

HISTORIC
LANDMARKS
OF ADVENTISM

Confession. When?

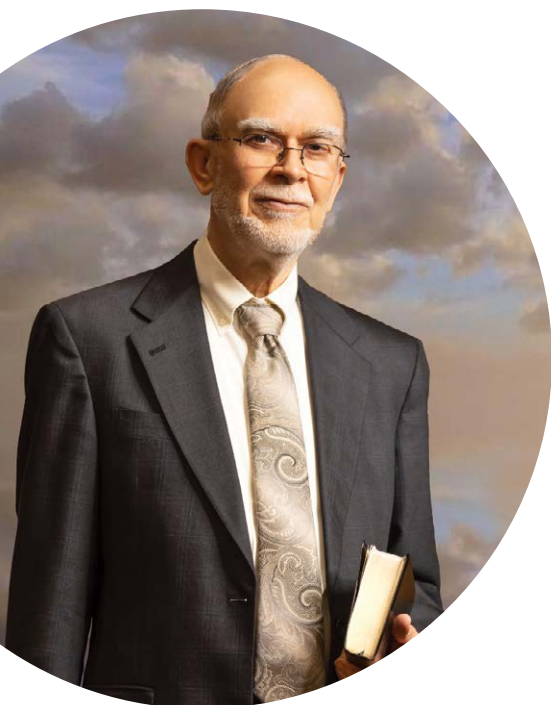
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From the Editor

John J. Grosboll

The Promise of the Melchizedek Priesthood

In the epistle to the Hebrew Christians, the apostle Paul states seven times that God has made Christ a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. He also makes it clear that no one was ever made perfect by the Levitical priesthood as far as the conscience is concerned, and no sin has ever been forgiven by a priest who descended from Levi (Hebrews 10).

So it was necessary that another Priest should come who could do what the descendants of Aaron could never do. What is the function of a priest? He offers gifts and sacrifices for sin (Hebrews 5). It is through the services of a priest that sins are forgiven, but the Levitical priests could not forgive sin, as we saw in the preceding paragraph. However, no one will go to heaven who has his sins forgiven only.

Do not misunderstand. No one can go to heaven unless their sins are forgiven, but it is necessary that more be done for you than just forgiveness of your sins.

In order to go heaven, your sins must be taken away—removed from you completely. The person who has had his sins forgiven is still a sinner even though he has been justified, or forgiven, and is accounted innocent.

The sin itself, the degradation from sin, must be removed. No earthly priest ever has or ever will be able to do this for you, but Jesus can and it must happen if you are to be with Him in heaven.

Paul says that Jesus came to put away sin (Hebrews 9). This is the miracle of salvation that everyone who goes to heaven must have. Only the services of a priest after the order of Melchizedek can do this for you.

No one can be saved by a human priest, that is why Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” John 14:6

The Melchizedek priesthood is all powerful and can save any sinner (Hebrews 7:25).

Have you asked Him to save you? **LM**

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OF ADVENTISM

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LANDMARKS is a magazine of Steps to Life, a ministry established in 1988 by Seventh-day Adventists. It is dedicated to the publication of the historic doctrines held by God's true people in all ages. Its special emphasis is to present truth (2 Peter 1:12)—those historic doctrines espoused by Seventh-day Adventist pioneers in the nineteenth century. Its purpose is to help all of God's remnant people to press together in unity, holding high the banner on which is inscribed the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This magazine is designed to help believers to defend the faith and to expose the flood of false doctrine by which the truth is being assailed in these last days. It is the goal of LANDMARKS' editors to present articles based on truth from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Viewpoints of writers and/or contributors expressed outside of articles printed in this publication are not necessarily the views of this magazine's editors and are not endorsed by Steps to Life Ministries.

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Confession. When?

by John J. Grosboll

Let's begin with the big question: How are a person's sins forgiven?

The basic principle regarding the forgiveness of sins is that to be forgiven, we must be willing to forgive (Matthew 6:14, 15).

Say someone has done a terrible thing against me, and I decide that it is just so awful that there is no way I can forgive them. I might say, "You don't understand how bad this was. I just can't forgive them."

Jesus left us an example so that we would know what to do under such a circumstance. After the soldiers had driven the nails through His hands and feet, after they had raised the cross to savagely drop into the hole prepared for it, did Jesus say, "This is just too much. I cannot possibly forgive them for this, the crown of thorns, the torture and humiliation. I just can't."?

No. With tears streaming down His bloodied face, His body consumed with pain, His heart crying out for each and every person who stood beneath the cross as well as those throughout all time, He pleaded, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Regardless of how bad the hurts, the wrongs, and the harm that our fellow humans may do to us or we may do to them, I am confident that we will experience nothing in this world that is worse than what Jesus experienced in His life—in the judgment hall, as He watched Peter's betrayal, and as He hung on Calvary's cross—suspended between heaven and earth to pay a price we could not pay. And yet, He pled for the souls of the very ones who rejected Him and caused Him so much pain.



So, to be forgiven, we must be willing to forgive those who have wronged us no matter how serious the wrong may be. But we also must repent from our own sins if we want to be forgiven.

The Jews believed that if something disastrous happened to a person, it meant that he was a terrible sinner and God had sent this disastrous thing as punishment for his sins. Even today, a person might be sick with cancer and someone will say, “I wonder what they did wrong?” This belief is recorded in John 9. We find the story of a man blind from birth, and when the disciples saw the man, they asked Jesus, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Verse 2. But Jesus’ response, found in verse 3, was clear: “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.” Consider what Jesus’ words imply. The man was blind his entire life until the day came when Jesus gave him sight, and in doing so, the glory of God was revealed to, in, and through him—a wonderful thought to consider.

We see this same principle in the book of Job. The Lord tried to teach the human race through the story of Job not to assume someone is a terrible sinner just because some disaster happened to them. We read in Job that the Lord called him, “blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.” Job 1:1

The Lord gave Satan the opportunity to bring all kinds of hardships, disasters, and sorrow to Job, and when Job’s friends came to “comfort” him, the theme of their conversation was, “Job, you must have been or done something very bad, otherwise these terrible tragedies would not have befallen you.” But the Lord said that Job was a righteous man and none of these troubles came because he was a great sinner.

We find a similar circumstance in Luke 13. The Jews were wondering about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Jesus’

response was, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you, no, but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” Verses 2, 3

Or what of the 18 who died when the tower in Siloam fell and killed them. “Do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” Verses 4, 5

Jesus is saying, “If you want to be saved, you must repent.”

“Repent therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” Acts 3:19

In Acts 26, we find Paul’s experience on the road to Damascus. In his speech to King Agrippa, he said, “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God and do works befitting repentance.” Verses 19, 20. Everywhere Paul went, he preached the need for repentance.

Speaking to the people in Athens, Paul says, “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” Acts 17:30

Repentance is to be sorry for sin, so sorry that we will quit sinning. Repentance requires sorrow for sin, but it also requires a turning away from it. If I lie, then I must be sorry for the lie, I must go to those I lied to and tell the truth and make amends, I must confess to

God and ask for forgiveness for the lie, and then I must not lie again.

The English word *repentance* is derived from the Greek word *metanoia* (verb=*metanoew*). The word is formed from two words *meta* which means

“after” or “change” and *noew* which means “to think” suggesting the meaning “afterthought” or “a change of mind.” Before repentance we think that sin is wonderful, but after repentance the mind is changed so that we can see just how terrible sin is. Repentance is the

first step in having our sins forgiven, but what leads us to repent? “Or do you despise the riches or the goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” Romans 2:4. How does the goodness of God lead us to repentance? “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3. When a person goes to the cross, he or she is able to see what sin is really like, to see what it really does. It took the death of Jesus to save us from sin, our sin.

Have you spent any time thinking about Jesus on the cross, thinking about what it meant that He was willing to and why He did go? As you ponder it, see it in your mind’s eye—the beating, the crown of thorns, the nails piercing His feet and hands, the blood flowing down His body—your mind begins to change; sin doesn’t seem so wonderful when you stand at the foot of the cross, when you gaze up at your crucified Lord, when you hear Him say, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what

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*For if you forgive men
their trespasses, your
heavenly Father will
also forgive you.*

Matthew 6:14

they do.” This is where the conversion of men’s hearts and minds takes place. Here is where we see the true heinousness of sin.

How can man’s natural love for sin be taken out of his heart and replaced with a sanctified hatred for it? “The preaching of the cross is to us that are saved the power of God.” 1 Corinthians 1:18. To those who are lost, the cross is foolishness. But to the saved, it is the power of God to change lives so that repentance can take place.

“No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation.” *The Desire of Ages*, 555. Genuine repentance means living a life of righteousness rather than one of sinfulness, and results in a reformation in the life. Sorrow for sin cannot be forced, but if you will spend time in your devotions at the cross, your mind and life, your opinions and feelings about sin, and all sinful behavior will be changed. “The cross speaks life, and not death, to the soul that believes in Jesus. Welcome the precious life-giving rays that shine from the cross of Calvary.” *In Heavenly Places*, 52

The next step in genuine repentance is confession. “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” Proverbs 28:13. We all need mercy, but we will not be given mercy until we first confess and forsake our sins.

“Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” James 5:16

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

What a wonderful promise! God stands behind every promise that He has made. Our problem is not that God does not forgive. The problem is that we do not confess. Without confession, there is no forgiveness.

When I became a minister, I preached for many years, but did not preach on confession. I thought that it was so simple,

everybody knew it. I had learned 1 John 1:9 when I was a child and have known it for as long as I can remember. And I thought that other Christians knew it, too, so I never preached about it.

But after a number of years, I began to realize that there were people who had been Christians, Seventh-day Adventists, for many years, who had never confessed their sins. They felt that because they had been Christians for so long, they just didn’t need to do it anymore.

I knew a man, not that long ago, who had been a Christian for over 50 years. He and a relative had a very sharp difference of opinion on something and it resulted in some not-so-kind words between them. The man thought that maybe he ought to confess it, but instead he said, “Well, I guess I just won’t be able to go to heaven, because I can’t confess it.” This man would rather risk eternal life than to confess a sin. How many Christians are there in the world today who are willing to leave their sins unconfessed and lose eternal life?

The Bible and Inspiration explain in great detail how important it is to confess our sins if we want to be forgiven. Remember, without forgiveness we will not reach heaven, and we cannot be forgiven if we do not confess our sins.

Let me start with a quotation from an article on child training. I have often wondered if one of the reasons adult Christians find it so difficult to confess their sins is because they were not taught as children to do it.

“Children are to be taught to be respectful to their parents and to one another. Thus they learn to be respectful to God. They are to be taught to appreciate the abilities God has given them, and to remember that Christ’s love for them calls for the surrender of all to Him. They are to be taught to do right because it is right; to control self, to be kind, loving, and gentle; to forget self in the effort to help others.

“Parents, do all in your power to keep disagreements out of the home circle. If the children quarrel remind them that God has said, ‘Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.’ Teach them never to let the

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We will experience nothing in this world that is worse than what Jesus experienced.

sun go down on angry feelings or sin unconfessed." *The Signs of the Times*, April 23, 1902

What wonderful counsel! Never to let the sun go down on our anger without confession. Every day, as the sun begins its descent below the skyline, we should all ask ourselves the question, "Have I sinned against anyone today that I need to confess?" This is a principle that we should early teach our children.

"At eventide when the children would gather together before going to bed, we would talk over the happenings of the day. Possibly during the day one of the children had said, 'Mother, someone has done thus and so to me.' I had replied that when we all come together in the evening, we could talk it over. When evening came, they had all had time for reflection, and they did not feel inclined to bring charges against one another. They would say, 'Mother, I have done thus and so,' and the tears would start from their eyes, as they would add, 'I feel as though I would like to have you ask the Lord to forgive me. I believe He will.' And then we would bow in prayer, and confess the sins of the day, and pray for forgiveness." *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 7, 270. This was Mrs. White's practice with her children. This is how to raise a child to be a Christian.

We should never go to bed and go to sleep with an unconfessed sin. What if I have a sin that I have left unconfessed for months, maybe even years? What if it is a very serious sin? The good news of the gospel is that big and little sins alike can be forgiven. Whatever sin is in your life, Jesus wants to forgive it and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

The following is an excerpt from a letter Mrs. White wrote to a woman who had been living as a mistress, living in the sin of adultery, for a long time.

"I again address you not to fail in this time which is the crisis of your life, to take the only right course left for you to take. The stronghold of sin is in the will. Put your will on God's side of the



question; place yourself no longer in the position of a sinner, a harlot. You may not see clearly how you will obtain deliverance from the sins which have been cherished and strengthened with repetition. The only way is to confess your sins, forsake them, and believe that Jesus will pardon you.

"Your deliverance is to be found in Christ, and in Him alone. Your temper and your pride must die, and Christ live in you, else you are still in the bondage of sin and iniquity. You must humble your heart before God, and Jesus will pity and save you. ...

"You have been living in adultery so long that sin does not appear heinous to you. You love sin. If now you want to leave sin, you must forever renounce it. ... You must not hide or excuse your sins, but you must arise and make haste to confess your sins, and save your soul by seeking the forgiveness of your sins." *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce*, 140, 141

This is a letter written to an old man in a similar circumstance. "The sands of your life are nearly run out, and now if you will come to God just as you are, without one plea but that He has died to save the chiefest of sinners, you will find

pardon, even in this the eleventh hour. Man must cooperate with God. Christ did not die to have the power to cover transgression unrepented of and unconfessed. Not all sins are to be confessed publicly, but some are to be confessed alone to God and the parties that have been injured." *Ibid.*, 133

Ministers find it difficult to confess their sins because they are supposed to be "men of the cloth." People don't think of them as sinners. Therefore, they don't think of themselves as sinners either.

This statement is from a letter written to the General Conference Committee and the Medical Missionary Board on August 11, 1902. "Dear Brethren: A wonderful work could have been done for the vast company gathered in Battle Creek at the General Conference of 1901, if the leaders of our work had taken themselves in hand. Had thorough work been done at this conference; had there been, as God designed there should be, a breaking up of the fallow ground of the heart by the men who had been bearing responsibilities; had they, in humility of soul, led out in the work of confession and consecration, giving evidence that they received the counsels and warnings sent by the Lord to correct their

mistakes, there would have been [one] of the greatest revivals that there has been since the day of Pentecost.

“But the work that all heaven was waiting to do as soon as men prepared the way was not done. For the leaders in the work closed and bolted the door against the Spirit’s entrance. There was a stopping short of entire surrender to God. Hearts that might have been purified from error were strengthened in wrongdoing. The doors were barred against the heavenly current that would have swept away all evil. Men left their sins unconfessed. They built themselves up in their wrongdoing and said to the Spirit of God, ‘Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee.’

“The Lord calls for the close self-examination to be made now that was not made at the last General Conference when He was waiting to be gracious. The present is our sowing time for eternity. We must reap the fruit of the evil seed we sow, unless we repent the sowing, and ask for forgiveness for the mistakes we have made.” *The Kress Collection*, 95

“Those who, given opportunity to repent and reform, pass over the ground without humbling the hearts before God, without doing faithful work in putting away that which He reproves, will become hardened against the council of the Lord Jesus.” *Battle Creek Letters* (1928), 56

“If a brother does you a wrong, you are not to retaliate by doing him a wrong. If you have done him a wrong, you must go to him, and ask him to forgive you. You must not let an injury to your brother remain unrepented of, and unforgiven, for even one night.” *The Review and Herald*, August 14, 1888

It doesn’t matter who you are or what your position is, if you have made mistakes, if you have sinned, those sins must be confessed. As soon as it is brought to your knowledge that you have done something wrong, the heart must be humbled, and you

must confess it, or you will be lost. Unconfessed sin is unforgiven sin.

When the devil sinned, he tried to justify himself. When Adam and Eve sinned, they tried to justify themselves. This is common among the unrepentant. Mistakes are made and rather than repent, the natural human tendency is to justify, with a prideful heart seeking to prove itself right. But genuine repentance does not seek to justify sin; instead, with a humbled heart, it confesses its mistakes. This is one of the primary ways you can know if you have truly repented or not.

“There are those who are supposed to be excellent men, but they have some flaw in their character which, under special temptation becomes as a dead fly in the ointment. The whole character will be perverted by one unconfessed sin.” *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 13, 190

All excuses for sin are in vain and they will be in vain in the Day of Judgment. To be saved, we must have a Christlike character, but if we have one unconfessed sin, our whole character will be perverted, unfit for heaven.

“What souls are there here who will have their sins unforgiven and their names blotted out of the book of life? We do not know what we are doing. If we have unclean hands we cannot enter heaven.” *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, 158. There is only one way that we are able to enter heaven—if we make a full and complete confession of all our sins.

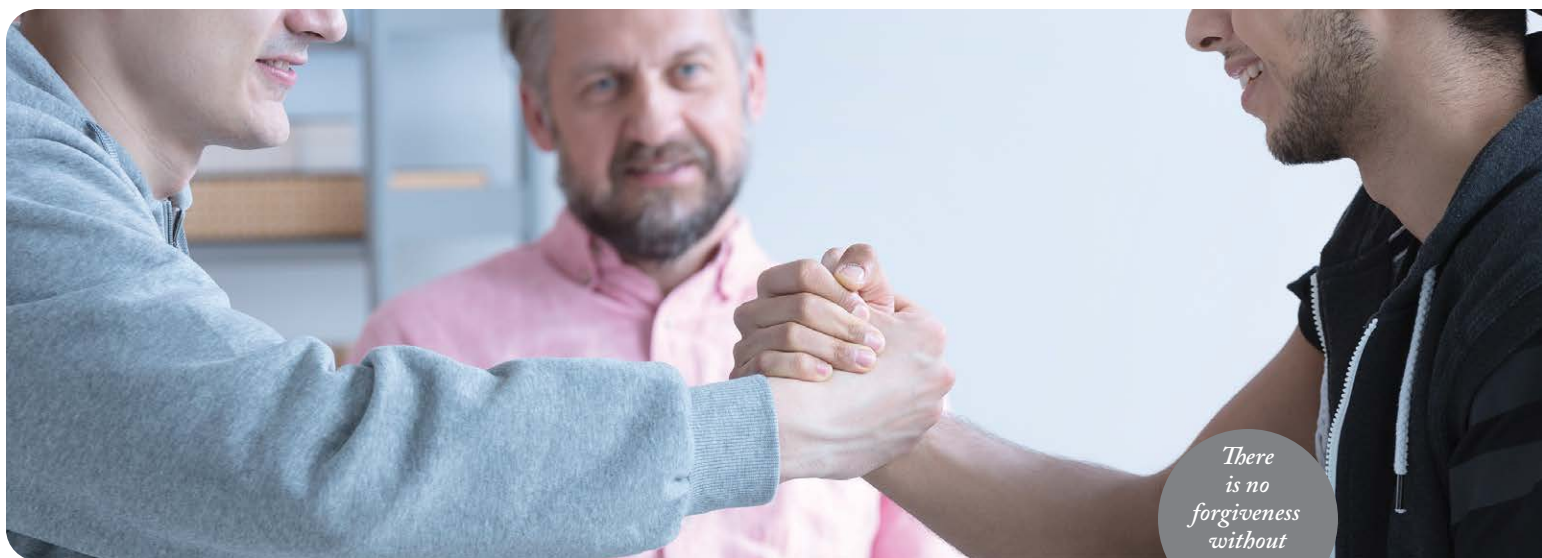
“All sin unrepented of and unconfessed, will remain upon the books of record. It will not be blotted out. It will not go beforehand to Judgment, to be canceled by the atoning blood of Jesus. The accumulated sins of every individual will be written with absolute accuracy and the penetrating light of God’s law will try every secret of darkness. ...

“The day of final settlements is just before us.” *The Review and Herald*, March 27, 1888

Some might say that we should love people, have compassion for people, that we shouldn’t be too hard on people. If they confess, it could cause a lot of trouble in their home or work or school, so we shouldn’t push them to do something that would cause trouble and unhappiness in their lives.

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The story of Job teaches us not to assume someone is a terrible sinner just because some disaster happened to them.



We all will have to face the Day of Judgment. The truth is, unconfessed, unforsaken sins will not be forgiven, they will not be blotted out of heaven's books of record, so we must confess our wrongdoings now, or we, along with all the wicked of the world, will confess them before the universe at the end of the millennium.

"... Errors and unconfessed sins stand registered in heaven and will not be blotted out until [we comply] with the instructions, the directions in the word of God: 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.'" *Testimonies*, Vol. 4, 241

When I was 19 years old, I heard an elderly minister preach about when he became a Christian. Before he became a Christian, he had been a traveling salesman. He worked a specific region of the United States. On many occasions, he had lied in order to help sell his product.

He went through his records and began writing letters of confession to his customers. When he was finished, he had written 726 letters, but his conscience was clear.

Can you imagine it, going to bed tonight, closing your eyes, and falling asleep with a clear conscience? You cannot comprehend how hard it is to

confess until you decide to do it. It takes backbone, but it is wonderful when it is done and you know that your conscience is clear.

"Whatever the character of your sin, confess it. If it is against God only, confess only to Him. If you have wronged or offended others, confess also to them, and the blessing of the Lord will rest upon you. In this way you die to self, and Christ is formed within. Thus you may establish yourself in the confidence of your brethren, and may be a help and blessing to them." *The Review and Herald*, December 16, 1890

We have two choices: confession or cover up. For those who find it difficult to confess, the Holy Spirit will bring back to us, again and again, our sins and errors until we confess.

"If when the Lord reveals your errors you do not repent or make confession, His providence will bring you over the ground again and again. You will be left to make mistakes of a similar character, you will continue to lack wisdom, and will call sin righteousness, and righteousness sin. The multitude of deceptions that will prevail in these last days will encircle you, and you will change leaders, and not know that you have done so. ...

"The Lord reads every secret of the heart. He knows all things. You may now close the book of your remembrance, in order to escape confessing your sins: but when the judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened, you cannot close them. The recording angel has testified that which is true. All that you have tried to conceal and forget is registered, and will be read to you when it is too late for wrongs to be righted. Then you will be overwhelmed with despair. O, it is a terrible thing that so many are trifling with eternal interests, closing the heart against any course of action which shall involve confession!" Ibid.

The question must now be asked, "Are there any sins you still must confess?" If the answer is yes, then begin now, for your soul is in peril. Whatever the Lord brings to your remembrance, confess it and your record will be clean, and when Jesus comes, your garment of character will be spotless and you will be able to go home with Him. **LM**

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No Excuse

by Judy Rebarck

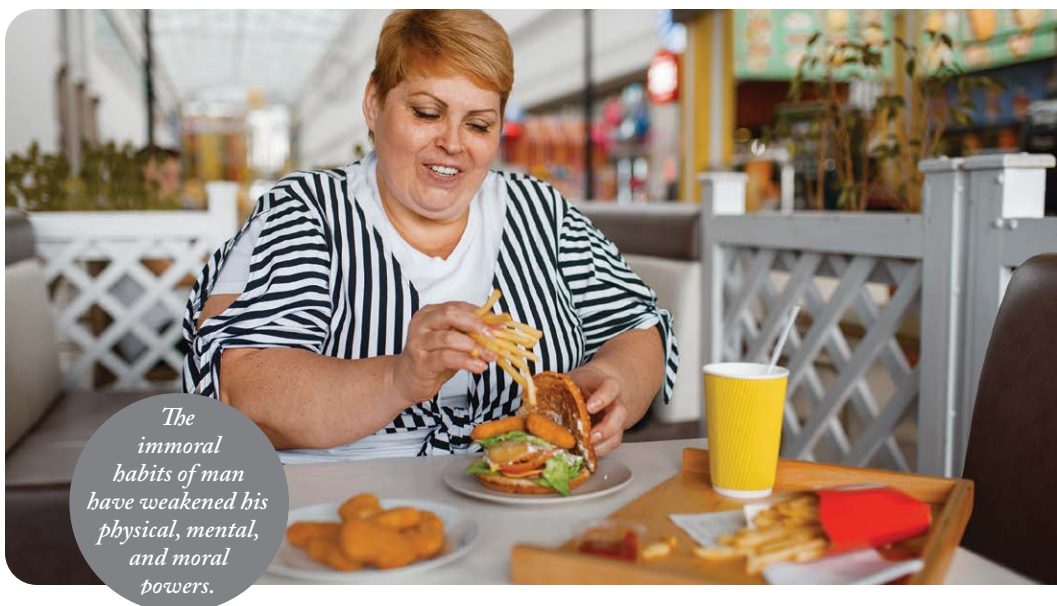
Years ago, there was a comedian who portrayed a character that would often say, “The devil made me do it!” The character used this as an excuse for having done things that they knew they shouldn’t do. How many of us use the same excuse, whether we realize it or not? It seemed funny when spoken as part of the comedian’s skit, but there is nothing funny about sin or making excuses for it.

The Bible tells us that none of us is good, not one (Psalm 14:3), that the human heart seeks only to do evil (Genesis 6:5). Why is mankind so bad? Because our first parents chose to believe a lie rather than to trust in their Creator, and as a consequence they were changed and sin entered the world. This is made clear in the Spirit of Prophecy, “The beginning of yielding to temptation is in the sin of permitting the mind to waver, to be inconsistent in your trust in God. The wicked one is ever watching for a chance to misrepresent God and to attract the mind to that which is forbidden.” *Mind, Character and Personality*, Vol. 1, 31

God had created Adam and Eve in His own image, to be like Him. But disobedience changed them, and their nature became selfish and proud, self-serving and rebellious. Since this change in man’s nature, he naturally is, and seeks to do, evil. Man’s natural sinful tendencies lead him to pursue, nurture, just plain work hard at developing cultivated sins—things such as drinking alcohol, gambling, breaking the Sabbath, adultery, covetousness, jealousy, conceit, pride, and many other things.

James 1:14 describes it this way: “Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.” Since Adam and Eve sinned, each subsequent generation is born to want to do evil and Satan is more than happy to help us continue living that way. “Why is there so much misery and suffering in the world today? Is it because God loves to see His creatures miserable? Oh, no! It is because the immoral habits of man have weakened his physical, mental, and moral powers.” *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 9, 234

Satan has at his disposal a large arsenal that he uses against us with great effectiveness. To begin with, he hates God. God loves us so much that He gave His Son to save us, so consequently, Satan hates us, too. He will do anything and use any means to keep us under his control. He deceives, lies, manipulates, promises, accuses, forces, berates,



insinuates, demeans, and tempts. He has spent the last 6,000 years mastering the art of temptation and wielding the other weapons in his armory.

“If he can, he will fasten the mind upon the things of the world. He will endeavor to excite the emotions, to arouse the passions, to fasten the affections on that which is not for your good; but it is for you to hold every emotion and passion under control, in calm subjection to reason and conscience. Then Satan loses his power to control the mind.” *Mind, Character and Personality*, Vol. 1, 31

First of all, let’s look at what sin is not. Temptation is not sin. You can be tempted all day long, but if you do not yield to temptation, then you have not sinned. Yielding to temptation is sinning.

How many times have you thought your life was all but wasted because of all the sinful things you have done, the wrong choices you have made, the many times you have turned to do your desires rather than to follow God? A hundred times? A thousand? How many times have you thought, “How in the world can God even want me after all I’ve done?” That’s devil talk. Satan is telling you that God cannot love you because you are too bad.

Read the following quotation carefully and, maybe, read it again, “The strongest temptation is no excuse for sin. However great the pressure brought to bear upon the soul, transgression is our own act. It is not in the power of earth or hell to compel anyone to sin. The will must consent, the heart must yield, or passion cannot overbear reason, nor iniquity triumph over righteousness.” *Maranatha*, 225

Did you get that? You cannot be compelled to sin against your will! You can’t even blame it on the devil. If you or I sin, it is a result of our own action.

“It is not because there is any flaw in the title which has been purchased for you that you do not accept it. It is not because the mercy, the grace, the love of the Father and the Son is not ample, and has not been freely bestowed, that you do not rejoice in pardoning love. ... If you are lost, it will be because you will not come unto Christ that you might have life.” *Our Father Cares*, 92

“According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” Then if you are lost, you will be left without excuse.” *Peter’s Counsel to Parents*, 11

“Temptation is not sin unless it is cherished. Looking unto Jesus, the

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Temptation is not sin unless it is cherished. The strongest temptation is no excuse for sin.

Author and Finisher of our faith, will fill the soul with peace and abiding trust. ‘When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him’ [Isaiah 59:19].” *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 2, 343

The devil knows us very well. He knows how to tempt us and he will find every possible way to do it. I grew up watching television—what we called good, wholesome family shows in those days—kid shows, nature shows, and family movies. However, as I got older I began to watch other programs. This opened a whole Pandora’s box of worldly things to see and hear and wonder about. There was hardly a day that went by that the TV wasn’t on in my house, even if I wasn’t watching it. I used the excuse that it provided me with company.

The negative influence that TV programs and movies have had on my life is incalculable. So many of my likes and dislikes, the things that drove many of my decisions in life can, to a large degree, be traced back to the hours and hours I spent watching television. All of these did their work over the years to diminish my desire for prayer and Bible study, and also provided the devil with fertile material to use against me. “Decisions may be made in a moment that fix one’s condition forever. ... But remember, it would take the work of a lifetime to recover what a moment of yielding to temptation and thoughtlessness throws away.” *My Life Today*, 322. Think of all the days and hours thrown away that can never be retrieved again and how much work is now required in order to recover.

“By a momentary act of will you may place yourself in the power of Satan, but it will require more than a momentary act of will to break his fetters and reach for a higher, holier life. The purpose may be formed, the work begun, but its accomplishment will require toil, time, and perseverance, patience, and sacrifice. The

man who deliberately wanders from God in the full blaze of light will find, when he wishes to set his face to return, that briars and thorns have grown up in his path, and he must not be surprised or discouraged if he is compelled to travel long with torn and bleeding feet. The most fearful and most to be dreaded evidence of man’s fall from a better state is the fact that it costs so much to get back. The way of return can be gained only by hard fighting, inch by inch, every hour.” *Ibid.*

These are all sobering thoughts and quotations, but my purpose for this writing is not to discourage or cause anguish of heart. Yes, we are tempted. Yes, we have yielded, but, praise God, we don’t have to yield. “There is no excuse for man to remain in transgression and sin, because strength has been provided for him in Jesus, that he may overcome. The God of heaven Himself is working by His Spirit.” *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 9, 233. Imagine! God Himself is working on your behalf to make us strong enough to resist temptation.

Christ came to this world to pay the penalty for sins on behalf of every man, woman, and child, but He also came to live the very life that God has promised to every man. God doesn’t just say, “Do this.” Or “Be this.” No. He says I have shown you the way, walk in it. I have provided everything you will need, including My promise that you will be able to do it (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, 333).

“Not only did Christ give explicit rules showing how we may become obedient children, but He showed us in His own life and character just how to do those things which are right and acceptable with God, so there is no excuse why we should not do those things which are pleasing in His sight. ...

“In Him was found the perfect ideal. To reveal this ideal as the only true standard for attainment; to show what every human being might become; what, through the indwelling of humanity by divinity, all who received Him would become—for this, Christ came to the world. He came to show how men are to be trained as befits the sons of God; how on earth they are to practice the principles and to live the life of heaven.” *Our Father Cares*, 310

“We are ever to be thankful that Jesus has proved to us by actual facts that man can keep the commandments of God, giving contradiction to Satan’s falsehood that man cannot keep them. The Great Teacher came to our world to stand at the head of humanity, to thus elevate and sanctify humanity by His holy obedience to all of God’s requirements showing it is possible to obey all the commandments of God. He has demonstrated that a lifelong obedience is possible. Thus He gives men to the world, as the Father gave the Son, to exemplify in their life the life of Jesus Christ.” *Lift Him Up*, 170

Some have said that Christ did this because He was God. But if Jesus had had a single advantage that is not available to us, how could we follow what He says, live as He lived?

“We need not place the obedience of Christ by itself as something for which He was particularly adapted, by His particular divine nature, for He stood before God as man’s representative and [was] tempted as man’s substitute and surety. If Christ had a special power which it is not the privilege of man to have, Satan would have made capital of this matter. The work of Christ was to take from the claims of Satan his control of man, and He could do this only in the way that He came—a man, tempted as a man, rendering the obedience of a man.” *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 6, 340

“Our Lord was tempted as man is tempted. He was capable of yielding to temptations, as are human beings. His finite nature was pure and spotless, but the divine nature that led Him to say to Philip, ‘He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father’ also, was not humanized; neither was humanity deified by the blending or union of the two natures; each retained its essential character and properties.

“The divine nature, combined with the human, made Him capable of yielding to Satan’s temptations. Here the test to Christ was far greater than



The negative influence of TV and movies can be incalculable.

that of Adam and Eve, for Christ took our nature, fallen but not corrupted, and would not be corrupted unless He received the words of Satan in the place of the words of God. To suppose He was not capable of yielding to temptation places Him where He cannot be a perfect example for man, and the force and the power of this part of Christ’s humiliation, which is the most eventful, is no instruction or help to human beings.” *Ibid.*, Vol. 16, 182, 183

“Obedience is the outgrowth and fruit of oneness with Christ and the Father. ...

“Bear in mind that Christ’s overcoming and obedience is that of a true human being. In our conclusions, we make many mistakes because of our erroneous views of the human nature of our Lord. When we give, to His human nature, a power that it is not possible for man to have in his conflicts with Satan, we destroy the completeness of His humanity. His imputed grace and power He gives to all who receive Him by faith. The obedience of Christ to His Father was the same obedience that is required of man.” *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, 340, 341

Wait, I am to give the same obedience to God as Christ gave? How is that possible?

“Man cannot overcome Satan’s temptations without divine power to combine with his instrumentality. So with Jesus Christ, He could lay hold of divine power. He came not to our world to give the obedience of a lesser God to a greater, but as a man to obey God’s holy law, and in this way He is our example.

“The Lord Jesus came to our world, not to reveal what a God could do, but what a man could do, through faith in God’s power to help in every emergency. Man is, through faith, to be a partaker in the divine nature, and to overcome every temptation wherewith he is beset. The Lord now demands that every son and daughter of Adam through faith in Jesus Christ, serve Him in human nature which we now have.

“The Lord Jesus has bridged the gulf that sin has made. He has connected earth with heaven, and finite man with the infinite God. Jesus, the world’s Redeemer, could only keep the commandments of God, in the same way

that humanity can keep them. 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.'

2 Peter 1:4. ...

"... by thinking and talking of Jesus we become charmed with His character, and by faith we become changed from character to character. 'And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after

God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' ... We must practice the example of Christ, bearing in mind His Sonship and His humanity. It was not God that was tempted in the wilderness, nor a god that was to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself. It was the Majesty of heaven who became a man—humbled Himself to our human nature." Ibid., 341, 342

Because of the example set forth in the life of Jesus Christ we "need not retain one sinful propensity. ...

"Christ was obedient to every requirement of the law. ...

"By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. 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. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe

of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah.

"Through the plan of redemption, God has provided means for subduing every sinful trait, and resisting every temptation, however strong.

"The strongest temptation is no excuse for sin. However great the pressure brought to bear upon the soul, transgression is our own act. It is not in the power of earth or hell to compel anyone to sin. The will must consent, the heart must yield, or passion cannot overbear reason, nor iniquity triumph over righteousness. ...

"As we partake of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are cut away from the character, and we are made a living power for good. Ever learning of the divine Teacher, daily partaking of His nature, we cooperate with God in overcoming Satan's temptations. God works, and man works, that man may be one with Christ as Christ is one with God. Then we sit together with Christ in heavenly places. The mind rests with peace and assurance in Jesus." *Maranatha*, 225

"By faith and prayer all may meet the requirements of the gospel. No man can be forced to transgress. His own consent must be first gained; the soul must purpose the sinful act, before passion can dominate over reason, or iniquity triumph over conscience. Temptation, however strong, is no excuse for sin." *The Signs of the Times*, February 8, 1883

"The work to which Christ calls us is to the work of progressive conquest over spiritual evil in our characters. Natural tendencies are to be overcome. ... Appetite and passion must be conquered, and the will must be placed wholly on the side of Christ." *The Review and Herald*, June 14, 1892

Friends, this is good news. Never again do you have to feel like a failure. Never again do you have to believe that you are too great a sinner and therefore are unable to change. Never again will the devil be able to say that you are his.

"If you will stand under the bloodstained banner of Prince Emmanuel, faithfully doing His service, you need never yield to temptation; for One stands by your side



Think of all the days and hours thrown away that can never be retrieved.

who is able to keep you from falling.”
Maranatha, 225

David is an example of one who was tempted, and who yielded with grave and horrible consequences. When darkness was brought upon his soul by his sins with Bathsheba and his desire to have her at all cost, he offered no excuse. Immediately, he accepted responsibility for what he had done and the painful results that would follow.

“David awakens as from a dream. He feels the sense of his sin. He does not seek to excuse his course, or palliate his sin, as did Saul; but with remorse and sincere grief, he bows his head before the prophet of God, and acknowledges his guilt. . . .” *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 2, 1023

Christ met Satan, a defeated foe, and prevailed. “The humanity of Christ received the fallen foe and engaged in battle with him. He was sustained in the conflict by divine power just as man will be sustained by his being a partaker of the divine nature. He gained victory after victory as our Champion, the Captain of our salvation . . .

“All heaven rejoiced because humanity, the workmanship of God, was placed in an elevated scale with God by the signal victory gained. Christ was more than conqueror, leaving the way open that man may be more than conqueror through Christ’s merits, because He loved him. . . .” *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 16, 183, 184

“Temptation and trial will come to us all, but we need never be worsted by the enemy. Our Saviour has conquered in our behalf. Satan is not invincible. . . . Christ was tempted that He might know how to help every soul that should afterward be tempted. Temptation is not sin; the sin lies in yielding. To the soul who trusts in Jesus, temptation means victory and greater strength.” *Our High Calling*, 87

Do you want to walk with Jesus in truth and righteousness? Then claim the promise “It is not in the power of earth or hell to compel anyone to sin.” It is in



the time of trial and temptation that we are able to measure our faith in God and the firmness of our character.

“Do not say, ‘It is impossible for me to overcome.’ Do not say, ‘It is my nature to do thus and so, and I cannot do otherwise. I have inherited weaknesses that make me powerless before temptation.’ In your own strength you cannot overcome, but help has been laid upon One that is mighty. . . .

“God has given His Holy Spirit as a power sufficient to subdue all your hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong-doing. By yielding the mind to the control of the Spirit, you will grow into the likeness of God’s perfect character, and will become an instrumentality through which He can reveal His mercy, His goodness and His love.

“Whatever may be your defects, the Holy Spirit will reveal them, and grace will be given you to overcome. Through the merits of the blood of Christ you may be a conqueror, yes, more than a conqueror. Will you who read these words resolve never again to excuse

your defects of character by saying, ‘It is my way’? Let no one again declare, ‘I cannot change my natural habits and tendencies.’ Let the truth be admitted into the soul, and it will work to sanctify the character.” *The Youth’s Instructor*, October 2, 1902

“All the satanic legions cannot injure you unless you open your soul to the arts and arrows of Satan. Your ruin can never take place until your will consents. If there is not pollution of mind in yourself, all the surrounding pollution cannot taint or defile you.” *Our Father Cares*, 96, 97

“I must continually have my strength in God. My dependence must not waiver. No human agency must come between my soul and my God. The Lord is our only hope. In Him I trust, and He will never, no never, fail me.” *That I May Know Him*, 266 **LM**

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The Beginning of Religion

A Lie About the Immortal Soul

by Marcin Watras

Religious diversity in the world is vast. From the very beginning of civilization, religions have played a significant role in the lives of both societies and individuals. Specific beliefs have determined the understanding of the metaphysical reality, which has always had its impact on the way of life and its quality for individuals.

Despite the multitude of different religions in the world, there is a certain religious doctrine that has exerted and continues to exert a profound influence not only on the religious world, but also on the broader cultural landscape. This common element, a denominator that connects almost all Christian denominations, Judaism, Islam, as well as Eastern and pagan religions, is the belief in the immortality of the soul. This belief dates back to the very beginnings of human civilization. Therefore, if we want to understand the origins of human religious systems, we need to go back to the dawn of humanity—to the garden of Eden—specifically to the conversation between Eve and Satan.

The Primordial Lie of Satan

God had instructed the first humans that their lives depended on obedience to the rules of life established by Him as their Creator. God said “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Genesis 2:16, 17 ESV. However, when Eve was confronted by Satan in the form of the serpent, he questioned God’s direction, saying, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” Eve’s response was that God had told them to eat freely of all the trees of the garden except for this one tree. And if they ate, or even touched, the fruit, they would die. But Satan then replaced what God had said with a lie of his own, “You will not surely die.” Genesis 3:1–4 ESV

Contagious Idea

Satan’s lie became the beginning of the theory of unconditional human immortality. The adversary of God was the creator of the idea that humans can live eter-

nally independent of God, regardless of divine law. When deceived by Satan’s lies, humans sinned by rebelling against God, choosing independence from Him. God was no longer at the center of human life; instead, it was human ego. Convinced by the devil of their uniqueness and the greatness of their own “self,” humans believed that the ego could survive the death of the body, that it was something distinct from their physical tissue, which was subject to degradation and ultimately death, and therefore, that the ego is and must be immortal. For the tainted human nature influenced by sin, the idea that the immaterial “self” is immortal is incredibly tempting, attractive, and highly contagious. Consequently, the majority of Christianity did not resist it. How did it happen that the idea of the immortality of the human soul, which contradicts the words of God, became part of Christian doctrine?

Ancient philosophy

In the realm of Western civilization and culture, the concept of a self-exis-

tent, immaterial, spiritual, and immortal soul, which is widespread in, among others, the Roman Catholic Church and many Protestant denominations, appeared in Christianity primarily through Greek philosophical concepts, specifically through the philosophy of Plato.

Theories and Views

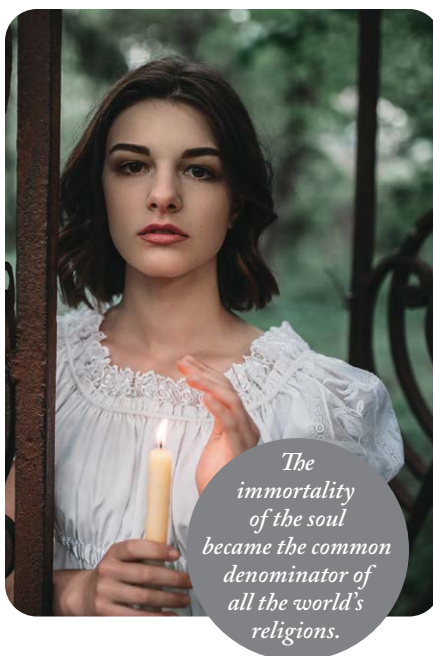
Plato argued that a human being consists of two fundamental elements: an immortal soul and a mortal body. Therefore, Plato's concept of the soul is a form of dualism. Dualism suggests that a human being is not a homogeneous entity but rather composed of multiple elements, specifically that the structure of a human being consists of two fundamental components: the soul or spirit and the body.¹ The issue is that Plato's concept of the soul is not solely a product of his philosophical reasoning but has its origins in the mystical religious beliefs of Orphism, which Plato refined and elaborated upon. Hence, Plato's concept of the soul has a distinctly (false) religious origin.

Mysteries of the Mysteries

The word *mystery* comes from the Greek *mysterion*, which originally meant "dedicated rite" and later became associated with "secrecy" or "hidden knowledge." The Romans translated *myein* as *initiare*, which means "to introduce to something" (from *initium*, meaning "beginning"). The process of initiation was called *initiatio*. Therefore, initiation was understood as receiving knowledge, and by extension, transitioning into a new form of religiosity. Initiation distinguished mystery cults from the commonly accepted and practiced religion.² Mysteries were, therefore, rites of passage or entry—an initiation into another reality, a spiritual reality.

Mystical Platonism

In ancient Greece, alongside the official state religion practiced publicly and privately, there existed ancient mystery cults with pre-Greek origins. These cults



*The
immortality
of the soul
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religions.*

showed influences from Egyptian and Eastern spirituality. Mystery cults had a significant impact on shaping Greek spirituality and philosophy because Greek philosophy is an integral part of Greek spirituality. What distinguishes Greek philosophies is their specific experiential foundation, rooted in a particular kind of experience. Philosophical experience defines the spirit of philosophy. Therefore, it can be said that the philosophy of Plato, as well as the entire Platonic philosophy, is profoundly mystical and, as such, adopts and continues the tradition of Greek mysteries.³ It was the Orphic mysteries in particular that allowed Plato to recognize the spiritual essence in humans above all else, with all the consequences that follow. According to Plato, "... if any one of us is to have pure knowledge of anything, he must get rid of the body and contemplate things by themselves with the soul by itself. Then, I suppose, it will be plain that we shall attain to that which we desire and shall achieve that goal which we have in view, if there is a goal of this kind."⁴

Updating an Old Lie

The Orphics held a doctrine of the immortality and divinity of the soul, a

motif that is very clearly present in Plato's teachings about the soul. Plato describes the soul as being most similar to what is divine and immortal, accessible only to thought, having a single form, indivisible, and always self-identical.⁵ The Orphics believed in an immortal, divine soul trapped in an impure body. According to Orphic belief, the body is merely a prison and a tomb for the true, spiritual human being. Liberation from this bodily imprisonment is necessary to return to the divine sphere of the universe. Orphic mysteries promised humans a return to the world of the gods, provided they purify themselves from bodily attachments.⁶ When we explore Orphic beliefs, it is easy to hear echoes of the devil's lie in the garden of Eden. After all, Orphic beliefs contain the conviction that the immaterial essence of humans—the soul—certainly does not die because it is immortal. Through mysteries, the human soul can attain enlightenment and recognize its divine nature. "The serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" Genesis 3:4–5 ESV. Just as Greek mysteries updated Satan's old lie in the ancient world, the New Age movement has, through its beliefs, updated the devil's lie for our modern times. Consequently, contemporary culture and popular culture are permeated with the belief in the immortal soul, as observed almost daily in news articles, social media posts, and common entertainment venues.

Platonic dualism

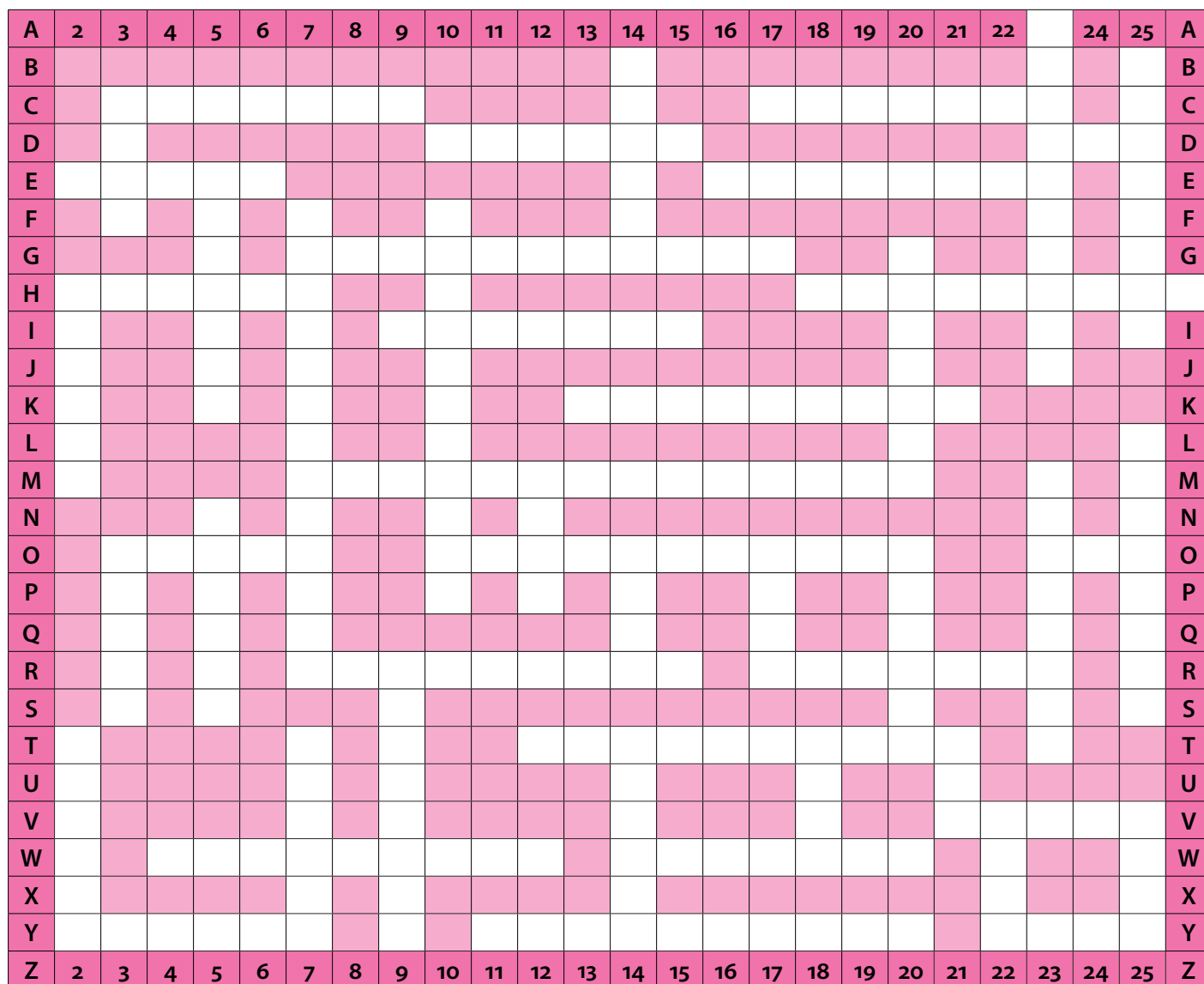
All elements of the mysterious religion of the Orphics can be found in Plato's philosophy except for the Orphic cult and rituals. Plato simply rationalized Orphic mysticism to fit the needs of his philosophy. In Plato's view, reality always had a dualistic structure. In the

continued on page 34

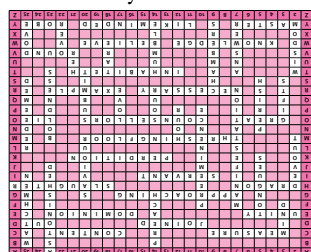
Clues – KJV

C3	Grace is given according to the _____ of God's gift.	Ephesians 4:7
C17	I have learned to be _____.	Philippians 4:11
D10	Be _____ together with the same mind.	1 Corinthians 1:10
D23	A river went _____ of Eden.	Genesis 2:10
E2	God desires we all come into _____.	Ephesians 4:13
E16	Let not iniquity have _____ over me.	Psalms 119:133
G7	Assemble together as you see the day _____.	Hebrews 10:25
H2	Michael fought with the _____ in heaven.	Revelation 12:7
H18	Saul breathed out threatenings and _____ against the disciples.	Acts 9:1
I9	Moses was a _____ of the Lord.	Joshua 22:5
K13	The man of sin is the son of _____.	2 Thessalonians 2:3
M7	Uzzah touched the ark of God at Nachon's _____.	2 Samuel 6:6
O3	Moses dealt with _____ matters.	Exodus 18:22
O10	In a multitude of _____, is safety.	Proverbs 11:14
O23	Of the things he wrote, Paul did not _____.	Galatians 1:20
R7	The more feeble members of the body are _____.	1 Corinthians 12:22
R17	Christ left us an _____.	1 Peter 2:21
T12	The high and lofty One that _____ eternity.	Isaiah 57:15
V21	They were afraid when the glory of the Lord shone _____ about them.	Luke 2:9
W4	A _____ of the Son of God is necessary for eternal life.	Ephesians 4:13
W14	Christ prayed that the world may _____.	John 17:21
Y2	One is your _____.	Matthew 23:8
Y11	Be _____, having love and one mind.	Philippians 2:2
Y22	Soldiers put a purple _____ on Jesus.	John 19:2

A23	The people were _____ at Jesus' doctrines.	Matthew 7:28
B14	Believers are commissioned to _____ the gospel.	Mark 16:15
B25	Thy _____ shall lift up the voice and sing.	Isaiah 52:8
C3	The people had a _____ to work.	Nehemiah 4:6
E5	Some are given the gift of _____.	1 Corinthians 12:10
F7	The _____ of the Spirit is given to every man.	1 Corinthians 12:7
F10	Christ has _____ over all things.	Colossians 1:18
G20	Christ is the _____ of the body.	Ephesians 5:23
H2	Cornelius was a _____ man.	Acts 10:2
L25	The 144,000 will be _____ from the earth.	Revelation 14:3
M12	Daniel was astonished for one _____.	Daniel 4:19
M23	Peter and John appeared with _____.	Acts 4:13
N5	The Father wants none to _____.	Matthew 18:14
O3	_____ are given according to grace.	Romans 12:6
O14	The fathers have eaten _____ grapes.	Jeremiah 31:29
O17	The greatest commandment.	John 13:34
O20	The young should _____ to the elder.	1 Peter 5:5
R9	The _____ will be filled with riches.	Proverbs 24:4
T6	Through _____, a soul is saved.	Proverbs 24:3



Answer Key:



- T7 Be ready always to give an _____ to every man of your hope.I Peter 3:15
 T14 God gives grace to the _____.I Peter 5:5
 T18 The devil threw him down, and _____ him.Luke 9:42
 T21 God made woman and brought _____ to the man.Genesis 2:22
 V22 God made man to have dominion _____ all things.Genesis 1:26
 V25 The Spirit of God descended like a _____.Matthew 3:16

A Boy Who Was Wanted



Well, I found out one thing,” said Jack, as he came to his mother. He was hot, tired, and dusty.

“What is that?” she asked.

“That there are a great many boys in the world.”

“Didn’t you know that before?”

“Partly; but I didn’t know there were so many more boys than are wanted.”

“Why do you think there are more than are wanted?”

“Because I have been ’round and ’round till I am worn out, trying to find a place to work. Wherever I go, there are more boys than places. Doesn’t that show that there are too many boys?”

“Not exactly,” said his mother, with a smile. “It depends entirely on the kind of boy. An honest, dependable boy is always wanted somewhere.”

“Well, if I am that boy, I wish that I knew that I was wanted.”

“Patience, patience, my boy. In such a great world as this is, with so many places and so many boys, it is no wonder some of them do not find their places at once. But be sure, dear,” as she laid her

hand on his arm, “that every boy who wants a chance to do fair, honest work will find it.”

“That’s the kind of work I want to do,” said Jack. “I don’t want anybody’s money for nothing. Let me see, what have I to offer? All the schooling and all the wits I have been able to get up in thirteen years; good, stout hands, and a civil tongue.”

“And a mind and heart set on doing faithful duty,” suggested his mother.

“I hope so,” said Jack. “I remember Father used to say: ‘Just as soon as you undertake to work for anyone, you must bear in mind that you have sold yourself for the given time. Your time, your strength, your energy, are his, and your best efforts to seek his interests in every way are his due.’”

The earnest tone in which the boy spoke seemed to give assurance that he would pay good heed to the words of the father whose counsel could no more reach him.

For two or three days longer Jack had reason to hold his opinion that there were more boys than the world wanted,

at the end of which time he met a businessman who, questioning him closely, said, “There are a great many applications for the place, but a large number of the boys come and stay a short time, and then leave if they think they can do a little better. When a boy gets used to our route and customers, we want him to stay. If you will agree to stay at least three years, we will agree to pay you three dollars a week as errand boy.”

“That is just what I wanted to do, sir,” said Jack, eagerly. So he was installed, and proud enough he was to bring his wages home every week, and realize that, small as they were, the regular help was of great value to his mother.

It is not to be wondered at that the faithful carrying out of his father’s admonition after a while attracted the attention not only of his employers, but of others with whom he was brought in contact in the pursuit of his duties. One day he was asked into the office of Mr. Lang, a gentleman to whom he frequently carried parcels of value.

“Have you ever thought of changing your situation?” asked Mr. Lang.

"No, sir," said Jack.

"Perhaps you could do better," said the other. "I want a boy who is quick and intelligent, and who can be relied on; and, from what I see of you, I think you are that sort of boy. I want you to drive a delivery wagon, and will pay you five dollars a week."

Jack's eyes opened wide.

"It is wonderfully good pay for a boy like me, I am sure. But I promised to keep on with Mr. Hill for three years, and the second year is only just begun."

"Well, have you signed a regular agreement with Mr. Hill?"

"No, sir; I told him I would stay."

"You have a mother to assist, you told me. Could you not tell Mr. Hill that you feel obliged to do better, when you have a chance?"

"I don't believe I could," said Jack, looking with his straight, frank gaze into the gentleman's face. "You see, sir, if I broke my word with him, I should not be the kind of boy to be relied on that you want."

"I guess you are about right," said Mr. Lang, with a sigh. "Come and see me when your time is out; I dare say I shall want you then."

Jack went home very much stirred by what had been said to him.

After all, could it be wrong to go where he would do so much better? Was it not really his duty to accept the position? He could then drive the wagon instead of trudging wearily along the streets. They had never felt so hot and dusty as they did just now, when he might escape from the tiresome routine. Might, but how? —By the sacrifice of his pledged word; by selling his truth and his honor. So strongly did the reflection force itself upon him that when he told his mother of the offer he had received, he merely added, "It would be a grand good thing if I could take it, wouldn't it, Mother?"

"Yes, it would. Some boys would change without thinking of letting a

promise stand in their way, but that is the kind of boy who, sooner or later, is not wanted. It is because you have not been that sort of boy that you are wanted now."

Jack worked away, doing such good work, as he became more and more accustomed to the situation, that his mother sometimes wondered that Mr. Hill, who seemed always kindly interested in him, never appeared to think of raising his pay. This, however, was not Mr. Hill's way of doing things, even though he showed an increasing disposition to trust Jack with important business.

So the boy trudged through the three years, at the end of them having been trusted far more than is usually the case with errand boys. He had never forgotten the offer made by Mr. Lang, and one day, meeting that gentleman on the street, ventured to remind him that his present engagement was nearly out, adding, "You spoke to me about driving the wagon, sir."

"Ah, so I did; but you are older now and worth more. Call around and see me."

One evening, soon after, Jack lingered in Mr. Hill's office after the other errand boys had been paid and had gone away.

"My three years are up tonight, sir," he said.

"Yes, they are," said Mr. Hill.

"Will you give me a recommendation to someone else, sir?"

"Well, I will, if you are sure that you want to leave me."

"I did not know that you wanted me to stay, but"—he hesitated, and then went

on—"my mother is a widow, and I feel as if I ought to do the best I can for her, and Mr. Lang told me to call on him."

"Has Mr. Lang ever made you an offer?"

Jack told him what Mr. Lang had said nearly two years before.

"Why didn't you go then?" asked Mr. Hill.

"Because I had promised to stay with you; but you wouldn't blame me for trying to better myself now?"

"Not a bit of it. Are you tired of running errands?"

"I'd rather ride than walk," said Jack with a smile.

"I think it is about time you were doing better than either. Perhaps you think that you have been doing this faithful work for me through these years for next to nothing; but if so, you are mistaken. You have been doing better work than merely running errands. You have been serving an apprenticeship to trust and honesty. I know you now to be a straightforward, reliable boy, and it takes time to learn that. It is your capital, and you ought to begin to realize it. You may talk to Mr. Lang if you wish, but I will give you a place in the office, with a salary of six hundred dollars for the first year, with the prospect of a raise after that."

Jack did not go to see Mr. Lang, but straight to his mother, with a shout and a bound.

"You're right, you're right, Mother!" he cried. "No more hard work for you, Mother. I'm wanted, you see, wanted enough to get good pay! All the hardest part is over."

Stories Worth Re-reading, RHPA,
©1913, 264-268 **LM**





Everyone a Watchman

So far as his opportunities extend, everyone who has received the light of truth is under the same responsibility as was the prophet of Israel to whom came the word: "Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at My mouth, and warn them from Me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." Ezekiel 33:7-9

Are we to wait until the fulfillment of the prophecies of the end before we say anything concerning them? Of what value will our words be then? Shall we wait until God's judgments fall upon the transgressor before we tell him how to avoid them? Where is our faith in the word of God? Must we see things foretold come to pass before we will believe

what He has said? In clear, distinct rays light has come to us, showing us that the great day of the Lord is near at hand, "even at the doors." Let us read and understand before it is too late.

We are to be consecrated channels, through which the heavenly life is to flow to others. The Holy Spirit is to animate and pervade the whole church, purifying and cementing hearts. Those who have been buried with Christ in baptism are to rise to newness of life, giving a living representation of the life of Christ. Upon us is laid a sacred charge. The commission has been given us: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:19, 20, margin. You are dedicated to the work of making known the gospel of salvation. Heaven's perfection is to be your power.

Testimonies, Vol. 9, 20, 21 **LM**



Jubilee

“While I was in England, one day there was a great parade in the streets. It was the Queen’s Jubilee. Everyone was talking about it. The shop windows were filled with her pictures, and all were extolling the queen of England.” *The Review and Herald*, February 11, 1890

The Royal Jubilee is the celebration of a significant milestone in a British monarch’s reign. The Silver Jubilee marks 25 years, Ruby is 40, Golden is 50, Diamond is 60, and Platinum is 70 years. Monarchs rarely lived long enough to reach most of these milestones, but since the early 1800s there have been two: Queen Victoria and her granddaughter, Queen Elizabeth.

Mrs. White’s reference to the Queen’s Jubilee is regarding the June 1887 Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria. She ruled from 1837 to 1901—64 years—the longest reign of any British monarch, until Elizabeth celebrated her Platinum Jubilee in June 2022. Elizabeth would reign for an additional three months until her death on September 8, 2022.

The Royal Jubilee is marked by celebration throughout the Commonwealth—banquets, parades through London, visiting dignitaries, and firework displays. The British public is invited to join in the celebration, lining the streets and cheering for their monarch. It is estimated that \$1.4 million was spent on Queen Elizabeth’s Jubilee and that over a million of England’s citizenry participated in the event.

“If men can make so much ado over the Queen’s Jubilee, if they can manifest so much enthusiasm over a finite being, can we not speak to the glory of the Prince of Life, who is so soon to come in majesty to take His weary, worn followers to Himself ...?” Ibid.

Hark! The Jubilee is sounding
O the joyful news is come,
Free salvation is proclaimed
In and through God’s only Son.
Now we have an invitation,
To the meek and lowly Lamb,
Glory, honor, and salvation,
Christ the Lord is come to reign.
Now let each one cease from sinning,

Come and follow Christ the Way;
We shall all receive a blessing,
If from Him we do not stray;
Golden moments we’ve neglected,
O the time we’ve spent in vain.
Glory, honor, and salvation;
Christ the Lord is come to reign.

Come, dear children, praise your Jesus,
Praise Him, praise Him evermore.
May His great love now constrain us,
His great name for to adore:
O then let us join together,
Crowns of glory to obtain,
Glory, honor, and salvation;
Christ the Lord is come to reign.

*Hymns and Spiritual Songs for the use of
Christians, 1803* 



Your Letters

"I've been so greatly blessed with the articles in *LandMarks* recently. I so love the magazine. I need to have suggestions on how to pass them along. I have so many I've kept."

—JA, Colorado

"Thank you for the blessings we get each month from the *LandMarks*, DVDs and CDs."

—LF, Florida

"Praise God we are blessed by the health articles, the sermons and stories from the Scriptures, and the children's stories each month found in the *LandMarks* magazine."

—JH, Wisconsin

"The *LandMarks* series articles "The Mystery of Godliness" are so beautiful, powerful, and true! Only the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy give the whole truth. I prayerfully read it over and over again. I'm so thankful for the Steps to Life Ministry."

—MP, Oregon

January Sermon of the Month

God's Mission for His Church, Pt. 2

by John J. Grosboll

Though God knows that the vast majority of the world will reject Him, He still has given the Seventh-day Adventist church the mission of taking the three angels' messages to the world.

All who
have donated in
the past month will
automatically receive this
Sermon of the Month
free of charge.

From the Desk of Pastor John J. Grosboll

January 2024

Dear Friend,

No one will go to heaven alone. If you go to heaven someday, there will be at least one other person who is there because of your influence in their life. Unfortunately, the same is true in regard to the final lake of fire that will destroy the wicked, root and branch. The Bible says that none of us lives to himself (Romans 14:7).

There are individuals who are the only Christian in their immediate families. I am always interested in such individuals, and I have learned many surprising stories from all over the country such as this one:

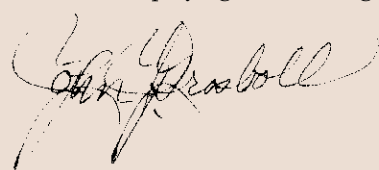
Both of my parents were alcoholics [or sometimes drug users] and were not at all religious. There was no religious influence in our home, but my grandmother would come on Saturdays and take me to Sabbath School.

So how can you influence others in the right direction? One way is by inviting them to go with you to church. Of course, for this type of witnessing to be effective you have to be going to a church where the gospel or plan of salvation is studied every Sabbath. Your church does not need to have many members. It does not need to be a large church or have an extravagant building, as some churches are these days. But the church should be organized with friendly people inside.

In the last three years, many people have stopped going to church just as they have stopped going to work—they think that they can do everything at home by themselves just as well. The problem is that we do not know as much as Jesus knows, and if it was not important to go to church, He would not have set that example for us and left for us definite instructions on this point:

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching." Hebrews 10:23–25

Your brother praying and working for a finished work,



Pastor John J. Grosboll

Jesus, I Am Resting, Resting

Jesus, I am resting, resting
In the joy of what Thou art;
I am finding out the greatness
Of Thy loving heart.

Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee,
And Thy beauty fills my soul,
For, by Thy transforming power,
Thou hast made me whole.

Simply trusting Thee, Lord Jesus,
I behold Thee as Thou art,
And Thy love, so pure, so changeless,
Satisfies my heart;
Satisfies its deepest longings,
Meets, supplies its every need,
Compasseth me round with blessings,
Thine is love indeed.

Ever lift Thy face upon me,
As I work and wait for Thee;
Resting 'neath Thy smile, Lord Jesus,
Earth's dark shadows flee.
Brightness of my Father's glory,
Sunshine of my Father's face,
Keep me ever trusting, resting,
Fill me with Thy grace.

Jesus! I am resting, resting
In the joy of what Thou art;
I am finding out the greatness
Of Thy loving heart.

Jean Sophia Pigott, 1876



from the
Mission Fields

New Year

2024

by Pastor Domingo Nunez

For many years, Steps to Life has been faithfully working to assist the brothers and sisters in Africa, Europe, Central America, South America, India, the Philippines, South Korea, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico. As you can see in the photographs in the December issue of *LandMarks*, we have successfully completed the building of a number of churches and office/headquarter buildings in different parts of the world.



Steps to Life currently works in these countries.

We are currently working with the home church in Cruz Verde, Guerrero, Mexico, with plans to build a church facility. The Marquelia and Cuajileles churches currently meet together in classrooms they rent from one of the local schools, however, property for a new church has been donated and construction has begun. Watch for an updated report on both of these projects later in the first quarter of 2024.

We have also been working on a Steps to Life Ministry extension office in Guadalajara, Mexico. The remodel of the extension building was completed at the end of October. The three angels' messages are already being broadcast via a local AM/FM radio station in Guadalajara, and completion of this office will enable the gospel to also be spread to all of Mexico via television, social media, and publishing from this location.

While all these facilities have been dedicated to the Lord's work and are or soon will be fully operational, we still need to purchase printing, audio/visual,

and office equipment, and furniture. Your donations to these projects have been crucial to what we have been able to accomplish. Jesus gave to His disciples—and to all those who obey His word—the commission to spread the gospel to the whole world, and, as we can see in these stressful times, the people of the world are truly in desperate need of the three angels' messages. Your financial support will make it possible for our workers in these areas of the world to obtain the equipment necessary to carry out our Lord's commission in their hometowns and the surrounding areas. Mark your donations as *Missions-and the name of the project you wish to support* (example: *Missions-Kenya*).

In order to provide the assistance required to establish the outposts and churches in these far away parts of the world, I have been unable to put forth the effort needed to work here in America.

Just as with the churches and headquarters we have helped to establish in

other countries, there are small groups and families here at home who need help, too. So beginning in 2024, I will spend the majority of my time flying and driving across the states to unite these groups and individuals throughout the country in a coordinated and organized manner, following the New Testament guidelines.

We are so thankful that America is still a land of freedom so that we can do this work, but we ask that you continue, as you have these many years, to pray for us as we start these new projects here in America. There will be many challenges because the enemy of souls will be very angry and will do all in his power to, if possible, deceive, manipulate, and cause division and hardship.

I will provide regular reports and testimonies throughout the upcoming year so you can see how the work is progressing in the United States, as well as updates on the ongoing work done by our brothers and sisters around the world. **LM**



The Duck-billed Platypus

The duck-billed platypus is a unique mammal, very unlike any other mammal. They make their homes in the freshwater creeks and rivers of Tasmania and the eastern and southeastern coasts of Australia.

They grow to about 20 inches in length—15 inches of head and body and 5 inches of tail. Full grown they will weigh about three pounds. They are relatively long-lived, and live in the wild for an average of 12 years, 20 years in captivity. They are nocturnal, being most active from dusk to dawn, sleeping during the day.

Their thick fur is dark brown on top and tan on their bellies and repels water to keep them warm and dry even after hours of swimming. They have a soft, duck-like bill, and are similar to a beaver in that they have webbed feet, a paddle shaped tail, and spend much of their time in the water. However, unlike the beaver, they can only stay submerged in the water for a little over two minutes. They are excellent swimmers, using their front feet for propulsion and their back feet and tail for steering. When not swimming, the platypus retires to a short, straight resting burrow in the riverbank not far above water level, hidden in a tangle of roots. They sleep an average of 14 hours per day.

Their body resembles an otter. Both male and female are born with ankle spurs, but the male's spurs located on the back of the ankles delivers a toxic venom comprised of molecules called defensin-like proteins, three of which are unique to the platypus. When stung by one of these spurs, a victim is effectively, and painfully, incapacitated. And while the venom might kill a small dog, it won't actually kill a man, but it can be excruciatingly painful. Edema (fluid build-up in tissue) will rapidly develop around the wound and the pain can develop into a long-lasting hyperalgesia (heightened sensitivity to pain) that could persist for days or even months. The venom is only produced during mating season, so it is not to be a form of defense, but rather is used in competition with other males for mating rights. Interestingly, studies have found that the venom might be useful in the treatment of diabetes.

The platypus is considered a carnivore, eating insects, larvae, worms, shellfish, freshwater shrimp, and yabby (crayfish) found in the water. But what is fascinating is how it finds its food—a true miracle of God's creation. When in the water, the platypus closes its eyes and ears, and flaps close over its nose, so it sees, hears, and smells nothing.



Electroreceptors (which detect electric fields) are located in the skin of its bill with mechanoreceptors (which detect touch) uniformly distributed across the bill. These receptors detect the electrical impulse when muscular contractions cause a shrimp or yabby to move its tail. This is called electrolocation.

This mammal feeds from the bottom of the water bed. It scoops up the food along with bits of gravel and mud from the riverbed with its snout. All this material is stored in cheek pouches and mashed for swallowing. While the platypus is born with teeth, these fall out at a very early age, leaving horny plates behind upon which the gravel helps to grind up their food. The food is carried to the surface, where it is eaten. A platypus must eat 20% of its weight every day, so it spends most, if not all, of its time awake looking for food.

Unlike most mammals whose offspring are delivered by live birth, the platypus is a monotreme, a species of mammal that lays eggs. There are only five species of monotremes—the platypus, and the four species of echidnas. Mating occurs between June and October. Females have two ovaries, but only the left is functional. She lays one to three small, leathery eggs, similar to reptile eggs. The eggs develop *in utero* for about 28 days, and once laid, she will curl around them and they incubate externally about ten days more. Once hatched, the young platypus is blind, hairless, and extremely vulnerable. Being

warm-blooded, the female feeds her young with milk. She does have mammary glands, but has no teats, so her milk is released through milk patches found in the pores of the skin in a manner very similar to sweating. She nurses in the burrow for three to four months, then the babies are ready to swim. They are considered fully mature by the age of two. There is no official term for the platypus young, but the terms platypup or puggle are often used unofficially.

The Aboriginal peoples used the platypus for food and fur until 1912 when it was prohibited by law.

As of 2019, with the exception of the San Diego Zoo Safari Park in California, all platypus held in captivity are exhibited in Australian zoos. Syd the platypus was one of three mascots for the Sydney 2000 Olympics along with an echidna and a kookaburra. Expo Oz was the mascot for the World Expo 88, held in Brisbane in 1988. The platypus also has appeared on Australian postage stamps and currency.

What a sense of humor our God has in creating the duck-billed platypus which looks like a duck, a beaver, and an otter combined into one mammal!

Resources: [Wikipedia.org/wiki/Platypus](https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platypus); science.jrank.org/pages/5344/Platypus; *Incredible Creatures That Defy Evolution, part 1; The Dodo, Platypus Facts* by Alina Bradford - *Live Science Contributor* August 04, 2014; kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/facts/platypus LM

Magnificent Minerals



Vibrant health, not just the absence of disease or injury, is something that we all want. Good Health is one of the greatest blessings we can have, and is something that we can work toward as we cooperate with God in choosing a healthy lifestyle. One area of life style that greatly impacts our health is our diet. There are seven broad, needful categories to be considered when it comes to good nutrition, if we hope to experience vibrant health. Of these seven categories, we have already looked at carbohydrates, protein, fat, and vitamins. The three remaining are minerals, fiber, and water. In this article, we will look at minerals.

Minerals are inorganic substances that do not break down easily,

maintaining their chemical structure. Most scientists divide minerals into two groups: macro or major minerals and micro or trace minerals. Macro-minerals are needed and stored by the body in larger quantities. Some examples of macro-minerals include calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, chloride, potassium, sodium, and sulfur. The body only requires a small amount of essential micro-minerals such as iron, copper, iodine, boron, manganese, zinc, cobalt, fluoride, and selenium. Both macro and micro minerals are essential for vibrant health and your body must get these from food and/or supplementation.

Your body uses minerals for many different jobs, including keeping your

bones, joints, muscles, heart, and brain working properly. They have a role in the proper balance of water in the body, and are important for making enzymes and hormones, stabilizing proteins that make up skin, hair, and nails, and serve as antioxidants to support healthy cells.

In the perfect world that existed before sin entered, we would get all the macro and micro minerals (and vitamins) we needed by eating a wide variety of foods, particularly vegetables and fruit. However, over the years, studies have shown a significant loss of vitamins, minerals, and trace elements in many foods. Some macro and micro nutrients have lost 20-40% of their nutrient value over

the last 50 years. These declines were attributed to agricultural practices and contributing environmental factors.

Foods that are high in minerals include nuts, seeds, cruciferous vegetables, beans, cocoa, avocados, berries, spirulina, starchy vegetables, tropical fruits, leafy greens, and ancient grains—amaranth, millet, quinoa, and sorghum.

With this background, let's look at some of the essential macro and micro minerals.

Calcium is important for healthy bones and teeth and helps muscles relax and contract. It is important for nerve functioning, blood clotting, and maintaining healthy blood pressure. It is contained in fortified tofu and soy beverage, broccoli, kale, mustard greens, and legumes.

Magnesium is found in the bones and is needed for making protein, muscle contraction, nerve transmission, and immune system health. It is found in nuts and seeds, legumes, broccoli, leafy green vegetables, whole wheat bread, artichokes, and “hard” drinking water.

Phosphorus is important for healthy bones and teeth and is found in every cell of the body and is part of the system that maintains acid-base balance. It is found in green peas, broccoli, nuts, grains, legumes, and vegetables.

Potassium is needed for proper fluid balance, nerve transmission, and muscle contraction. Foods containing potassium are fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and legumes.

Iron is a part of the hemoglobin molecule found in red blood cells which carry oxygen to every cell in the body. It is also needed for chemical reactions in the body and for making amino acids, collagen, neurotransmitters, and hormones. It is found in legumes, dried fruits, dark leafy greens, iron-enriched breads and cereals, and fortified cereals. Because iron is harder to absorb from plants, experts suggest vegetarians

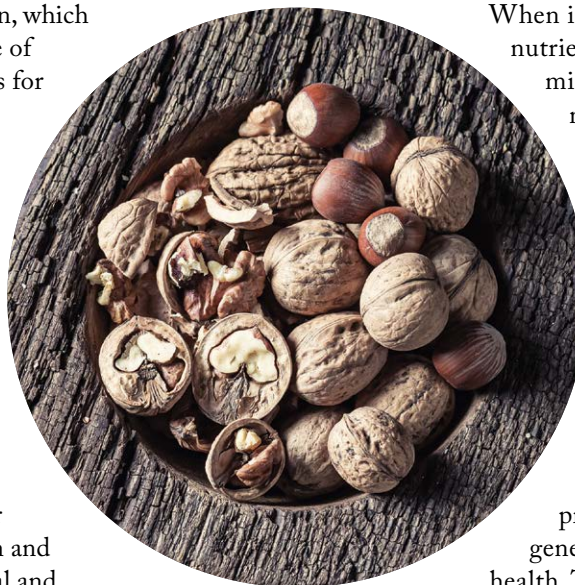
get twice the recommended amount, assuming the source is food. Many women of childbearing age don't get enough iron, which can be a source of many problems for them.

Zinc is a part of the make-up of many enzymes and plays a role in the proper function of more than 300 hormones and enzymes. It is needed for making protein and genetic material and functions in taste perception, wound healing, fetal development, production of sperm, normal growth and sexual maturation, and immune system health. It is also a key part of the body's most vital antioxidant system. It plays a part in carbohydrate metabolism and blood sugar support. It is found in leavened whole grains, vegetables, beans, and nuts. Because vegetarians absorb less zinc, experts suggest that they get twice the recommended requirement from plant foods. Older adults most often lack key nutrients such as zinc and other nutrients containing antioxidants. One government study of over 29,000 60+ aged adults revealed that 35-45% had zinc intakes insufficient to meet the estimated average daily requirements.

Iodine is found in thyroid hormones, which helps regulate growth, development, and metabolism. Foods containing iodine are foods grown in iodine-rich soil, iodized salt, bread, and dairy products.

Selenium acts as an antioxidant, neutralizing unstable free radicals that can damage cells. It also helps regulate thyroid hormone activity. It is found in

walnuts, Brazil nuts, broccoli, spinach, green peas, beans, potatoes, bananas, grapefruit, and grains.



When it comes to nutrients such as micro-minerals, macro-minerals, and vitamins, each individual has different requirements. These vary according to age, sex, certain physiological states such as pregnancy, and general state of health. Those over 50

often have trouble meeting their needs for micronutrients. With aging, there is a reduction in the ability to absorb certain nutrients from food. Compounding the problem, medications may prevent proper absorption of vitamins and minerals.

Because of the current decrease of nutrient density in our foods, dietary choices, health conditions, and medications, you may not be able to rely on diet alone to provide you with all the macro and micro minerals and other nutrients you need, particularly if you are in an older age group. Each of these essential minerals is critical to some aspect of health. So evaluate your specific needs and liabilities, and address any problem areas you may have.

Sources: [wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minerals_recognized_by_the_International_Mineralogical_Association](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minerals_recognized_by_the_International_Mineralogical_Association); [britannica.com/science/mineral-chemical-compound](https://www.britannica.com/science/mineral-chemical-compound); [nutramedix.com/blogs/nutrients-supplements/trace-minerals-an-overlooked-part-of-good-health](https://www.nutramedix.com/blogs/nutrients-supplements/trace-minerals-an-overlooked-part-of-good-health); medlineplus.gov/minerals.html; myhealth.alberta.ca/Health/Pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=ta3912; healthline.com/nutrition/foods-with-minerals#3.-Cruciferous-vegetables LM

The Spiritual Nature of the Law

by John J. Grosboll

We have studied many things regarding the mystery of godliness. Our eternal destiny is directly affected by this sacred subject.

God gave to Martin Luther, one of the great heroes of faith, the work of reminding the entire Christian world of the doctrine of justification by faith. This important doctrine had been almost forgotten, and Christians needed to be brought back to an understanding of it.

Let's say this very clearly: Justification by faith is the only way that we can be saved. It doesn't matter what you do, how religious you are, that you go to church and pay tithe, how much you sing and pray, how much you read your Bible, or the amount of missionary work and good deeds you do, unless you are justified by faith you are lost.

"The danger has been presented to me again and again of entertaining, as a people, false ideas of justification by faith." *Faith and Works*, 18. Mrs. White wrote this in 1888, at a time of great crisis in the Adventist church. Even today, we are in danger of accepting false ideas regarding justification by faith. Have

we seen that in the Christian world, in Adventism, today? "I have been shown for years that Satan would work in a special manner to confuse the mind on this point." Ibid. It is the devil's direct purpose to muddy the spiritual waters as much as he possibly can. He takes special measures, especially on this point, to bring in confusion.

Even though some people will say that Mrs. White wrote more than a hundred years ago, thus these counsels were for her time, they are, in fact, just as true today as when she first wrote them. "The law of God has been largely dwelt upon and has been presented to congregations, almost as destitute of the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His relation to the law as was the offering of Cain." Ibid. As bad as the offering of Cain? That is a strong rebuke. We must have a knowledge of Jesus Christ and His relationship to the ten commandments.

For over 40 years after the above statement was written, Adventist ministers preached the three angels' messages, God's last message of warning and mercy to the world. The Second

Advent Movement was to reach out to a fallen world that was, and still is, rapidly heading toward destruction. The three angels' messages offered to the people of the world a choice—listen and have life; don't and be destroyed.

Seldom is there anything revealed that is more important than when God says to listen. We have a problem with listening. Adam and Eve didn't listen. Cain didn't listen. The people of the Antediluvian world didn't listen. The people of Sodom didn't listen. People today are listening, just not to God. Messages are being given by strange voices, but they are not messages from heaven. These voices are so attractive. They say that man will not die. They say that man can know everything that God knows. They say that man can be and do and have whatever he wants. They say that man can be like God. But these voices are lying, and they lead all who listen to them to destruction.

Ellen White was a prophet. God spoke to her and gave her visions regarding the things He needed for her to share with His people. "I have been shown that many have been kept from

the faith because of the mixed, confused ideas of salvation, because the ministers have worked in a wrong manner to reach hearts.” Ibid. She is talking about Seventh-day Adventist ministers in this passage. Sadly, many people have been kept from accepting Jesus as their Saviour because of what these ministers have taught. What a terrible indictment against Adventist ministers!

How much is salvation worth to you? What would it mean if you could have a life with God that would never end—a life with no pain or sorrow, no death or funerals, no troubles or disappointments, no violence—instead there would be songs and praises, everlasting joy and gladness? Then it should be important to us to have a correct understanding of salvation.

At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, speaking of the last days, said that there will be many Christians who would think they were saved, but who, in fact, would be lost. They would come right up to the very end, believing that they were doing the work of God, only to find out it wasn’t true.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’” Matthew 7:21, 22

They are absolutely sure that they are saved. They have prophesied, cast out demons, performed miracles and wonders, all in the name of Jesus. Their prophesies have come true, and when they admonished demons, they departed. They healed the sick and did many other miraculous things. But here is the problem:

“And then I declared to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’” Verse 23. In spite of all the things they have done, believing that the power was coming from



Jesus, He says He did not know them at all. Why? Because they were still sinning. So where was the power to perform all these things coming from? The devil can give prophesies and then make them come true. He can make people sick and then heal them. A demon can certainly allow himself to be cast out so that it looks like the work of the Holy Spirit. These Christians had a power, but it wasn’t a power from God. They had claimed to have worshipped God for years, but Jesus will say that He doesn’t know them.

The Greek word *anti* plus the Greek word *Christos* is *anti-Christos*. From these two Greek words comes our word *antichrist*. Friend, there is an antichrist in the world. The Greek word *anti* in its primitive sense means “someone who stands in the place of someone or something else.”

The apostle John writes that there are many antichrists who have stood and are standing in the place of Christ (1 John 2:22). The chief antichrist is the devil. Revelation predicts that a time is coming when almost the whole world will think they are worshiping Christ, but they will be worshiping the antichrist.

How can you tell whether you are worshiping Christ or the antichrist?

Matthew 7:23, *last part*, tells us.

“Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” These people who claim to be Christians are breaking God’s law. The antichrist teaches people to break God’s law. Christ teaches people to keep God’s law. “Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.” 1 John 3:6. Those who transgress God’s law do not know Jesus and Jesus does not know them.

The Bible is clear that sin is the transgression of the law. “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He [Jesus] was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil.” Verses 4–8, *first part*. If I am living in sin, I am serving the devil, not Christ. Everyone who is living in sin is a child of the devil. “... the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” Verse 8, *last part*

“

A life with God that would never end—a life with no pain or sorrow, no death or funerals, no troubles, no violence. Is it worth it?

Christ came to this world as a man to destroy sin. It was decided thousands of years ago that sin could not be tolerated and would have to be destroyed. He has allowed it to continue for so long so that the entire universe can see just how bad sin really is, how it destroys lives.

God hasn't destroyed sin yet because there are people all around the world who have sin in them. If He destroyed sin now, then they would be destroyed, too. God doesn't want to destroy anyone, but anyone who clings to sin will be destroyed when sin is destroyed. There is only one way to avoid the destruction that will come when sin is destroyed: if we allow Jesus to take the sin out of us. Understand, I can never take the sin out of myself. Neither can you take the sin out of yourself.

When I was a child, people didn't understand this. They thought if they prayed enough and studied their Bibles enough, if they went to church every Sabbath and paid their tithe, if they told people about Jesus, that sin would be booted out of their lives. But there is no amount of praying, studying, church attending, tithe paying, or witnessing that will remove sin from my life. All of these things are needful, and are the outworking of a transformed life, but by themselves, they will not remove sin from my life. Only God can take the sin out of me and replace it with the righteousness of Jesus in my heart. That is why Jesus died on the cross. Without His death, it would have been impossible for God to take the sin out of me.

Romans 6:23 tells us, that "the wages of sin is death." Death is the natural consequence of sin, so when a person sins, they are guilty and cannot receive eternal life. Jesus died on the cross to bear my guilt for me and free me from the penalty of sin.

"The point that has been urged upon my mind for years is the imputed righteousness of Christ." *Faith and Works*, 18. That is how God takes the sin out. There are several

things that have to happen. What should happen when a person sins? They should die. Remember, "The wages of sin is death." That is the natural consequence of sin—if you are guilty of sin you deserve death and you cannot be given eternal life. So, the first thing that has to happen if you are going to have eternal life is the guilt in your conscience has to be removed. Sin and the guilt we bear is so awful that the only way it could be removed was for Jesus Christ to die on the cross, bearing your guilt for you.

"I have wondered that this matter was not made the subject of discourses in our churches throughout the land, when the matter has been kept so constantly urged upon me, and I have made it the subject of nearly every discourse and talk that I have given to the people." Ibid.

Let's look at the following three points to help us better understand Jesus' relationship to God's law.

1. We must understand the spiritual nature of the law. The main thrust of the Sermon on the Mount was the spirituality of the law (Romans 7:14).
2. We want to understand Jesus Christ and His relationship to the law—the ten commandments (*The Signs of the Times*, November 15, 1899).
3. If you don't understand the first two points, here's what will happen:
 - a. You will have a wrong idea about justification by faith.
 - b. If you have a wrong idea about justification by faith, you will have a wrong idea about sanctification.
 - c. If you have a wrong idea about sanctification, you will not know what to do to be ready for Jesus to come.

The foundation of truth in all of these doctrines begins with a correct understanding of the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His relationship to the law. Before a sinner is justified, he must be convicted of sin and confess it.

The experience of Paul reveals that it is the moral law that brings conviction of sin. "I was alive once without the law." Romans 7:9, *first part*. Paul had been taught by Gamaliel.

He was a strict Pharisee. In the Jewish church, he was called a doctor of the law and a teacher of it. He could quote the law perfectly in three languages. He could explain all the tenants of the ten commandments. But in this text, Paul admits, without realizing it, that he did not understand the spiritual nature of the law. He knew the words, but he did not know the part the law played in the spiritual transformation of his heart.

Paul engaged in hunting down, persecuting, and killing Christians, breaking the sixth commandment in the name of God, until one day, as he journeyed along the Damascus Road, on his way to hunt down more Christians, God struck him down. A brilliant light shone all around him, brighter than the sun. He fell to the ground, and he “heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And he said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ Then the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ So he, trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’ Then the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’” Acts 9:4–6

Before he truly understood the law, Paul believed that he was doing God’s work. He believed he was a good Jew, a good Pharisee, doing good work in hunting down those who allegedly spread blasphemy—those who, in Paul’s view, were sinners. Although most of the people of this world, because of their sins, are children of the devil, and yet, they still belong to God. The way we treat them, shows how we would treat Jesus. Thus unknowingly, Paul’s treatment of faithful Christians reveals how he might have treated Christ.

“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in,

naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.” Then they also will answer Him, saying, “Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?” Then He will answer them, saying, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.” And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” Matthew 25:41–46

Paul is saying in Romans 7:9 that, for the first time in his life, the law revealed to his conscience that he was a sinful man. Only then did he begin to understand the spiritual nature of the law. He never understood it before. He lived in the world without the law, but now he was able to see himself as he truly was—a sinner with a character filled with sin. He believed himself to be a righteous person, but the law showed him that he was exactly the opposite. What was his response to this revelation? “I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.” Recognizing that he is totally devoid of righteousness, devoid of all spiritual life, he says, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells.” Verse 18, *first part*

“The law revealed to Paul his defects of character; but he did not seek to abolish the law because he stood condemned before it. He said, ‘I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came [home to his conscience], sin [in his character] revived, and I died. . . . Wherefore the law [that worked so sharply against the natural propensities] is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.’ To his quickened conscience, sin became exceedingly sinful. This is the work of the law and the Holy Spirit, that convict of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.” *The Home Missionary*, October 1, 1897

When the moral law comes home to the conscience and the spiritual nature

of the law is discerned, the sinner will realize that he is condemned because of his natural, sinful propensities. Notice the law not only convicts of sin, it also convicts of the righteousness found only in Jesus.

“Even the moral law fails of its purpose, unless it is understood in its relation to the Saviour.” *The Desire of Ages*, 608

If we fail to recognize this relationship, we are in danger of embracing false ideas of justification by faith. Many today fail to recognize the relationship between Christ and the law, and therefore, they are not convicted that man is born a sinner. The definition of sin is limited to simply a choice. They deny that we have sin within—that we are sinners by nature—so they ascribe to the humanity of Christ the same sinful flesh [carnal nature] that we inherited from Adam.

Jude warns us against this danger—ascribing our sinful nature to Christ’s humanity—admonishing us to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.

My dear friend, the plan of salvation provides for the removal of sin from your life. Jesus, more than anything else in the world wants to take the sin out of your life so that He can replace it with His righteousness, and give you eternal life.

Are you willing to let Him do it? Are you willing to do whatever it takes to allow Jesus to come into your heart and mind and change you? To save you requires a creative act of God. He speaks and our sinfulness is removed and He creates in us a new heart, a new mind, a new spirit, a new character.

“Behold! I stand at the door and knock.” **LM**

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world of Platonic thought, there is a duality of ideas and things, and even more significantly, an anthropological dualism of the soul and the body. Such an approach causes the soul, as immaterial and immortal, to be in sharp contrast to the mortal and material body. The union of the soul with the body is unfavorable for the soul because the body is its prison and tomb. This opposition is extremely radical because the body is a punishment for the soul, a place where it undergoes penance as in a prison. The body becomes the worst enemy of the soul, serving as its tomb. With death, the liberation of the soul from the body begins. According to Plato, the body undergoes decay, but the soul is independent of it and exists eternally after its destruction. The existence of the soul is both eternal and everlasting because it has no beginning or end.⁷ Therefore, Plato presents himself as a deeply religious man who, fascinated by the world of Orphic mysteries and beliefs, appears more as a mystic than a philosopher dealing with the realm of reason.

Death in Plato's Philosophy

For Plato, death is the separation of the soul from the body. To put it more vividly, it is the liberation of the soul from the body. Therefore, for Plato, death is a good thing to strive for because only through death can the soul return to the divine realm. It would be amusing, as the philosopher says, "for a person who has worked on himself all his life to be as close to death as possible while alive, to then recoil when it comes to him? Isn't that funny?"⁸ There can be no greater contrast between Plato's view of death as a good thing, as a friend, and the perception of death in the Bible.

Death in the Bible

Death is described in the Bible as evil (Deuteronomy 30:15 ESV), a curse (Deuteronomy 30:19 ESV), bitterness

(Ecclesiastes 7:26), terror (Psalm 55:4, 5), darkness and shadow (Psalm 107:10), and an enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26 ESV). Death, as the opposite of life, is portrayed as an adversary and something foreign to God. The Bible addresses death because it is a profound issue intertwined with life. In the Hebrew Bible, death is understood as the end of life's symptoms, the end of existence. It is essential to emphasize that death was not perceived merely as the act of dying, but primarily as a state. Death elicited fear because in death, a person lost their relationship with God, which was most terrifying for the Hebrews.⁹

What is the state of the deceased according to the word of God? The deceased do not possess any of the three attributes that define existence: mind, emotions, and will. In the deceased, there are no cognitive processes: "When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish." Psalm 146:4 ESV. Therefore, "the dead know nothing." Ecclesiastes 9:5 ESV. The deceased have no emotions: "Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun." Ecclesiastes 9:6 ESV. The deceased have no will because after death: "in Sheol, where you are going, there is no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom." Ecclesiastes 9:10 BSB. This state of nonexistence is euphemistically referred to as "sleep" in the Bible.¹⁰ Furthermore, the meaning of the word *Sheol* is "grave" or "burial place" in the sense of the state of death, not a place for the spirits or souls of deceased people.¹¹ Death as the "sleep in the dust of the earth" is a direct consequence of the biblical understanding of the mortality of the soul (*nefesh*), which is a psycho-physical unity of a person.

Biblical Anthropology

What characterizes the Hebrew concept of a human being is the absence of a dualism between the soul and the body.

In Genesis 2:7 KJV, we find the fundamental biblical definition of a human being, a paradigm that is characteristic of the entire Hebrew thought on humanity. "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." This text does not state that God breathed a soul into the man's nostrils but "the breath of life." Similarly, it does not say that the man became an immortal soul but a "living being" or a "living soul." Thus, human beings do not possess a soul as a substantially different entity from their body; a human being is a living soul. According to the Bible, God first formed the body of the human being from the dust of the ground, which includes material and organic elements. Later, He breathed life into it, and in this way, the human being began to exist, becoming a living being.

Biblical equation

The way God created humans can be presented as a biblical equation as follows: dust of the earth (material elements) + breath of life = a living being, a living soul, a living body, a human. In the Hebrew language, "living soul" and "living body" are synonymous.¹² Therefore, the Bible conceives of a human being as a holistic entity comprising the body, mind, and spirit. Just imagine the far-reaching implications that the Platonic concept of a human being has for theology, psychology, epistemology (philosophy of knowledge), and popular culture. On the other hand, consider how the biblical holistic concept of a human being could impact the understanding of these areas of life if it had not been rejected by nearly all of Christianity.

Death as a friend versus death as an enemy

To ensure that our considerations of Plato's and the Bible's concepts are not too tedious and overly academic, let me present to you, dear readers, two radically different approaches to death

by two historical figures: Socrates and our Lord Jesus Christ. Oscar Cullmann described it as follows in his excellent essay: “Is there a greater contrast than that between Socrates, who, like Jesus on the day of His death, is surrounded by His disciples but full of sublime calm, discusses with them the topic of immortality, and Jesus, who a few hours before His death trembles and shudders and begs His disciples not to leave Him alone? The Letter to the Hebrews, which, more than any other New Testament text, emphasizes the full divinity (Hebrews 1:10) and full humanity of Jesus, surpasses even the synoptic accounts in its description of Jesus’s fear of death. In chapter 5:7, it states that Jesus, with loud cries and tears, offered up prayers and supplications to the One who could save Him. Therefore, as the Letter to the Hebrews says, Jesus cried out and wept before His death! There, serene and composed Socrates, discussing the immortality of the soul; here, Jesus, crying out the words of the psalm, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’ And He dies with an inarticulate cry (Mark 15:37). This is not death ‘as a friend.’ This is death in all its horrifying dread. It is truly ‘the last enemy of God,’ as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:26, and that is exactly where the complete opposition between the Greek world on one hand, and Judaism and Christianity on the other, reveals itself ... Nothing better illustrates the radical difference between the Greek doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the (Hebrew) Christian doctrine of resurrection than this [contrast] between Socrates and Jesus.”¹³

Hope of Christians

The word of God does not teach that humans have immortal souls. The Bible teaches that only God is immortal and possesses immortality: “Now to the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” 1 Timothy 1:17 BSB. All other beings have life solely through Him.



*The
dead
know
nothing.*

Scripture says, “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” 1 John 5:12 BSB. The alternative to this truth is Satan’s lie: “You will not surely die.” Genesis 3:4 BSB. Through this lie, the immortality of the soul became the cornerstone of all non-biblical (and therefore devil-inspired) religions. It is a fundamental element of spiritualism. Without it, there would also be no doctrine of hell and purgatory, the hidden purpose of which is to portray God as a cruel monster. Jesus clearly said that the alternative to eternal life is death (“to perish”): “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16 ESV.¹⁴ Immortality can only be obtained through the resurrected Jesus Christ, “who has abolished death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the gospel.” (2 Timothy 1:10 BSB). This will happen at the resurrection of the dead: “We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must be clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.” 1 Corinthians 15:51–53 BSB

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January 28 – February 3, 2024

An Orderly God

Key Text

“Let all things be done decently and in order.” 1 Corinthians 14:40

Study Help: *Testimonies*, Vol. 3, 428–433

Introduction

“He who says or does anything that tends to separate the members of Christ’s church is counterworking the Lord’s purpose.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 9, 145

Sunday

1 THE ORIGIN OF ORDER

1.a. What condition characterizes everything in the work of God? How can we succeed in our work for the Lord? 1 Corinthians 14:40

Note: “God is a God of order. Everything connected with heaven is in perfect order; subjection and thorough discipline mark the movements of the angelic host. Success can only attend order and harmonious action. God requires order and system in His work now no less than in the days of Israel. All who are working for Him are to labor intelligently, not in a careless, haphazard manner. He would have His work done with faith and exactness, that He may place the seal of His approval upon it.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 376

1.b. What does God expect from His creatures?
1 Peter 2:21; Psalm 119:133; 1 John 2:6

Note: “Order is heaven’s first law, and the Lord desires His people to give in their homes a representation of the order and harmony that pervade the heavenly courts. Truth never places

her delicate feet in a path of uncleanness or impurity. Truth does not make men and women coarse or rough and untidy. It raises all who accept it to a high level. Under Christ’s influence, a work of constant refinement goes on.” *Counsels on Health*, 101

Monday

2 CHURCH ORGANIZATION

2.a. What example did God leave us of thorough organization as a real blessing? Exodus 18:13–24. How is that implemented today?

Note: “This counsel [of Jethro] was accepted, and it not only brought relief to Moses, but resulted in establishing more perfect order among the people.

“The Lord had greatly honored Moses, and had wrought wonders by his hand; but the fact that he had been chosen to instruct others did not lead him to conclude that he himself needed no instruction. The chosen leader of Israel listened gladly to the suggestions of the godly priest of Midian, and adopted his plan as a wise arrangement.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 301

“God has not set any kingly power in the Seventh-day Adventist Church to control the whole body or to control any branch of the work. He has not provided that the burden of leadership shall rest upon a few men. Responsibilities are distributed among a large number of competent men.

“Every member of the church has a voice in choosing officers of the church. The church chooses the officers of the state conferences. Delegates chosen by the state conferences choose the officers of the union conferences, and delegates chosen by the union conferences choose the officers of the General Conference. By this arrangement every conference, every institution, every church, and every individual, either directly or through representatives, has a voice in the election of the men who bear the chief responsibilities in the General Conference.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 8, 236, 237

2.b. What is the fundamental principle for living as one of God’s children? Deuteronomy 10:12, 13; Joshua 22:5

Note: “Evil does not result because of organization, but because of making organization everything, and vital godliness of little moment. When form and machinery take the preeminence, and a laborious task is made of carrying on the work that should be done with simplicity, evil will result, and little will be accomplished in proportion to the effort put forth. The object of organization is just the reverse of this; and should we disorganize, it would be like tearing down that which we have built up.” *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 253

Tuesday

3 GENUINE UNITY

3.a. How does the church relate to Christ? Ephesians 1:17, 22, 23; Colossians 1:18. What result should follow among ourselves?

Note: “Those who have a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus must now become one in heart and purpose. All differences must be swept away. The members of the church must work unitedly under the great Head of the church.” *Selected Messages*, Book 1, 93

3.b. As we dedicate ourselves to Jesus without reservation, what happens in our relations with others who have the same experience? John 17:21

Note: “A union of believers with Christ will as a natural result lead to a union with one another, which bond of union is the most enduring upon earth. We are one in Christ, as Christ is one with the Father.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, 47

“If we are united to Christ, we shall be united to one another.” *The Review and Herald*, December 6, 1892

“Those who are truly converted will press together in Christian unity. Let there be no division in the church of God, no unwise authority exercised over those who accept the truth. The meekness of Christ is to appear in all that is said and done.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 9, 147

3.c. What happens to our personal relations the closer we come to Jesus? John 13:34, 35

Note: “As they [the disciples] were drawn to Christ in greater love, they were drawn to one another.” *The Desire of Ages*, 664

“True religion unites hearts not only with Christ, but with one another in a most tender union. When we know what it means to be thus united with Christ and with our brethren, a fragrant influence will attend our work wherever we go.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 9, 145

3.d. How does unity relate to perfection of character? Ephesians 4:13

Note: “Unity is the sure result of Christian perfection.” *The Sanctified Life*, 85

Wednesday

4 BEING PART OF CHRIST’S BODY

4.a. As new believers in Jesus, how do we unite with Him in a practical way? Ephesians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 12:27

Note: “[An] obligation, too often lightly regarded—one that to the youth awakened to the claims of Christ needs to be made plain—is the obligation of church relationship.

“Very close and sacred is the relation between Christ and His church—He the bridegroom, and the church the bride; He the head, and the church the body. Connection with Christ, then, involves connection with His church.

“The church is organized for service; and in a life of service to Christ, connection with the church is one of the first steps. Loyalty to Christ demands the faithful performance of church

duties. This is an important part of one's training; and in a church imbued with the Master's life, it will lead directly to effort for the world without." *Education*, 268, 269

"To human agencies is committed the work of extending the triumphs of the cross from point to point. As the Head of the church, Christ is authoritatively calling upon everyone who claims to believe on Him to follow His example of self-denial and self-sacrifice in working for the conversion of those whom Satan and his vast army are exerting every power to destroy. God's people are called upon to rally without delay under the bloodstained banner of Christ Jesus. Unceasingly they are to continue their warfare against the enemy, pressing the battle even to the gates. And everyone who is added to the ranks by conversion is to be assigned his post of duty."

Testimonies, Vol. 7, 30

4.b. How do we see, through the examples of Saul and Cornelius, that connection to the church is important? Acts 9:1-6, 17, 18; 10:1-6, 47, 48

Note: "God's Spirit convicts sinners of the truth, and He places them in the arms of the church. The ministers may do their part, but they can never perform the work that the church should do. God requires His church to nurse those who are young in faith and experience, to go to them, not for the purpose of gossiping with them, but to pray, to speak unto them words that are 'like apples of gold in pictures of silver.'"

Testimonies, Vol. 4, 69

Thursday

5 THE VISIBLE CHURCH

5.a. How do we know that the true church is a visible, tangible entity? 1 Corinthians 16:1, 19; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 8:1, 18

Note: "We should all feel our individual responsibility as members of the visible church and workers in the vineyard of the Lord." *Testimonies*, Vol. 4, 16

5.b. What happens if someone despises the God-given authority of the church? John 20:23

Note: "'Whosoever sins ye remit,' said Christ, 'they are remitted; ... and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.' Christ here gives no liberty for any man to pass judgment upon others. In the Sermon on the Mount He forbade this. It is the prerogative of God. But on the church in its organized capacity He places a responsibility for the individual members. Toward those who fall into sin, the church has a duty, to warn, to instruct, and if possible to restore. 'Reprove, rebuke, exhort,' the Lord says, 'with all longsuffering and doctrine.' 2 Timothy 4:2. Deal faithfully with wrongdoing. Warn every soul that is in danger. Leave none to deceive themselves. Call sin by its right name. Declare what God has said in regard to lying, Sabbath-breaking, stealing, idolatry, and every other evil. 'They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' Galatians 5:21. If they persist in sin, the judgment you have declared from God's word is pronounced upon them in heaven. In choosing to sin, they disown Christ; the church must show that she does not sanction their deeds, or she herself dishonors her Lord. She must say about sin what God says about it. She must deal with it as God directs, and her action is ratified in heaven. He who despises the authority of the church despises the authority of Christ Himself." *The Desire of Ages*, 805, 806

5.c. What is the major reason for having a church? Mark 16:15, 16

Note: "The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world." *The Acts of the Apostles*, 9

Friday

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1 What "first law" does God expect from His creatures that obey Him?
- 2 When a believer truly unites with Christ, what else happens?
- 3 How important is our relation with other souls of like precious faith?
- 4 Why does God place new believers into the arms of the church?
- 5 What duties rest upon God's recognized and organized church?

February 4 – 10, 2024

Unity in Diversity

Key Text

“Fulfill my joy by being likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” Philippians 2:2

Study Help: *The Desire of Ages*, 805, 806

Introduction

“All who believe are to be gathered into one church.” *The Desire of Ages*, 821

Sunday

1 COUNSELING TOGETHER

1.a. To advance His cause on earth, what does God want us to do in forming plans of action?
Proverbs 11:14; 15:22

Note: “The Lord does not apportion to any one man some special territory in which he alone is to labor. This is contrary to His plan. He designs that in every place where the truth is introduced, different minds, different gifts, shall be brought in to exert an influence upon the work. No one man has sufficient wisdom to manage an interest without helpers, and no one should think himself competent to do so. The fact that a person has ability in one direction, is no evidence that his judgment on all other subjects is perfect, and that the wisdom of some other mind does not need to be united with his.” *Gospel Workers*, 481

1.b. In order to work with others with whom we are bonded by the same precious faith, what is needed in each of us? 2 Chronicles 7:14; 34:27; Isaiah 57:15; 1 Peter 5:5, 6

Note: “Those who do labor together should seek to be in perfect harmony. And yet no one should feel that he cannot labor with those who do not see just as he sees, and who do not in their labors follow just his plans. If all manifest a humble, teachable spirit, there need be no difficulty. God has set in the church different gifts. These are precious in their proper places, and all may act a part in the work of preparing a people for Christ’s soon coming.” *Gospel Workers*, 481

Monday

2 UNITED IN DIVERSITY

2.a. Why could Jesus speak with authority, and how can we teach with the same divine mandate? Matthew 7:28, 29; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 3:15

2.b. What types of gifts are needed in the church, and why do we need people with varied abilities to reap the gospel harvest? 1 Corinthians 12:7–11

Note: “Many times the progress of the work has been hindered because the laborers thought their gifts all that were necessary for its advancement. The Lord has not done for His people what He would have done if so many of the workers had not limited the development of the work by refusing to cooperate with laborers who should have been given standing room and encouragement. In self-sufficiency, men have ignored and pushed aside those to whom God has given a special work.” *Pacific Union Recorder*, December 29, 1904

“It may seem to some that the contrast between their gifts and the gifts of a fellow laborer is too great to allow them to unite in harmonious effort; but when they remember that there are varied minds to be reached, and that some will reject the truth as it is presented by one laborer, only to open their hearts to God’s truth as it is presented in a different manner by another laborer, they will hopefully endeavor to labor together in unity.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 9, 145

2.c. What will people recognize when they see that Christians are working harmoniously? Acts 4:13; John 13:34, 35; 17:21–23

Note: “Let the messengers whom He [God] sends work so harmoniously that all will take knowledge that they have learned of Jesus.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 9, 146

2.d. In Old Testament times, as entrusted according to specific families, what did each member of the tribe of Levi receive as a divine responsibility?

1. Gershonites: Numbers 3:23–26
2. Kohathites: Verses 29–32
3. Merarites: Verses 35–37

Tuesday

3 SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

3.a. In the case of Uzzah, what happened when he did another’s work? 2 Samuel 6:6, 7; Numbers 3:38. How does this apply today?

Note: “[One] remarkable exhibition to the nations round about was the perfect order observed in the camp of the Israelites. They could see the cloud hovering over the place where the tabernacle was to be pitched; they observed the priests and other appointed agencies going about their special work, each one doing the part assigned him in the work of preparing the camp for the night. No one did anything that someone else should do. Whoever would have tried to do another man’s work would have suffered the death penalty. Each one attended to his special duty. In the erecting of the tabernacle, part fitted to part, and the house of the Lord was set up with beautiful precision. Not a word was spoken, not an order given, excepting by the one in charge. No one was confused.” *Lift Him Up*, 145

“The directions in regard to order in the tabernacle service were recorded that lessons might be drawn from it by all who should live upon the earth. Men were selected to do various

parts of the work of setting up and taking down the tabernacle, and if one strayed in carelessly and put his hands to the work assigned to another, he was to be put to death. We serve the same God today. But the death penalty has been abolished; had it not been, there would not now be so much careless, disorderly work in His cause. The God of heaven is a God of order, and He requires all His followers to have rules and regulations, and to preserve order.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, 274

3.b. How does God intend to finish the work when we are composed of such a diverse group of believers? 1 Corinthians 12:14–18

Note: “The leaders among God’s people are to guard against the danger of condemning the methods of individual workers who are led by the Lord to do a special work that but few are fitted to do. Let brethren in responsibility be slow to criticize movements that are not in perfect harmony with their methods of labor. Let them never suppose that every plan should reflect their own personality. Let them not fear to trust another’s methods; for by withholding their confidence from a brother laborer who, with humility and consecrated zeal, is doing a special work in God’s appointed way, they are retarding the advancement of the Lord’s cause.” *Gospel Workers*, 488

Wednesday

4 INDIVIDUALITY AMONG BELIEVERS

4.a. How are we in danger of underestimating one another? Ephesians 4:7

Note: “Let us beware of allowing our minds to become fixed on ourselves, thinking that no one can be serving the Lord unless he is working on the same lines as those on which we are working.

“Never is a worker to say, ‘I do not want to work with such a one, because he does not see things as I do. I wish to work with someone who will agree with all I say, and follow out all my ideas.’ The one the worker thus refuses to connect with may have truths to present that have not yet been presented.” *Pacific Union Recorder*, December 29, 1904

4.b. Because we are all fellow believers, can we dictate the details of what each missionary worker shall do? Matthew 23:8

Note: “No human being is to seek to bind other human beings to himself as if he were to control them, telling them to do this and forbidding them to do that, commanding, dictating, acting like an officer over a company of soldiers. This is the way the priests and rulers did in Christ’s day, but it is not the right way. After the truth has made the impression upon hearts, and men and women have accepted its teachings, they are to be treated as the property of Christ, not as the property of man.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 9, 146

“A strange thing has come into our churches. Men who are placed in positions of responsibility that they may be wise helpers to their fellow workers have come to suppose that they were set as kings and rulers in the churches, to say to one brother, Do this; to another, Do that; and to another, Be sure to labor in such and such a way. There have been places where the workers have been told that if they did not follow the instruction of these men of responsibility, their pay from the conference would be withheld.

“It is right for the workers to counsel together as brethren; but that man who endeavors to lead his fellow workers to seek his individual counsel and advice regarding the details of their work, and to learn their duty from him, is in a dangerous position and needs to learn what responsibilities are really comprehended in his office. God has appointed no man to be conscience for his fellowman.” *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 477

Thursday

5 DEVELOPING A SANCTIFIED UNITY

5.a. Despite our great diversity, how will God’s work be finished? Isaiah 52:7, 8; 1 Corinthians 1:10

Note: “The Reformation was greatly retarded by making prominent differences on some points of faith and each party holding tenaciously to those things where they differed. We shall see eye to eye ere long, but to become firm and consider it your duty to present your views in decided opposition to the faith or truth as it has been taught by us as a people, is a mistake, and will result in harm, and only harm, as in the days of Martin Luther. Begin to draw apart and feel at liberty to express your

ideas without reference to the views of your brethren, and a state of things will be introduced that you do not dream of.” *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 76

5.b. Where does God place believers, and why? 1 Corinthians 12:18–25

Note: “Our Redeemer throws souls into the arms of the church, for them to care for unselfishly and train for heaven.”

Testimonies, Vol. 2, 331

“The man who is truly united with Christ will never act as though he were a complete whole in himself. ...

“The perfection of the church depends not on each member being fashioned exactly alike.” *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, 1090

5.c. What type of authority does this united church have over its membership? Matthew 18:16–18

Note: “On the church has been conferred the power to act in Christ’s stead. It is God’s instrumentality for the preservation of order and discipline among His people. To it the Lord has delegated the power to settle all questions respecting its prosperity, purity, and order. Upon it rests the responsibility of excluding from its fellowship those who are unworthy, who by their unchristlike conduct would bring dishonor on the truth. Whatever the church does that is in accordance with the directions given in God’s word, will be ratified in heaven.” *Gospel Workers*, 501, 502

“Unless the advice and counsel of the church can be respected, it is indeed powerless. God has placed a voice in the church which must control its members.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, 108

Friday

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1 Since God’s work is diverse and complex, what do we greatly need?
- 2 Why are various gifts and abilities important in the final harvest?
- 3 What can we learn from the thorough order and organization of the Levitical system?
- 4 How can we guard individual duty to the great Head of the church?
- 5 How does respect for individuality relate to organizational structure?

February 11 – 17, 2024

Organization

Key Text

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching.” Hebrews 10:25

Study Help: *Prophets and Kings*, 638–645, 659

Introduction

“God wants His people to be united in the closest bonds of Christian fellowship; confidence in our brethren is essential to the prosperity of the church; union of action is important in a religious crisis.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 3, 446

Sunday

1 IN THE AIR WE BREATHE

1.a. As the originator of disorganization was expelled from heaven, with what atmosphere has he tainted this earth? Revelation 12:7–10; James 3:15, 16

Note: “The world is filled with strife for the supremacy. The spirit of pulling away from fellow laborers, the spirit of disorganization, is in the very air we breathe.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 9, 257

“We are inclined to exalt self. But God wants no self-exaltation in His work.” *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 4, 354

1.b. Since the Roman Catholic organizational system is thoroughly hierarchical, what do some Protestants fear will be the results of following order and organization? 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4

Note: “By some, all efforts to establish order are regarded as dangerous—as a restriction of personal liberty, and hence to be feared as popery. These deceived souls regard it a virtue to boast

of their freedom to think and act independently. They declare that they will not take any man’s say-so, that they are amenable to no man. I have been instructed that it is Satan’s special effort to lead men to feel that God is pleased to have them choose their own course independent of the counsel of their brethren.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 9, 257

Monday

2 THOROUGH ORGANIZATION ESSENTIAL

2.a. In order to avoid self-exaltation, what must we learn? Psalm 84:10; Philippians 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:6

Note: “Talent is too much idolized, and station too much coveted. There are too many who will do nothing unless they are recognized as leaders; too many who must receive praise, or they have no interest to labor. What we need to learn is faithfulness in making the utmost use of the powers and opportunities we have, and contentment in the lot to which Heaven assigns us.” *Education*, 117

2.b. What is God’s plan for His gifts to the church? Ephesians 4:13

Note: “God is leading a people out from the world upon the exalted platform of eternal truth, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. He will discipline and fit up His people. They will not be at variance, one believing one thing, and another having faith and views entirely opposite, each moving independently of the body. Through the diversity of the gifts and governments that He has placed in the church, they will all come to the unity of the faith. If one man takes his views of the Bible truth without regard to the opinions of his brethren, and justifies his course, alleging that he has a right to his own peculiar views, and then presses them upon others, how can he be fulfilling the prayer of Christ? ... Where will be that harmony which existed between Christ and His Father, and which Christ prayed might exist among His brethren?” *Testimonies*, Vol. 3, 446, 447

2.c. What principle, associated with diverse gifts, will promote unity in the church? Romans 12:6–9; Ephesians 4:15, 16

Note: “Oh, how Satan would rejoice if he could succeed in his efforts to get in among this people and disorganize the work at a time when thorough organization is essential and will be the greatest power to keep out spurious uprisings and to refute claims not endorsed by the word of God! We want to hold the lines evenly, that there shall be no breaking down of the system of organization and order that has been built up by wise, careful labor.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 9, 257, 258

Tuesday

3 IDENTIFYING AND OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

3.a. How much can we accomplish if we work without using practical wisdom? Proverbs 24:3, 4; Ecclesiastes 10:10. Explain the importance of cooperation.

Note: “It is not a good sign when men refuse to unite with their brethren and prefer to act alone. Let laborers take into their confidence the brethren who are free to point out every departure from right principles. If men wear the yoke of Christ, they cannot pull apart; they will draw with Christ.

“Some workers pull with all the power that God has given them, but they have not yet learned that they should not pull alone. Instead of isolating themselves, let them draw in harmony with their fellow laborers. Unless they do this, their activity will work at the wrong time and in the wrong way. They will often work counter to that which God would have done, and thus their work is worse than wasted.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 9, 258, 259

3.b. In the days of Nehemiah, how did the enemies try to hinder God’s work? Nehemiah 4:7–16. How did the reformer respond to distractions, and with what result? Nehemiah 4:6, 17, 18; 6:1–4, 15

Note: “They [the enemies of Israel] attempted to cause division among the workmen by suggesting doubts and arousing unbelief as to their success. They also ridiculed the efforts of the

builders, declared the enterprise an impossibility, and predicted a disgraceful failure. . . . Emissaries of the enemy, professing friendliness, mingled with the builders, suggesting changes in the plan, seeking in various ways to divert the attention of the workers.” *Christian Service*, 173

“Every device that the prince of darkness can suggest will be employed to induce God’s servants to form a confederacy with the agents of Satan. Repeated solicitations will come to call them from duty; but, like Nehemiah, they should steadfastly reply, ‘I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.’ God’s workers may safely keep on with their work, letting their efforts refute the falsehoods that malice may coin for their injury. Like the builders on the walls of Jerusalem they must refuse to be diverted from their work by threats or mockery or falsehood. Not for one moment are they to relax their watchfulness or vigilance, for enemies are continually on their track. Ever they must make their prayer to God ‘and set a watch against them day and night.’ Nehemiah 4:9.” *Prophets and Kings*, 659

Wednesday

4 DANGERS

4.a. What is one of the greatest problems for those who are called to be saved? Psalm 119:176; Isaiah 53:6

4.b. How does Jesus deal with those who have a tendency to go astray? Matthew 18:12–14; 1 Peter 2:25

Note: “If one strays from the fold, he is not followed with harsh words and with a whip, but with winning invitations to return.” *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 273

4.c. What happens if we refuse to be rescued? Hebrews 12:25; 2:3; Isaiah 1:20

Note: “Those who are inclined to regard their individual judgment as supreme are in grave peril. It is Satan’s studied effort to separate such ones from those who are channels of light, through whom God has wrought to build up and extend His work in the earth. To neglect or despise those whom God has appointed to bear the responsibilities of leadership in connection with the advancement of the truth is to reject the means that He has ordained for the help, encouragement, and strength of His people. For any worker in the Lord’s cause to pass these by, and to think that his light must come through no other channel than directly from God, is to place himself in a position where he is liable to be deceived by the enemy and overthrown. The Lord in His wisdom has arranged that by means of the close relationship that should be maintained by all believers, Christian shall be united to Christian and church to church. Thus the human instrumentality will be enabled to cooperate with the divine. Every agency will be subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all the believers will be united in an organized and well-directed effort to give to the world the glad tidings of the grace of God.” *The Acts of the Apostles*, 164

“We are living amid the perils of the last days, and if we have a spirit of self-sufficiency and independence we shall be exposed to the wiles of Satan and be overcome. Self-importance must be put away from you, and you be hid in God, depending alone upon Him for strength. The churches do not need your labor. If you are consecrated to God, you can labor in new fields, and God will work with you. Purity of heart and life God will accept. Anything short of this, He will not regard. We must suffer with Christ if we would reign with Him.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 3, 66

Thursday

5 PRESS TOGETHER

5.a. What was Christ’s greatest concern for the young church after His departure? What “credentials” must we show before outsiders can believe that we are Christ’s true followers? John 13:34, 35; 17:21

Note: “The world is against us, the popular churches are against us, the laws of the land will soon be against us. If there was ever a time when the people of God should press together, it is now. God has committed to us the special truths for this time to make known to the world. The last message of mercy is now going forth. We are dealing with men and women who are judgment bound. How careful should we be in every word

and act to follow closely the Pattern, that our example may lead men to Christ. With what care should we seek so to present the truth that others by beholding its beauty and simplicity may be led to receive it. If our characters testify of its sanctifying power, we shall be a continual light to others—living epistles, known and read of all men. We cannot afford now to give place to Satan by cherishing disunion, discord, and strife.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, 236

“God has made His church a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will. He does not give one an experience independent of the church. He does not give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church, while the church, Christ’s body, is left in darkness.” *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, 414

“God has invested His church with special authority and power which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising, for in so doing he despises the voice of God.” *Ibid.*, 417

5.b. Will there ever be a time when church fellowship will cease to be appropriate for God’s people? John 10:16; Hebrews 10:25

Note: “Some have advanced the thought that, as we near the close of time, every child of God will act independently of any religious organization. But I have been instructed by the Lord that in this work there is no such thing as every man’s being independent. The stars of heaven are all under law, each influencing the other to do the will of God, yielding their common obedience to the law that controls their action. And, in order that the Lord’s work may advance healthfully and solidly, His people must draw together.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 9, 258

Friday

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1 What attitude is in the very air we breathe? What is the difference between a hierarchy and God’s system of organization?
- 2 What has God provided in His church to facilitate unity of action?
- 3 In order to succeed in accomplishing the work assigned to us in God’s great vineyard, how must we work in relation to our fellow workers?
- 4 What are some great dangers we face in these last days?
- 5 What is a key component in our preparation for Christ’s soon advent?

February 18 – 24, 2024

The Lord's Flock

Key Text

"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one Shepherd." John 10:16

Study Help: *Testimonies*, Vol. 6, 91–99

Introduction

"While the great adversary will try his utmost to make of none effect the word of God, truth must go forth as a lamp that burneth." *Testimonies*, Vol. 4, 595

Sunday

1 THE SHEEPFOLD

1.a. To what are Christ's followers often compared, and why? John 10:24–28

Note: "The sheep that has strayed from the fold is the most helpless of all creatures. It must be sought for by the shepherd, for it cannot find its way back. So with the soul that has wandered away from God; he is as helpless as the lost sheep, and unless divine love had come to his rescue he could never find his way to God." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 187

"There is a large, a very large number of straying and lost sheep that have perished in the wild deserts of sin, simply because no one went after them, to search for them and to bring them back to the fold. Jesus uses the illustration of a lost sheep to show the need of seeking after those who have wandered from Him; for a sheep once lost will never find its way back to the fold without help. It must be sought for, it must be carried back to the fold." *The Review and Herald*, June 30, 1896

1.b. What do we need to realize about the size and character of Christ's true fold? Luke 12:32; John 10:14, 15

Note: "The church on earth is greatly beloved by God. It is the fold provided for the sheep of His pasture." *The Signs of the Times*, October 31, 1900

Monday

2 ONE FINAL FOLD

2.a. In what can Christ's torn, scattered flock rejoice?
John 10:16

Note: "It is the unity of Christ's followers that convinces the world that God has indeed sent His Son to die for sinners, to make them partakers of His perfection, changing the sinful heart, and forming the character after the divine likeness." *The Review and Herald*, July 21, 1903

"All who believe are to be gathered into one church." *The Acts of the Apostles*, 28

2.b. When will many of the sheep come out of their churches and join God's true church, the one fold?
Revelation 18:4

Note: "The time of God's destructive judgments is the time of mercy for those who have no opportunity to learn what is truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; His hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter. Large numbers will be admitted who in these last days hear the truth for the first time." *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, 979

"God still has a people in Babylon; and before the visitation of His judgments these faithful ones must be called out, that they partake not of her sins and 'receive not of her plagues.' Hence the movement symbolized by the angel coming down from heaven, lightening the earth with his glory and crying mightily with a strong voice, announcing the sins of Babylon. In connection with his message the call is heard: 'Come out of her, My people.' These announcements, uniting with the third angel's message, constitute the final warning to be given to the inhabitants of the earth." *The Great Controversy*, 604

"God has honest children among the nominal Adventists and the fallen churches, and before the plagues shall be poured out, ministers and people will be called out from these

churches and will gladly receive the truth. Satan knows this; and before the loud cry of the third angel is given, he raises an excitement in these religious bodies, that those who have rejected the truth may think that God is with them. He hopes to deceive the honest and lead them to think that God is still working for the churches. But the light will shine, and all who are honest will leave the fallen churches, and take their stand with the remnant.” *Early Writings*, 261

Tuesday

3 A HOLY NATION

3.a. What other terms are used by Christ to describe His faithful church? Exodus 19:5, 6; Matthew 21:42, 43; 1 Peter 2:9

Note: “The Lord made a special covenant with ancient Israel: ‘Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.’ He addresses His commandment-keeping people in these last days: ‘But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.’” *Testimonies*, Vol. 2, 450

3.b. How can sinners become a part of God’s holy nation? Matthew 21:44; 7:24, 25; 2 Corinthians 5:17

Note: “In both the Old and the New Testament the Lord has positively enjoined upon His people to be distinct from the world, in spirit, in pursuits, in practice, to be a holy nation, a peculiar people. The east is not farther from the west than are the children of light, in customs, practices, and spirit, from the children of darkness. And this distinction will be more marked, more decided, as we near the close of time. It is not a profession of faith, or a name registered in the church book, that constitutes us children of God. It is a vital connection with Christ. We must be one with Him, imbued with His Spirit, partakers

of the divine nature, crucified to the world with its affections and lusts, renewed in knowledge and true holiness.” *The Review and Herald*, November 12, 1914

3.c. When and how did God open the door for the Gentiles to become “children of the living God”? 1 Peter 2:10; Romans 9:25, 26; Hosea 1:10; 2:23; Ephesians 2:13

Note: “The Saviour Himself, during His earthly ministry, foretold the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles. In the parable of the vineyard He declared to the impenitent Jews, ‘The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.’ Matthew 21:43. And after His resurrection He commissioned His disciples to go ‘into all the world’ and ‘teach all nations.’ They were to leave none unwarned, but were to ‘preach the gospel to every creature.’ Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15.” *The Acts of the Apostles*, 174

“In the quarry of the Jewish and the Gentile world the apostles labored, bringing out stones to lay upon the foundation.” *Ibid.*, 596

Wednesday

4 PART OF GOD’S FINAL, TRUE FOLD

4.a. How does one become part of God’s final fold? Acts 2:37–41, 47

Note: “Present truth leads onward and upward, gathering in the needy, the oppressed, the suffering, the destitute. All that will come are to be brought into the fold. In their lives there is to take place a reformation that will constitute them members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. By hearing the message of truth, men and women are led to accept the Sabbath and to unite with the church by baptism. They are to bear God’s sign by observing the Sabbath of creation. They are to know for themselves that obedience to God’s commandments means eternal life.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 8, 195, 196

“Every believer should be wholehearted in his attachment to the church. Its prosperity should be his first interest, and unless

he feels under sacred obligations to make his connection with the church a benefit to it in preference to himself, it can do far better without him.” Ibid., Vol. 4, 18

4.b. Before new converts can be fellowshipped into God’s true church, what must be done in their behalf and be manifested in their lives? Matthew 28:19, 20; 3:7, 8

Note: “There is need of a more thorough preparation on the part of candidates for baptism. They are in need of more faithful instruction than has usually been given them. The principles of the Christian life should be made plain to those who have newly come to the truth. None can depend upon their profession of faith as proof that they have a saving connection with Christ. We are not only to say, ‘I believe,’ but to practice the truth. It is by conformity to the will of God in our words, our deportment, our character, that we prove our connection with Him. Whenever one renounces sin, which is the transgression of the law, his life will be brought into conformity to the law, into perfect obedience. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. The light of the word carefully studied, the voice of conscience, the strivings of the Spirit, produce in the heart genuine love for Christ, who gave Himself a whole sacrifice to redeem the whole person, body, soul, and spirit. And love is manifested in obedience. The line of demarcation will be plain and distinct between those who love God and keep His commandments, and those who love Him not and disregard His precepts.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 6, 91, 92

Thursday

5 OBSTACLES TO MEET

5.a. What hinders the progress of God’s truth? Matthew 13:24–30

Note: “Joining the church is one thing, and connecting with Christ is quite another. Not all the names registered in the church books are registered in the Lamb’s book of life. Many, though apparently sincere believers, do not keep up a living connection with Christ. They have enlisted, they have entered their names on the register; but the inner work of grace is not wrought in the heart.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, 278

“Reformatory action is always attended with loss, sacrifice, and peril. It always rebukes love of ease, selfish interests, and lustful ambition. Hence, whoever initiates or prosecutes such action must encounter opposition, calumny, and hatred from those who are unwilling to submit to the conditions of reform. It is no easy matter to overcome sinful habits and practices. The work can be accomplished only with the help of divine grace; but many neglect to seek such help and endeavor to bring down the standard to meet their deficiencies, instead of bringing themselves up to meet the standard of God.” *Sketches From the Life of Paul*, 305, 306

“There have ever been two classes among those who profess to be followers of Christ. While one class study the Saviour’s life and earnestly seek to correct their defects and conform to the Pattern, the other class shun the plain, practical truths which expose their errors. Even in her best estate the church was not composed wholly of the true, pure, and sincere. Our Saviour taught that those who willfully indulge in sin are not to be received into the church; yet He connected with Himself men who were faulty in character, and granted them the benefits of His teachings and example, that they might have an opportunity to see their errors and correct them. Among the twelve apostles was a traitor.” *The Great Controversy*, 43

5.b. When sin without repentance invades a faithful church, one of two things should happen. What are they? 1 Corinthians 5:11–13

Note: “[In Corinth] one former convert had so far backslidden that his licentious course was a violation of even the low standard of morality held by the Gentile world. The apostle pleaded with the church to put away from among them ‘that wicked person.’” *The Acts of Apostles*, 303, 304

Friday

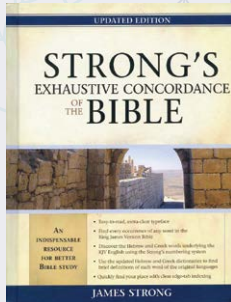
PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1 Why have God’s people always been few and rejected by most?
- 2 How did Jesus prophesy of unity in one church body?
- 3 How do we become a part of God’s church, His holy, spiritual nation?
- 4 If one desires to become a member of Christ’s visible church, what must he or she do?
- 5 In teaching true reformation, what can we expect from most people?

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BIBLE STUDY TOOLS

Increase Your Knowledge of God's Word



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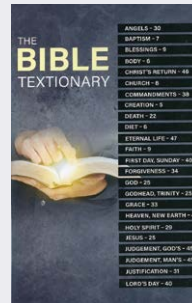
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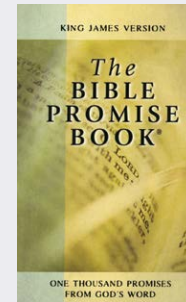
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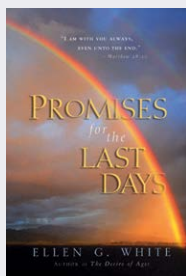
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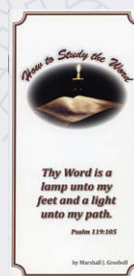
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Corn is the third-most cultivated crop in the world, following wheat and rice. Originating in the Americas—but grown on every continent except Antarctica—over 440 million tons of corn are harvested yearly throughout the world. In 2019, US farmers planted 91.7 million acres of corn—the equivalent of 69 million football fields.

There are six main varieties of corn that come in different shades and combinations of white, yellow, red, blue, purple/black, and green. An ear of corn has about 800 kernels in 16 rows, always an even number with one silk strand for every kernel. A good ear of corn is juicy

and sweet on its own, but can also be used in soups, chili, salsas, salads, breads, and crusts.

DID YOU KNOW? One variety of corn grown in Peru has kernels so large that they are eaten individually.

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Sources: factretriever.com/corn-facts; mydadssweetcorn.com/blog/corn-facts



Fruit

Vegetables

Legumes

Nuts/Seeds

Grains



POLENTA PIZZA

Crust

2½ cups water
½ cup almond milk
1 cup cornmeal
1 tsp. sea salt
¼ tsp. dried thyme, or to taste
¼ tsp. dried oregano, or to taste
¼ tsp. dried basil, or to taste
1 Tbs. olive oil

Tomato Sauce

2 cups tomatoes, chopped
6–8 cloves garlic, chopped
2 tsp. lemon juice, or to taste
½ tsp. salt
Olive oil

Topping suggestions:
sliced cherry tomatoes, red onion, bell pepper, olives

Process

Bring water and almond milk to a boil in a pot. Reduce heat to low. Add cornmeal and whisk until clumps are reduced and mixture thickens. Add salt and herbs. Continue to whisk for another 5–10 minutes. Remove from heat. Brush a baking sheet with oil and pour half the corn mixture on one side forming a ½-inch thick circle. Pour the remaining mixture on the other side of the sheet, making two pizzas. Cover the sheet and refrigerate until mixture thickens, about 30 minutes. Combine tomatoes, garlic, lemon juice, salt, and a drizzle of olive oil in a blender; blend to combine. Adjust seasonings. Remove crusts from refrigerator, top with tomato sauce and toppings of choice. Pop pizzas in the oven; bake at 375°F for 15 minutes or until crust is crispy.





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<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/benefits-of-corn/>

