world which once distinguished us as "an holy nation, a peculiar people."

Make no mistake about it, the true remnant church will turn back to the historic, biblical doctrines and standards which have always been our hallmark. It will be a bitter and traumatic experience on the part of the church. A great number will be too proud to confess their complicity in condoning the apostasy, and will be shaken out. Others will be so comfortable in their new proximity to the world that they will have no relish to return. A majority will leave the church and join the ranks of the enemy. It will seem as though the church might fall, but it does not. Instead, the decimated "little company" will draw so close to Christ, in experience and doctrine, that the latter rain falls upon them. Under the anointing of God, this purified remnant will go forth to give the "loud cry." God will raise up many of the common people and make them powerful spokesmen for the truth. They will be qualified by no educational institutions of men, but by the unction of the Spirit. (The Great Controversy, p. 606.)

Oh, how much better it will be in that day to have held the true faith without wavering. Those who are now approving the worldly bent will find it hard to retrace the painful steps of compromise which now seem so easy to take. Most will not be able to humble themselves and repent of their part in the defection. It will be too embarrassing to embrace that which they had for so long ' publicly scorned as fanatical and legalistic. And even when they see thousands responding to the pure message, like the Jews of old, they will only be more furious at those whom they have labeled as divisive troublemakers.

Somehow, if this book can open our eyes just a little bit to see the clearly predicted pattern described by the inspired writings, it might cause some to help hold the fast-disappearing line of principle now.

Those who accept the small changes that are being made because they want to be in harmony with the majority, ignoring recognized Bible principles, are doing something terribly damaging to their consciences.

"It is transgression in the little things that first leads the soul away from God." Review and Herald, Vol. 4, p. 233.

"In the day of judgment, many will be shut out of the City of God by sins which they supposed to be unworthy of notice." Signs of the Times Articles, Vol. 3, p. 348.

"The sins which man is disposed to look upon as small may be the very ones which God accounts as great crimes." Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 337.

The sobering truth is that this church is being sifted right now over issues that may seem small and inconsequential in preparation for the Sabbath test which will involve one of the Ten Commandments. Daniel and his friends faced the very same thing in Babylon. Had they failed to stand firmly against the relatively minor matter of eating the king's food, they would not have been prepared for the major confrontation over bowing down to the image. The moral law test came after they had been fortified by victory in areas of lesser importance. Some might even call them "gray areas." Certainly it would have been easy for Daniel to convince himself that conformity to cultural requirements at the king's table was more important than being so rigidly legalistic about eating one meal. But he did not make the mistake of adjusting his conscience to accommodate a little deviation from recognized principle.

Many in the remnant church today are making that mistake. Like Daniel, they are being urged to change their practices in certain areas to save themselves unnecessary conflict with worldly associates or social demands. But, unlike Daniel, thousands of Seventh-day Adventists are yielding life-long convictions, and equivocating on practices that were never in question before. Couples are putting rings on their fingers because of "what people might think." Families are serving coffee to their guests, and providing TV sets for Sabbath viewing by week-end visitors. Movie attendance is becoming commonplace, and alcohol is gradually gaining popularity in certain Adventist communities. Dozens of tragic illustrations could be given of shifting standards among God's professed people. I have wept to see friends suddenly reverse their previous strong stance against worldly compromise in order to harmonize with a more popular majority view.

What does it all mean? Where is it leading? The sifting will soon turn into the shaking. The little issues will turn into the great Sabbath test, and the majority will give up the faith altogether. Is it possible to know now who will be among that large group of apostates? Yes, you can know this very moment where you will stand when the mark is enforced. It has been revealed to us in these words: "Those who have yielded step by step to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will then yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death." Prophets and Kings, p. 188.

Are you willing to apply this inspired revelation to your; own life and experience? What about your current lifestyle? Have convictions changed or practices been altered? If so, ask yourself why those alterations were made, and in which direction they are leading you. Do they fall into the pattern of "yielding step by step to worldly demands"? Were they made to conform more carefully with God's Word? Or did you adjust certain aspects of your behavior in order to be less "peculiar" to those around you?

By such seemingly innocuous tests, the character of every Seventh-day Adventist is gradually settling into an irreversible mold. The opportunity to turn back and make long-term changes is slowly closing up to those who have had great light. Soon it will be too late to redeem the wasted years.

Now, in the times of refreshing, let us grasp the promises of God and claim the mind of Christ. The enemy is at the gate, but we can keep him there on the outside as we allow the abiding Holy Spirit to guard well the avenues of the soul.

We have had much to say about the necessity of holding the world at bay through the power of a sanctified mind. Now let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter as far as victory over the world is concerned. How can it be conquered in all of its highly-charged, emotional appeal? Let this statement of Paul be the true focus of all we have tried to present in this book. If we miss this, we miss it all. "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Galatians 6:14.

What is the substance of this verse? How only can the love for worldly things be put to death in my nature? Paul says it is through the cross. There can be no focus upon human strength or effort. Victory over the sins of the flesh will come only as a result of what Jesus accomplished in our behalf on the cross. Evidently, there is a special provision in the atonement which enables us to overcome the world and its sinful pleasures.

Does the cross help us die to the world by providing justification only? All of us certainly need forgiveness for yielding to the evil enticements of this world system in the past. Or is there much more involved in the cross than cleansing from guilt and condemnation? Specifically, how does it take away our attachments to the world, so that we become dead to its appeal? Paul tells us in the clearest possible language that our death to the world is made possible through the cross. It is not because of any strength we have in fighting the enemy. Even our faith in the cross is not the source of victory. It is the vehicle to connect us with the source, but His death as the Saviour of the world is the real secret. That is what qualified Him to be our Substitute for sin and our Saviour from sin. This is where the mind of Christ is both obtained and maintained. Let us take a look at the amazing and significant meaning of those events of the cross.

The answers we are looking for lie hidden in the ethics of the atonement. Some people challenge the viability of the entire plan of salvation because it violates one of the basic laws of human government.

How could it ever be right for an innocent person to bear the punishment of a guilty person who is consequently declared to be righteous and uncondemned? No legal system in the world would uphold such a principle. What defense can be offered for a plan which allows the one who is offended to bear the penalty of the one who offends?

There is an answer to these questions which should satisfy the most skeptical mind. Everything revolves around the principle of substitution. A moment of thought will reveal that the gems of forgiveness is rooted in an act of substitution. Justice demands an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Whatever the offender does must be visited back upon him in equal measure. If a man gives a blow, he must receive a blow, etc.

But suppose the one who is wronged decides to forgive the offender. In that case the penalty which could legally be exacted is canceled, and the guilty one is not required to suffer the equivalent of the wrong done. In fact, the one who suffered the blow, agrees to accept the pain and the loss instead of the guilty one in order that the offender can go free of the punishment. In this case, the forgiven actually substitutes himself to bear the consequences which could legally be required of the offender.

If I forgive a debt, I agree to suffer the loss in order to relieve the debtor from paying the amount. If I forgive a blow, I consent to accept the pain in order to relieve the guilty from suffering an equal blow.

Suppose for a moment that a murdered man, from his grave, could forgive the man who killed him. He would, in effect, be consenting to his own death in order for the murderer to be spared from death. This brings us very close to the heart of the atonement.

In order to forgive us, Jesus had to suffer the legal consequences of our sins so that we would not have to bear them. "The wages of sin is death." Romans 3:23. Only by substituting Himself for us in accepting that death, could He be qualified to forgive us. The Bible says, "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Hebrews 9:22. Remission means forgiveness. Therefore, His death on the cross provided ethical authority for Him to grant us forgiveness.

Although some are appealed to by the ethics of this transaction, most of us will see it as a tremendous indescribable demonstration of selfless love. None who have experienced the joy of His forgiveness will question the method by which it was made possible.

Now consider another vindication of His propitiatory atonement for us. He had an absolute right to be our substitute because He shared our fallen human nature. When He lived a perfect life of obedience and carried our sinful nature to the cross, we were corporately with Him in that experience. This is why Paul writes: "I am crucified with Christ." Galatians 2:20. "Like as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Romans 6:4.

Our identification with Him in His sinless living and atoning death is made possible only because of His incarnate involvement with our nature. Had He carried any other flesh than fallen sinful flesh to that cross, He could not have "condemned sin in the flesh." Romans 8:4. Only someone in my family with my nature, could represent me, or stand in as my substitute. It would have been only a pretend situation for Him to impute His victory to me, if His victory was obtained in some alien nature impossible for me ever to experience or reproduce. Had He carried any other flesh than sinful flesh to the cross IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN MINE, because mine is sinful. Therefore I could not have been "crucified with Him."

The only way any of us could die with Him and be resurrected with Him is through His substitutionary role in our behalf. And that was made possible solely by sharing that aspect of our nature that produced the sins requiring atonement on the cross-our fallen, sinful nature.

Thus we see that the true secret of living with Christ is to die with Christ. "For he that is dead is freed from sin."

Romans 6:7. Faith in the cross, with its forgiving, cleansing merits, produces the new spiritual life which triumphs over the flesh and sin.

Any effort on our part to fulfil the requirements of the law are doomed to failure unless they are centered in the cross. It was that glorious objective act of sacrifice and love which brings justification, the new birth, and sanctification to every one who believes. Jesus, the object of our faith, who "is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorifieth, let him glory in the Lord." I Corinthians 1:30, 31.

So, even though we rejoice in the victory, we glory only in the cross by which "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." To allow any element in our human response, including the thrill of victory, to diminish our recognition of His all-sufficient, atoning work on the cross, would be a tragic mistake. In every prayer and in every testimony, we need to acknowledge gratefully that the world is crucified to us only because of what He did in our behalf. We have learned that there can be no forgiveness of our sins without His substitutionary death for us on the cross. This provides justification for all. Further, we have discovered that sanctification is possible only because He overcame sin in our flesh, with our fallen nature, so that He could reproduce that life of victory in our own human experience. Thus, everything we could possibly boast about is His work and not ours. "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Will you not gladly receive Him as your Substitute, your Forgiveness, and your Victory?

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I Corinthians 15:57.

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." II Corinthians 9:15.

THANKS BE TO GOD!

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

The Church and the World walked far apart
On the changing shore of Time;
The world was singing a giddy song,
And the Church a hymn sublime.
"Come, give me your hand," cried the merry World,
"And walk with me this way;"
But the good Church hid her snowy hands,
And solemnly answered, "Nay;
I will not give you my hand at all,
And I will not walk with you;
Your way is the way to endless death;
Your words are all untrue."

"Nay, walk with me but a little space,"
Said the World with a kindly air;
"The road I walk is a pleasant road,
And the sun shines always there.
Your path is thorny, and rough, and rude,

And mine is broad and plain;
My road is paved with flowers and dews
And yours with tears and pain.
The sky above me is always blue;
No want, no toil, I know:
The sky above you is always dark,
Your lot is a lot of woe.
My path, you see, is a broad, fair one
And my gate is high and wide;
There is room enough for you and for me
To travel side by side."

Half shyly the Church approached the World,
And gave him her hand of snow;
The old World quick grasped it and walked along,
Saying in accents low;
"Your dress is too simple to please my taste;
I will give you pearls to wear,
Rich velvets and silks for your graceful form,
And diamonds to deck your hair."
The Church looked down at her plain white robes
And then at the dazzling World,
And blushed as she saw his handsome lip
With a smile contemptuous curled..
"I will change my dress for a costlier one,"
Said the Church with a smile of grace:

Then the pure white garments drifted away,
And the World gave in their place
Beautiful silks and shining satins,
And roses and gems and pearls,
And over her forehead her bright hair fell,
Crisped in a thousand curls.
"Your house is too plain," said the proud old World;
"I'll build you one like mine,
Carpets of Brussels, and curtains of lace
And furniture ever so fine."
So he built her a costly and beautiful house,
Splendid it was to behold;
Her sons and her beautiful daughters dwelt there,
Gleaming in purple and gold;
And fairs and shows in the halls were held,
And the World and his children were there;
And laughter and music and feasts were heard
In the place that was meant for prayer.
She had cushioned pews for the rich and great

To sit in their pomp and pride;
While the poor folk, clad in their shabby suits,
Sat meekly down outside.

The Angel of Mercy flew over the Church,
And whispered, "I know thy sin:"
Then the Church looked back with a sigh and longed
To gather her children in;
But some were off at the midnight ball,
And some were off at the play,
And some were drinking in gay saloons,
So she quietly went her way.

Then the sly World gallantly said to her:
"Your children mean no harm,
Merely indulging in innocent sports;"
So she leaned on his proffered arm
And smiled and chatted and gathered flowers
As she walked along with the World;
While millions and millions of sorrowing souls
To eternal death were hurled.

"Your preachers are all too old and plain,"
Said the World to the Church with a sneer
"They frighten my children with dreadful tales,
Which I like not for them to hear.
They talk of brimstone and fire and pain
And the night of an endless death;
They talk of a place which may only be
Mentioned with bated breath.
I will send you some of the better stamp,
Brilliant and gay and fast,
Who will tell them that people may live as they choose
And go to heaven at last.
The Father is merciful, great and good,
Tender and true and kind;
Do you think he would take one child to heaven,
And leave the other behind?"

So he filled her house with gay divines,
Gifted and great and learned,
And the plain old men that preached the cross
Were out of her pulpits turned.
"You give too much to the poor," said the world,
"Far more than you ought to do;
If the poor need shelter and food and clothes,

Why need it trouble you?
Go, take your money and buy rich robes,
And horses and carriages fine,
And pearls and jewels and dainty foods,
And the rarest and costliest wine!
My children, they dote on all such things;
And if you their love would win,
You must do as they do and walk in the ways
That they are walking in."

Then the Church held tightly the strings of her purse
And gracefully lowered her head,
And whispered, "I've given too much away;
I'll do, sir, as you have said."
So the poor were turned from her door in scorn,
And she drew her robes aside
As the widows went weeping on their way;
With all their needs denied,
And the sons of the world and the sons of the church
Walked closely hand and heart,
And only the Master who knoweth all
Could tell the two apart.
Then the Church sat down at her ease, and said,
"I am rich, and with goods increased;
I have need of nothing, and naught to do
But to laugh and dance and feast."

And the sly World heard her and laughed up his sleeve,
And mockingly said aside;
"The Church is fallen, the beautiful Church
And her shame is her boast and pride."
The angel drew near to the mercy-seat,
And whispered in sighs her name,
And the saints their anthems of rapture hushed,
And covered their heads with shame.

Then a voice came down through the hush of heaven
From Him who sat on the throne:
"I know thy works, and how thou has said,
'I am rich,' and hast not known
That thou art naked, and poor, and blind,
And wretched before my face.
Unless thou repent I will cast thee out
And blot thy name from its place.
I counsel thee to buy of Me
The gold that will make you rich;

And anoint your eyes with the heavenly salve
To discern your Maker's wish."

Then the awakened Church with deep regret
From her worldly course returned;
She opened her heart to the knock of Christ
As His love in her bosom burned.
And gave her robes and forgave her sins,
And together they sat and supped;
His proffered throne He shared with her
For whom He had suffered much.
O Church of Christ, hear the Spirit's voice
As He calls through the world today.
Would that every church throughout the realm
Would turn from the world away.
The world will be lost in eternal night,
But the penitent saved for aye.
Author Unknown