

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND

Joe Crews 1985

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Reaping the WHIRLWIND

The author of *CREEPING COMPROMISE* has now written another book for Seventh-day Adventists only. Drawing on the insight gained from thirty-seven years of experience as pastor, missionary and evangelist, Joe Crews fearlessly exposes the causes and consequences of the theological crisis in the church today.

For many, *REAPING THE WHIRLWIND* may be more shocking than *CREEPING COMPROMISE*, but few will disagree with its conclusions.

This book, written by a minister of unquestioned loyalty, honors the remnant church but still dares to tell the painful truth about apostasy in the pulpit. If it makes you wake up and weep over the tragedy it portrays, let it also direct you to the True Witness for the revival and reformation that has been promised.

1. LAODICEA - AN UNHOLY MIXTURE

Have you ever been on the horns of a dilemma? That's where I am right this moment. For the past thirty-eight years I have been preaching this beautiful message, and calling people into the joys of the family of Christ. No work could be more satisfying or rewarding. The last twenty years have been spent in full-time evangelism, and God has graciously given me 200 souls per year for His kingdom, just from my public crusades. What a thrill it has been to watch the Spirit of God transform the lives of those whom He has led into the meetings! Thousands of others have been won by the Amazing Facts literature and radio-TV outreach. I expect to be doing this work until Jesus comes.

But let's return to my dilemma. I am puzzled about what to do for those who are members of the remnant church. Most of my ministry has been directed toward public evangelism, and winning new people to the truth.

Only one out of the thirty-six books I have

authored is directed to Seventh-day Adventists in particular. All the others are especially written to reach the general public with the great doctrinal and prophetic messages which we hold dear. Obviously, in this book I am addressing myself in particular to those who already are in the church, and who are committed to it just as I am.

My crusade appointments have taken me into hundreds of churches where I have had the opportunity to make friends with many thousands of our faithful people in the United States and Canada. It has been a heartwarming experience. Naturally, I have also been able to observe firsthand many of the spiritual problems which the grass-roots membership are struggling to overcome. My heart goes out to them. There are no better people in the world than those who belong to this last-day church of prophecy. Neither is there any group whom Satan hates with such intensity. He is angry with the woman and her seed, because they keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus.

Even though the book of Revelation identifies our church as the “remnant,” it also applies another name to it in the context of the seven prophetic churches. The last one before Christ returns is given the significant title of “Laodicea.” We have never denied our historical relationship to this final manifestation of God’s called out people. At the same time, we have not been very eager to accept the characterization so vividly depicted by the apostle John. He described this church as a strange mixture of flesh and spirit. Apparently blinded by its compromising posture, it seems unable to recognize the true nature of its nauseous, lukewarm state.

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. 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: 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.” Revelation 3:15-18.

How fortunate we are to have this divine preview of the special snare Satan will use against us in these last days. We have not only been forewarned; we have also been assured of God’s willingness to provide the divine remedy for this potentially fatal condition. He offers eyesalve to overcome the blindness, white raiment to overcome the nakedness, and gold to overcome the poverty. In other words, no one really needs to remain lukewarm and Laodicean. Says the True Witness:

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 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.” Revelation 3:19, 20.

The most exciting thing I see in these verses is that God loves Laodicea, even though she is self-deceived and divided in her loyalty. He pleads with her to turn back and accept His solution for all her ills. In plain, simple language He says, “Repent, and open the door for me to come into your heart.” Here we find the buying power to obtain all the prescriptions for a total recovery. The person of Jesus, received into the heart, will bring righteousness, faith, and the Holy Spirit. Those who were wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked now enter into an overcoming experience that leads them at last to sit side by side with the Father on His throne. What a prospect!

Please take note that the Laodicean message is a call to “repent” and “open the door” to Jesus. But what are we to repent of? Obviously those who are deep into this paralyzing predicament do not even recognize that they are sinning. They claim to be rich and in need of nothing! Lukewarm water causes one to

relax and become lethargic. Laodiceans are oblivious to their desperate and lost condition. “And knowest not that thou art wretched . . . and blind, and naked.” Revelation 3:17. That’s the real problem with Laodicea. She really can’t see. The most tragic thing about the worldly state of the church is that she doesn’t recognize her own miserable plight. She is comfortable with the way things are going. Platitudes and generalizations roll over the ears of Laodiceans without making the tiniest impression. Books and articles have also been written about the need to repent of this loathsome attitude which God detests. Yet, we see the situation almost growing worse. Why? Why hasn’t the message been heeded? I’ve analyzed many of the appeals in our publications, and they are wonderfully presented. But as I studied deeper, I discovered that almost none of them spelled out what to repent of. Suddenly it became clear to me why there was little response. Those eloquent appeals to turn from sin bring no response because Laodiceans cannot see. They are incapable of discerning sin. Vague terms like “sin” do not really register with them. They need to have sin defined, described, and delineated. We have assumed too often that the Holy Spirit will take over and teach the details if we just provide the general appeals.

I searched deeper into the Spirit of Prophecy and discovered that Sister White brought some of the strongest rebukes against those who would not boldly give the straight testimony and call sin by its right name. It was then that I began to realize that in these final probationary moments, God is depending on watchmen to blow a trumpet of warning in such clear notes that not even a blind, sleepy Laodicean can fail to get the message. When people are half asleep, it often requires much more stimulation to shake them back to full reality.

Just how serious is the Laodicean condition? And how important is the work of arousing the sleeping saints?

Sister White wrote:

“The testimony of the True Witness has not been half heeded. The solemn testimony upon which the destiny of the church hangs has been lightly esteemed, if not entirely disregarded. This testimony must work deep repentance, and all who truly receive it, will obey it and be purified.” Testimonies, Vol. 1, p. 181.

Surely we need no stronger words than these to impress us with the necessity of properly understanding the message. The urgency of the repeated call to “cry aloud and spare not” and “call sin by its right name” indicates that a very pointed testimony is to be borne to the church.

What does it mean to call sin by its right name? Does it mean to declare boldly that adultery is a sin, stealing is a sin, etc.? If so, then every Adventist pastor around the world has been faithfully preaching the Laodicean message throughout our history. Yet Sister White declared that in her day such pastors were “few indeed.” (Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 300.) Is it any better in our day? Is the straight testimony being presented throughout the church? If it is, why hasn’t the shaking occurred long ago? She said, “Some will rise up against it, and this is what will cause a shaking among God’s people.” Early Writings, p. 270.

Let’s face it. No one is rising up in the church against ministers who identify adultery as a sin, lying as a sin, and Sabbath-breaking as a sin. No one will do it, either. It is expected by everyone in the church that watchmen will preach against such activities and will label them as evil.

Is it not obvious to all of us that the reason for many “rising up” against the straight testimony of the Laodicean message is because it not only defines sin, but relates sin directly with those in the church who are committing it? Wrote the servant of God:

“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. . . . Let the truth cut. 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." *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 2, pp. 284, 285.

The true message to Laodicea will boldly declare that sins are being committed by the church members, and even by the institutions of the church. "Unless these evils which bring the displeasure of God are corrected in its members, the whole church stands accountable for them." *Review and Herald*, December 23, 1890,

"Oh, if ever a temple upon earth needed purifying, the institutions in Battle Creek need it now! 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. . . . 'Cry aloud, spare not, . . . show My people their transgression.' *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 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 Sanhedrin because their religion consisted in forms. . . . He spoke to Herod in regard to his marriage with Herodias, saying, It is not lawful for thee to have her. . . . The message we bear must be as direct as was the message of John. He rebuked kings for their iniquity. He rebuked the adultery of Herod." *Selected Messages*, Bk. 2, pp. 149-151.

I do not doubt that some will complain that they are not comfortable with this book. No one has ever said that the Laodicean message is to make people comfortable. If it were possible to trim it and refine it until all were comfortable with it, it would no longer be the straight testimony to Laodicea. The prophecy

is that "some will rise up against it."

Does this mean that the true message of God for this time will be divisive? Indeed, the effect of such a straight 'testimony will cause a separation among the professed people of God.

Listen to this:

"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.'" *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 676.

But now I am brought back to the horns of my dilemma. How does one speak so boldly about specific sins in the church without being accused of attacking the church? After all, there are scores of snipers on the outside (and a few on the inside) who spend all their time fighting the brethren and criticizing the leadership. Of course, the true Laodicean message must be given from within the church, not from outside. But would it not be resented and rejected by many? No one likes to have his sins pointed out, and churches and people are equally sensitive to personal censure. Could this be the reason that I found so many of the "straight testimony" articles so lacking in straight testimony? The message must be given, the sins must be exposed, and it must be done with love and loyalty.

I struggled and prayed over these very real concerns. The more I weighed the matter, the more convicted I became. Like any other conscientious minister, I could readily see the disturbing, basic problem of lukewarm Laodicea. She was not all the way into the world, or she would have been cold. But neither was she fully into Christ, or she would have been hot. There was a mixture—a halfway commitment on the part of many which had created an atmosphere of lassitude and unconcern.

Should I undertake to write a book that would dare to address the total picture of

worldly compromise and the true causes of it? I felt that God had shown me the major issues and tragic consequences of the phenomenon which many Seventh-day Adventists have come to know as the “new theology” crisis. It involved both laymen and ministers. My greatest anxiety was that my fellow ministers—most of them dedicated and loyal—might misconstrue my head-on approach as some sort of oblique attack on them. Neither did I want my beloved church to misinterpret the strong, incisive language which I felt was needed to strike conviction to a sleeping congregation.

As you open this book to the following chapters, please try to empathize with me in the unsolicited assignment which I believe the Lord has laid on me. I love my church, its members, and its leaders. It is going through to the kingdom. It is the apple of God’s eye, and the object of His greatest solicitude and love on earth. Nothing I might express in my poor, human way is to be perceived as demeaning or dishonoring it in any manner whatsoever. I pray that after you have read this book, you will love the remnant church more than ever before, but will hate the sins that would separate her from our loving Saviour.

Although we will be focusing on the aspect of lukewarmness and compromise, there are two facts that must not be overlooked. First: The church is a body, and whatever affects one part of it, will also affect other parts.

Second: We must see the problem of Laodicea as only one portion of Satan’s great overall program to subvert the remnant church. There are many interrelated causes and effects which operate within the delicate, spiritual framework of the church body.

In the following chapters, I have sought to analyze the unfolding events within the church in the light of Satan’s overall plan and purpose. Why would he try to create certain conditions in one department of the church in order to carry out his design for the full body? What long-range strategies has he de-

veloped to break down gradually the strong defenses of this citadel of truth? It has been a fascinating, and sometimes terrifying, experience to diagnose the diabolical manipulation of events and circumstances on the part of Satan to accomplish his ends. There is no question that he has made many inroads, and has succeeded in somewhat diluting the truth, but all the forces of hell cannot prevail against the church of the living God. This is not just another denomination. It is a movement of prophecy, destined to restore generations of fallen truth, and it cannot and will not fail. Even though, in the fierce heat of Satan’s final assault, the church may seem about to fall, it does not fall. It will survive and triumph. And all those who remain faithful through its shaking, testing experience will triumph with it. My prayer is that the exposure of Satan’s operating tactics will prepare us to avoid the terrible pitfalls which have been and will be placed in our path.

2. DIAGNOSING DOCTRINAL DOUBTS

Have you ever wondered why there is so much discussion of doctrinal doubts within the remnant church today? Why have so many pastors abandoned the faith after struggling with theological questions concerning the sanctuary, the law, and the Spirit of Prophecy? A few congregations have been decimated by large groups withdrawing to organize independent “fellowship churches” with liberalized standards and modified beliefs. Others have joined large, popular Sunday-keeping church bodies where doctrine and standards are almost totally ignored.

The arguments that these “neo-Adventists” present against the great, historic pillars of Adventism are the same as those which were being used when I graduated from the Seminary in 1947. Repeatedly I had to meet the same stereotyped objections from evangelical opponents who fiercely resisted my public crusade meetings. I was often challenged openly by Church of Christ pastors to engage in a public debate over the issues of the Sab-

bath, the sanctuary, and Ellen White. Sometimes in my own tent auditorium they would stand up and try to expound their opposing views. Yet I never knew one Seventh-day Adventist, not even the weakest in the congregation, to become confused by the attacks of those enemies of our faith.

There were few apostasies in those days, and almost never because of doubting the message. For years I never met an ex-Seventh-day Adventist who had joined any other church. If members left the remnant church, it was because of the pull of flesh, world, or devil, and not because they had lost faith in the doctrines.

The great puzzling question is this: Why is there such a stirring today among our people over the same tired arguments which upset no one forty years ago? I have discovered the answer to that question in an amazing chain of texts. The Bible clearly describes the reasons for doctrinal doubt, and it is confirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy. The beloved John summarized the issue perfectly: "They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." I John 4:5, 6.

These words assure us that those who conform to the world are not able to discern between truth and error. The delicate ability to discriminate between counterfeit and true depends upon staying apart from the world.

Paul affirms the same principle in Romans 12:2: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. " The NIV translation says, "Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is." Please take note that there is a sound rule of Scripture which requires separation from the world in order to understand God's will and counsel.

To the Corinthians Paul wrote, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." I Corinthians 2:12.

Do you follow the beautiful thread of truth in all those texts? We cannot know the things of God while receiving the spirit of the world. The two are incompatible. Jesus added the capstone to this divine principle: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." John 7:17.

Here the Master insisted that one must "DO HIS WILL" in order to recognize that His doctrine was true. What does it mean to "do His will"? John wrote, "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. . . . And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." I John 2:15-17.

No one can miss the fact that John identifies the one who does God's will as the one who does not love the world. And Jesus said this is the only kind who can know of the doctrine, whether it is true or not.

Is this tremendous cause-and-effect relationship supported by the writings of Ellen G. White? She wrote:

"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." Testimonies. Vol. 5, p. 62.

These statements take on new significance in the light of current theological developments within the church. According to the Bible, two things will always exist together **WORLDLY COMPROMISE** and **DOCTRINAL UNCERTAINTY**. This leads us to some very interesting questions. Have these two factors been observed in the Seventh-day Adventist church during the recent past? Is there reason

to believe that a gradual leavening process of worldly conformity throughout our ranks might have precipitated the present “new theology” crisis in our midst?

No one can deny that there has been a weakening of our traditional posture against worldliness. Under the deadly influence of television, the Adventist lifestyle has been seriously breached and compromised. Practices which were once shunned as unacceptable and intolerable within the framework of Adventism are no longer made issues of loyalty to the faith. In most cases the church has offered no official change in its position, but the standards have been lowered and lost by default. They have remained in the annals of official beliefs, but the percentage of pastors, administrators, and evangelists who preach on them and hold them before the congregations has steadily declined year by year. In dress, diet, tithing, movies, coffee drinking, Sabbathkeeping, and divorce there has been an obvious slacking of conviction.

I know the arguments very well which are used to defend the bending and shifting toward the world. “Society is changing,” they tell us, “and we must make adjustments in our own lifestyle in order to reach the people around us.” It is very clear that tremendous changes have been made in our surrounding culture, and we do need to adapt our methods of presenting the message. Yet, I know deep inside that some things should never change. I have an uneasy fear that in the name of progress we are yielding up something called truth—something God never intended that we should ever modify or surrender.

When I see Adventist young people crowd the theaters, and their parents watching risqué television by the hour, when I see the display of artificial adornment and immodest dress in the church; when I hear the beat of Babylon’s music from the pulpit; when I see the divorce rate of Seventh-day Adventists equal that of the world—call it what you will, but please don’t call it progress.

The sad truth is that we, as a church, have been complacently tolerant of forces within the organization which have literally sabotaged the Adventist principles we have defended for years. By a failure to monitor the material in our official publications we have sown some of the seeds of this present doctrinal dilemma.

The growing influence of articles and sermons which subtly undermine historic truth and present variant beliefs has accelerated creeping compromise into a galloping problem within the church. Unfortunately, the youth, who are already under considerable pressure to compromise (and who need special encouragement to be firm), have been the target of much of the new libertarian influence. But wherever and however it started, it has now permeated every level of church life. And what has been the predicted result in the congregation? Cause has been followed quickly by the effect. We have sowed the wind and are now reaping the whirlwind. By an incredible lack of courage to draw lines and hold firm standards, we have watered down the beautiful principles which once constituted our uniqueness and strength. But the most serious consequence of this love affair with the world has been the dulling of our spiritual perceptions. It is now reaping time, and the whirlwind harvest has cut a swath through our beloved church more destructive than we dare to admit. And the end is not yet. Unless we can muster the courage and the strength to pull back to where God has drawn the line, the devastation will continue.

Inspiration has told us that worldly conformity will bring a corresponding inability to recognize truth. This opens the door to doctrinal doubt and uncertainty of faith.

Has it happened? We know it has. Some of our churches are just as riddled with the “new theology” as they are with worldliness.

No one should be surprised to find these two conditions existing side by side in the church right now. And it is going to continue

until the shaking takes care of the situation. Over and over again Sister White gave graphic descriptions of the incredible falling away after the crunch of persecution develops. If you want to review her assessment of the problem and what produces it, consider the following startling statements and their context. In every one of these best-known quotations she defines the exodus from the church as the result of “conforming” to the world, or “uniting” with the world.

“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. At that time the gold will be separated from the dross. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliance will then go out in darkness. Those who have assumed the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ’s righteousness, will then appear in the shame of their own nakedness.” *Prophets and Kings*, p. 188.

“I would say that we are living in a most solemn time. 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. Many will get above the simplicity of the work. They will conform to the world, cherish idols, and become spiritually dead “ *Testimonies*, Vol. 1, pp. 608, 609.

“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 for Satan to misrepresent and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the rulers against them.” *The Great Controversy*, p. 608.

“The work which the church has failed to do in a time of peace and prosperity she will have to do in a terrible crisis under most discouraging, forbidding circumstances. 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.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p.463.

“Those who are uniting with the world are receiving the worldly mold and preparing for the mark of the beast. Those who are distrustful of self, who are humbling themselves before God and purifying their souls by obeying the truth these are receiving the heavenly mold and preparing for the seal of God in their foreheads.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 216.

Here we see the end result of the program of gradualism which is literally eating away the vitals of our church. The words of the prophet indicate that eventually the worldly bent and accompanying loss of faith will lead “a large class” to renounce their faith completely. What we see now as a trickle will turn

into a floodtide of apostasy. Spiritual doubts, doctrinal confusion and apostasy inevitably follow the breaking down of that wall of separation between the church and the world.

Can we now put together the strong, common theme of repetitive truth which flows through the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy statements? We would have to be blind to miss the point, and these are only a small sampling of hundreds which could be cited.

Probably the most shocking element in these inspired statements is the revelation about the number of apostasies. A majority of believers will actually abandon the faith, and give up the Sabbath. Amazing, isn't it? And what is the battle plan of Satan for pulling off this kind of deadly coup within the church?

3. THE WEDGE OF WORLDLY INFILTRATION

The sequence is very clearly spelled out in the counsels of God. Satan began by cleverly introducing borderline compromises among the saints, which easily attracted those who were not studying for themselves. As these camouflaged deviations became established among the membership, the gap slowly widened to accommodate more collaboration with the world.

Said the prophet:

“The change in her spiritual state has come gradually and almost imperceptibly. As she began to seek the praise and friendship with 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.” Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 240.

Because the changes were always marginal, ministers were reluctant to make issues over them for fear of being labeled as legalistic and judgmental. In order to assure the silence of watchmen on the walls, Satan carefully programmed a preparatory campaign to

make any protesting preacher appear as an enemy of righteousness by faith.

With great shrewdness, Satan gradually introduced among Sabbathkeepers the subtle concept that any concern about careful obedience was tied to legalism. Many faithful pastors began to feel guilty about preaching sanctification, and a strange shift of emphasis began to alter the kind of Sabbath sermons being preached in Adventist churches.

Fewer and fewer messages dealt with the responsibility of the Christian in living a life of obedience to God's law. Before long the very law which is a transcript of the character of Jesus was coming across as an enemy of righteousness by faith. Some leading theologians began to deny the Bible definition of sin as “the transgression of the law,” and declared that sin was not breaking the law, but “breaking a relationship.” Such clever play on words, containing partial truth and partial error, led many actually to look with contempt upon that which was “holy, just and good.” (Romans 7:12.) Christians who still believed that obedience was both necessary and possible were chided as being “works-oriented,” a nice sounding euphemism for “salvation by works.”

With all the froth skimmed away, the substance of the sermons preached under this liberated theology gave recognition only to justification and the cross—never to the corresponding activity of obedience equally demanded by the gospel. Christ did everything for us, including obedience, and our part was only to believe and love. The very condition described by Sister White settled over the Laodicean church.

“A religious life once presented difficulties and demanded self-denial. All is made very easy now. And why is this? The professed people of God have compromised with the powers of darkness. There must be a revival of the straight testimony. The path to heaven is no smoother now than in the days of our Saviour. All our sins must be put away. Every

darling indulgence that hinders our religious life must be cut off.” Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 222.

Such counsel was not compatible with the emphasis on this new “righteousness by faith.” Adventist young people were warned not to think too much about their sins, and especially not to “try” to overcome them. They were made to believe that the more they looked at their shortcomings, the more they might be tempted to rely on the “works” of trying to obey the law. It came through very clearly that such a program would be a legalistic denial of the true gospel. Is it any wonder that, under this popular, easy-grace intoxication, many pastors were reluctant to preach against the stealthy encroachment of worldly elements into the church?

Do you see how the groundwork was laid for the introduction of questionable practices into the church? Who wanted to disrupt the influence of what appeared to be a genuine tool for revival? Many were bearing testimony that they had been truly converted for the first time, having escaped from the bonds of legalism. But strangely enough, many of those who rode the emotional high of this new freedom turned more and more critical of those who were concerned about the breakdown of standards. They became the most vocal protesters against any program that involved any change of conduct or reformation. To them it smacked too much of “works” to be concerned over the cut of clothes or the beat of music. And since everyone quite agreed that righteousness by faith had been generally neglected in the past, it was easy for the new, exciting emphasis to gain rapid acceptance. Anyone who raised a question about the increasing worldliness in the church was instantly silenced by cries of “Legalism!” A new, tolerant attitude developed toward the small changes that were cropping up in the Adventist lifestyle.

As the minds of God’s people slowly adjusted to the appearance of more and more

“controlled” television, the wedding ring, “moderate” makeup, “good” movies, three-percent caffeine, “modest” bathing suits and shorts, “special” divorce cases and unisex dress codes, the predicted doctrinal confusion began to develop.

Satan had created the appropriate climate for introducing doubts and questions about the great, supporting pillars of the remnant church. Utilizing the intellectualism of a few theologians with worldly educations, a massive assault was launched against the faith of every loyal Seventh-day Adventist. The attack took many by surprise, because few had anticipated that the major detractor of the faith would be one of our own. Long before his perfidy was recognized, Desmond Ford’s concepts were being assimilated by hundreds of admiring young students who were captivated by his personality and powerful command of words.

4. NEW THEOLOGY AND THE SIFTING

No class was spared from the desolating influence of the “new theology” which subtly undermined several basic positions of the historic church. Worldly conformity had paved the way for Satan to confuse the minds of thousands whose convictions had already been damaged by the spirit of compromise. The confusion and falling away continues. A serious sifting process is weeding out many whose hearts have not been firm for the truth. But the greatest testis still just before us. We have seen nothing compared to that approaching crisis when the majority will forsake us. It will seem as though the church might fall and never recover, but the true Christians will remain secure and unshaken while the chaff is blown away.

Where will the greatest sifting occur? Sister White wrote:

“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.” Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 81.

What a dramatic portrayal of the approaching trauma, and how it challenges every one of us to a deeper commitment! Not a soul among us needs to be in that cloud of chaff. Oh, how we need to hide ourselves in Christ and be consumed with a hunger for His abiding presence. It is only the Holy Spirit within who can groom us for that terrible hour of test. Not one of us should depend on any other human being for spiritual strength or doctrinal integrity. We must know the truth for ourselves and be able to put every sermon to the test of God’s Word. Furthermore, our personal relationship with Christ must be the source of our daily walk of faith.

Now is the time-and the only time we will have-to store our minds with the precious counsels of the Word. All our doctrines and life practices must be based upon what we have drawn from personal Bible study, rather than pronouncements of the church. There are many faithful pastors who are sounding the alarm, but some are bending with the Laodicean majority. We have been warned that false doctrine will invade the pulpits of our own churches.

Consider this inspired statement:

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

At the same time such heresies are being boldly proclaimed, God will raise up equally bold defenders of the true doctrine. With fearless zeal, these faithful servants of Christ will challenge every corruption of truth which appears in high places or low. It is this open, impartial exposure of error, under the powerful ministry of the Holy Spirit, which will cause the shaking.

Who are those men whom God will use to proclaim the straight testimony which will precipitate the separation of wheat and chaff?

The answer is given by God’s servant:

“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. . . . 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.” Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 80.

“He will call men from the plow and from other occupations to give the last note of warning to perishing souls.” Testimonies, Vol. 9, p. 170.

“As the time comes for it [the third angel’s message] to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments. . . . The laborers will be qualified rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. The sins of Babylon will be laid open.” The Great Controversy, p. 606.

“He will raise up from among the common people, men and women to do His work, even as of old He called fishermen to be His disciples.” Unabridged Loma Linda Messages, p. 83.

There is a reason for the last warning call of God to be designated “the Elijah message.” The fearless exposure of Satan’s final deceptions must be done by the faithful survivors of the shaking. Just as the Old Testament Tishbite prophet spoke boldly against compromising with pagan sun worship, so the modern Elijah message will expose the devious work of Satan’s agents to amalgamate the day of the sun with Christian worship. Just as John fulfilled the type of Elijah by his courageous preaching against Herod’s unlawful marriage alliance, so the remnant will speak out against sin in all of its ugly ramifications.

5. NO TIME FOR EASY LISTENING

I am concerned and troubled over the growing tendency to water down the truth. Some Adventist evangelists no longer preach on the mark of the beast for fear of upsetting their listeners. The ecumenical attitude against rocking the boat has extended its subtle influence over many who should know better.

We have no right to keep silent on the great issues of the final conflict. Love and tact is needed, but the message must be given. Millions must be undeceived by hearing the truth proclaimed in language that cannot be misconstrued. Sometimes it seems that the more educated we get, the more fearful we become to take stands for the right. Is it possible to get too much polish and become too cultured in our attitude? I believe God has given us the answer to this question.

“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 bearing 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.” *Evangelism*, p. 230.

“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.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 144.

Is there a danger that we might become so institutionalized that public relations will be more important to us than getting the truth to the public? There is evidence that this is happening right now. The Amazing Facts broadcast was dropped from four Seventh-day Adventist college radio stations because of its straightforward approach in presenting the last warning message. Only two stations continued to carry the daily full-message broadcast. Here are actual quotes from those college station managers who canceled our contracts:

“There were numerous reasons behind the decision to cancel your program, but the overriding reason related to the program’s incompatibility with our easy listening format.”

“We had understood initially that the approach of Amazing Facts would be much more indirect than it is. The very strong doctrinal emphasis with forceful treatments of the Sabbath-Sunday issue seems not to fit the tenor and motivation for our work here at _____. For us to be making a direct ‘attack’ on the lifetime positions of our neighbors and friends through the medium of our station does not seem to us a wise approach.”

“We will no longer be able to carry Amazing Facts on _____. I’m sure the program is doing a great deal of good, but it doesn’t fit in with the type of outreach that we’re trying to do.”

“We are trying to reach a secular audience. Your program comes on too strong on a religious note.”

Surely these letters offer dramatic proof that Sister White was correct in warning us not to soft-pedal our urgent last-day warning message. This is no time for “easy listening.” God has provided the means for us to proclaim the truth for this time, and we are afraid to use them. The stations of Babylon beg us to use their facilities, but Amazing Facts was told it could not buy time at any price on those four Seventh-day Adventist owned and operated stations. If we are afraid to let our

position be known now, what will we do when the death sentence stares us in the face?

In comparing the Elijah ministry of John the Baptist with this attitude, Sister White wrote:

“Many of those who profess to believe the truth would say, if they expressed their real sentiments, 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? He lost his life by speaking so plainly.” *Gospel Workers*, p. 149.

In the approaching crisis when the warning swells to a loud cry, we have this promise:

“In the hour of greatest peril the God of Elijah will raise up human instrumentalities to bear a message that will not be silenced. . . . The voice of stern rebuke will be heard. Boldly will men of God’s appointment denounce the union of the church with the world.” *Prophets and Kings*, p. 187.

Do the people of God need to be warned now about the unholy union of the church and the world? We have already discovered that the “new theology” errors are the direct outgrowth of such a union. Some Adventist pastors are fearful that doctrinal subjects, reformatory messages or sanctification topics might be criticized as harsh and unloving. Calling people away from worldly indulgences is very likely to be labeled as “works oriented.” Does God have anything to say to those watchmen who are afraid to warn people against the practice of known sin?

“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. 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.” *Selected Messages*, Bk. 3, p. 155.

Sister White, under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit, wrote hundreds of pages of the strongest counsel and warning on this very matter of lowering the standards. She was unafraid of the charges that some would get offended at her strong words. Said she:

“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 from Isaiah 58. I did not round the corners at all.” *Selected Messages*. Bk. 3, p. 64.

“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.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 103.

Why do we hear so little about this danger today? If the worldly drift was so strong a hundred years ago, what would the prophet write about the sad state of things today?

I can tell you why the silence is deafening on this subject. Satan has generated an opinion, based upon the distant past, that legalism is the big problem in the Adventist church right now. No one can deny that some is present, but I contend that it is minor, compared to the problem of permissiveness. Once in a great while one meets a genuine legalistic fanatic, but it is hardly possible to visit a church without meeting several proponents of the new, liberal theology. The need today is to counteract the obvious bent toward cheap-grace preaching. There is no

present evidence that our church suffers from too strong doses of sanctification doctrine. How much material is available which dares to pinpoint the specific areas of slackened discipline within the remnant church? There is practically nothing. We have swamped our people with books on faith, justification, love, self-worth, and forgiveness, and there is nothing at all wrong with those subjects; they are important. But why haven't we balanced the picture by speaking out on the sanctifying effect of true justification?

The answer is twofold. It certainly appears that the majority of our writers and editors have assumed that Adventists are already too works-oriented, and many others are afraid they will be branded as legalists. In the meantime, our people perish for want of real Adventist sermons on the subject of victory over sin, and practical godliness.

How many books have been written primarily to combat the deceptive inroads of worldliness into the remnant church? Considering the proportion of the problem, and the space devoted to it in the Spirit of Prophecy, there should be many books available on the subject. If you want to see the practical results of our neglect to speak out in warning and counsel, look around at the next large gathering of Adventists you attend. Camp meeting would be a good place to make your observations. What will you see? Even though it is a religious gathering, one will look in vain to discover much difference in the general appearance of these people and those thronging the streets of Babylon.

At one recent camp meeting, a beautiful Christian mother shared her concern for her teenage daughter who wandered the grounds dressed in very, very tight jeans. The mother was a recent convert and her husband was a communist who did not even believe in God. Yet he objected violently to his daughter's provocative attire. Our convert was puzzled that the spiritual leaders of her new church did not seem to recognize a violation of mod-

esty which her atheist husband could see clearly. What a commentary on the blindness produced by exposure to the world! And we become more blind as we adjust to a toleration of that which we know to be wrong.

Not so many years ago, the MV Department of the General Conference took a firm position against mixed swimming in our sponsored youth activities. Not only has that standard been changed for the young people, but it is quite a normal practice for churches and even ministerial groups to promote mixed bathing at their picnics and retreats. Few pastors seem to recognize those activities as being unfitting and inconsistent with their holy calling. One worker did observe that it seemed to be out of harmony with God's command to His priests in the Old Testament not to mount the altar by steps lest they expose their nakedness in the process. (Exodus 20:26.)

I think it is right here that we see the alarming extent of the worldly invasion of our church. We have become so accustomed to the ways of the world that we no longer recognize our departure from true principle. Those who do see it are often charged with fanaticism or having an evil mind. It is easy to understand why they would be reluctant to expose themselves to such unsavory charges. Yet the dangers must be exposed by the watchmen who have been assigned that responsibility. We are not engaged in a popularity contest. The truth must be told whether it is pleasing or not. As long as we are telling the truth in a constructive manner to help people find their way back to God's great ideal, we must not be afraid of what men might say or do.

The real problem is that the continuing compromise has rendered many of our people incapable of discerning between truth and error. In great sincerity they will oppose the work of reform in the church with the words, "I can't see anything wrong with what I'm doing." No state is more hopeless than this. Only the Holy Spirit can open the eyes of those who

do not even know they are blind. If they could only recognize their need, their sin, and their blindness, they might seek a remedy. But the sad words are heard again and again, "I can't see . . . I can't see . . ."

The involvement of our people with the things of the world has led to the cancellation of prayer meeting in many Seventh-day Adventist churches across the land.

They are too busy with the job, the house, or other material concerns to find time for midweek fellowship or prayer. Youth meetings have become a relic of the past in large numbers of our churches. Church bulletins are filled with announcements about activities of the week, but many of them are social in nature. Alas, the Bible study and prayer appointments occupy only a portion of the long list of sponsored functions. But because there is a whirl of exciting activity, the church is rated highly successful. The chief concern seems to be to get everybody involved, but involved in what?

Certainly, it's not evangelism or soul winning. A few weeks ago from this writing, I watched night after night as the faithful forty or fifty members joined the largely non-Adventist crowd in the crusade auditorium. Where were the other 750 members of the sponsoring church? I could almost understand why the Wednesday-night prayer meeting had been canceled in that church. Why cannot our people sense the solemnity of living in the time of the judgment? The heart searching attitude of Israel on the day of atonement should be manifest among Sabbath-keepers today.

What was that attitude? Deep concern that every sin had been confessed and forsaken. With intense interest they listened to the bells on the high priest, and followed him in spirit as he moved about in the holy of holies interceding for them. Just as deeply, we must be aware of the final atonement which is unfolding in the heavenly sanctuary above and follow our blessed High Priest as He ministers for us in the most holy place.

Every day we should remind ourselves that we are not just another denomination. This church is on assignment by God to RESTORE the foundations of truth which have been broken down, and to FINISH the great reformation work of ages past.

The greatest tragedy which could ever occur would be to forget our prophetic mission, and slowly lapse into the familiar pattern of luke-warmness which has overtaken every other religious movement. It must not happen to us, and yet we see it happening! Hardly one of us is unaware of subtle changes which have been creeping into our churches and institutions. We have wept over it and prayed earnestly that we might not be a part of the problem. Yet we know in our heart of hearts that we are. Every time we neglect to study and pray, every time we refuse an opportunity to witness, we are frustrating God's holy purpose for us.

Every Seventh-day Adventist church should be a swarming beehive of evangelistic activity. We have not been called into this exciting message to relax in a corner. The age-old mysteries of the great controversy have been revealed to us for one purpose—that we might share them with others. Each new member of this glorious faith is immediately invested with the power of the Spirit to be a witness. Men and women alike are to recognize the commission and ordination of God to begin a personal ministry of reconciliation. The laying on of hands is not necessary. All do not have to engage in the same work, but everyone has a gift which may be used in soul winning.

Nothing will combat the spirit of Laodiceanism more effectively than evangelism, Bible studies, and personal missionary work. Too many of our people are waiting for some special emotional experience as a sign that they are to launch into a witnessing program. But we already have the promise of the Spirit and that is quite enough. We receive it by faith, not feeling. Only those who begin acting on God's

command by faith will receive the latter rain and have a part in the loud cry.

“In many places consecrated men and women may be seen communicating to others the light that has made plain to them the way of salvation through Christ. And AS they continue to let their light shine, as did those who were baptized with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, they will receive more and still more of the Spirit’s power. THUS the earth will be lightened with the glory of God.” The Acts of the Apostles, p. 54.

Please remember that the whole purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to make us witnesses. (Acts 1:8.) Paul declares that the promise of the Spirit is received by faith. (Galatians 3:14.) How do we show our faith? “Faith without works is dead.” James 2:26. So if we truly believe we have the promised witnessing power, we will begin to act upon it in faith. In other words, we will start doing what we can to share our witness, whether we feel any power in us or not. Sister White wrote that AS that work is launched “more and still more” of the Spirit’s power will be supplied. Then she declared, “THUS the earth will be lightened with the glory of God.”

Isn’t that a tremendous thought! Those who have had no experience in soul winning would not even know what to do with the power if it came. Only those who are doing it already will be qualified to receive the latter rain and participate in the loud cry, and none will be saved who do not share that sealing experience. No wonder, then, that Satan wants to keep the remnant church occupied with everything else except soul winning. He has perfected a dazzling, numbing array of worldly attractions to keep average church members away from the very work which would prepare them to be translated.

How painful it is to look upon the spiritual paralysis that has immobilized many of the saints in this critical hour of time. The trumpet tones of straight testimony have become more and more muted as the worldly

subversion proceeds. Even people outside the church are able to detect the altered emphasis.

In the October, 1984 issue of *Christianity Today*, a former Seventh-day Adventist described the changes that

are transforming what she called “the old-style sabbatarian” approach which claimed that the “Sabbath is the seal of the living God and that Sunday worship is the mark of the beast.” She said, “This is still the official Adventist line. . . . But it lacks a little warmth, and nowadays in Adventist circles you are likely to hear quite a different approach.” Then she described two well known Adventist theologians who were still preaching the Sabbath, but who emphasized “the day’s quality rather than the sequence in the week and worship, rather than belaboring the fate of those who fail to observe the Sabbath as Adventists do.”

How interesting it is that this softer line in presenting the Sabbath and mark of the beast has been clearly recognized even by those who are not members of the church. What Joan Craven is saying, in this very popular Protestant magazine, is that Adventists are getting less concerned about the particular day of the week they observe. Could this be a prelude to the terrible end-time apostasy predicted by Sister White? To fulfill that prediction, our people will surely have to be programmed to see the claims of the law and the seventh-day Sabbath as less and less important. Ms. Craven has observed that our theologians are leading the way in the downplay of the Sabbath.

The trend which she described in her unusually candid article is the very same which is revealed by our conciliatory attitude toward the papacy, our continuing acceptance of government aid in our institutions, our ongoing dialogue with the World Council of Churches, our dalliance with the ordination of women, and a radical de-emphasis of the great Reformation prophecies about the Antichrist.

6. APOSTASY WAITING IN THE WINGS

But now let us look more closely at the purpose of Satan's sneak attack on standards in the remnant church. We have described his cunning program of gradual infiltration through borderline issues, and how those tiny loopholes were slowly expanded into major departures from our historic principles. The divine cause-and-effect law immediately began to operate, creating doubt and confusion about the true doctrine. And Satan made very certain that a masterpiece of deception was in both wings waiting to emerge just as soon as enough minds had been sufficiently dulled by conformity to the world. Desmond Ford and Walter Rea appeared on the stage almost simultaneously, and for the first time the old, stale objections began to raise questions in the minds of Seventh-day Adventists.

It is only when we look closely at the focus of the "new theology" errors that we can understand Satan's ingenious strategy. Almost all of its attack is aimed at the law of God. Even though some Seventh-day Adventists are afraid to say it, the real issue in the age-long controversy is over the subject of God's law and whether it can be kept or not.

Satan knows even better than we do that the final clash in the great contest will revolve around loyalty and obedience to that law. Anything he can do now to weaken and discredit the law in the eyes of Seventh-day Adventists will be a master stroke on his part. He has no problem with the rest of Christendom, because their doctrine already belittles the Decalogue, but he needs some incredibly deceptive approach to make Adventists look lightly upon the law.

The roots of the law controversy go all the way back to the fallen angel, Lucifer. That rebel angel based his entire attack against God on the premise that Heaven's law was too severe and could not be obeyed. Those false charges were aired before the unfallen universe, and one third of the angels were persuaded that Lucifer was right. From that

time to this, the governments of good and evil have been locked in a titanic struggle to settle those issues raised by Lucifer.

The plan of salvation was designed by God to vindicate His justice and honor before the universe, and to clear His name from the lying accusation that His law could not be obeyed. The purpose of His 6000-year program has been to produce a people who will live without sin. If God's plan is not able to restore man to that original position of obedience from which he fell, then Satan's arguments will be upheld. On the other hand, if God is able to exhibit a people who have totally obeyed Him, under the most adverse conditions Satan can create, His character will be eternally vindicated before the unfallen worlds. The universe will be forever secure from further disobedience, because, age upon age, the living testimony of the redeemed remnant will be a reminder of God's righteousness in dealing with His creatures.

Now, can you see how important it must be for Satan to make people sin? And do you see why the remnant of the woman—those who keep the commandments and have the Spirit of Prophecy—are the special objects of the dragon's wrath? Whatever Satan does against God's faithful saints will be aimed at diluting their confidence in the law. Somehow he must prepare them to regard the law so lightly and see sin as so unobjectionable, that when their lives are on the line, they will choose to disobey rather than perish. Satan sees this as his last opportunity to strike out against God's plan to bring His people to perfection.

Does it begin to make more sense now for Satan to prepare special assaults against Sabbathkeepers? No wonder he devised the clever plan to slip worldly customs slowly into the church. He knew very well the Bible principle that doctrinal confusion would quickly follow. And he made careful preparations to introduce his artful "anti-lawism" through respectable inside spokesmen who would have the widest influence.

7. THE “NEW THEOLOGY” ATTACKS

The first basic error of the “new theology” stemmed from the old Augustinian doctrine of original sin. By ascribing imputed sin to all of Adam’s descendants the assumption was made that every baby is born not only with accrued guilt, but with such an utterly perverse nature that it could never stop sinning short of Paradise. Thus the foundation was laid for rationalizing lawbreaking as a problem of irresponsible genes and hormones. Strike one against God’s law!

This initial deviation made it necessary to introduce another distortion of truth. If all of Adam’s descendants inherit his guilt, then Jesus would also become guilty as soon as He was born. That would never do, of course. In that case, He could save no one. He would be a sinner Himself. The Catholic church neatly took care of the problem by inventing the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which excluded the Virgin Mary from partaking of Adam’s imputed guilt. The “new theologians” simply accepted an ancient Protestant version of the Catholic position and declared that Jesus was actually born with Adam’s unfallen nature instead of with Abraham’s, David’s or Mary’s fallen nature.

Not only did this contradict many specific Bible statements, but it also left every one of Adam’s children without any hope of overcoming their sins. It left the human race without one encouraging example of perfect obedience, except in an alien nature totally unknown to anyone who has been born since Adam sinned. If Jesus dared not face the temptations of fallen man, how could any mortal ever expect to gain the victory over those temptations? Such a doctrine added fuel to the satanic proposal that God’s laws are too difficult to obey anyway. Strike two against the law!

How did these first two perversions tie in with further “new theology” attacks against the law? Strange as it may seem, even though they portrayed Jesus in a nature far removed

from needy humanity, these professors of new light asserted that Christ was able to impute to sinners all the merits of His holy life, including His obedience, through His atoning death on the cross. That sounds like good theology, but look at it more carefully.

They call this imputed merit of Christ “righteousness by faith,” but sanctification is specifically and deliberately excluded from this package of grace. It is maintained that obedience is entirely separated from the requirements of salvation, and acceptance of the imputed merits of justification alone is the only “works” required for entrance into God’s kingdom. Thus conformity to God’s law is assigned an optional role in the experience of salvation. Strike three against the law! 2

With the focus on imputed righteousness, the atoning death of Jesus on the cross came to be regarded as the finished work of redemption: He did everything for us, including a perfect obedience, and all is credited to us as we accept it by faith.

Did the death of Christ finish the work of atonement in behalf of the transgressor? No, it did not. It provided a perfect sacrifice. The offering of the unblemished Lamb was finished forever, but the final atonement was not completed until the blood had been sprinkled in the most holy place and the record of sins blotted out. The book of Hebrews proves beyond question that Jesus returned to the heavenly sanctuary to minister His own blood in fulfillment of the types carried out in the two apartments on earth. That work is going on today. What is involved in that work? Why was it needed? How did it excel the work which was carried out in the earthly sanctuary?

Chiefly in this respect; the earthly services could only provide for the forgiveness of sin, and never for the power to stop sinning. Those offerings of lambs and goats could not make anyone perfect. “For the law ... can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers

thereunto perfect.” Hebrews 10:1.

On the other hand, Paul declared that the true High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary would remove sins and make people perfect. “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Hebrews 10:14.

Herein is revealed the grand necessity of the high priestly work of Jesus in heaven. It was required in order to cleanse sins from the record AND from the lives of the worshipers. The “new theology” asserts that the atonement was finished at the cross, and there is no present application of the yearly “most holy place” ministry to the work of the heavenly High Priest. This essentially denies both the need for any sanctifying of the saints, and the means of ministering that sanctification or perfection. By rejecting the two-apartment ministry of Christ for us, the “new theology” turns attention away from the exalted place where the law resides beneath the mercy seat of the ark. Small wonder, then, that it finds no need for sanctification in the experience of righteousness by faith. The law is minimized in the great scheme of salvation. Strike four against the law! 3

And what about the perfection provided to worshipers from the heavenly sanctuary? Most “new theologians” deny the doctrine of total victory over sin in the flesh. To them sin is synonymous with being born. It is pervasive in every fallen body and mind until translation eradicates it at the coming of Christ. With this view, it is easy to see why sanctification has been downplayed. If it is impossible to overcome all sin, then obviously God will accept that part of sin which it is not possible for man to conquer. But how much and which part is in that category? Is it left up to each person to decide which sins he cannot overcome in the strength of Christ? How could one be sure that he was not tolerating a sin that could be put away, with a little more faith and effort on his part?

The fact is that there is no intimation in the Bible that anyone should stop certain sins

only, or diminish the amount of other sins he commits. Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery, “Go and sin no more.” He did not tell her to cut back on the amount of adultery she was committing. If I believe some sins are impossible to overcome, I certainly will not waste any time attempting to put them out of my life. Can’t you see how dangerous it is to conclude that ANY sin cannot be overcome in the strength of the Lord? I become tolerant of that sin and deceive myself into believing that God also will accept it. And how easy it will be for my poor human nature to select any sin that I don’t want to give up as one of those which cannot be overcome.

Does it seem logical to think that God can and will give me the victory over some sins—perhaps those that are not too deeply rooted—but that He cannot or is not willing to deliver me from the others? The entire concept is foreign to the Word of God. The only thing to be done with sin is to stop doing it, to put it away, to claim victory over it altogether. The blatant attitude that God’s children must keep on sinning until Jesus comes is not only a denial of the Word, but a favorable vote for Satan’s ancient lie.

Strike five against God’s law!

‘For more on this subject, write for information about the book entitled, *Christ’s Human Nature*.

‘For more on this subject, write for information about the book entitled, *Satan’s Confusing Counterfeits*.

‘Far more on this subject, write for information about the booklet entitled, *Blood Behind the Veil*.

‘For more on this subject, write for information about the book entitled, *Is it Possible to Live Without Sinning?*

8. SATAN’S WAR AGAINST PERFECTION

Is Satan happy when Christians resign themselves to a program of continued sin?

You can be sure that he is. Does one become more tolerant of a sin that he believes is impossible to overcome? Without question! Is there something especially dangerous about Seventh-day Adventists defending Satan's accusation that the law cannot be obeyed? Indeed, it borders on spiritual treason and blasphemy.

But let me explain why this doctrine against character perfection is such a deadly menace to the remnant church. We are repeatedly reminded in the Spirit of Prophecy that none will be sealed except those who survive the shaking and take part in the loud cry. **BUT THE CONDITION FOR RECEIVING THE LATTER RAIN AND GIVING THE LOUD CRY IS TO OVERCOME EVERY SIN!**

What a triumph for Satan to be able to lure Seventh day Adventists into the fatal delusion that sins cannot be completely conquered. By yielding to that monstrous lie, one would be conceding the impossibility of being saved, because, at that point in time, all who do not receive the latter rain will be lost. Consider these significant statements:

“Those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will receive the latter rain.” Testimonies, Vol. 1, p. 187.

“Today you are to have your vessel purified, that it may be ready for the heavenly dew, ready for the showers of the latter rain; for the latter rain will come, and the blessing of God will fill every soul that is purified from every defilement.” Evangelism, p. 702.

“Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost.” Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 214.

“I was shown that if God's people make no

effort on their part, but wait for the refreshing to come upon them and remove their wrongs and correct their errors; if they depend upon that to cleanse them from filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and fit them to engage in the loud cry of the third angel, they will be found wanting. The refreshing or power of God comes only on those who have prepared themselves for it by doing the work which God bids them, namely, cleansing themselves of all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” Testimonies, Vol. I, p. 619.

In the light of these explicit declarations, how could any Adventist Christian deny the possibility of overcoming all sin? No one can be sealed who has not experienced this perfect process of sanctification in his life.

Many overlook the fact that there are two distinct aspects of righteousness by faith which must be experienced by every successful overcomer. One of them, justification, provides for deliverance from the death penalty through forgiveness of past sins. This tremendous gift is based solely upon the objective work of Jesus in living a perfect life, assuming our liability of guilt, and dying to satisfy the penalty against us.

As soon as we exercise faith in Jesus as our personal Saviour, He gives us the credit for all those things he did in our behalf. He counts us as having lived a perfect life, and looks upon us as though we have never sinned. He imputes to us the merits of His own death on the cross, relieving us of any condemnation or punishment for our past sins. This transaction of faith lies at the very heart of the great plan of salvation. None can be saved without it, and none can receive it by any other means than faith alone. The Bible says, “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Romans 4:5.

Notice that the one requirement for receiving justification by faith is to be ungodly. Those who feel that they need to make them-

selves less ungodly by their good works before seeking justification are destroying their only grounds for receiving it. Furthermore, they hopelessly contradict the Scriptures by seeking to extract some personal merit from a totally undeserved gift. The less ungodly a person feels himself to be, the less inclined he will be to cast himself in simple faith upon the promises of God. In the justification experience, there can be no dividing of credit. It is by faith alone.

But the second, and equally important, aspect of righteousness by faith is sanctification. The dynamic power of the gospel does not deliver us from the guilt of sin without also saving us from the sin itself. Adam's fall into sin created two terrible problems for himself and all his descendants. First, it brought the sentence of death upon the human race, and second, it weakened man's moral nature to such a degree that he had no power to stop sinning. Both of these tragic consequences have been reversed by the glorious victory of the second Adam.

The first problem is remedied by the imputed righteousness of Jesus in justification. By it the death sentence is lifted, and past sins are canceled.

But there is still another issue to be resolved. How is the moral nature to be restored so that sin can be resisted and overcome? The plan of salvation does not provide for only a partial deliverance from the effects of sin. Through sanctification, the righteousness of Jesus is imparted to the believer, and total victory is made possible over every inherited or cultivated weakness. Faith in the power-packed promises of the Bible can break sin's stranglehold and fit the soul for sealing under the latter rain.

Only those Adventists who have claimed both justification and sanctification will have a part in the loud cry experience. The Seed of the woman has given back to all of Adam's descendants the power to choose not to sin. There are critics of our church who feel that

God's blessing can no longer rest upon it because of its Laodicean condition. Some have withdrawn their membership in protest of the declining spirituality and loss of standards. I share nothing in common with such an attitude. Recently, I received a letter from a man who was once an ordained pastor of a large Seventh-day Adventist church. He seemed genuinely concerned that I could bring people into a church that had "totally apostasized from the truth," as he described it, and had reverted to Babylonian darkness." He quoted some paragraphs from Sister White to the effect that the church was retreating toward Egypt, that they were drifting away to sea, without chart or compass. I was acquainted with those statements and many others in the same vein. She did portray the sad, Laodicean condition of every level of church organization, rebuking, appealing, and weeping over its compromise with the world. BUT SHE DID NOT LEAVE THE CHURCH, OR SUGGEST THAT IT WAS BABYLON! Even though she spoke shocking words of correction, there was never any intimation that the concerned, faithful ones within the remnant should leave the organization for any reason whatsoever. She did write repeatedly that the weak, worldly, vacillating ones would be shaken out, leaving a pure people to finish the work.

"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.... 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." Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 676.

9. FACING OUR DEFECTS HONESTLY

It would be folly to ignore the sins which have been condoned and embraced by many in the church. It does no good to put our

heads in the sand. The voice of warning must be heard. The cutting truth must be proclaimed, but it must be done in the context of love and concern for those who have been blinded by Satan. There is still a loyal group who will not be moved from the pillars of truth.

“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.” Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 209, 210.

This statement is typical of many in which Sister White identifies a “little company” within the remnant which refuses to follow the rest of the church whose “members are doing after the manner of the world.” From such statements it seems clear that there is a remnant within the remnant who will recognize the breakdown of standards and take a strong stand against the worldly drift within the church.

Today God is looking for those who will set their faces like flint against sin and all its allies. What joy there is in placing no limits upon the operation of His marvelous grace! Every one of us has the privilege right now of submitting every faculty of our being to God and His message. He does not call us to divided service. There is no peace in a half surrender of the heart.

What common ground is there between truth and error? God desires His remnant people to give an unambiguous witness to every point of true doctrine and experience. This church is not the true church just because it fits into a particular historical and prophetic framework. It is true, and will remain true, only as it continues to preach and practice in full harmony with the testimonies of God’s Spirit. We can feel no assurance of

salvation, either, just because we belong to the true church. Our security rests upon a personal relationship with Christ, which produces the obedience of faith. An inordinate spiritual pride destroyed God’s Israel of old, and it could easily be a snare to Seventh-day Adventists today.

Several points are made by Sister White concerning the faithful “little company” within the remnant. They sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land, and “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.” Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 210.

Oh, what a responsibility rests upon the watchmen on the walls! And how earnestly we should be studying and praying to be a part of that small group who grieve over the sins of the church. How clearly we see the fulfillment of Sister White’s description as we approach the sealing time. We long to be able to turn back the floodtide of compromise. Daily we need to plead for the Spirit of God to keep our feet from sliding back and to fortify our minds against the deceptions which surround us. Who is sufficient for these things?

As one watchman on the walls, I will be held responsible to God for the souls of any whom I do not warn against the approaching enemy. My heart mourns as I watch what is happening and see how little I seem able to do. What can be done to bring our church back to the pattern so clearly laid down in the inspired counsels?

The medical work has taken a direction

against which we were warned years ago. By taking the administration of our institutions out of the hands of the church and placing them under the direction of highly paid health professionals, we have opened a floodgate of compromise. The new arrangement is accelerating the pace of our shameful competition to be the biggest and to attract the largest number of patients. Nowhere have we been encouraged by God to construct such facilities. Over and over we have been warned not to compete with the world in this area. Smaller, rural sanitariums where true health reform principles can be practiced and taught, was the burden of Sister White's message from God. How can we defend the investment of borrowed millions of dollars in the proliferation of medical-surgical monoliths which defy the great mass of instruction which God has given us?

The counsel against drugs has been flaunted. In most of our huge hospitals and medical centers there is little distinction from the world in the way we treat disease. My last two crusades were held in large cities where two of our sprawling hospital complexes were located. I often ate in the cafeterias of those metropolitan institutions. Imagine my shock and chagrin to find meat being served in one of those Seventh-day Adventist hospitals. Each day I had to question the servers closely to identify the real meat from the vegetarian entrees.

In the other hospital, no meat was served in the cafeteria, but large coffee-dispensing machines stood in the room. On Sabbaths, the public, as well as the employees, paid for their food at the ringing cash register, just as they did on the weekdays. Even though I had a guest card, it was an uncomfortable experience to watch the business-as-usual. I remembered how, years ago, no one could eat in our hospital cafeterias on Sabbath unless he had a meal ticket. No money was exchanged on that day.

My heart is sick also when I look at the

trends our publishing and educational work are following. I know how sensitive our educators have become to the smallest criticism, but I must refer you to a statement by Dr. Winton Beaven in the *Adventist Review* of September 27, 1984, in which he is quoted: "Between 40 and 45 percent of male students at Adventist colleges in North America drink beer, wine or spirits." Some will surely want to reject that appraisal, but who would be better qualified to make such a judgment? Dr. Beaven has been a recognized authority in drug research for many years, and he made the statement at the first board meeting of the Institute of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency at Andrews University.

I know we have some of the finest Christian educators in the world—men and women who are really dedicated to the character development of our youth. They are often limited by board rules, parental pressures, and proximity of the unpredictable young people day after day after day. Seventh-day Adventist teachers deserve a great deal of honor and recognition for their commitment to a difficult task.

Yet somewhere along the line we have dropped the ball, and along with it, many of the standards and rules which once safeguarded our educational centers.

On the basis of the *Review* statement, if our colleges still maintained the published standards of the recent past, almost half the male enrollment would qualify for immediate expulsion. Their continuation in the schools provides dramatic proof that the most basic Christian standards are not being maintained. If Dr. Beaven is correct, we are adjusting our rules to meet the Laodicean lifestyle of an indulgent generation, or else our educational leaders do not know what is going on right under their noses. Instead of disciplining the drinking students, some schools are instituting programs of alcohol rehabilitation. This is not to fault the good plan for alcoholic reform and recovery, but

in the meantime there must be a meaningful program to uphold a disciplined lifestyle on every Adventist campus.

Does this lenient stance toward drinking bleed over into other areas of Adventist practice? Look at the divorce rate in the remnant church. It just about equals the worldly average. Consider the rapidly changing attitudes toward movie attendance, abortion, and homosexuality. Historic Bible positions are being adroitly neutralized by learned dissertations based largely on emotional appeals for fairness, equality and justice. Emotion we need, but far more, we need to stand on clear-cut, long-held, inspired principles which have served us well for over 125 years.

But in spite of some mistaken policies of compromise, this is still God's remnant church, and it is going through to the Kingdom. Many of its members, its ministers, and its administrators will be shaken out, but the church of the translation will be pure and uncompromised. Worldly policy and political expedience will be unknown in the ranks of that Spirit-filled remnant who will give the loud cry!

"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." Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 80.

"Satan will work his miracles to deceive; he will set up his power as supreme. The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out . . . This is a terrible ordeal . . . The remnant that purify their souls by obeying the truth gather strength from the trying process." Bible Commentary, Vol. 7, p. 911.

"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 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." Early Writings, p. 270.

Are we not entering the shaking time already when the church will be purified in both doctrine and practice? What a responsibility rests upon those who stand at the head of the work in various conferences and institutions! Not one hindrance should be allowed to interpose between our people and the spirit of true revival and reformation. No segment of the organized work should be permitted to cast stumbling blocks in the way of this sanctifying process.

Some would urge that it is better to ignore the blatant articles in the youth paper which run counter to our historic Christian standards. They would keep silent altogether when our college science teachers publish their views against a 6000-year earth history. But is that the best policy? Will the message of the True Witness accomplish its work when such a course is followed? A clear break with Laodicea calls for repentance for such grievous sin on the part of the leaders. It would be wrong for those who make up the church to accept quietly such misrepresentation of the true Adventist position. To continue the employment of teachers, pastors, or administrators who do not support the doctrines of the church does not encourage revival or reformation. Neither does it inspire confidence in those who have been elected to oversee the Lord's business.

When men preach contrary to truth, they should no longer be retained as spokesmen for that truth. It just doesn't make sense. Such a course would place the church in conflict with its own best spiritual interests.

Listen to the words of two former General Conference presidents as they looked at the spirit of compromise working in the church

in their day:

“I am troubled by the direction that our educational and training work is definitely taking. I am concerned by the more and more obvious fact that in the education and training of our workers we are inquiring more and more of the world and less of God than formerly.” Elder C. H. Watson, *Review and Herald*, November 21, 1935.

“The time has come for a thorough reformation to take place. What we need today is a people revived with new spiritual power, a church reformed and turned away from the world . . . there has come into the church a listlessness, a carelessness that is deplorable.” Elder J. L. McElhany, *Review and Herald*, December 3, 1936.

In the same year the *Review* editor made this earnest appeal for the straight testimony to be restored in the church:

“If our hearts become faint and our tongues palsied, and we fail to proclaim the whole counsel of God, crying out against sin in the church regardless of who may be involved, we shall lose our power, and heaven must raise up others from the ranks to take our places.” Elder F. M. Wilcox, *Review and Herald*, June 1, 1936.

Today such honest confessions from church leaders is almost unknown. Administrators, workers, and laymen are discouraged from taking note of such specific shortcomings among the saints. But it was exactly that kind of strong, direct appeal which stirred the hearts of our members and made them aware of their individual needs. Nothing would more quickly restore and establish confidence in the leadership of this movement than their sincere, open admission of obvious failings, and a public commitment to make things right by God’s grace.

10. TIME FOR THE STRAIGHT TESTIMONY

Surely the time has come for every Seventh-day Adventist to learn about the sins of

Laodicea -its worldliness, pride, etc.-and to join those who will cry out against this nauseating mixture of flesh and spirit. Ministers and members must be willing to risk criticism in order to preach the Laodicean message. There are a thousand more pleasant subjects, but the hour is too late to substitute smooth things. Neither do the sleeping saints need any more soothing messages. This is the hour for an awakening.

If you think John the Baptist was too strong and direct in his preaching, you may rise up against the kind of messages God is leading men to proclaim today. Was John too blunt when he called the king into question for being unlawfully married? If so, we must be more blunt. Consider this statement:

“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.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 1, p. 321.

Will the religious leaders of today feel any better about being corrected than those in John’s day? Surely we can expect the same outrage to be expressed by those who are settled in the comfortable, self-righteous mold of Laodicea. How dare anyone charge the true church with wrong-doing or apostasy!

“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.” Testimonies, Vol. 3, p. 261.

In these days of separation and testing, the spirit of fear must not mold the ministry of responsible pastors and leaders. It is no kindness to comfort those who are asleep in Zion. We may be inclined, like Eli, to be very gentle and loving, but don't ever forget how that lack of firmness led to Eli's rejection. Much good can be said about the man, but he was too fearful of taking a strong, uncompromising, public stand against sin.

“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.” Testimonies, Vol. 4, p. 517.

Will God hold many sweet, gentle pastors responsible for sins they find no heart to expose and rebuke?

“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.” Testimonies, Vol. 3, pp. 265, 266.

“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.” Testimonies, Vol. 3, p. 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.” Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 578.

In anticipation of his last-ditch effort to make God's special remnant lose confidence in the law, would it not be logical for Satan to infiltrate the church with uncommitted pastors as well as unconverted members? When viewed in the context of the age-long warfare, it is easy to see how he would attempt such a long-range tactical ploy.

Because we live literally in the final stages of this tremendous drawn-out drama, we become grandstand spectators of Satan's total strategy. Right now he is pulling together all the lines of influence which he has manipulated to weaken the commandment keepers. We see a converging of many circumstances which could not be understood until now, because they appeared only as distressing side issues. Suddenly we see that they were all tied together and were being masterminded by the great adversary himself.

Look once more at the amazing order which the jigsaw puzzle begins to reveal. The isolated developments within the church are seen to be small portions of a giant pattern which is now approaching completion. It all makes sense in the light of Satan's ultimate objectives. What better plan could he have devised than to dilute the spiritual standards slowly by worldly wedges of compromise that grew bigger and bigger. At the same time, Satan exploited the fears of many against fanaticism and legalism, causing a radical swing toward grace-only, the finished work of the cross, and a down-play of sanctification. Some ministers were caught up in the trend, and were conditioned to accept new members for baptism without the fruits of

full obedience. Under the influence of these unconverted ones, and a worldly-oriented membership, the church was not prepared to cope with the explosive impact of the “new theology,” especially since it filtered through the weekly sermons of numerous young advocates of the divergent views.

My heart goes out to the hundreds of faithful Adventists who have written me about their efforts to stem the relentless tide of apostasy. They recognize the “snipping away” of one cherished principle after another, and are seeking support in their lonely work of trying to hold the line. My counsel is always the same. Stay in the church, and especially stay close to the Lord Jesus in prayer and Bible study. Be sure that you stand on sound, historic truth, and DON'T COMPROMISE!

What is the real solution to the problems we face in the church today? The corporate answer, of course, is the shaking, but the personal solution is a very deep, spiritual relationship with Christ. None of us can ever imagine the nature of the full-blown opposition program of Satan against the saints. He will literally throw everything in his arsenal of evil at those who stand in his way. Everything that can be shaken will be shaken.

The large cities will be centers of violence and dangers. There will be no safe place there for Sabbath-keepers. We have received warning after warning to leave the great metropolitan areas and secure small places in the country. Money and property will become a snare and threat to those who waited too long to put them into the work of God. The real deceitfulness of riches will be exposed when millions of Adventist dollars are swept away in the approaching economic collapse.

For those who have placed their lives and possessions upon the altar, there will be no fear of the final events. By daily heart-searching prayer and Bible study, they have prepared themselves for the maelstrom of Armageddon. When the great controversy rises to its final stages, each person becomes the

subject of a raging battle between Christ and Satan. There will be security only for those who have prepared in advance. The ones who have developed a conciliatory attitude toward the world cannot meet the test.

God's call to Laodicea is to repent and lay hold of faith, love, the righteousness of Christ, and the Holy Spirit. There is hope and promise for every soul who will cooperate with the agencies God provides for our sanctification. Like Daniel of old, we must be faithful in little things before we are prepared to face the death sentence. By developing unswerving loyalty in every circumstance, the soul is fortified, and victory is assured.

How is it with you today? Are you waiting for more signs that the end is upon us? Ask yourself what work of grace still needs to be done in your life in preparation for Christ's coming. If you are not spending at least an hour a day in study and prayer, how do you justify your neglect? We find time for what we really want to do. Satan's favorite deception is to create a false security in those who have only a nominal experience.

Seek the Lord now while He may be found. Adjust your daily program to reserve choice prayer and study time in the early morning or evening. By consistent and deliberate decisions to make God first in your life, an amazing discipline of spirit will result.

“When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness.” Christ's Object lessons, p. 312.

What an exciting possibility! The habitual yielding of the entire being to God results in an actual union with Him. When we hunger for that experience more than for anything else in the world, we shall receive it. And the

desire grows as we spend time in His presence.

The fragrance of such a relationship will fill any life with joy unspeakable. As you give priority, quality time for feeding on God's Word, there will be spiritual revival also—just as surely as growth follows the rain.

“If we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him, we shall have continual freshness in our religious life. Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God as we would talk with a friend. He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Often there will come to us a sweet joyful sense of the presence of Jesus. Often our hearts will burn within us as He draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch.” Christ's Object Lessons, p. 129.

11. THE FEARFUL AND CARELESS SHAKEN OUT

The experience of Gideon proves that God does not need great numbers to accomplish His work. The army of 32,000 was practically wiped out when all the frightened ones were invited to go home. Gideon must have been devastated as he watched 22,000 soldiers leave the ranks and run for home. He saw no way of routing the enemy with the remaining 10,000 men. But God saw that there were still too many, so He ordered another test to be applied. On the way to battle every man paused at the river to get a drink of water. All but three hundred of the soldiers carelessly got down on their knees to sip water from the flowing river, making it impossible to keep their eyes on the enemy. The elite three hundred did not drop on their knees, but quickly scooped water into their hands, and lapped it with their tongues. The Lord said:

“By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place.” Judges 7:7.

We know the story of God's great victory that day which He wrought through a small company of Israelites. With lamps and pitchers, and trumpets they shattered the mighty strength of the Midianite army.

What is the lesson for us today as we face our final war of deliverance? There is a beautiful parallel with Gideon's experience. We shall be, literally, a remnant of the remnant, just like the sifted and shaken residue of Gideon's forces. The lesson is that God cannot use COWARDS, and He cannot use CARELESS ones in the crucial battle just before us. We have presented incontestable evidence in this book that God requires bold, courageous followers who will deal with sin in the spirit of Elijah and John the Baptist. Those who give the loud cry under the latter rain, will not fear what man can do to them. They will lay bare the sins of Babylon, and also preach the straight testimony to the slumbering Laodicean church. They will give the trumpet a “certain” sound.

Can careless ones be a part of the sealed saints in the day of battle? All the evidence says no. Our enemy is not the Midianites; our enemy is the world.

“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.” James 4:4.

Have we found it at all possible to accommodate the world and still be sealed during the loud cry? None whatsoever. Those who are carelessly compromising with the world will fall prey to false teaching, because their ability to discern truth and error has been destroyed.

Right now the test of Gideon is being applied to the remnant church, and the exodus is beginning to take place. The cowards and careless are being forced to show their hand as the straight testimony of the True Witness begins to be heard throughout the Seventh-

day Adventist Church. This message will not be sounded by those outside the church, but by those within who are sighing and crying for the abominations which exist among the members.

Never forget that the victorious three hundred in Gideon's day did not win by virtue of numbers or equipment. They were armed with two things only—a lamp in a pitcher and a trumpet. Here is the scenario of victory for the little remnant. The lamp with its oil represents the Holy Spirit in the latter rain which falls only upon the fully obedient, sealed ones. The trumpet symbolizes the bold sounding of the warning against Laodicean worldliness and compromise. Perhaps the comparison of 300 to 32,000 may be significant as to the “small portion” who were described by Sister White. They were the only ones who did not give up the Sabbath and join the opposition. (Testimonies, Vol. 1, p. 608.)

Will the organized church be receptive to the call to regent and renounce the apostasy which has been allowed to develop? In 1888 she was not willing to receive the same message which was described as the beginning of the latter rain. It will never be easy to pull back up to a higher standard. Every lesson of our past teaches us that the downward cascade will continue. But this time the normal, predictable pattern will be broken and changed. It will be a terrible and traumatic decision because it will seem to threaten the entire structure and fabric of the church. All will appear ready to fall and disintegrate, but the church does not fall. The Spirit of God provides the power for a clean break. No one can predict how painful this experience will be. As we have seen, God will raise up many of the common people to replace the brightest lights who will go out. The work will then be finished quickly by those who are ready to depend upon divine power rather than “the training of literary institutions.” (The Great Controversy, p. 606.)

The solemn question which faces each one

of us right now is whether we will be in that special little group who will accept the Laodicean message of repentance and reformation. Even though many rejected the message when it came in 1888, are we more humble and receptive now to such a call? Do we recognize the breakdown of standards, and grieve over the worldly drift of the church? What about your own heart? Does it welcome the call to a deeper cleansing and consecration of life?

“If the professed people of God find their hearts opposed to this straight work, it should convince them that they have a work to do to overcome, if they would not be spewed out ... Those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will receive the latter rain.” Testimonies, Vol. 1, p. 187.

“The church is in the Laodicean state. The presence of God is not in her midst ... What a terrible thing it is to exclude Christ from His own temple! What a loss to the Church! Our Redeemer sends His messengers to bear a testimony to His people . . . But many refuse to receive Him, because they fear that He will be an expensive guest . . . they fear that He will require something from them. And so Jesus of Nazareth passes by. He longs to bestow on them His richest blessings and gifts of grace, but they refuse to accept them.” Brown Leaflet Series, Education, No. 6, 1898.

“The Laodicean message is full of encouragement; for the backslidden church may yet buy the gold of faith and love, may yet have the white robe of the righteousness of Christ, that the shame of their nakedness need not appear. Purity of heart, purity of motive, may yet characterize those who are halfhearted and who are striving to serve God and mammon.

They may yet wash their robes of character and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Bible Commentary, Vol. 7, p. 966.

“The sin of ancient Israel was in disregard-

ing 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 x is as surely resting upon them." Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 94.

Remind yourself often that there is a tremendous parallel between ancient Israel and modern Israel. We have been warned of the terrible danger of following the course pursued by the Jewish nation, which culminated in their rejection as God's people. All that happened to them was for our "admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." (I Corinthians 10:11.) God pleaded with them often to separate from the nations around them, and reject any compromise with Baal worship. Said He:

"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 resting place." Jeremiah 50:6.

The prophet portrays the grief of God over His poor people who find no place to rest. They are led away by their own pastors into strange paths. Then comes God's call again through the prophet Jeremiah:

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." Jeremiah 6:16.

Until God's Israel today returns to the landmarks of truth and restores the old paths-the good way-they will never find that resting place for their souls.

In summary, we can say that the doctrinal confusion in our church is largely the result of worldly compromise. The compromise was generated by a Laodicean lukewarmness which was spawned by the neglect of a personal relationship with Christ. Every link in the chain of apostasy leads right back to

the great, basic problem of not taking time to pray, study, and give Jesus first place in the life. Thus the true remedy for Laodicea is announced to be gold, white raiment and eyesalve, representing the elements of true personal religion. Faith, the Holy Spirit, and the righteousness of Christ will generate such individual revival that it will make a clean sweep of Laodicea, purging and purifying from top to bottom.

What a prospect! God will have a people who reflect the image of Jesus fully. This message will close on a glorious note of triumph. All the powers of hell will not be able to prevail against the church which is built upon the Rock of enduring truth. Out of the crucible of loneliness, betrayal, and persecution God will bring forth a residue of faithful ones who will vindicate His character before the universe.

They will be the ones who gathered strength from the defections of others. They will be the faithful group who looked to Christ rather than men, and would not alter their convictions to please the crowd. These are the loyalists who did not leave the ship because it shook and trembled. True as a needle to the pole their consciences would not bow to the blowing winds of compromise or smooth doctrine.

Do you see yourself, by faith, standing with that shining company upon the sea of glass? God grant that we shall be a part of that precious remnant.