

# The Testimony of the True Witness

Questions of a fictional church member answered by inspired testimonies from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy

14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; 15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: 18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. 22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.  
Revelation 3:14-22

# Contents

The Testimony of the True Witness .....	1
Contents .....	2
Preface.....	3
Abbreviations.....	4
1. Our Duty.....	5
2. Our condition .....	6
a) Laodicea.....	8
3. Unfaithful watchmen .....	8
4. The Spirit of Prophecy .....	9
5. The duty of the leaders .....	11
a) False Shepherds .....	13
b) God will call others .....	14
c) Resistance.....	16
6. The Sifting.....	17
a) Sunday Laws.....	18
b) Persecuted by false brethren.....	19
c) They which lead thee cause thee to err ... (Isa. 3:12) .....	19
d) Only few who will not apostatize .....	20
e) A contrite Spirit .....	20
7. God's true Church.....	21
a) The Three Angels' Messages – the sign of the church .....	22
b) History repeats itself .....	24
The apostasy of the first centuries: .....	24
The apostasy among the Waldenses:.....	25
The apostasy among the Bohemians: .....	25
Luther and Rome: .....	25
The Protestants:.....	25
The Advent Movement in 1844:.....	25
At the End:.....	25
8. Babylon.....	26
9. Satan's attack on the Church .....	28
a) Lording over God's people .....	29
b) Self-supporting missionary groups .....	31
10. Fruits .....	32

# Preface

Dear reader,

this little booklet is addressed only to Seventh-Day-Adventists. It contains inspired testimonies which are meant to admonish and to awaken us from our spiritual slumber before it is too late for time and eternity. But even so as people tend to be annoyed when they are awakened resolutely, the testimony of the True Witness will cause opposition with many. Ellen G. White states, *"I ... was shown that it [the shaking I had seen] would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this will cause a shaking among God's people. 1T 181.*

As we believe that those who reject these testimonies of the Spirit of Prophecy will state that the testimonies in this booklet are taken out of their context, we exhort our readers right from the start to look up the texts quoted and to examine "whether those things were so." Acts 17:11.

These testimonies are God's loveletter to His professed Church. The True Witness says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Revelation 3:19. That is what we ask the readers to think of in their prayers.

# Abbreviations

1888 1746	The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials (1987), p. 1746.
1NL 99	Notebook Leaflets from the Elmshaven Library Vol. 1 (1945), p. 99.
1T 181	Testimonies For The Church Volume One (1855-1868), p. 181.
2SG 283	Spiritual Gifts. Volume 2 (1860), p. 283.
CM 23	Colporteur Ministry (1953), p. 23.
CH 237	Counsels on Health (1923), p. 237.
ChS 41	Christian Service (1925), p. 41
DA 140	The Desire of Ages (1898), p. 140.
Ed 46	Education (1903), p. 46.
Ev 271	Evangelism (1946), p. 271.
EW 258	Early Writings (1882), p. 258.
FLB 295	The Faith I Live By (1958), p. 295.
LP 233	Sketches from the Life of Paul (1883), p. 233.
MYP 384	Messages to Young People (1930)
ML 41	My Life Today (1952), p. 41.
PK	Prophets and Kings (1917)
PP	Patriarchs and Prophets (1890)
RH	The Review and Herald
ST	The Signs of the Times
TM 106	Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers (1923), p. 106
VSS 325	The Voice in Speech and Song (1988), p. 325

# 1. Our Duty

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## Why did God call us as Adventists? Weren't there already enough Churches around?

Ellen G. White (EGW): "Christ has said of His people, "Ye are the light of the world." We are the Lord's denominated people, to proclaim the truths of heavenly origin. The most solemn, sacred work ever given to mortals is the proclamation of the first, second, and third angel's messages to our world. CD 76

"In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import--the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention. 9T 19.

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## Are the Three-Angels'-Messages really that important?

EGW: "I saw a company who stood well guarded and firm, giving no countenance to those who would unsettle the established faith of the body. God looked upon them with approbation. I was shown three steps -- the first, second, and third angels' messages. Said my accompanying angel, 'Woe to him who shall move a block or stir a pin of these messages. The true understanding of these messages is of vital importance. The destiny of souls hangs upon the manner in which they are received.' ... I saw that as the Jews crucified Jesus, so the nominal churches had crucified these messages, ... These messages were represented to me as an anchor to the people of God. Those who understand and receive them will be kept from being swept away by the many delusions of Satan. EW 258,259,261,256.

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## But many don't understand the Three-Angels'-Messages, so we should advance rather cautiously. Besides that our influence will be greater, when people are not addressed with so direct messages. By doing so we could be more successful.

EGW: "Men will employ every means to make less prominent the difference between Seventh-day Adventists and observers of the first day of the week. A company was presented before me under the name of Seventh-day Adventists, who were advising that the banner, or sign, which makes us a distinct people should not be held out so strikingly; for they claimed that this was not the best policy in order to secure success to our institutions. But this is not a time to haul down our colors, to be ashamed of our faith. ... Never for one moment should the impression be given to anyone that it would be for his profit to hide his faith and doctrines from the unbelieving people of the world, fearing that he may not be so highly esteemed if his principles are known. 6T 144.

"Satan has devised a state of things whereby the proclamation of the third angel's message shall be bound about. We must beware of his plans and methods. There must be no toning down of the truth, no muffling of the message for this time. The third angel's message must be strengthened and confirmed. The eighteenth chapter of Revelation reveals the importance of presenting the truth in no measured terms but with boldness and power.... There has been too much beating about the bush in the proclamation of the third angel's message. The message has not been given as clearly and distinctly as it should have been.-- *Manuscript 16, 1900*. Ev 230.

"No one can be excusable who says, "I will no longer have anything to do with these special messages; I will preach Christ." No one can preach Christ, and present the truth as it is in Jesus, unless he presents the truths that are to come before the people at the present time, when such important developments are taking place.-- *Ms 33, 1897*. VSS 325,326.

"Our message is a life-and-death message, and we must let this message appear as it is--the great power of God. Then the Lord will make it effectual. We are to present it in all its telling force. The first and second angels' messages are bound up with the third angel's message. The power of the proclamation of the first and second angels' messages is to be concentrated in the third.-- *Lt 209, 1899*. VSS 329.

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## But to present the Pope as antichrist and Sunday as the mark of the Beast is for sure highly charged. Could we be not more accepted with other churches and to keep peace with them by giving those points not so much preeminence?

EGW: "God means that testing truth shall be brought to the front and become a subject of examination and discussion, even if it is through the contempt placed upon it. The minds of the people must be agitated. Every controversy, every reproach, every slander, will be God's means of provoking inquiry and awakening minds that otherwise would slumber. 5T 453.

"Separate the Sabbath from the messages, and it loses its power; but when connected with the message of the third angel, a power attends it which convicts unbelievers and infidels, and brings them out with strength to stand, to live, grow, and flourish in the Lord. 1T 337.

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## Is it really that easy for me to proclaim that message? Do I not have to get first the permission of the leading brethren?

EGW: "There should be counsel and co-operation. But they are not to feel that at every step they must wait to ask some higher officer if they may do this or that. Look not to man for guidance, but to the God of Israel. 5T 463 (cp. DA 140,141).

"The great danger with our people has been that of depending upon men and making flesh their arm. Those who have not been in the habit of searching the Bible for themselves, or weighing evidence, have confidence in the leading men and accept the decisions they make; and thus many will reject the very messages God sends to His people, if these leading brethren do not accept them. TM 106,107.

"By night the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and said to the disciples, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." This command was directly contrary to the order given by the Jewish rulers; but did the apostles say, We cannot do this until we have consulted the magistrates and received permission from them? No; God had said, "Go," and they obeyed. AA 80 (cp. TM 72).

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**Isn't the pastor somehow to control the missionary activities of the church? I suppose I need at least his approval?!**

EGW: "Now I want to say, God has not put any kingly power in our ranks to control this or that branch of the work. The work has been greatly restricted by the efforts to control it in every line. ... Let me tell you, if your heart is in the work, and you have faith in God, you need not depend upon the sanction of any minister or any people; **if you go right to work in the name of the Lord, in a humble way doing what you can to teach the truth, God will vindicate you.** 1888 1746.

"It is a mistake to make men believe that the workers for Christ should make no move save that which has first been brought before some responsible man. Men must not be educated to look to men as to God. RH, August 7, 1894.

Gal. 1:15.16: But when it pleased God, ... to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

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**But if leading brethren or other church members criticize a certain form of evangelistic work and its advocates there are for sure good reasons. You don't think that there's someone in our church who wants to hinder missionary work, do you?**

EGW: "We have far more to fear from within than from without. The hindrances to strength and success are far greater from the church itself than from the world. 1SM 122.

"I am alarmed as I see how many obstructions are coming in to divert men from evangelistic work, and thus hinder the work of God. CM 23.

"Those who have been thrust out to bear a plain, pointed testimony, in the fear of God to reprove wrong, to labor with all their energies to build up God's people, and to establish them upon important points of present truth, have too often received censure instead of sympathy and help. 1T 321.

## 2. Our condition

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**The condition of the church is good. By having turned to the world around us a bit more we are no longer called a sect. That also enlarged our influence.**

EGW: "God had separated the Israelites from every other people, to make them His own peculiar treasure. But they, disregarding this high honor, eagerly desired to imitate the example of the heathen! And still the longing to conform to worldly practices and customs exists among the professed people of God. ... Christians are constantly seeking to imitate the practices of those who worship the god of this world. Many urge that by uniting with worldlings and conforming to their customs they might exert a stronger influence over the ungodly. But all who pursue this course thereby separate from the Source of their strength. Becoming the friends of the world, they are the enemies of God.

James 4:4: Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

1 John 2:15: 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.

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**Is that possibly the cause for our church being lukewarm and losing members?**

EGW: "The change in [the] spiritual state [of the church] has come gradually and almost imperceptibly. As she began to seek the praise and friendship of the world, her faith diminished, her zeal grew languid, her fervent devotion gave place to dead formality. Every advance step toward the world was a step away from God. As pride and worldly ambition have been cherished, the spirit of Christ has departed, and emulation, dissension, and strife have come in to distract and weaken the church. 5T 240,241.

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**If the church really got so similar to the world others would also realize that state of things and warn, wouldn't they?**

EGW: "The church has received warning after warning. The duties and dangers of God's people have been plainly revealed. But the worldly element has proved too strong for them. Customs, practices, and fashions which lead the soul away from God have been for years gaining ground in defiance of the warnings and entreaties of the Holy Spirit, until at last their ways have become right in their own eyes, and the Spirit's voice is scarcely heard. **No man can tell how far he may go in sin when once he yields himself to the power of the great deceiver. ... Those who are not wholly consecrated to God may be led to do the work of Satan, while yet they flatter themselves that they are in the service of Christ.** 5T 103.

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**Is it possible to become more and more worldly and still not realize one's true condition?**

EGW: "October 2, 1868, I was shown the state of God's professed people. Many of them were in great darkness, yet seemed to be insensible of their true condition. The sensibilities of a large number seemed to be benumbed in regard to spiritual and eternal things, while their minds seemed all awake to their worldly interests. Many were cherishing idols in their hearts and were practicing iniquity which separated them from God and caused them to be bodies of darkness. I saw but few who stood in the light, having discernment and spirituality to discover these stumbling blocks and remove them out of the way. 2T 439.

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**Does not a similar fate as that of the Jews 2,000 years ago await the church if she is that much steeped in the world?**

EGW: "I have been shown that the spirit of the world is fast leavening the church. You are following the same path as did ancient Israel. There is the same falling away from your holy calling as God's peculiar people. You are having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Your concord with unbelievers has provoked the Lord's displeasure. You know not the things that belong to your peace, and they are fast being hid from your eyes (cp. Luke 19:42, the editors). Your neglect to follow the light will place you in a more unfavorable position than the Jews upon whom Christ pronounced a woe. 5T 75,76.

“May the Lord forbid that the history of the children of Israel in departing from God, in refusing to walk in the light, in refusing to confess their sins of unbelief and rejection of his messages, should be the experience of the people claiming to believe the truth for this time. For if they do as did the children of Israel in the face of warnings and admonitions, the same result will follow in these last days as came upon the children of Israel. RH, October 21, 1890

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**Do we also halt between two opinions, then?**

EGW: “Are you not halting between two opinions? Are you not neglecting to heed the light which God has given you? Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. You know not the time of your visitation. The great sin of the Jews was that of neglecting and rejecting present opportunities. As Jesus views the state of His professed followers today, He sees base ingratitude, hollow formalism, hypocritical insincerity, pharisaical pride and apostasy. 5T 72.

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**What was the cause of the church’s increasing worldliness?**

EGW: “Let our people beware of belittling the importance of the Sabbath, in order to link up with unbelievers. Let them beware of departing from the principles of our faith, making it appear that it is not wrong to conform to the world. Let them be afraid of heeding the counsel of any man, whatever his position may be, who works counter to that which God has wrought in order to keep His people separate from the world. CH 237,238.

“Conformity to the world is a sin which is sapping the spirituality of our people, and seriously interfering with their usefulness. It is idle to proclaim the warning message to the world, while we deny it in the transactions of daily life.--Review and Herald, March 28, 1882. Ev 271,272.

“There is the same dislike of reproof and correction among the professed people of God today as in the days of our Saviour. There is the same disposition to lean toward the world and to follow its mocking shadows. The presence of ambitious, selfish, time-serving members is imperiling the church, whose greatest danger is from worldly conformity. Such members are constantly exerting an influence to unite the church more closely with the world. They are doing the work of Satan. When God sends his servants with words of warning or counsel, these traitors to their holy trust reject the Heaven-sent message, and thus not only slight the grace of Christ themselves, but lead others also to smother their convictions and lose the proffered blessing. LP 233.

The warnings that worldly conformity has silenced or withheld **must be given under the fiercest opposition from enemies of the faith.** 5T 463

“The minds of many have been so darkened and confused by worldly customs, worldly practices, and worldly influences that all power to discriminate between light and darkness, truth and error, seems destroyed. 5T 62.

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**To what end can this worldliness lead?**

EGW: “Those who are uniting with the world are receiving the worldly mold and preparing for the mark of the beast. 5T 216.

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**Does that mean that such SDAs will apostatize?**

EGW: “The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The observance of the false sabbath will be urged upon us. The contest will be between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. 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. PK 188.

“Those who link in sympathy with the world are eating and drinking with the drunken and will surely be destroyed with the workers of iniquity. 5T 212.

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**How many church members are converted, then?**

EGW: “It is a solemn statement that I make to the church, that not one in twenty whose names are registered upon the church books are prepared to close their earthly history, and would be as verily without God and without hope in the world as the common sinner. ChS 41.

“**Profession alone is nothing.** Names are registered upon the church-books upon earth, but not in the book of life. I saw that there is not one in twenty of the youth who knows what experimental religion is. MYP 384.

“I am alarmed for the people of God who profess to believe solemn, important truth, for I know that many of them are not converted nor sanctified through it. Men can hear and acknowledge the whole truth, and yet know nothing of the power of godliness. 1T 261.

“There are only a few who, like the stars in a tempestuous night, shine here and there among the clouds. Many who complacently listen to the truths from God's word are dead spiritually, while they profess to live. For years they have come and gone in our congregations, but they seem only less and less sensible of the value of revealed truth. They do not hunger and thirst after righteousness. They have no relish for spiritual or divine things. They assent to the truth, but are not sanctified through it. Neither the word of God nor the testimonies of His Spirit make any lasting impression upon them. Just according to the light, the privileges, and opportunities which they have slighted will be their condemnation. Many who preach the truth to others are themselves cherishing iniquity. The entreaties of the Spirit of God, like divine melody, the promises of His word so rich and abundant, its threatenings against idolatry and disobedience--all are powerless to melt the world-hardened heart. Many of our people are lukewarm. They occupy the position of Meroz, neither for nor against, neither cold nor hot. They hear the words of Christ, but do them not. If they remain in this state, He will reject them with abhorrence. Many of those who have had great light, great opportunities, and every spiritual advantage praise Christ and the world with the same breath. They bow themselves before God and mammon. They make merry with the children of the world, and yet claim to be blessed

with the children of God. They wish to have Christ as their Saviour, but will not bear the cross and wear His yoke. May the Lord have mercy upon you; for if you go on in this way, nothing but evil can be prophesied concerning you. 5T 76,77

## a) Laodicea

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### **If it were thus dramatically we would for sure recognize our condition, wouldn't we?**

Revelation 3:14-17: And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; 15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

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### **Is the message for Laodicea really applicable to us as Seventh-Day-Adventists?**

EGW: "I was shown that the testimony to the Laodiceans applies to God's people at the present time. 1T 186.

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### **How can we apply this message to ourselves?**

EGW: "The people of God are represented in the message to the Laodiceans as in a position of carnal security. They are at ease, believing themselves to be in an exalted condition of spiritual attainments. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." What greater deception can come upon human minds than a confidence that they are right when they are all wrong! The message of the True Witness finds the people of God in a sad deception, yet honest in that deception. They know not that their condition is deplorable in the sight of God. While those addressed are flattering themselves that they are in an exalted spiritual condition, the message of the True Witness breaks their security by the startling denunciation of their true condition of spiritual blindness, poverty, and wretchedness. The testimony, so cutting and severe, cannot be a mistake, for it is the True Witness who speaks, and His testimony must be correct. 3T 252,253.

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### **That may be true for certain church members, but not for me. Why are such strong warnings given? Why do the testimonies accuse us of apostasy and grave sins? We still love the truth!**

EGW: "In my last vision I was shown that even this decided message of the True Witness had not accomplished the design of God. The people slumber on in their sins. They continue to declare themselves rich and having need of nothing. Many inquire: Why are all these reproofs given? Why do the Testimonies continually charge us with backsliding and with grievous sins? We love the truth; we are prospering; we are in no need of these testimonies of warning and reproof. But let these murmurers see their hearts and compare their lives with the practical teachings of the Bible, let them humble their souls before God, let the grace of God illuminate the darkness, and the scales will fall from their eyes, and they will realize their true spiritual poverty and wretchedness. 3T 254.

"Gladly would I comfort you if I could. Gladly would I praise your good qualities, good purposes, and good acts; but God was not pleased to show me these. He presented before me the hindrances to your gaining the noble, elevated character of holiness needful for you to have that you may not lose the heavenly rest and immortal glory He would have you attain. 3T 543.

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### **After all, is God, in spite of all that, not among us?**

EGW: "The church [that is, the Seventh-Day-Adventist Church, the editor] is in the Laodicean state. The presence of God is not in her midst. 1NL 99.

Revelation 3:20: Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: ...

"Like ancient Israel the church has dishonored her God by departing from the light, neglecting her duties, and abusing her high and exalted privilege of being peculiar and holy in character. Her members have violated their covenant to live for God and Him only. They have joined with the selfish and world-loving. Pride, the love of pleasure, and sin have been cherished, and Christ has departed. His Spirit has been quenched in the church. Satan works side by side with professed Christians; yet they are so destitute of spiritual discernment that they do not detect him. 2T 441,442.

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### **What are we to do in this situation?**

Revelation 3:18,19: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

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### **What will happen if we do not repent?**

Revelation 3:16: So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

Jeremiah 15:7: And I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land; I will bereave them of children, I will destroy my people, since they return not from their ways.

## 3. Unfaithful watchmen

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### **Should not some watchmen warn us and sound an alarm?**

EGW: "Men who stand in very responsible positions at the heart of the work are asleep. Satan has paralyzed them in order that his plans and devices may not be discerned, while he is active to ensnare, deceive, and destroy. Some who occupy the position of watchmen to warn the people of danger have given up their watch and recline at ease. They are unfaithful



sentinels. They remain inactive, while their wily foe enters the fort and works successfully by their side to tear down what God has commanded to be built up. They see that Satan is deceiving the inexperienced and unsuspecting; yet they take it all quietly, as though they had no special interest, as though these things did not concern them. They apprehend no special danger; they see no cause to raise an alarm. To them everything seems to be going well, and they see no necessity of raising the faithful, trumpet notes of warning which they hear borne by the plain testimonies, to show the people their transgressions and the house of Israel their sins. 2T 439,440.

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**But there is hardly a minister who warns the church in this sense. Is it possible that the majority of them err?**

EGW: "Who knows whether God will not give you up to the deceptions you love? Who knows but that the preachers who are faithful, firm, and true may be the last who shall offer the gospel of peace to our unthankful churches? It may be that the destroyers are already training under the hand of Satan and only wait the departure of a few more standard-bearers to take their places, and with the voice of the false prophet cry, Peace, peace," when the Lord hath not spoken peace. I seldom weep, but now I find my eyes blinded with tears; they are falling upon my paper as I write. It may be that ere long all prophesyings among us will be at an end, and the voice which has stirred the people may no longer disturb their carnal slumbers. When God shall work His strange work on the earth, when holy hands bear the ark no longer, woe will be upon the people. Oh, that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! Oh, that our people may, as did Nineveh, repent with all their might and believe with all their heart, that God may turn away His fierce anger from them. ... What can I say to arouse our people? I tell you not a few ministers who stand before the people to explain the Scriptures are defiled. Their hearts are corrupt, their hands unclean. Yet many are crying, Peace, "peace;" and the workers of iniquity are not alarmed. 5T 77,78.

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**Is it really that bad? What does God do when there are no more faithful ministers?**

EGW: "I know that many think far too favorably of the present time. These ease-loving souls will be engulfed in the general ruin. Yet we do not despair. We have been inclined to think that where there are no faithful ministers there can be no true Christians, but this is not the case. God has promised that where the shepherds are not true He will take charge of the flock Himself. God has never made the flock wholly dependent upon human instrumentalities. But the days of purification of the church are hastening on apace. God will have a people pure and true. In the mighty sifting soon to take place we shall be better able to measure the strength of Israel. The signs reveal that the time is near when the Lord will manifest that His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor. 5T 80.

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**But that means that we are in the midst of a great apostasy! Did the Bible foretell something like that?**

1 Timothy 4:1: Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.

EGW: "I was shown that the testimony to the Laodiceans applies to God's people at the present time, ... It is designed to arouse the people of God, to discover to them their backslidings [or apostasy, the editor], and to lead to zealous repentance, that they may be favored with the presence of Jesus, and be fitted for the loud cry of the third angel.

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**But the vast majority of our church is content with the present state, though. Is that justified or just Laodiceas's blind contentment?**

But it is in vain to deceive ourselves. Things are far from being what the appearance would indicate. From a distant view much may appear beautiful which, upon close examination, will be found full of deformities. The prevailing spirit of our time is that of infidelity and apostasy--a spirit of pretended illumination because of a knowledge of the truth, but in reality of the blindest presumption. There is a spirit of opposition to the plain word of God and to the testimony of His Spirit. There is a spirit of idolatrous exaltation of mere human reason above the revealed wisdom of God. I know that many think far too favorably of the present time. These ease-loving souls will be engulfed in the general ruin. 5T 79,80.

## 4. The Spirit of Prophecy

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**Against what is Satan's wrath directed in his fight with the remnant church?**

Revelation 12:17: And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

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**Well, I understand Satan's wrath against the Law of God, but what is the Spirit of Prophecy?**

Revelation 19:10: ... For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (or, as other translations have it, the spirit of the prophetic word, the editors).

EGW: "God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies, and He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do this work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was entrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, nonetheless, from Heaven. The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth. ML 41.

Uriah Smith: "Well, says one, if you have reached the fulfillment of this prophecy, which demands the testimony of Jesus Christ, or the spirit of prophecy in its midst, where is the Spirit of prophecy? I am speaking to a people today most, if not all, of whom know very well where it is, and how it is connected with this work. It is set forth in what is known in our literature as the *Testimonies for the Church*, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, *The Great Controversy*, and works of that nature. What is our relation to this? Our relation to it is our relation to something which arose with this work, which has gone right forward with it, side by side, which has interwoven itself into and through it and all about it, from the day this message began until this present hour. ... Does the Seventh-day Adventist Church believe the so-called testimonies and writings of Mrs. E. G. White

to be revelations from God? We believe these writings are a manifestation of the Spirit of prophecy; and just as much as anything that comes from God's Spirit would be a "revelation from God," just so much these are a revelation from God. ... What is received through this gift should be accepted, cherished, and obeyed, if we would be prepared for a greater diversity in the operations of the Spirit, in the restoration of all the gifts, and for the larger outpouring of the Spirit upon the church, when it receives the refreshing (Acts 3:19-21), the early and the latter rain (James 5:7, 8), as it comes to the close of its experience and its work in this world, not far hence.-- GCB 1891, p. 151,153.

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**Are the Testimonies not just the personal opinion of Ellen G. White?**

EGW: "Yet now when I send you a testimony of warning and reproof, many of you declare it to be merely the opinion of Sister White. You have thereby insulted the Spirit of God. You know how the Lord has manifested himself through the spirit of prophecy. Past, present, and future have passed before me. I have been shown faces that I had never seen, and years afterward I knew them when I saw them. I have been aroused from my sleep with a vivid sense of subjects previously presented to my mind; and I have written at midnight letters that have gone across the continent, and, arriving at a crisis, have saved great disaster to the cause of God. This has been my work for many years. A power has impelled me to reprove and rebuke wrongs that I had not thought of. Is this work of the last thirty-six years from above, or from beneath? . . . RH, August 30, 1906 (cp. 1SM 27ff.).

"Let the Testimonies be judged by their fruits. What is the spirit of their teaching? What has been the result of their influence? "All who desire to do so can acquaint themselves with the fruits of these visions. ... This work is of God, or it is not. God does nothing in partnership with Satan. My work ... bears the stamp of God or the stamp of the enemy. There is no halfway work in the matter. The Testimonies are of the Spirit of God, or of the devil." FLB 296.

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**So how did the Testimonies originate and what is their purpose?**

EGW: "I took the precious Bible and surrounded it with the several *Testimonies for the Church*. . . . Here, said I, the cases of nearly all are met. The sins they are to shun are pointed out. The counsel that they desire can be found here, given for other cases situated similarly to themselves. God has been pleased to give you line upon line and precept upon precept. But there are not many of you that really know what is contained in the Testimonies. You are not familiar with the Scriptures. If you had made God's Word your study, with a desire to reach the Bible standard and attain to Christian perfection, you would not have needed the Testimonies. ... If we disregard them [the warnings in the Testimonies], what excuse can we offer? FLB 295.

"The Lord designs to warn you, to reprove, to counsel, through the testimonies given, and to impress your minds with the importance of the truth of His Word. The written testimonies are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed. Man's duty to God and to his fellow man has been distinctly specified in God's Word; yet but few of you are obedient to the light given. Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the Testimonies simplified the great truths already given and in His own chosen way brought them before the people to awaken and impress the mind with them, that all may be left without excuse. FLB 295.

"Men may get up scheme after scheme, and the enemy will seek to seduce souls from the truth, but all who believe that the Lord has spoken through Sister White, and has given her a message, will be safe from the many delusions that will come in these last days.--Letter 50, 1906. 3SM 83,84.

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**If there is no additional truth given in the Spirit of Prophecy, then why do we need it? Is the Bible alone not sufficient?**

EGW: "The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. *"Where there is no vision, the people perish."* Prov. 29:18. Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God's remnant people in the true testimony. He will bring in spurious visions, to mislead and mingle the false with the true, and so disgust people that they will regard everything that bears the name of visions, as a species of fanaticism; but honest souls, by contrasting false and true, will be enabled to distinguish between them. When the Testimonies, which were once believed, are doubted and given up, Satan knows the deceived ones will not stop at this; and he redoubles his efforts till he launches them into open rebellion, which becomes incurable and ends in destruction. FLB 296.

"One thing is certain: Those Seventh-day Adventists who take their stand under Satan's banner will first give up their faith in the warnings and reproofs contained in the Testimonies of God's Spirit. 3SM 84.

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**Why is the Spirit of Prophecy, the Testimony of Jesus, so seldom heard in the church?**

EGW: "There will be a hatred kindled against the testimonies which is satanic. The workings of Satan will be to unsettle the faith of the churches in them, for this reason: Satan cannot have so clear a track to bring in his deceptions and bind up souls in his delusions if the warnings and reproofs and counsels of the Spirit of God are heeded. 1SM 48.

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**But our leading brethren often don't agree with the messenger of the Lord. Does that not lead to doubts in many church members?**

EGW: "Some who are supposed to be heart and soul devoted to God are acting contrary to Him and to His work. Others have placed confidence in them, **but deception covers them as with a garment. Their minds are controlled by a restless, irrepressible energy, an eagerness to disclose their sentiments. Thus seeds are sown everywhere.** By a partially expressed sentiment they cast doubt and unbelief of the truth. There are those who are not in harmony with the testimonies because men in high positions of trust have expressed themselves as not in harmony with them; for the testimonies do not coincide with their opinions, but rebuke every vestige of selfishness. TM 291.

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**Why do we have this spiritual blindness when God is speaking to us through the Testimonies?**

EGW: "I have been shown that the greatest reason why the people of God are now found in this state of spiritual blindness is that they will not receive correction. Many have despised the reproofs and warnings given them. The True Witness condemns the lukewarm condition of the people of God, which gives Satan great power over them in this waiting, watching time. 3T 254.

Proverbs 29:18: Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

2 Chronicles 20:20: Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

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**Did it ever happen that God spoke to his people and they did not listen?**

Jeremiah 7:25-28: Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers. Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.

Jeremiah 6:10: To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.

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**What will happen to the Seventh-Day-Adventist Church if she goes on to reject knowledge?**

Hosea 4:6: My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

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**God has told that He will spue out those in the Laodicean condition. So why hasn't he done that yet?**

EGW: "I have been shown that unbelief in the testimonies has been steadily increasing as the people backslide from God. It is all through our ranks, all over the field. But few know what our churches are to experience. I saw that at present we are under divine forbearance, but no one can say how long this will continue. No one knows how great the mercy that has been exercised toward us. 5T 76.

2 Peter 3:9: The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

## 5. The duty of the leaders

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**What duty do our leaders have?**

Ezekiel 33:1: Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.

Malachi 2:7: For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

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**What heavy responsibilities do they have to bear? Do they have an example in this work?**

EGW: "In this fearful time, just before Christ is to come the second time, God's faithful preachers will have to bear a *still more pointed testimony* than was borne by John the Baptist. A responsible, important work is before them; and those who *speak smooth things, God will not acknowledge as His shepherds. A fearful woe is upon them.* 1T 321.

"Would that every minister might realize the sacredness of his office and the holiness of his work, and show the courage that Elijah showed. As divinely appointed messengers, ministers are in a position of awful responsibility. They are to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering. In Christ's stead they are to labor as stewards of the mysteries of Heaven, encouraging the obedient, and warning the disobedient. RH, September 11, 1913 (cp. PK 141,142; 4T 402).

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**Elijah and John the Baptist were not very much accepted with the leaders of the people in their times, so the same could happen today. Do we really have to preach cutting words like these?**

Isaiah 58:1: Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

EGW: "Here is a people who are self-deceived, self-righteous, self-complacent, and the minister is commanded to cry aloud and show them their transgressions. In all ages this work has been done for God's people, and it is needed now more than ever before. 5T 299.

"Preachers should have no scruples to preach the truth as it is found in God's word. Let the truth cut. 2SG 284.

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**That reminds me of Ezekiel, who was set as watchman over the house of Israel.**

Ezekiel 3:17-21: Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor

speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

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**But if we don't warn and reprove so much, more members would be added to the church, and that would be positive!**

EGW: "The accession of members who have not been renewed in heart and reformed in life is a source of weakness to the church. This fact is often ignored. Some ministers and churches are so desirous of securing an increase of numbers that they do not bear faithful testimony against unchristian habits and practices. ... Little self-denial or self-sacrifice is required in order to put on a form of godliness, and to have one's name enrolled upon the church book. Hence many join the church without first becoming united to Christ. In this Satan triumphs. Such converts are his most efficient agents. They serve as decoys to other souls. They are false lights, luring the unwary to perdition. It is in vain that men seek to make the Christian's path broad and pleasant for worldlings. God has not smoothed or widened the rugged, narrow way. If we would enter into life, we must follow the same path which Jesus and his disciples trod,—the path of humility, self-denial, and sacrifice. ST, February 1, 1883.

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**What will happen if ministers remain uncommitted and don't reproach and reprimand us?**

EGW: "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. In vision I have been pointed to many instances where the displeasure of God has been incurred by a neglect on the part of His servants to deal with the wrongs and sins existing among them. 3T 266; 5T 676.

Ezekiel 33:6-9: But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

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**Does that mean that we can be hold responsible for the sins of others?**

EGW: "If the leaders of the church neglect to diligently search out the sins which bring the displeasure of God upon the body, they become responsible for these sins. 3T 269.

"Those who have too little courage to reprove wrong, or who through indolence or lack of interest make no earnest effort to purify the family or the church of God, are held accountable for the evil that may result from their neglect of duty. We are just as responsible for evils that we might have checked in others by exercise of parental or pastoral authority as if the acts had been our own. PP 578.

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**That would mean that sermons would have to be much more pointed, but we listen almost exclusively to smooth sermons which give church members the feeling to be on the right track without any danger being there.**

EGW: "The smooth sermons so often preached make no lasting impression. The trumpet does not give a certain sound. Men are not cut to the heart by the plain, sharp truths of God's Word. RH, September 11, 1913 (cp. PK 140).

"Sins exist in the church that God hates, but they are scarcely touched for fear of making enemies. Opposition has risen in the church to the plain testimony. ... I have been shown that why ministers have not more success is, they are afraid of hurting feelings, fearful of not being courteous, and they lower the standard of truth, and conceal if possible the peculiarity of our faith. I saw that God could not make such successful. The truth must be made pointed, and the necessity of a decision urged. And as false shepherds are crying, Peace, and are preaching smooth things, the servants of God must cry aloud, and spare not, and leave the result with God. 2SG 283-285.

"Thus "Peace and safety" is the cry from men who will never again lift up their voice like a trumpet to show God's people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins. These dumb dogs that would not bark are the ones who feel the just vengeance of an offended God. 5T 211.

Isaiah 56:10: His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.

Jeremiah 6:13-15: For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealth falsely. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 23:17,20: They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. ... The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.

“Those ministers who are men pleasers, who cry, Peace, peace, when God has not spoken peace, might well humble their hearts before God, asking pardon for their insincerity and their lack of moral courage. It is not from love for their neighbor that they smooth down the message entrusted to them, but because they are self-indulgent and ease-loving. 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. PK 141,142.

## b) False Shepherds

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### That would mean preachers with smooth sermons are false shepherds!

EGW: “In this fearful time, just before Christ is to come the second time, God's faithful preachers will have to bear a still more pointed testimony than was borne by John the Baptist. A responsible, important work is before them; and those who speak smooth things, God will not acknowledge as His shepherds. A fearful woe is upon them. 1T 321.

“And as false shepherds are crying, Peace, and are preaching smooth things, the servants of God must cry aloud, and spare not, and leave the result with God. 2SG 285.

Jeremiah 14:13,14: Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

Jeremiah 50:6: My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace.

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### Does God really allow the leading brethren to become seducers?

Isaiah 9:16: For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.

Isaiah 3:12: ... O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.

Jeremiah 23:1-3: Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD. And I will gather the remnant of my flock ...

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### What did God tell you about the condition of our ministers?

EGW: “I tell you not a few ministers who stand before the people to explain the Scriptures are defiled. Their hearts are corrupt, their hands unclean. 5T 78.

“It has been clearly presented before me that many who now preach the truth have never been converted. 1888 505.

“There are fearful woes for those who preach the truth, but are not sanctified by it, and also for those who consent to receive and maintain the unsanctified to minister to them in word and doctrine. I am alarmed for the people of God who profess to believe solemn, important truth, for I know that many of them are not converted nor sanctified through it. Men can hear and acknowledge the whole truth, and yet know nothing of the power of godliness. All who preach the truth will not themselves be saved by it. Said the angel: “Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.” (Isa. 52:11). 1T 261,262.

Micah 3:1,5: And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment? ... Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets\* that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him.

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### Why are those ministers so popular with church members and are so much loved by them?

EGW: “A large majority of the men and women who profess to know the truth prefer smooth messages. They do not desire to have their sins and defects brought before them. They want accommodating ministers, who will not arouse conviction by speaking the truth. They choose men who will flatter them, and in their turn they flatter the minister who has shown such a “good” spirit, while they revile the faithful servant of God. TDG 55.

Jeremiah 5:31: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

Isaiah 30:9,10: That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits:

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### For sure, it's not flattering to have one's sins brought before him. But wouldn't it be better to talk more about the love of God? It cannot be wrong to be a bit more liberal, and no one would be hurt by such a course!

EGW: “Brother E suggests that it would please the people if I speak less about duty and more in regard to the love of Jesus. But I wish to speak as the Spirit of the Lord shall impress me. The Lord knows best what this people needs. **I spoke in the forenoon [Sabbath, October 17] from Isaiah 58. I did not round the corners at all.**--Manuscript 26, 1885. 3SM 64.

This goody-goody religion that makes light of sin and that is forever dwelling upon the love of God to the sinner, encourages the sinner to believe that God will save him while he continues in sin and he knows it to be sin. This is the way that many are doing who profess to believe present truth. ... There must be a straining of every nerve and spirit and muscle to leave the world, its customs, its practices, and its fashions. 3SM 155.

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\* “But the name was given also to those who, though not so directly inspired, were divinely called to instruct the people in the works and ways of God.” Ed 46.

"Thou art the man," Nathan said to David. These words are seldom heard in the pulpits of today, seldom seen in the public press. If they were not so rare, we should see more of the power of God revealed among men. The Lord's messengers should not complain of their efforts being without fruit, until they repent of their own love for approbation, and their desire to please men, which lead them to suppress the truth. Those ministers who are men-pleasers, who cry, Peace, peace, when God has not spoken peace, might well humble their hearts before God, asking pardon for their insincerity and lack of moral courage. It is not from love for their neighbor that they smooth down the message entrusted to them, but because they are self-indulgent and ease-loving. 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, they will not consider self, but will speak the word given them to speak, refusing to excuse or palliate evil. RH, September 11, 1913.

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**But that would mean that the God-sent person who reproves is never loved while the minister who appeases and emphasizes God's forbearing love and grace is always popular. Isn't that so?**

EGW: "Many praise the minister who dwells on the grace and mercy and love of Jesus, who is not particular to enforce duties and obligations, who does not warn of the danger of hypocrisy, or present the terrors of God's wrath. TDG 55.

"In vision I have been pointed to many instances where the displeasure of God has been incurred by a neglect on the part of His servants to deal with the wrongs and sins existing among them. 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." 3T 266 (cp. also 5T 676).

"Many professed Christians look upon men who do not reprove and condemn wrong, as men of piety and Christians indeed, while they think that those who stand boldly in defense of the right, and will not yield their integrity to unconsecrated influences, lack piety and a Christian spirit. Those who stand in defense of the honor of God and maintain the purity of truth at any cost will have manifold trials, as did our Saviour in the wilderness of temptation. 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. Those who are in harmony with God, and who through faith in Him receive strength to resist wrong and stand in defense of the right, will always have severe conflicts and will frequently have to stand almost alone. 3T 302.1 }

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**You said, "Those who speak smooth things, God will not acknowledge as His shepherds. A fearful woe is upon them." (1T 321). What happens to those who support these false shepherds?**

EGW: "There are fearful woes for those who preach the truth, but are not sanctified by it, and also for those who consent to receive and maintain the unsanctified to minister to them in word and doctrine. 1T 261,262.

"As there are woes for those who preach the truth while they are unsanctified in heart and life, so there are woes for those who receive and maintain the unsanctified in the position which they cannot fill. *If the Spirit of God has not sanctified and made pure and clean the hands and heart of those who minister in sacred things, they will speak according to their own imperfect, deficient experience, and their counsels will lead astray from God those who look to them and trust in their judgment and experience.* 2T 552.

### c) God will call others

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**But who will do this important work if the minister doesn't live up to that high calling?**

EGW: "The days are fast approaching when there will be great perplexity and confusion. Satan, clothed in angel robes, will deceive, if possible, the very elect. There will be gods many and lords many. Every wind of doctrine will be blowing. Those who have rendered supreme homage to "science falsely so called" will not be the leaders then. Those who have trusted to intellect, genius, or talent will not then stand at the head of rank and file. They did not keep pace with the light. Those who have proved themselves unfaithful will not then be entrusted with the flock. In the last solemn work few great men will be engaged. They are self-sufficient, independent of God, and He cannot use them. The Lord has faithful servants, who in the shaking, testing time will be disclosed to view. There are precious ones now hidden who have not bowed the knee to Baal. ... Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy will then go out in darkness. Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat. All who assume the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ's righteousness, will appear in the shame of their own nakedness. When trees without fruit are cut down as cumberers of the ground, when multitudes of false brethren are distinguished from the true, then the hidden ones will be revealed to view, and with hosannas range under the banner of Christ. 5T 80,81.

"[B]ut in the hour of greatest peril the God of Elijah will raise up human instrumentalities to bear a message that will not be silenced. In the populous cities of the land, and in the places where men have gone to the greatest lengths in speaking against the Most High, the voice of stern rebuke will be heard. Boldly will men of God's appointment denounce the union of the church with the world. PK 187.

"When God puts His Spirit upon men, they will work. They will proclaim the word of the Lord; they will lift up their voice like a trumpet. The truth will not be diminished or lose its power in their hands. They will show the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins. TM 411.

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**Does that mean that also "normal" church members are called upon to pray for this boldness that they may be prepared to speak the truth bravely?**

EGW: "God calls for men like Elijah, Nathan, and John the Baptist--men who will bear His message with faithfulness, regardless of the consequences; men who will speak the truth bravely, though it call for the sacrifice of all they have. PK 142.

"God calls for men of decided fidelity. He has no use in an emergency for two-sided men. He wants men who will lay their hand upon a wrong work and say, "This is not according to the will of God." — (Letter 19 1/2, 1897) 2SM 153.

"Today there is need of the voice of stern rebuke; for grievous sins have separated the people from God. Infidelity is fast becoming fashionable. "We will not have this man to reign over us," is the language of thousands. The smooth sermons so often preached make no lasting impression. The trumpet does not give a certain sound. Men are not cut to the heart by the plain, sharp truths of God's Word. There are many professed Christians who, if they should express their real feelings would say, What need is there of speaking so plainly? **They might as well ask, Why need John the Baptist have said to the Pharisees, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Why need he have provoked the anger of Herodias by telling Herod that it was unlawful for him to live with his brother's wife? The forerunner of Christ lost his life by his plain-speaking. Why could he not have moved along without incurring the displeasure of those who were living in sin?** So men who should be standing as faithful guardians of God's law have argued till policy has taken the place of faithfulness, and sin is allowed to go unreprieved. When will the voice of faithful rebuke be heard once more in the church? RH, September 11, 1913 (cp. also PK 140,141).

"The searching testimony of the Spirit of God "will separate those from Israel who have ever been at war with the means that God has ordained to keep corruptions out of the church. Wrongs must be called wrongs. Grievous sins must be called by their right name. All of God's people should come nearer to Him. . . . Then will they see sin in the true light and will realize how offensive it is in the sight of God." [cp. 3T 324 (1873).] "The plain, straight testimony must live in the church, or the curse of God will rest upon His people as surely as it did upon ancient Israel because of their sins." [cp. 3T 269 (1873)] 5T 676.

"My message to you is: No longer consent to listen without protest to the perversion of truth ... for many are in danger of receiving theories and sophistries that undermine the foundation pillars of the faith. 1SM 196,197.

"There is need now of men who are firm and fearless in declaring the whole counsel of God; men who will not sleep as do others, but watch and be sober. 5T 160.

Ezekiel 3:11: And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

"Just as long as God has a church, he will have those who will cry aloud and spare not, who will be his instruments to reprove selfishness and sins, and will not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, whether men will hear or forbear. 2SG 284.

"Will you not seek God most humbly, that you may give the Laodicean message with clear, distinct utterance? Where are God's watchmen who will see the peril and give the warning? Be assured that there are messages to come from human lips under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. "Cry aloud, spare not, . . . show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. **Yet they seek Me daily, . . . as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God."** TM 296.

"John the Baptist met sin with open rebuke in men of humble occupation and in men of high degree. He declared the truth to kings and nobles, whether they would hear or reject it. He spoke personally and pointedly. He reproved the Pharisees of the Sanhedrim because their religion consisted in forms and not in righteousness of pure, willing obedience. ... He spoke to Herod in regard to his marriage with Herodias, saying, It is not lawful for thee to have her. **He spoke to him of a future retribution, when God would judge every man according to his works.** ... Just such a work and message as that of John will be carried on in these last days. The Lord has been giving messages to His people, through the instruments He has chosen, and He would have all take heed to the admonitions and warnings He sends. 2SM 149,150.

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**Are there no earnest men of prayer who are lovely and kind and who are interested in the cause of God, but whose character would not let them speak such reproving words?**

"Eli was gentle, loving, and kind, and had a true interest in the service of God and the prosperity of His cause. He was a man who had power in prayer. He never rose up in rebellion against the words of God. But he was wanting; he did not have firmness of character to reprove sin and execute justice against the sinner so that God could depend upon him to keep Israel pure. He did not add to his faith the courage and power to say No at the right time and in the right place. Sin is sin; righteousness is righteousness. The trumpet note of warning must be sounded. We are living in a fearfully wicked age. The worship of God will become corrupted unless there are wide-awake men at every post of duty. **It is no time now for any to be absorbed in selfish ease. Not one of the words which God has spoken must be allowed to fall to the ground.** 4T 517.

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**For what kind of character should we pray, then?**

"God knows the character. He sees the temperament of the men He has chosen. He knows that none but earnest, firm, determined, strong-feeling men will view this work in its vital importance, and will put such firmness and decision into their testimonies that they will make a break against the barriers of Satan. TM 412,413.

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**But if I give the church warnings like these all will think I've lost my senses and won't take me seriously, because they believe everything's right with the church!**

EGW: "**Those whom God has chosen for an important work have ever been received with distrust and suspicion.** Anciently, when Elijah was sent with a message from God to the people, they did not heed the warning. They thought him unnecessarily severe. They even thought that he must have lost his senses because he denounced them, the favored people of God, as sinners and their crimes as so aggravated that the judgments of God would awaken against them. Satan and his host have ever been arrayed against those who bear the message of warning and who reprove sins. The unconsecrated will also be united with the adversary of souls to make the work of God's faithful servants as hard as possible. 3T 261.

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**But if I say something, no one will be impressed, because my voice doesn't carry weight with the church.**

EGW: “Those who allow prejudice to bar the mind against the reception of truth cannot receive the divine enlightenment. Yet, when a view of Scripture is presented, many do not ask, Is it true--in harmony with God's word? but, By whom is it advocated? and unless it comes through the very channel that pleases them, they do not accept it. So thoroughly satisfied are they with their own ideas that they will not examine the Scripture evidence with a desire to learn, but refuse to be interested, merely because of their prejudices. The Lord often works where we least expect Him; He surprises us by revealing His power through instruments of His own choice, while He passes by the men to whom we have looked as those through whom light should come. God desires us to receive the truth upon its own merits – because it is truth. TM 105,106.

## d) Resistance

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### So that means that faithful men will encounter resistance and rejection?

EGW: “Opposition has risen in the church to the plain testimony. Some will not bear it. They wish smooth things spoken unto them. And if the wrongs of individuals are touched, they complain of severity, and sympathize with those in the wrong. As Ahab inquired of Elijah, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" they are ready to look with suspicion and doubt upon those who bear the plain testimony, and like Ahab overlook the wrong which made it necessary for reproof and rebuke. When the church depart from God they despise the plain testimony, and complain of severity and harshness. It is a sad evidence of the lukewarm state of the church. ... I saw that individuals would rise up against the plain testimonies. It does not suit their natural feelings. They would choose to have smooth things spoken unto them, and have peace cried in their ears. I view the church in a more dangerous condition than they ever have been. Experimental religion is known but by a few. The shaking must soon take place to purify the church. 2SG 283,284.

“The spirit of opposition to reproof, that led to the persecution and imprisonment of Jeremiah, exists today. Many refuse to heed repeated warnings, preferring rather to listen to false teachers who flatter their vanity and overlook their evil-doing. In the day of trouble such will have no sure refuge, no help from heaven. God's chosen servants should meet with courage and patience the trials and sufferings that befall them through reproach, neglect, and misrepresentation. They should continue to discharge faithfully the work God has given them to do, ever remembering that the prophets of old and the Saviour of mankind and His apostles also endured abuse and persecution for the Word's sake. PK 437.

Matthew 5:10-12: Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Ezekiel 3:6,7: Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted.

Jeremiah 35:14,15: ... notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now ... but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me (cp. also Jer. 7:13,25,26).

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### So I could be rejected the same way like the prophets of old or the apostles when I lift up my voice?

EGW: “Let no soul complain of the servants of God who have come to them with a heaven-sent message. Do not any longer pick flaws in them, saying, "They are too positive; they talk too strongly." They may talk strongly; but is it not needed? God will make the ears of the hearers tingle if they will not heed His voice or His message. He will denounce those who resist the word of God. TM 410.

“No stronger evidence can be given of Satan's delusive power than that many who are thus led by him deceive themselves with the belief that they are in the service of God. When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against the authority of Moses, they thought they were opposing only a human leader, a man like themselves; and they came to believe that they were verily doing God service. But in rejecting God's chosen instrument they rejected Christ; they insulted the Spirit of God. So, in the days of Christ, the Jewish scribes and elders, who professed great zeal for the honor of God, crucified His Son. The same spirit still exists in the hearts of those who set themselves to follow their own will in opposition to the will of God. PP 635.

“To them everything seems to be going well, and they see no necessity of raising the faithful, trumpet notes of warning which they hear borne by the plain testimonies, to show the people their transgressions and the house of Israel their sins. These reproofs and warnings disturb the quiet of these sleepy, ease-loving sentinels, and they are not pleased. They say in heart, if not in words: "This is all uncalled for. It is too severe, too harsh. These men are unnecessarily disturbed and excited, and seem unwilling to give us any rest or quietude 'Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them.' They are not willing that we should have any comfort, peace, or happiness. It is active labor, toil, and unceasing vigilance alone which will satisfy these unreasonable, hard-to-be-suited watchmen. Why don't they prophesy smooth things, and cry: Peace, peace? Then everything would move on smoothly."

“These are the true feelings of many of our people. And Satan exults at his success in controlling the minds of so many who profess to be Christians. *He has deceived them, benumbed their sensibilities, and planted his hellish banner right in their midst, and they are so completely deceived that they know not that it is he.* The people have not erected graven images, yet their sin is no less in the sight of God. They worship mammon. They love worldly gain. Some will make any sacrifice of conscience to obtain their object. God's professed people are selfish and self-caring. They love the things of this world, and have fellowship with the works of darkness. They have pleasure in unrighteousness. They have not love toward God nor love for their neighbors. They are idolaters, and are worse, far worse, in the sight of God than the heathen, graven-image worshippers who have no knowledge of a better way. 2T 440,441 (emphasis supplied).

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### Who is rejected with the refusal to accept this heaven-sent message? Is it only the messenger?



EGW: "Those who despise and reject the faithful servant of God show contempt, not merely for the man, but for the Master who sent him. It is God's words, His reproofs and counsel, that are set at nought; it is His authority that is rejected. PP 605.

Luke 10:16: He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me (cp. also John 13:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:8).

EGW: "I have no smooth message to bear to those who have been so long as false guideposts, pointing the wrong way. If you reject Christ's delegated messengers, you reject Christ. TM 97.

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**Should we take a decided position and proclaim the God-given warnings, even when we are alone and everyone is fighting against us?**

EGW: "Many professed Christians look upon men who do not reprove and condemn wrong, as men of piety and Christians indeed, while they think that those who stand boldly in defense of the right, and will not yield their integrity to unconsecrated influences, lack piety and a Christian spirit. Those who stand in defense of the honor of God and maintain the purity of truth at any cost will have manifold trials, as did our Saviour in the wilderness of temptation. 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. Those who are in harmony with God, and who through faith in Him receive strength to resist wrong and stand in defense of the right, will always have severe conflicts and will frequently have to stand almost alone. 3T 302.

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**This coming conflict seems to be too hot for me. I'd rather stay neutral first and decide afterwards!**

EGW: "If God abhors one sin above another, of which His people are guilty, it is doing nothing in case of an emergency. Indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God as a *grievous crime and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God*. 3T 280 (emphasis supplied).

"Shall not the counsel of Christ have an effect on the churches? Why halt, ye who know the truth, between two opinions? "If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him." Christ's followers have no right to stand on the ground of neutrality. *There is more hope of an open enemy than of one who is neutral*. RH, February 25, 1902 (emphasis supplied).

## 6. The Sifting

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**What will happen to Laodicea?**

Revelation 3:16: So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

EGW: "In the balances of the sanctuary the Seventh-day Adventist church is to be weighed. She will be judged by the privileges and advantages that she has had. If her spiritual experience does not correspond to the advantages that Christ, at infinite cost, has bestowed on her, if the blessings conferred have not qualified her to do the work entrusted to her, on her will be pronounced the sentence: "Found wanting." By the light bestowed, the opportunities given, will she be judged. 8T 247 (cp. also 5T 83).

"Unless the church, which is now being leavened with her own backsliding, shall repent and be converted, she will eat of the fruit of her own doing, until she shall abhor herself. 8T 251.

Matthew 8:11,12: And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

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**What will happen to us as Seventh-Day Adventists if we don't live up to our high calling?**

EGW: "Of those who boast of their light and yet fail to walk in it Christ says, "But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum [Seventh-day Adventists, who have had great light], which art exalted unto heaven [in point of privilege], shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day." RH Aug. 1, 1893 [THE BRACKETED COMMENTS ARE BY ELLEN WHITE.].

Matthew 11:24: But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

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**But that was applicable to the ancient Israelites. Would it be the right conclusion to say that we as SDAs repeat the history of that people?**

EGW: "The trials of the children of Israel, and their attitude just before the first coming of Christ, have been presented before me again and again to illustrate the position of the people of God in their experience before the second coming of Christ. How the enemy sought every occasion to take control of the minds of the Jews, and today he is seeking to blind the minds of God's servants, that they may not be able to discern the precious truth. RH, February 18, 1890 (cp. also 1SM 406).

"This [Israel's] history Satan is striving to repeat in our day. PP 689 (bracketed comments ours).

"The sin of ancient Israel was in disregarding the expressed will of God and following their own way according to the leadings of unsanctified hearts. Modern Israel are fast following in their footsteps, and the displeasure of the Lord is as surely resting upon them. 5T 93.

"The history of ancient Israel is a striking illustration of the past experience of the Adventist body. GC 457 (cp. also 4SP 291).

“Satan's snares are laid for us as verily as they were laid for the children of Israel just prior to their entrance into the land of Canaan. We are repeating the history of that people. 5T 160.

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**Is our disobedience really comparable to that of Israel who so easily forgot God's dealings with them?**

EGW: “I saw that many who profess to believe the truth for these last days, think it strange that the children of Israel murmured as they journeyed, and after the wonderful dealings of God to them, should be so ungrateful, and forget what God had done for them. Said the angel, “Ye have done worse than they.” 4bSG 15 (cp. Ezekiel 16:51,52).

1 Corinthians 10:11: Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

EGW: “With many the cry of the heart has been, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” *Baal, Baal, is the choice*. The religion of many among us will be the religion of apostate Israel, because they love their own way, and forsake the way of the Lord. TM 467,468 (emphasis supplied).

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**Does our condition, which God has shown us through the Spirit of Prophecy, make it necessary for Him to cleanse this church?**

EGW: “He will purify His church, even as Christ purified the temple during His ministry on earth. AA 525.

1 Peter 4:17: For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

Ezekiel 9:6: ... and begin at my sanctuary. ...

EGW: “Here we see that the church--the Lord's sanctuary--was the first to feel the stroke of the wrath of God. 5T 211.

Jeremiah 25:29: For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts.

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**Are we living in the time of sifting?**

EGW: “I saw that we are now in the shaking time. Satan is working with all his power to wrest souls from the hand of Christ and cause them to trample underfoot the Son of God. IT 429.

God is now sifting His people, testing their purposes and their motives. Many will be but as chaff – no wheat, no value in them. 4T 51.

“We are in the shaking time, the time when everything that can be shaken will be shaken. The Lord will not excuse those who know the truth if they do not in word and deed obey His commands. 6T 331.

“But divisions will come in the church. Two parties will be developed. The wheat and tares grow up together for the harvest. 2SM 113.

Jeremiah 6:29,30: The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain: for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the LORD hath rejected them.

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**What will cause the sifting?**

EGW: “I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this is what will cause a shaking among God's people. EW 270 (cp. also IT 181).

“The searching testimony of the Spirit of God "will separate those from Israel who have ever been at war with the means that God has ordained to keep corruptions out of the church. Wrongs must be called wrongs. Grievous sins must be called by their right name. 5T 676 (cp. also 3T 324).

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**But messages like that will for sure bring unrest into the churches!**

EGW: “Most startling messages will be borne by men of God's appointment, messages of a character to warn the people, to arouse them. And while some will be provoked by the warning, and led to resist the light and evidence, we are to see from this that we are giving the testing message for this time. GW 354.

Jeremiah 20:8,10: For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.

## e) Sunday Laws

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**When will the effects of the sifting be seen in the church?**

EGW: “The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. The contest is between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. In this time the gold will be separated from the dross in the church. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. ... When trees without fruit are cut down as cumberers of the ground, when multitudes of false brethren are distinguished from the true, then the hidden ones will be revealed to view, and with hosannas range under the banner of Christ. 5T 81.

## f) Persecuted by false brethren

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### Will there be a persecution by people among us?

EGW: "As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren. When Sabbathkeepers are brought before the courts to answer for their faith, these apostates are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the rulers against them. GC 608.

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### Does that mean that there are Adventists who are keeping the Sabbath now but will give it up then and betray their former brothers and sisters?

EGW: "I saw the nominal church and nominal Adventists, like Judas, would betray us to the Catholics to obtain their influence to come against the truth. The saints then will be an obscure people, little known to the Catholics; but the churches and nominal Adventists who know of our faith and customs (for they hated us on account of the Sabbath, for they could not refute it) will betray the saints and report them to the Catholics as those who disregard the institutions of the people; that is, that they keep the Sabbath and disregard Sunday. SpM 1.

"Those who are careless in their observance of the Sabbath will suffer great loss. The Lord has a controversy with his professed people in these last days. In this controversy men in responsible positions will take a course directly opposite to that pursued by Nehemiah. They will not only ignore and despise the Sabbath themselves, but they will try to keep it from others by burying it beneath the rubbish of custom and tradition. In churches and in large gatherings in the open air, ministers will urge upon the people the necessity of keeping the first day of the week. There are calamities on sea and land: and these calamities will increase, one disaster following close upon another; and the little band of conscientious Sabbath-keepers will be pointed out as the ones who are bringing the wrath of God upon the world by their disregard of Sunday. Satan urges this falsehood that he may take the world captive. **It is his plan to compel men to accept errors. He takes an active part in the promulgation of all false religions, and will stop at nothing in his efforts to enforce erroneous doctrines.** RH, March 18, 1884.

"The warnings that worldly conformity has silenced or withheld must be given under the fiercest opposition from enemies of the faith. And at that time the superficial, conservative class, whose influence has steadily retarded the progress of the work, will renounce the faith and take their stand with its avowed enemies, toward whom their sympathies have long been tending. These apostates will then manifest the most bitter enmity, doing all in their power to oppress and malign their former brethren and to excite indignation against them. This day is just before us. 5T 463.

"As trials thicken around us, both separation and unity will be seen in our ranks. Some who are now ready to take up weapons of warfare will in times of real peril make it manifest that they have not built upon the solid rock; they will yield to temptation. Those who have had great light and precious privileges, but have not improved them, will, under one pretext or another, go out from us. **Not having received the love of the truth, they will be taken in the delusions of the enemy; they will give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, and will depart from the faith.** 6T 400,401.

"The apostle Paul warns us that "some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." This is what we may expect. Our greatest trials will come because of that class who have once advocated the truth, but who turn from it to the world, and trample it under their feet in hate and derision. Ev 624,625.

"Those who have been regarded as worthy and righteous prove to be ring-leaders in apostasy and examples in indifference and in the abuse of God's mercies. Their wicked course He will tolerate no longer, and in His wrath He deals with them without mercy. 5T 212.

## g) They which lead thee cause thee to err ... (Isa. 3:12)

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### So where will those be who now in a leading position? Will they fight in the front line of the work?

EGW: "The days are fast approaching when there will be great perplexity and confusion. Satan, clothed in angel robes, will deceive, if possible, the very elect. There will be gods many and lords many. Every wind of doctrine will be blowing. Those who have rendered supreme homage to "science falsely so called" [see 1 Tim. 6:20, the editors] will not be the leaders then. Those who have trusted to intellect, genius, or talent will not then stand at the head of rank and file. They did not keep pace with the light. Those who have proved themselves unfaithful will not then be entrusted with the flock. In the last solemn work few great men will be engaged. They are self-sufficient, independent of God, and He cannot use them. The Lord has faithful servants, who in the shaking, testing time will be disclosed to view. There are precious ones now hidden who have not bowed the knee to *Baal*. ... Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy will then go out in darkness. Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat. All who assume the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ's righteousness, will appear in the shame of their own nakedness. When trees without fruit are cut down as cumberers of the ground, when multitudes of false brethren are distinguished from the true, then the hidden ones will be revealed to view, and with hosannas range under the banner of Christ. 5T 80,81 (emphasis supplied).

"Many will stand in our pulpits with the torch of false prophecy in their hands, kindled from the hellish torch of Satan. If doubts and unbelief are cherished, **the faithful ministers will be removed from the people** who think they know so much. "If thou hadst known," said Christ, "even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." TM 409,410 (emphasis supplied).

Jeremiah 2:8: The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.

Jeremiah 10:21: For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.

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**But do we not have to fear then that many of our leaders today will lead us to err?**

Isaiah 3:12: As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.

Isaiah 9:15: The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail.

Matthew 15:14: Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

Jeremiah 50:6: My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace.

EGW: "It is with reluctance that the Lord withdraws His presence from those who have been blessed with great light and who have felt the power of the word *in ministering to others*. They were once His *faithful servants*, favored with His presence and guidance; but they departed from Him and *led others into error*, and therefore are brought under the divine displeasure. 5T 212 (emphasis supplied).

"Men of finite judgment cannot see that in patterning after these men who have so often opened to them the treasures of God's word, they will surely endanger their souls. *Jesus is the only true pattern. Everyone must now search the Bible for himself upon his knees before God, with the humble, teachable heart of a child, if he would know what the Lord requires of him.* However high any minister may have stood in the favor of God, if he neglects to follow out the light given him of God, if he refuses to be taught as a little child, he will go into darkness and satanic delusions and will lead others in the same path. 5T 214.

## **h) Only few who will not apostatize**

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**So we are right before the same question as the disciples of Jesus, "Who then can be saved?" (Matthew 19:25; Luke 13:23)**

EGW: "In the last vision given me, I was shown the startling fact that but a small portion of those who now profess the truth will be sanctified by it and be saved. 1T 608.

"I have stated before them that, from what was shown me, but a small number of those now professing to believe the truth would eventually be saved – not because they could not be saved, but because they would not be saved in God's own appointed way. 2T 445.

Luke 13:23,24: Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

Isaiah 10:21,22: The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness.

Jeremiah 3:14: Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

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**Do you really want to say that the majority will apostatize?**

EGW: "To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few – this will be our test. *At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason.* 5T 136.

"Be not deceived; many will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. We have now before us the alpha of this danger. The omega will be of a most startling nature. 1SM 197.

"In vision I saw two armies in terrible conflict. One army was led by banners bearing the world's insignia; the other was led by the bloodstained banner of Prince Immanuel. Standard after standard was left to trail in the dust as company after company from the Lord's army joined the foe and tribe after tribe from the ranks of the enemy united with the commandment-keeping people of God. 8T 41.

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**Doesn't God always talk in the Bible of a "remnant people"?**

Jeremiah 6:9: Thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine: turn back thine hand as a grapegatherer into the baskets.

Jeremiah 44:28: Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs (cp. also Jer. 44:14; 23:3; Micah 2:12).

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**Will not the remnant be characterized by total obedience to all of God's commandments and the testimony of Jesus, which is the Spirit of Prophecy (Rev. 19:10)?**

Revelation 12:17: And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

## **i) A contrite Spirit**

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**What else will characterize the remnant people of God?**

EGW: "The leaven of godliness has not entirely lost its power. At the time when the danger and depression of the church are greatest, the little company who are standing in the light will be sighing and crying for the abominations that are done in the land. But more especially will their prayers arise in behalf of the church because its members are doing after the manner of the world. ... In the time when His wrath shall go forth in judgments, these humble, devoted followers of Christ will be distinguished from the rest of the world by their soul anguish, which is expressed in lamentation and weeping, reproofs and warnings. While others try to throw a cloak over the existing evil, and excuse the great wickedness everywhere prevalent, those who have a zeal for God's honor and a love for souls will not hold their peace to obtain favor of any. Their righteous souls are vexed day by day with the unholy works and conversation of the unrighteous. They are powerless to stop the rushing torrent of iniquity, and hence they are filled with grief and alarm. They mourn before God to see religion despised in the very homes of those who have had great light. ... The class who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension, nor mourn over the sins of others, will be left without the seal of God. 5T 209-211.

Ezekiel 9:4: And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

"The seal of God will be placed upon the foreheads of those only who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land. 5T 212.

Isaiah 66:2: ... but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

Isaiah 57:15: For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Jeremiah 13:17: But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD's flock is carried away captive.

Revelation 3:19,20.22: As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: ... He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

## 7. God's true Church

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### Is it possible that our whole organization as the people of God will be rejected

EGW: "There is danger that God's commandment-keeping people will be found, as were the Jews, weighed in the balance of the heavenly sanctuary, and found wanting. YI, October 14, 1897

"Let a church become proud and boastful, not depending on God, not exalting His power, and that church will surely be left by the Lord, to be brought down to the ground. 8T 127.

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### Like the Jews? Are we in the danger to be rejected as the Jews were rejected? That's impossible!

EGW: "The trials of the children of Israel, and their attitude just before the first coming of Christ, have been presented before me again and again to illustrate the position of the people of God in their experience before the second coming of Christ (see also 1SM 406; 1888 533).

"The history of ancient Israel is a striking illustration of the past experience of the Adventist body. GC 457 (4SP 291).

"We are repeating the history of that people. 5T 160.

1 Corinthians 10:11: Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come (cp. also Romans 15:4).

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### So it wasn't right for the Jews to rely on being God's people?

Jeremiah 7:2-5: Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; ...

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### So "lying words" obviously means that we cannot feel saved just because we go to our local church every Sabbath. But still, we are Seventh-Day Adventists, the last church and therefore cannot be cut away and be thrown into the fire!

Matthew 3:7-10,12: ... O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. ... Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

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### But in spite of all that, the Jews still were the people of God!

EGW: "And now also," said the prophet, "the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Not by its name, but by its fruit, is the value of a tree determined. If the fruit is worthless, the name cannot save the tree from destruction. John declared to the Jews that their standing before God was to be decided by their character and life. Profession was worthless. If their life and character were not in harmony with God's law, they were not His people. DA 107.

Hosea 1:9: Then said God, Call his name Loammi [that means: "not my people", the editors]: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.

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**The Jews didn't bring the fruits they had to bring as God's people. In what sense are we lacking the required fruits?**

EGW: "In this crisis, where is the church to be found? Are its members meeting the claims of God? Are they fulfilling His commission, and representing His character to the world? Are they urging upon the attention of their fellow men the last merciful message of warning? ... There is a stupor, a paralysis, upon the people of God, which prevents them from understanding the duty of the hour. ... Are they less guilty than was the Jewish church? ... The Lord says, "Shall I not visit for these things?" Jer. 5:9. Because they failed of fulfilling God's purpose, the children of Israel were set aside, and God's call was extended to other peoples. If these too prove unfaithful, will they not in like manner be rejected? COL 302-304.

"A striking illustration of this truth is presented in the history of the Jewish people in the time of Christ. ... Wherever the cause exists, the same results will follow. He who deliberately stifles his convictions of duty because it interferes with his inclinations will finally lose the power to distinguish between truth and error. The understanding becomes darkened, the conscience callous, the heart hardened, and the soul is separated from God. Where the message of divine truth is spurned or slighted, there the church will be enshrouded in darkness; faith and love grow cold, and estrangement and dissension enter. Church members center their interests and energies in worldly pursuits, and sinners become hardened in their impenitence. GC 378,379.

## **j) The Three Angels' Messages – the sign of the church**

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**So the true church is characterized on the one hand by personal character sanctification, and on the other hand by the proclamation of the last message of grace to the world. Is that right?**

EGW: "These truths, as presented in Revelation 14 in connection with "the everlasting gospel," *will distinguish the church of Christ at the time of His appearing*. For as the result of the threefold message it is announced: "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." And this message is the last to be given before the coming of the Lord. *Immediately following its proclamation the Son of man is seen by the prophet, coming in glory to reap the harvest of the earth.* GC 453,454 (emphasis supplied).

"Time is short. The first, second, and third angel's messages are the messages to be given to the world. We hear not literally the voice of the three angels, but these angels in Revelation represent a people who will be upon the earth and give these messages. 1888 926.

Revelation 14:6-12: And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

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**Is it not impossible today to proclaim the three-angels's-messages in the first place, because that would mean to hurt other churches? I believe, God wants us to hold back that proclamation in our times a bit more!**

EGW: "Shall we for the sake of policy, betray a sacred trust? If the world is in error and delusion, breaking the law of God, is it not our duty to show them their sin and danger? We must proclaim the third angel's message. CW 95.

"The proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages has been located by the word of Inspiration. Not a peg or pin is to be removed. No human authority has any more right to change the location of these messages than to substitute the New Testament for the Old. The Old Testament is the gospel in figures and symbols. The New Testament is the substance. One is as essential as the other. The Old Testament presents lessons from the lips of Christ, and these lessons have not lost their force in any particular. The first and second messages were given in 1843 and 1844, and we are now under the proclamation of the third; but all three of the messages are still to be proclaimed. It is just as essential now as ever before that they shall be repeated to those who are seeking for the truth. By pen and voice we are to sound the proclamation, showing their order, and the application of the prophecies that bring us to the third angel's message. There cannot be a third without the first and second. These messages we are to give to the world in publications, in discourses, showing in the line of prophetic history the things that have been, and the things that will be.--Manuscript 32, 1896. CW 26,27 (emphasis supplied).

"The third angel's message is the gospel message for these last days, *and in no case is it to be overshadowed by other interests and made to appear an unessential consideration*. When in our institutions *anything* is placed above the third angel's message, the gospel is not there the great leading power. 6T 241 (emphasis supplied).

"A great work is to be accomplished in setting before men the saving truths of the gospel. This is the means ordained by God to stem the tide of moral corruption. This is His means of restoring His moral image in man. It is His remedy for universal disorganization. It is the power that draws men together in unity. To present these truths is the work of the third angel's message. *The Lord designs that the presentation of this message shall be the highest, greatest work carried on in the world at this time.* 6T 11 (emphasis supplied).

"The third angel's message is to be proclaimed with a loud voice. Tremendous issues are before us. We have no time to lose. God forbid that we should allow minor matters to eclipse the light which should be given to the world. CM 120.

"The third angel's message, embracing the messages of the first and second angels, is *the message for this time*. We are to raise aloft the banner on which is inscribed, "The commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." The world is soon to meet

the great Lawgiver over His broken law. ***This is not the time*** to put out of sight the great issues before us. God calls upon His people to magnify the law and make it honorable. CH 357 (emphasis supplied).

“The work of preaching the third angel's message has not been regarded by some as God designs it should be. It has been treated as an *inferior* work, while it should occupy an *important place* among the human agencies in the salvation of man. CH 513 (emphasis supplied).

***The theme of greatest importance*** is the third angel's message, embracing the messages of the first and second angels. All should understand the truths contained in these messages and demonstrate them in daily life, for this is *essential to salvation*. We shall have to study earnestly, prayerfully, in order to understand these grand truths.--Letter 97, 1902. CW 29,30 (emphasis supplied).

“We are as a people in danger of giving the third angel's message in such an indefinite manner that it does not impress the people. . . . Our message is a life-and-death message, and we must let this message appear as it is,--the great power of God. Then the Lord will make it effectual. We are to present it in all its telling force.--Letter 209, 1899. Ev 230.

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#### What is the part of the individual?

EGW: “Let every Seventh-day Adventist ask himself, “What can I do to proclaim the third angel's message?” Christ came to this world to give this message to His servant to give to the churches. It is to be proclaimed to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. How are we to give it? The distribution of our literature is one means by which the message is to be proclaimed. Let every believer scatter broadcast tracts and leaflets and books containing the message for this time. Colporteurs are needed who will go forth to circulate our publications everywhere.--Southern Watchman, Jan. 5, 1904.

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#### But when you hand out tracts, many will be thrown away. Is this not a waste?

EGW: “The miracle of feeding the multitude with a few loaves and fishes, the food was increased as it passed from Christ to those who received it. Thus it will be in the distribution of our literature. God's truth, as it is passed out, will multiply greatly. And as the disciples, by Christ's direction, gathered up the fragments, that nothing might be lost, so we should treasure every fragment of literature containing the truth for this time. None can estimate the influence that even a torn page containing the truths of the third angel's message may have upon the heart of some seeker after truth. --Southern Watchman, Jan. 5, 1904. ChS 153,154.

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#### So that means that our publications have an important part in this work?

EGW: “While in California in the year 1874, I was given an impressive dream, in which was represented the instrumentality of the *press* in the work of giving the third angel's message to the world. CET 216 (emphasis supplied).

“I am bidden to say to our *publishing houses*: “Lift up the standard; lift it up higher. Proclaim the third angel's message, that it may be heard by all the world. Let it be seen that here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Rev. 14:12. ***Let our literature give the message as a witness to all the world.***” 9T 61 (emphasis supplied).

Our publications should go everywhere. Let them be issued *in many languages*. The third angel's message is to be given through this medium and through the living teacher. You who believe the truth for this time, wake up.--The Colporteur Evangelist, p. 101. ChS 149 (emphasis supplied).

Many of God's people are to go forth with our *publications* into places where the third angel's message has never been proclaimed. Our books are to be published *in many different languages*. With these books, humble, faithful men are to go out as colporteur-evangelists, bearing the truth to those who would otherwise never be enlightened. --Testimonies, vol. 9, pp. 33, 34. ChS 149 (emphasis supplied).

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#### And how is this work to be financed?

EGW: “If all will act their part, the barrenness of the Lord's vineyard will no longer speak in condemnation of those who profess to follow Christ. Medical missionary work is to open the door for the gospel of present truth. The third angel's message is to be heard in all places. Economize! Strip yourselves of pride. Give to God your earthly treasure. Give what you can now, and as you cooperate with Christ, your hand will open to impart still more. And God will refill your hand, that the treasure of truth may be taken to many souls. He will give to you that you may give to others.--R. & H., Dec. 10, 1901. {CS 50.

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#### Who are the angels in this work

EGW: “When will the church do her appointed work? She is represented as an angel of light, flying through heaven with the everlasting gospel to be proclaimed to the world. This represents the *speed and directness* with which the church is to prosecute her work. MM 131.

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#### Speed and Directness? I used to think, stop-smoking-courses and anti-stress seminaries were enough!

EGW: “Satan has devised a state of things whereby the proclamation of the third angel's message shall be bound about. We must beware of his plans and methods. There must be no toning down of the truth, no muffling of the message for this time. The third angel's message must be strengthened and confirmed. The eighteenth chapter of Revelation reveals the importance of presenting the truth in no measured terms but with boldness and power.... There has been too much beating about the bush in the proclamation of the third angel's message. The message has not been given as clearly and distinctly as it should have been. Ev 230.

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**In my church they say over and over again, “We mustn't scare off people by proclaiming the Three-Angels'-Messages to them directly. The independent missionary groups who spread the message on tracts everywhere are doing harm to respectability of the church.” But according to that testimony above the our missionary methods of today are Satan's**

**“plans and methods” to tone down and muffle the message for this time. Are we still God’s people if we are continually going backwards concerning this distinctive mark of His true church?**

EGW: “The third angel, flying in the midst of heaven and heralding the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus, represents our work. The *message loses none of its force* in the angel’s onward flight, for John sees it *increasing* in strength and power until the whole earth is lightened with its glory. The course of God’s commandment-keeping people is *onward, ever onward*. 5T 383 (emphasis supplied).

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**What happens to those who do not have a part in this work?**

EGW: “All who venture to have their own way, who do not join the angels who are sent from heaven with a message to fill the whole earth with its glory, will be passed by. The work will go forward to victory without them, and they will have no part in its triumph. RH, December 23, 1890 (cp. also 1888 765; PC 343; see also DA 107).

## **k) History repeats itself**

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**The Jews weren’t faithful to their commission and were rejected consequently. We’ve always believed that something like this could never happen to the church in the last days. Is this true?**

EGW: “The Lord Jesus will always have a chosen people to serve Him. When the Jewish people rejected Christ, the Prince of life, He took from them the kingdom of God and gave it unto the Gentiles. God will continue to work on this principle with every branch of His work. When a church proves unfaithful to the word of the Lord, whatever their position may be, however high and sacred their calling, the Lord can no longer work with them. Others are then chosen to bear important responsibilities. But, if these in turn do not purify their lives from every wrong action, if they do not establish pure and holy principles in all their borders, then the Lord will grievously afflict and humble them and, unless they repent, will remove them from their place and make them a reproach. ... UL 131.

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**It is clear that the Jews were rejected by Christ because they rejected Him. That is emphasized in the parable of the husbandmen, who killed the servants sent and finally even the Son. But we as SDAs are different from that!**

EGW: “The parable of the vineyard applies not alone to the Jewish nation. It has a lesson for us. ... In our day are not the same influences at work? Of the husbandmen of the Lord’s vineyard are not many following in the steps of the Jewish leaders? Are not religious teachers turning men away from the plain requirements of the word of God? ... The result of Israel’s sin is before us. Will the church of today take warning? COL 296,305,306.

Romans 11:21: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

Matthew 21:43: Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

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**But what about our hospitals, institutes church buildings and our magnificent services? Are they not a sign that we are God’s true church?**

EGW: “The Jewish leaders looked with pride upon their magnificent temple, and the imposing rites of their religious service; but justice, mercy, and the love of God were lacking. The glory of the temple, the splendor of their service, could not recommend them to God; for that which alone is of value in His sight they did not offer. They did not bring Him the sacrifice of a humble and contrite spirit. It is when the vital principles of the kingdom of God are lost that ceremonies become multitudinous and extravagant. It is when the character building is neglected, when the adornment of the soul is lacking, when the simplicity of godliness is lost sight of, that pride and love of display demand magnificent church edifices, splendid adornings, and imposing ceremonials. In all this God is not honored. A fashionable religion that consists of ceremonies, pretense, and display, is not acceptable to Him. Its services call forth no response from the heavenly messengers.

The church is very precious in God’s sight. He values it, not for its external advantages, but for the sincere piety which distinguishes it from the world. He estimates it according to the growth of the members in the knowledge of Christ, according to their progress in spiritual experience. COL 297,298.

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**Are we not the organization that was founded by God Himself? The our leading brethren must also have ecclesiastical authority!**

John 8:39: ... If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

EGW: “Descent from Abraham was proved, not by name and lineage, but by likeness of character. *So the apostolic succession rests not upon the transmission of ecclesiastical authority*, but upon spiritual relationship. A life actuated by the apostles’ spirit, the belief and teaching of the truth they taught, this is the true evidence of apostolic succession. This is what constitutes men the successors of the first teachers of the gospel. DA 467 (emphasis supplied).

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**In our church there used to be members who called apostasy by its name. But then, one day they were disfellowshipped for that reason. Now they met in their homes for Sabbath services as it is quite common among faithful Adventists around the world who were disfellowshipped. I’ve always asked myself, When their names were blotted out from the church books, and they continued to adhere to the fundamentals of our faith, do they still belong to God’s church? Or, let me put my question differently: Who or what is the church? The big, established church, even if they let their banners sink into the dust, or the remnant, the rest of the rest, who are still holding up our colors? Do we have examples from the past which could give us an answer to that question?**

### **THE APOSTASY OF THE FIRST CENTURIES:**

EGW: “After a long and severe conflict, the faithful few decided to dissolve all union with the apostate church if she still refused to free herself from falsehood and idolatry. They saw that separation was an absolute necessity if they would obey the



word of God. They dared not tolerate errors fatal to their own souls, and set an example which would imperil the faith of their children and children's children. To secure peace and unity they were ready to make any concession consistent with fidelity to God; but they felt that even peace would be too dearly purchased at the sacrifice of principle. If unity could be secured only by the compromise of truth and righteousness, then let there be difference, and even war. GC 45 (ELLEN WHITE TELLS US ABOUT THE AIMS OF THAT BOOK ("THE GREAT CONTROVERSY") IN HER PREFACE: "In these records we may see a foreshadowing of the conflict before us. ... It is not so much the object of this book to present new truths concerning the struggles of former times, as to bring out facts and principles which have a bearing on coming events. GC xi,xii.

#### **THE APOSTASY AMONG THE WALDENSES:**

EGW: "For centuries the churches of Piedmont maintained their independence; but the time came at last when Rome insisted upon their submission. After ineffectual struggles against her tyranny, the leaders of these churches reluctantly acknowledged the supremacy of the power to which the whole world seemed to pay homage. There were some, however, who refused to yield to the authority of pope or prelate. They were determined to maintain their allegiance to God and to preserve the purity and simplicity of their faith. A separation took place. ... Theirs was not a faith newly received. Their religious belief was their inheritance from their fathers. They contended for the faith of the apostolic church,--"the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Jude 3. "The church in the wilderness," and not the proud hierarchy enthroned in the world's great capital, was the true church of Christ, the guardian of the treasures of truth which God has committed to His people to be given to the world. GC 64.

#### **THE APOSTASY AMONG THE BOHEMIANS:**

EGW: "As their former brethren, entering into compact with Rome, imbibed her errors, those who adhered to the ancient faith had formed themselves into a distinct church, taking the name of "United Brethren." This act drew upon them maledictions from all classes. Yet their firmness was unshaken. GC 119.

#### **LUTHER AND ROME:**

EGW: "Yet it was not without a terrible struggle with himself that Luther decided upon a final separation from the church. It was about this time that he wrote: "I feel more and more every day how difficult it is to lay aside the scruples which one has imbibed in childhood. Oh, how much pain it has caused me, though I had the Scriptures on my side, to justify it to myself that I should dare to make a stand alone against the pope, and hold him forth as antichrist! ... How many times have I not asked myself with bitterness that question which was so frequent on the lips of the papists: 'Art thou alone wise? Can everyone else be mistaken? How will it be, if, after all, it is thyself who art wrong, and who art involving in thy error so many souls, who will then be eternally damned?' 'Twas so I fought with myself and with Satan, till Christ, by His own infallible word, fortified my heart against these doubts." GC 143.

#### **THE PROTESTANTS:**

EGW: "Romanists have persisted in bringing against Protestants the charge of heresy and willful separation from the true church. But these accusations apply rather to themselves. They are the ones who laid down the banner of Christ and departed from "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Jude 3. GC 51.

#### **THE ADVENT MOVEMENT IN 1844:**

EGW: "As his work tended to build up the churches, it was for a time regarded with favor. But as ministers and religious leaders decided against the advent doctrine and desired to suppress all agitation of the subject, they not only opposed it from the pulpit, but denied their members the privilege of attending preaching upon the second advent, or even of speaking of their hope in the social meetings of the church. Thus the believers found themselves in a position of great trial and perplexity. They loved their churches and were loath to separate from them; but as they saw the testimony of God's word suppressed and their right to investigate the prophecies denied they felt that loyalty to God forbade them to submit. Those who sought to shut out the testimony of God's word they could not regard as constituting the church of Christ, "the pillar and ground of the truth." Hence they felt themselves justified in separating from their former connection. GC 376.

#### **AT THE END:**

EGW: "As these bodies [i.e. churches, the editor] depart further and further from the truth, and ally themselves more closely with the world, the difference between the two classes will widen, and it will finally result in separation. The time will come when those who love God supremely can no longer remain in connection with such as are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." GC 390.

1 Corinthians 11:19: For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

John 16:1,2: These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

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#### **So that means that God's true church is really a remnant people as it was in Jesus' times?**

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

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**Well, that can be seen in history where it is evident that the organizational structure, which God had given His church as a scaffold always remained, even though God didn't acknowledge these churches as His true church any more. He rather stood up for a small number of organized people who had no big church buildings, institutions or whatever. So I would be interested in a God-given definition of 'church'.**

Matthew 18:20: For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

EGW: "God has a church. It is not the great cathedral, neither is it the national establishment, neither is it the various denominations; it is the people who love God and keep His commandments. ... Where Christ is even among the humble few, this is Christ's church, for the presence of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity can alone constitute a church. UL 315.

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**If that is so, how about our names being registered in church books, then? Does the fact that my name is on the list of one SDA church mean that I'm a member of God's true church?**

EGW: "Let the senses of all be aroused: for many whose names now appear on the church books are not the children of God. In the books of heaven it is recorded of them. 'Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.' GCDB, March 2, 1897.

## 8. Babylon

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**Does our SDA-organization have a guarantee of not becoming a part of Babylon's family, even when we are committing spiritual adultery and become (or rather, stay) a (guest) member of ecumenical organizations?**

We are in danger of becoming a sister to fallen Babylon, of allowing our churches to become corrupted, and filled with every foul spirit, a cage for every unclean and hateful bird; and will we be clear unless we make decided movements to cure the existing evil? TSB 188.

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**What are the special characteristics of Babylon?**

The term "Babylon" is derived from "Babel," and signifies confusion. It is employed in Scripture to designate the various forms of false or apostate religion. In Revelation 17 Babylon is represented as a woman --a figure which is used in the Bible as the symbol of a church, a virtuous woman representing a pure church, a vile woman an apostate church. {GC 381.1}

In the Bible the sacred and enduring character of the relation that exists between Christ and His church is represented by the union of marriage. The Lord has joined His people to Himself by a solemn covenant, He promising to be their God, and they pledging themselves to be His and His alone. ... **The unfaithfulness of the church to Christ in permitting her confidence and affection to be turned from Him, and allowing the love of worldly things to occupy the soul, is likened to the violation of the marriage vow.** ... In the New Testament, language very similar is addressed to professed Christians who seek the friendship of the world above the favor of God. Says the apostle James: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."...

Babylon is also charged with the sin of unlawful connection with "the kings of the earth." It was by departure from the Lord, and alliance with the heathen, that the Jewish church became a harlot; and Rome, corrupting herself in like manner by seeking the support of worldly powers, receives a like condemnation.

Babylon is said to be "the mother of harlots." By her daughters must be symbolized churches that cling to her doctrines and traditions, and follow her example of sacrificing the truth and the approval of God, in order to form an unlawful alliance with the world. The message of Revelation 14, announcing the fall of Babylon must apply to religious bodies that were once pure and have become corrupt. Since this message follows the warning of the judgment, it must be given in the last days; therefore it cannot refer to the Roman Church alone, for that church has been in a fallen condition for many centuries. Furthermore, in the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation the people of God are called upon to come out of Babylon. According to this scripture, many of God's people must still be in Babylon. And in what religious bodies are the greater part of the followers of Christ now to be found? Without doubt, in the various churches professing the Protestant faith. At the time of their rise these churches took a noble stand for God and the truth, and His blessing was with them. Even the unbelieving world was constrained to acknowledge the beneficent results that followed an acceptance of the principles of the gospel. In the words of the prophet to Israel: "Thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God." But they fell by the same desire which was the curse and ruin of Israel--the desire of imitating the practices and courting the friendship of the ungodly. "Thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown." Ezekiel 16:14, 15.

Many of the Protestant churches are following Rome's example of iniquitous connection with "the kings of the earth"--the state churches, by their relation to secular governments; and other denominations, by seeking the favor of the world. And the term "Babylon" -- *confusion* -- may be appropriately applied to these bodies, all professing to derive their doctrines from the Bible, yet divided into almost innumerable sects, with widely conflicting creeds and theories.

Besides a sinful union with the world, the churches that separated from Rome present *other of her characteristics*. A Roman Catholic work argues that "if the Church of Rome were ever guilty of *idolatry in relation to the saints*, her daughter, the Church of England, stands guilty of the same, which has ten churches dedicated to Mary for one dedicated to Christ."--Richard Challoner, *The Catholic Christian Instructed*, Preface, pages 21, 22.

And Dr. Hopkins, in "A Treatise on the Millennium," declares: "There is no reason to consider the *antichristian spirit and practices* to be confined to that which is now called the Church of Rome. The Protestant churches have much of antichrist in them, and are far from being wholly reformed from . . . corruptions and wickedness."--Samuel Hopkins, *Works*, vol. 2, p. 328.

Concerning the separation of the Presbyterian Church from Rome, Dr. Guthrie writes: "Three hundred years ago, our church, with an open Bible on her banner, and this motto, 'Search the Scriptures,' on her scroll, marched out from the gates of Rome." Then he asks the significant question: "*Did they come clean out of Babylon?*" --Thomas Guthrie, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, page 237.

"The Church of England," says Spurgeon, "seems to be eaten through and through with *sacramentarianism*; but nonconformity appears to be almost as badly riddled with *philosophical infidelity*. Those of whom we thought better things are turning aside one by one from the fundamentals of the faith. Through and through, I believe, the very heart of England is honeycombed with a *damnable infidelity* which dares still go into the pulpit and call itself Christian."

What was the origin of the great apostasy? How did the church first depart from the simplicity of the gospel? By conforming to the practices of paganism, to facilitate the acceptance of Christianity by the heathen. The apostle Paul declared, even in his day, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." 2 Thessalonians 2:7. During the lives of the apostles the church remained comparatively pure. But "toward the latter end of the second century most of the churches assumed a new form; the first simplicity disappeared, and insensibly, as the old disciples retired to their graves, their children, along with new converts, . . . came forward and new-modeled the cause." -- Robert Robinson, *Ecclesiastical Researches*, ch. 6, par. 17, p. 51. To secure converts, the exalted standard of the Christian faith was lowered, and as the result "a pagan flood, flowing into the church, carried with it its customs, practices, and idols." -- Gavazzi, *Lectures*, page 278. As the Christian religion secured the favor and support of secular rulers, it was nominally accepted by multitudes; but while in appearance Christians, many "remained in substance pagans, especially worshipping in secret their idols." -- *Ibid.*, page 278.

***Has not the same process been repeated in nearly every church calling itself Protestant?*** As the founders, those who possessed the true spirit of reform, pass away, their descendants come forward and "*new-model the cause.*" While blindly clinging to the creed of their fathers and refusing to accept any truth in advance of what they saw, the children of the reformers depart widely from their example of humility, self-denial, and renunciation of the world. Thus "the first simplicity disappears." A worldly flood, flowing into the church, carries "with it its customs, practices, and idols."

Alas, to what a fearful extent is that friendship of the world which is "enmity with God," now cherished among the professed followers of Christ! **How widely have the popular churches throughout Christendom departed from the Bible standard of humility, self-denial, simplicity, and godliness! ...**

A profession of religion has become popular with the world. Rulers, politicians, lawyers, doctors, merchants, join the church as a means of securing the respect and confidence of society, and advancing their own worldly interests. Thus they seek to cover all their unrighteous transactions under a profession of Christianity. The various religious bodies, re-enforced by the wealth and influence of these baptized worldlings, make a still higher bid for popularity and patronage. Splendid churches, embellished in the most extravagant manner, are erected on popular avenues. The worshipers array themselves in costly and fashionable attire. A high salary is paid for a talented minister to entertain and attract the people. His sermons must not touch popular sins, but be made smooth and pleasing for fashionable ears. Thus fashionable sinners are enrolled on the church records, and fashionable sins are concealed under a pretense of godliness. ...

Says Howard Crosby: "It is a matter of deep concern that we find Christ's church so little fulfilling the designs of its Lord. Just as the ancient Jews let a familiar intercourse with the idolatrous nations steal away their hearts from God, . . . so the church of Jesus now is, by its false partnerships with an unbelieving world, giving up the divine methods of its true life, and yielding itself to the pernicious, though often plausible, habits of a Christless society, using the arguments and reaching the conclusions which are foreign to the revelation of God, and directly antagonistic to all growth in grace." --*The Healthy Christian: An Appeal to the Church*, pages 141, 142. ...

***Apostasy, apostasy, apostasy***, is engraven on the very front of every church; and did they know it, and did they feel it, there might be hope; but, alas! they cry, 'We are rich, and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing.'" --*Second Advent Library*, tract No. 39.

The great sin charged against Babylon is that she "made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." This cup of intoxication which she presents to the world represents the false doctrines that she has accepted as the result of her unlawful connection with the great ones of the earth. Friendship with the world corrupts her faith, and in her turn she exerts a corrupting influence upon the world by teaching doctrines which are opposed to the plainest statements of Holy Writ. ...

When faithful teachers expound the word of God, there arise men of learning, ministers professing to understand the Scriptures, ***who denounce sound doctrine as heresy***, and thus turn away inquirers after truth. Were it not that the world is hopelessly intoxicated with the wine of Babylon, multitudes would be convicted and converted by the plain, cutting truths of the word of God. But religious faith appears so confused and discordant that the people know not what to believe as truth. ***The sin of the world's impenitence lies at the door of the church.***

The second angel's message of Revelation 14 was first preached in the summer of 1844, and it then had a more direct application to the churches of the United States, where the warning of the judgment had been most widely proclaimed and most generally rejected, and where the declension in the churches had been most rapid. But the message of the second angel did not reach its complete fulfillment in 1844. The churches then experienced a moral fall, in consequence of their refusal of the light of the advent message; but that fall was not complete. As they have continued to reject the special truths for this time they have fallen lower and lower. Not yet, however, can it be said that "Babylon is fallen,... because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." She has not yet made all nations do this. The spirit of world conforming and indifference to the testing truths for our time exists and has been gaining ground in churches of the Protestant faith in all the countries of Christendom; and these churches are included in the solemn and terrible denunciation of the second angel. ***But the work of apostasy has not yet reached its culmination.*** ...

Not until this condition shall be reached, and the union of the church with the world shall be fully accomplished throughout Christendom, will the fall of Babylon be complete. The change is a progressive one, and the perfect fulfillment of Revelation

14:8 is yet future. GC 381-389 (emphasis supplied; compare also the sins of Babylon with those of Laodicea mentioned in EW 226-228; 120,121; 107-114; 273-276).

## 9. Satan's attack on the Church

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**But we still must listen to those men who have to carry responsibilities, because God is leading His church, isn't He?**

EGW: "The inconsistency of centering so many responsibilities in Battle Creek has been presented many times, but the counsels have not been acted upon. The reproofs and warnings from the Lord have been evaded and interpreted and made void by the devices of men. There has been counterworking against God, and the judgment of men has been received. TM 319.

"I have been shown that it is a mistake to suppose that the men in positions of special responsibility at Battle Creek [at that time the seat of the GC, the editors] have wisdom which is far superior to that of ordinary men. Those who think that they have, supposing them to have divine enlightenment, rely upon the human judgment of these men, taking their counsel as the voice of God. But this is not safe; for unless men are wholly consecrated to God, Satan will work through them to impart that knowledge which will not be for the present and eternal good of those who hear. TM 374.

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**Can Satan obtain the leadership in the church? That sounds real absurd, because God would never let something like this happen!**

EGW: "October 2, 1868, I was shown the state of God's professed people. Many of them were in great darkness, yet seemed to be insensible of their true condition. **The sensibilities of a large number seemed to be benumbed in regard to spiritual and eternal things, while their minds seemed all awake to their worldly interests. Many were cherishing idols in their hearts and were practicing iniquity which separated them from God and caused them to be bodies of darkness.** ... And Satan exults at his success in controlling the minds of so many who profess to be Christians. He has deceived them, benumbed their sensibilities, and planted his hellish banner right in their midst, and they are so completely deceived that they know not that it is he. **The people have not erected graven images, yet their sin is no less in the sight of God. They love the things of this world, and have fellowship with the works of darkness. They have pleasure in unrighteousness. They have not love toward God nor love for their neighbors. They are idolaters, and are worse, far worse, in the sight of God than the heathen, graven-image worshipers who have no knowledge of a better way.** ...

"Like ancient Israel the church has dishonored her God by departing from the light, neglecting her duties, and abusing her high and exalted privilege of being peculiar and holy in character. Her members have violated their covenant to live for God and Him only. They have joined with the selfish and world-loving. Pride, the love of pleasure, and sin have been cherished, and Christ has departed. His Spirit has been quenched in the church. Satan works side by side with professed Christians; yet they are so destitute of spiritual discernment that they do not detect him. 2T 439-442.

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**And I always thought we could rely on the fact that God was working through leading brethren! Is it really possible that Satan is using them, and do we have parallels for this in the Advent history?**

EGW: "The perils of the last days are upon us. Satan takes the control of every mind that is not decidedly under the control of the Spirit of God. Some have been cultivating hatred against the men whom God has commissioned to bear a special message to the world. They began this satanic work at Minneapolis. ... They opened their hearts to the enemy of God and man. Yet these men have been holding positions of trust, and have been molding the work after their own similitude, as far as they possibly could. ... TM 79.

"The men who close their eyes to the divine light are ignorant, deplorably ignorant, both of the Scriptures and of the power of God. The Holy Spirit's working is not agreeable to them, and they attribute its manifestations to fanaticism. They rebel against the light, and do all they can to shut it out, calling darkness light and light darkness. ... They are cherishing a love of darkness; and just as long as these Christless souls are retained in positions of responsibility the cause of God is imperiled. They are in danger of fastening themselves so firmly with the dark leader of all rebellion that they will never see light; and the longer they are retained the more hopeless is their chance of receiving Christ or of having a knowledge of the true God. How uncertain they make everything that is spiritual and progressive in the truth! Under the influence of their leader they become more and more determined to work against Christ. TM 284,285.

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**Am I right to say that our leading brethren cannot plan and decide as they want to, because when they do not cooperate with God, Satan is using them as his agents?**

EGW: "God cannot give His wisdom to men who look upon their position as sufficient excuse for turning from Bible principles to their own finite judgment, as if a position in the work of the Lord gave them liberty of speech, and power to pass resolutions and devise plans and methods that are not in accordance with God's will. ... It rests wholly with the man himself to prove whether he will work himself, which means that Satan will work him, or whether he will be worked by the Holy Spirit. TM 288 (cp. also DA 415).

"[writing from Australia, the editors] Oh, if I could have the joyful news that the will and minds of those in Battle Creek who have stood professedly as leaders, were emancipated from the teachings and slavery of Satan, whose captives they have been for so long, I would be willing to cross the broad Pacific to see your faces once more. But I am not anxious to see you with enfeebled perceptions and clouded minds because you have chosen darkness rather than light. TM 395.

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**Does Satan have a special interest in working through ministers?**

EGW: "The men called to the ministry should not be made idols of; they should not be looked upon with superstitious reverence; and because of the power vested in them through their office, sin in them should not lose its offensiveness. Their very office makes sin in them more exceedingly sinful, for in committing sin they make themselves the ministers of sin, the

agents of Satan, through whom he can work with success to perpetuate sin. All should bear in mind that *Satan's special efforts are directed against the ministry*. TM 404 (emphasis supplied).

## 1) Lording over God's people

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### What is Satan's intention concerning the church?

[Note: We advise our readers here and also in all the other places to look up the quotations and read them in their context. Especially the quotes from Testimonies to Ministers, pp. 310 ff. should be read in their entirety, as Ellen White is **not** talking in general terms here, but rather talks directly about the SDA church.]

EGW: "Satan's methods tend to one end--to make men the slaves of men. TM 361.

"He works to restrict religious liberty, and to bring into the religious world a species of slavery. Organizations, institutions, unless kept by the power of God, will work under Satan's dictation to bring men under the control of men; and fraud and guile will bear the semblance of zeal for truth and for the advancement of the kingdom of God. TM 365.

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### How is this to be seen among us?

EGW: "The high-handed power that has been developed, as though position has made men gods, makes me afraid, and ought to cause fear. It is a curse wherever and by whomsoever it is exercised. This lording it over God's heritage will create such a disgust of man's jurisdiction that a state of insubordination will result. ... Age after age Jesus has been delivering His goods to His church. At the time of the first advent of Christ to our world, the men who composed the Sanhedrin exercised their authority in controlling men according to their will. Thus the souls whom Christ had given His life to free from the bondage of Satan were brought under bondage to him in another form. TM 361.

"The trials of the children of Israel, and their attitude just before the first coming of Christ, have been presented before me again and again to illustrate the position of the people of God in their experience before the second coming of Christ. RH, February 18, 1890 (see also 1SM 406; 1888 533).

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### In the Roman-Catholic church Satan uses a hierarchical leadership to lead many through the instrumentality of a few into his bondage. Is the use of satanic methods like these also to be seen in the Adventist Church?

EGW: "His methods are practiced even among Seventh-day Adventists, who claim to have advanced truth. TM 365.

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### Does that mean that hierarchical ruling is practiced even among us?

EGW: "The spirit of domination is extending to the presidents of our conferences. TM 362.

"Those who are enjoined to represent the attributes of the Lord's character, step from the Bible platform, and in their own human judgment devise rules and resolutions to force the will of others. The devisings for forcing men to follow the prescriptions of other men are instituting an order of things that overrides sympathy and tender compassion, that blinds the eyes to mercy, justice, and the love of God. Moral influence and personal responsibility are trodden underfoot. ... Men think they are representing the justice of God, but they do not represent His tenderness and the great love wherewith He has loved us. Their human invention originating with the specious devices of Satan, appears fair enough to the blinded eyes of men, because it is inherent in their nature. A lie, believed, practiced, becomes a truth to them. Thus the purpose of the satanic agencies is accomplished, that men should reach these conclusions through the working of their own inventive minds. TM 363,364.

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### That seems to be not very different from Roman-Catholicism ...

EGW: "When men who profess to serve God ignore His parental character and depart from honor and righteousness in dealing with their fellowmen, Satan exults, for he has inspired them with his attributes. They are following in the track of Romanism. TM 362.

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### So God criticizes an organizational structure in which the whole work is controlled from top down. But you told us that the general conference is "the voice of the highest authority the Lord has upon the earth." (3T 492; 1875). But that means that we have to obey this voice of God, even though it may be organized hierarchically!

EGW: "Much pride and loftiness and a spirit which desires to rule has been manifested, ... Human inventions and human plans are eclipsing sacred things, and excluding divine instruction. Men are taking the place of God by seeking to assume authority over their fellowmen. ... *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 that the heart of the work is being diseased and corrupted at Battle Creek. Many of the people are in a lethargic, listless, apathetic condition, and assent to plans which they do not understand. Where is the voice, from whence will it come, to whom the people may listen, knowing that it comes from the true shepherd. I am called upon by the Spirit of God to present these things before you, and they are correct to the life, according to the practice of the past few years.* 1888 1558/1559,1568 [letter to GC-president O.A. Olsen; emphasis supplied].

"Let those in America who suppose the voice of the General Conference to be the voice of God, become one with God before they utter their opinions. 13MR 291.

"Men who have not learned to submit themselves to the control and discipline of God, are not competent to train the youth, to deal with human minds. It is just as much an impossibility for them to do this work as it would be for them to make a world. That these men should stand in a sacred place, to be as the voice of God to the people, as we once believed the General Conference to be, -- that is past. 1888 1745.

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**So no one of the leading brethren is allowed to control the missionary works of anyone?**

EGW: "Now, it has been Satan's determined purpose to eclipse the view of Jesus and lead men to look to man, and trust to man, and be educated to expect help from man. TM 93.

"Let not men prescribe laws to take the place of God's law. Never educate men to look to men, to trust in men; for man's wisdom is not sufficient to decide as to their right to engage in the Lord's work. When God lays a work upon individuals, men are not to reject His sanction. God must not be impeded in the working out of His plans by man's interference, but *this has been done again and again*. If the church on earth is to resemble a temple, let it be built according to the pattern shown in heaven and not according to man's genius. The invention of man often counteracts the working out of God's plans. The golden measuring rod has not been placed in the hands of any finite man or any class of men, whatever their position or calling, but is in the hand of the heavenly Architect. If men will not meddle with God's plan, and will let Him work upon minds and characters, building them up according to His plan, a work will be accomplished that will stand through the severest of trials. TM 209 (emphasis supplied).

"... we should be quick to comprehend that we are to guard against leaving the work given us in order that we may interfere with other human agencies who are doing a work not precisely the same as our own. *To no man has been assigned the work of interfering with the work of one of his fellow laborers, trying to take it in hand himself; for he would so handle it that he would spoil it*. To one God gives a work different from the work that He gives another. TM 494,495 (emphasis supplied).

Take your hands off the work, and do not hold it fast in your grasp. You are not the only man whom God will use. Give the Lord room to use the talents He has entrusted to men, in order that the cause may grow. Give the Lord a chance to use men's minds. ... Do not stand in the way of the advancement of the work, but let the Lord work by whom He will. ... How my heart aches to see presidents of conferences taking the burden of selecting those whom they think they can mold to work with them in the field. They take those who will not differ with them, but will act like mere machines. No president has any right to do this. TM 303,304.

"... when men in any line of God's work seek to bring the minds and talents of the Lord's human agents under their control, they have assumed a jurisdiction over their fellowmen that they cannot maintain without injustice and iniquity. The Lord has placed no man as judge, either of the pen or the voice of God's workmen. TM 293.

"[Paul] realized that the church must never be brought under the control of human power. *The traditions and maxims of men must not take the place of revealed truth*. The advance of the gospel message must not be hindered by the prejudices and preferences of men, whatever might be their position in the church. AA 199,200.

"But the Holy Spirit will, from time to time, reveal the truth through its own chosen agencies; and no man, not even a priest or ruler, has a right to say, You shall not give publicity to your opinions, because I do not believe them. TM 70.

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**Does this mean that leaders cannot act in God's work as is pleasing to themselves?**

EGW: "A strange thing has come into our churches. Men who are placed in positions of responsibility that they may be wise helpers to their fellow workers have come to suppose that they were set as kings and rulers in the churches, to say to one brother, Do this; to another, Do that; and to another, Be sure to labor in such and such a way. There have been places where the workers have been told that if they did not follow the instruction of these men of responsibility, their pay from the conference would be withheld. ... *God has appointed no man to be conscience for his fellowman. It is not wise to lay so much responsibility upon an officer that he will feel that he is forced to become a dictator*. TM 477.

"It is not in the order of God that any man, or any class of men, should assume that God has made them conscience for their brethren, or put forth their finite hand in a patronizing manner to control the Lord's delegated workers, thus endangering the safety of the Lord's heritage as well as their own, and retarding the work of God. TM 208,209 (cp. also TM 295,349,495).

1 Peter 5:2-5: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; *Neither as being lords over God's heritage*, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

EGW: "The Lord has not placed any one of His human agencies under the dictation and control of those who are themselves but erring mortals. He has not placed upon men the power to say, You shall do this, and you shall not do that. . . . "No man is a proper judge of another man's duty. Man is responsible to God; and as finite, erring men take into their hands the jurisdiction of their fellowmen, as if the Lord commissioned them to lift up and cast down, all heaven is filled with indignation. There are strange principles being established in regard to the control of the minds and works of men, by human judges, as though these finite men were gods. . . . *Organizations, institutions, unless kept by the power of God, will work under Satan's dictation to bring men under the control of men; and fraud and guile will bear the semblance of zeal for truth, and for the advancement of the kingdom of God*. . . . TM 493,494 (emphasis supplied; cp. also TM 347,348).

"I was shown that the follies of Israel in the days of Samuel will be repeated among the people of God today unless there is greater humility, less confidence in self, and more trust in the Lord God of Israel, the Ruler of the people. TM 464.

1 Samuel 8:5-7,19,20: Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. ... Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

1 Samuel 12:17: I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king.

Matthew 23:8: ... all ye are brethren.

Matthew 11:12: And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

Luke 22:25,26: And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

EGW: "The error that some are in danger of committing is in giving to the mind and judgment of one man, or of a small group of men, the full measure of authority and influence that God has vested in His church in the judgment and voice of the General Conference assembled to plan for the prosperity and advancement of His work. When this power, which God has placed in the church, is accredited wholly to one man, and he is invested with the authority to be judgment for other minds, then the true Bible order is changed. Satan's efforts upon such a man's mind would be most subtle and sometimes well-nigh overpowering, for the enemy would hope that through his mind he could affect many others. Let us give to the highest organized authority in the church that which we are prone to give to one man or to a small group of men. 9T 261.

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**What is to be done with someone who makes his will the ruling power in the church?**

EGW: "The spirit of domination is extending to the presidents of our conferences. If a man is sanguine of his own powers and seeks to exercise dominion over his brethren, feeling that he is invested with authority to make his will the ruling power, *the best and only safe course is to remove him*, lest great harm be done and he lose his own soul and imperil the souls of others. TM 362 (emphasis supplied).

"Will we ever realize that the consciences of men are not given into our command? If you have appointed committees to do the work which has been going on for years in Battle Creek, dismiss them; and remember that God, the infinite God, has not placed men in any such positions as they occupied at Minneapolis, and have occupied since then. TM 295.

## **m) Self-supporting missionary groups**

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**But missionary work has to be controlled, mustn't it? It is not good to found small missionary groups everywhere!**

EGW: "The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members, but for unbelievers. If in one place there are only two or three who know the truth, let them form themselves into a band of workers. 7T 21,22.

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**Well, but a missionary has to be paid by the church! There mustn't be independent ministers!**

EGW: "Self-supporting missionaries are often very successful. Beginning in a small, humble way, their work enlarges as they move forward under the guidance of the Spirit of God. Let two or more start out together in evangelistic work. They may not receive any particular encouragement from those at the head of the work that they will be given financial support; nevertheless let them go forward, praying, singing, teaching, living the truth. 7T 23.

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**Well, but think about the tracts that are handed out by those self-supporting missionary groups for a moment. They are criticized by our leading brethren and many church members, because it's not the right method!**

EGW: "As the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me, I seemed to be present in one of your councils. One of your number rose; his manner was very decided and earnest as he held up a paper before you. I could read plainly the heading of the paper; it was the American Sentinel. Criticisms were then passed upon the paper and the *character of the articles* therein published. Those in council pointed to *certain passages*, declaring that this must be cut out, and that must be changed. Strong words were uttered in criticism of the *methods* of the paper, and a strong, un-Christlike spirit prevailed. Voices were decided and defiant. My guide gave me words of warning and reproof to speak to those who took part in this proceeding, who were not slow to utter their accusations and condemnation. TM 469 (emphasis supplied).

"Men can become just as were the Pharisees – wide-awake to condemn the greatest teacher that the world ever knew. ... There are those who are today doing the very same things. In their counsels they venture to pronounce judgment upon the work of God; for they have become trained in doing that which the Lord has never required them to do. They would better humble their own hearts before God, and keep their hands off the ark of God, lest the wrath of God shall break forth upon them; for if God has ever spoken by me, I testify that they have undertaken a work in criticizing and pronouncing unsound judgment which I know is not right. They are but finite men and, being befogged themselves, suppose that other men are in error. But these men who presume to judge others should take a little broader view and say, Suppose the statements of others do not agree with our ideas; shall we for this pronounce them heresy? Shall we, uninspired men, take the responsibility of placing our stakes, and saying, This shall not appear in print? TM 294,295.

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**That would mean that there are leading brethren who fight against God, just because they expect the workings of God in another way or want to tell God how to act! How is this going to develop when the latter rain will start to fall?**

EGW: "There is to be in the churches a wonderful manifestation of the power of God, but it will not move upon those who have not humbled themselves before the Lord, and opened the door of the heart by confession and repentance. In the manifestation of that power which lightens the earth with the glory of God [cp. Revelation 18:1, the editors], they will see only something which in their blindness they think dangerous, something which will arouse their fears, and they will brace themselves to resist it. Because the Lord does not work according to their ideas and expectations, they will oppose the work. "Why," they say, "should not we know the Spirit of God, when we have been in the work so many years?" – Because they did

not respond to the warnings, the entreaties of the messages of God, but persistently said, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." RH, December 23, 1890.

"Unless those who can help ... are aroused to a sense of their duty, they will not recognize the work of God when the loud cry of the third angel shall be heard. When light goes forth to lighten the earth, instead of coming up to the help of the Lord, they will want to bind about His work to meet their narrow ideas. Let me tell you that the Lord will work in this last work in a manner very much out of the common order of things, and in a way that will be contrary to any human planning. There will be those among us who will always want to control the work of God, to dictate even what movements shall be made when the work goes forward under the direction of the angel who joins the third angel in the message to be given to the world. God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands. The workers will be surprised by the simple means that He will use to bring about and perfect His work of righteousness. TM 300.

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**I've often heard such lay missionary workers being called extremists and fanatics ...**

EGW: "I would speak in warning to those who have stood for years resisting light and cherishing the spirit of opposition. How long will you hate and despise the messengers of God's righteousness? God has given them His message. They bear the word of the Lord. There is salvation for you, but only through the merits of Jesus Christ. The grace of the Holy Spirit has been offered you again and again. Light and power from on high have been shed abundantly in the midst of you. Here was evidence, that all might discern whom the Lord recognized as His servants. But there are those who despised the men and the message they bore. They have taunted them with being *fanatics*, *extremists*, and *enthusiasts*. Let me prophesy unto you: Unless you speedily humble your hearts before God, and confess your sins, which are many, you will, when it is too late, see that *you have been fighting against God*. Through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, no longer unto reformation and pardon, you will see that these men whom you have spoken against have been as signs in the world, as witnesses for God. Then you would give the whole world if you could redeem the past, and be just such zealous men, moved by the Spirit of God to lift your voice in solemn warning to the world; and, like them, to be in principle firm as a rock. Your turning things upside down is known of the Lord. Go on a little longer as you have gone, in rejection of the light from heaven, and you are lost. "The man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation." TM 96,97 (to GC president O.A. Olsen; emphasis supplied).

"Now is our time of peril. Our only safety is in walking in the footsteps of Christ, and wearing his yoke. Troublous times are before us. In many instances, friends will become alienated. Without cause men will become our enemies. The motives of the people of God will be misinterpreted, not only by the world, *but by their own brethren*. The Lord's servants will be put in hard places. A mountain will be made of a molehill to justify men in pursuing a selfish, unrighteous course. The work that men have done faithfully will be disparaged and underrated, because apparent prosperity does not attend their efforts. By misrepresentation these men will be clothed in dark vestments of dishonesty because circumstances beyond their control made their work perplexing. They will be pointed to as men that can not be trusted. *And this will be done by members of the church*. God's servants must arm themselves with the mind of Christ. They must not expect to escape insult and misjudgment. They will be called *enthusiasts* and *fanatics*. But let them not become discouraged. God's hands are on the wheel of his providence, guiding his work to the glory of his name. SpM 370 (emphasis supplied).

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**Does the Lord work also through the agency of such lay members who don't even have a theological education?**

EGW: "As the time comes for it [the message of the third angel; the editors] to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service. The laborers will be *qualified rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions*. ... The sins of Babylon will be laid open. The fearful results of enforcing the observances of the church by civil authority, the inroads of spiritualism, the stealthy but rapid progress of the papal power--all will be unmasked. GC 606 (emphasis supplied).

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**Those lay groups may do a good work, but the methods they use can really not be approved!**

EGW: "While some have worked intently, and have manifested unflinching energy, others have stood as spectators, and have been ready to make *remarks of a critical character as to methods and results*. This they are ready to do, though they have never exercised their minds in originating any plans whereby precious souls might be saved for Christ. They stand ready to find fault with those who do something.

## 10. Fruits

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**What do we have to do if we want to be a part of the church that will be saved?**

Matthew 3:8: Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

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**But why should I repent? I'm already baptized and keep the Sabbath and don't do anything real bad!**

EGW: "Many are deceived as to their true condition before God. They congratulate themselves upon the wrong acts which they do not commit, and forget to enumerate the good and noble deeds which God requires of them, but which they have neglected to perform. It is not enough that they are trees in the garden of God. They are to answer His expectation by bearing fruit. He holds them accountable for their failure to accomplish all the good which they could have done, through His grace strengthening them. GC 601.

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**Does that mean profession is not enough if we don't have fruit?**

EGW: "By their fruits ye shall know them. Not their profession, but the fruit they bear, shows the character of the tree. Many have a form of godliness, their names are upon the church records; but they have a spotted record in heaven. The recording angel has faithfully written their deeds. Every selfish act, every wrong word, every unfulfilled duty, and every secret sin, with every artful dissembling, is faithfully chronicled in the book of records kept by the recording angel.



Very many who profess to be servants of Christ are none of His. They are deceiving their souls to their own destruction. While they profess to be servants of Christ, they are not living in obedience to His will. ... Many, while professing to be servants of Christ, *are obeying another master*, working daily against the Master whom they profess to serve. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." 2T 442 (emphasis supplied).

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**Well, it is not so that we don't have fruits! What does God expect us to do more? We cannot be perfect, can we?**

Matthew 5:48: Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

EGW: "God *requires* perfection of His children. COL 315 (emphasis supplied).

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**Does perfection really mean putting away every sin?**

EGW: "All our sins must be put away. Every darling indulgence that hinders our spiritual progress must be cut off. The right eye or the right hand must be sacrificed, if it causes us to offend. MYP 56.

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**But why? One is not lost just because of such minor things!?**

EGW: "We may flatter ourselves that we are free from many things of which others are guilty; but if we have some strong points of character, and but one weak point, there is yet a communion between sin and the soul. The heart is divided in its service, and says, "Some of self and some of Thee." The child of God must search out the sin which he has petted and indulged himself in, and permit God to cut it out of his heart. He must overcome that one sin; for it is not a trifling matter in the sight of God. MYP 91.

"The longest chain is composed of separate links. If one of these links is faulty, the chain is worthless. Thus it is with character. A well-balanced character is formed by single acts well performed. *One defect*, cultivated instead of being overcome, makes the man imperfect, and closes against him the gate of the Holy City. He who enters heaven must have a character that is without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Naught that defileth can ever enter there. In all the redeemed host not one defect will be seen. MYP 144 (emphasis supplied).

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**But to reach character perfection is not easy! Will God help us in this fight and what is our work to do in it?**

EGW: "But Christ has given us no assurance that to attain perfection of character is an easy matter. A noble, all-round character is not inherited. It does not come to us by accident. A noble character is earned by individual effort through the merits and grace of Christ. God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character. It is formed by hard, stern battles with self. Conflict after conflict must be waged against hereditary tendencies. We shall have to criticize ourselves closely, and allow not one unfavorable trait to remain uncorrected. COL 331.

"The heavenly intelligences will work with the human agent who seeks with determined faith that perfection of character which will reach out to perfection in action. To everyone engaged in this work Christ says, I am at your right hand to help you. As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings. COL 332,333.

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**I've tried that very often, but I can't overcome!**

EGW: "Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character. If you come to this decision, you will certainly fail of obtaining everlasting life. The impossibility lies in your own will. If you will not, then you can not overcome. The real difficulty arises from the corruption of an un sanctified heart, and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God. ... Remember that you will never reach a higher standard than you yourself set. Then set your mark high, and step by step, even though it be by painful effort, by self-denial and sacrifice, ascend the whole length of the ladder of progress. Let nothing hinder you. COL 331,332.

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**Isn't that a bit exaggerated? Who of God's servants is perfect?**

EGW: "In each true-hearted endeavor to work out His plan, He chooses His agents not because they are perfect but because, through a connection with Him, they may gain perfection. COL 330.

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**I believe God will accept me into heaven as I am.**

EGW: "God will accept only those who are determined to aim high. He places every human agent under obligation to do his best. Moral perfection is *required* of all. Never should we lower the standard of righteousness in order to accommodate inherited or cultivated tendencies to wrong-doing. We need to understand that *imperfection of character is sin*. All righteous attributes of character dwell in God as a perfect, harmonious whole, and every one who receives Christ as a personal Saviour is privileged to possess these attributes. And those who would be workers together with God must strive for perfection of every organ of the body and quality of the mind. COL 330 (emphasis supplied).

"If we ever enter the kingdom of God, we must enter with perfect characters, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. ... *It rests with us to decide whether he shall control our hearts and minds, or whether we shall have a place in the new earth, a title to Abraham's farm.* MYP 105.

"Here are the conditions upon which every soul will be elected to eternal life. Your obedience to God's commandments will prove your right to an inheritance with the saints in light. God has elected a certain excellence of character; and every one who, through the grace of Christ, shall reach the standard of his requirement, will have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of glory. CE 118

"To neglect to comply with the conditions of salvation is to choose a character of defection and sin, wholly unlike the character of Christ. ST, January 5, 1891

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**Up to now I was told that we are to labor and toil till the end, but that we'll sin right to the end. Only when Jesus comes our sinning will be stopped.**

EGW: "We are preparing to meet Him who, escorted by a retinue of holy angels, is to appear in the clouds of heaven to give the faithful and the just the finishing touch of immortality. When He comes He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects in our characters, or to cure us of the infirmities of our tempers and dispositions. *If wrought for us at all*, this work will all be accomplished before that time. When the Lord comes, those who are holy will be holy still. Those who have preserved their bodies and spirits in holiness, in sanctification and honor, will then receive the finishing touch of immortality. But those who are unjust, unsanctified, and filthy will remain so forever. *No work will then be done for them to remove their defects and give them holy characters.* The Refiner does not then sit to pursue His refining process and remove their sins and their corruption. This is all to be done *in these hours of probation*. It is *now* that this work is to be accomplished for us. 2T 355 (emphasis supplied).

"But if we despise and neglect these appointments and privileges, God will not work a miracle to save any of us, and we will be lost as were Judas and Satan. Do not think that God will work a miracle to save those weak souls who cherish evil, who practice sin; or that some supernatural element will be brought into their lives, lifting them out of self into a higher sphere, where it will be comparatively easy work, without any special effort, any special fighting, without any crucifixion of self; because all who dally on Satan's ground for this to be done will perish with the evildoers. They will be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy. TM 453.

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**How comes, then, I was taught that we will sin till the second coming of Christ?**

Through defects in the character, Satan works to gain control of the whole mind, and he knows that if these defects are cherished, he will succeed. Therefore he is constantly seeking to deceive the followers of Christ with his fatal sophistry that it is impossible for them to overcome. ... Let none, then, regard their defects as incurable. God will give faith and grace to overcome them. GC 489.

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**When God wants individuals to be perfect, is the same also true for the church?**

Ephesians 5:25-27: Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

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**What is the logical conclusion, then? That everyone who is not willing to lay aside every sin doesn't belong to God's church?**

Luke 14:33: So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

EGW: "But these slavish bands must be broken; the flesh must be crucified with the affections and lusts. We cannot be half the Lord's and half the world's. *We are not God's people unless we are such entirely.* Every weight, every besetting sin, must be laid aside. 5T 83 (emphasis supplied).

Revelation 3:19,20,22: As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock... He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.