

Old Paths

Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.
Jeremiah 6:16

The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant.
Psalm 25:14

Vol. 7, No. 10

Straight and Narrow

October 1998

HISTORIC, BIBLICAL, OR PAPAL ADVENTISTS?

By David Clayton

Historic Adventists?

The term “historic Seventh-day Adventist” became popular a few years ago with the sudden explosion of home churches and independent ministries, all unhappy with the falling standards, the changing doctrines, and the general worldly and ecumenical trends in the “mother” Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Terry Ross, the founder of “Servants of Our Saviour” ministry, claims that he is the person who first coined the term. Be that as it may, it quickly became a phrase which the independent ministries favored, and many home churches began to use the term “historic Adventists” to identify themselves. It was a term which seemed to say, “we stand by the old landmarks on which the S. D. A. Church was founded. We belong to the original S. D. A. Church and not the present day impostor!” It made a good springboard for launching the claim that the present day S. D. A. denomination is in apostasy, has departed from the teachings of the earlier Adventists, and therefore is not the true Seventh-day Adventist Church, even though it bears the same name. Of course, the logical thing to conclude is that the “historic Seventh-day Adventists” are really the true Seventh-day Adventists.

All seemed to be well until the publication of the *Issues* book by the S. D. A. Church revealed a glaring inconsistency on the part of the independent ministries. On page thirty-nine of the book *Issues*, in the section entitled, “Historic Adventism – Ancient Landmarks and The Present Truth,” the publishers point out that the early Adventists were non-Trinitarian and quote from the statement of

beliefs published by the Adventists in 1872 to support their claim. They then go on to say:

“Would one be willing to accept all the content from that earlier era? Are the modern defenders of so-called historic Adventism really prepared to return to a non-Trinitarian position?”

The silence from the “historic” independent ministries on this point was deafening. The *Issues* book was perfectly right. Are you truly a historic Seventh-day Adventist? Since you say that the church has no right to change the position of the pioneers, but must stick by the original doctrines, then be consistent. Accept *all* of historic Adventism, or give up the sham of being a defender of the “faith of our fathers.”

Interestingly, Elder John Grosboll of Steps To Life published three small booklets in rebuttal to the book *Issues*. In the second of these booklets entitled, *ISSUES: The Letter the NAD Officers did not Publish in their ISSUES Book – The Church – Part Two*, Elder Grosboll reprinted the 1872 statement of beliefs referred to by the S. D. A. church leaders and makes the following remarkable statement:

Also in this issue:

Christ not a Created Being - E. J. Waggoner	p. 5
Forgiveness - Allen Stump	p. 7
Youth's Corner	p. 10
Christ Our Righteousness Bible Study	p. 11
The Fish as a Symbol	p. 11
A Man of Integrity - Debbie Lewellen	p. 12

“Who is an historic Seventh-day Adventist? An historic Seventh-day Adventist is a person who believes the historic teachings of Seventh-day Adventists. The following article by James White from the *Signs of the Times* in 1874 outlines the historic doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists. A historic Seventh-day Adventist still believes all of these.” (p. 71)

This is a remarkable statement coming from Elder Grosboll. Let us look at the first point in the statement of beliefs as published by the early Adventists. It reads as follows:

“That there is one God, a personal, spiritual Being, the Creator of all things, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal, infinite in wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, and mercy; unchangeable, and everywhere present by his representative, the Holy Spirit. Psalm 139:7”

Notice that in this statement, the one God is clearly identified as being one Person. Not three. The Holy Spirit is identified as being, not the one God, but rather, the *representative* of the one God. Furthermore, in the second point of this statement of beliefs, Jesus Christ is stated to be, not God, but rather, “*the Son of the Eternal Father, the One by whom God created all things.*” It is clear that this statement of beliefs teaches that the only Being who is God in the sense of being the absolute supreme Authority and the Source of all things, is God the Father.

Yet in his *Landmarks* magazine of December, 1996, Elder Grosboll, in an article entitled, “The Godhead,” accuses the S. D. A. pioneers of being Arians, contends that these “Historic Adventists” believed false doctrines and contradicted their statement of beliefs by stating many times that God is not a single person, but is rather, three Beings. Though he does not use the word “Trinity,” yet he teaches the Trinity concept.

“A second point that we notice in Ellen White’s writings is that she speaks of one God. She does not teach that there are three Gods, but that there is one God. And yet, at the same time, as we will see, she teaches that this one God includes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which are three personalities mysteriously united as one . . .” (*Landmarks* – December 1996, p.16)

“. . . Notice, there is One upon the throne. There is one God, but this one God includes both Christ and the Father. . .” (*Ibid.*)

It is evident that many of these “independent ministers” are not willing to be “historic Adventists” except where it is convenient for them and fits in with their agenda.

BIBLICAL ADVENTISTS?

Others involved with independent ministries have chosen to take a different label. Perceiving the inconsistency in calling oneself “historic” while rejecting doctrines which are fully a part of the “historic” package, they have chosen to refer to themselves as “Biblical Adventists,” implying that our pioneers were not Biblical in at least some of their beliefs. Here, however, we find a fulfillment of the Biblical proverb, “As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him.” (Amos 5:19) If the pioneers were non-Trinitarian, the Bible is even more so. Let us briefly compare the beliefs of the pioneers concerning God, with the teachings of the Bible.

✚ Pioneer’s Belief no. 1:

“That there is one God, a personal, spiritual Being, the Creator of all things . . . (who is) everywhere present by His representative, the Holy Spirit. (*Signs of the Times*, 1874)

✚ The Bible:

“But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him....” (1 Corinthians 8:6)

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?” (Psalm 139:7)

✚ Pioneer’s Belief no. 2:

“That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, and Son of the Eternal Father, the One by whom God created all things...” (*Signs of the Times*, 1874)

✚ The Bible:

“...and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” (1 Corinthians 8:6)

“.... God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:” (Ephesians 3:9)

“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” (1 John 4:15)

Our pioneers were men of prayer and study. God chose capable vessels to define the faith which would take the remnant into the kingdom; men who spent countless hours in seeking God’s guidance as they endeavored to learn the truth. One is impressed when reading the publications of the early Adventists with the careful research and the depth of thought, the logical reasoning, and the deep spirituality of our pioneers. The contrast with the present day crop of “theologians” is striking.

Several of these proponents of the Trinity doctrine have claimed that Jesus never became the Son of God until He was conceived in Mary’s womb! This concept is so destructive to the basic focus of the gospel that it is appalling to think that men who profess to be the ministers of that gospel should propose it. What says the Scripture?

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” (1 John 4:9)

Note three things here:

- ☞ We may discern how much God loves us by the value of the gift which He gave.
- ☞ The gift which He gave was His only begotten Son.
- ☞ God gave His Son by sending Him into the world.

What was the identity of Jesus Christ at the time when He was sent? Was He then God’s Son? If He was not, then it was not His Son that God sent. Did God the Father send another God to become the Son? No. Plain reason indicates that at the time when He was sent, He must have already been the Son, or else the whole sense of the verse is lost. The point being emphasized by the Holy Spirit in this verse is the revelation of God’s love. This, according to the verse, is manifested by the value of the gift which He gave. How valuable was this gift? The Holy Spirit calls upon us to discern the wonder of it all — it was His only begotten Son that He gave. Could there have been a more wonderful manifestation of God’s love? No. Nothing else could have revealed it so fully as the giving of such a gift.

But now we are told that it was not really His Son that God gave. What are we to make of the declarations of these “theologians” that the Father did not truly give His Son, but really incarnated a fellow God and gave Him the title of His Son, by virtue of the fact that He had transformed Him into flesh? What then is the measure of the love which God had for this Son? Logically, His *Fatherly* love for Jesus was based on the fact that He had changed Him into flesh (according to this teaching, this is how Jesus became the Son of God, therefore we must begin to measure God’s love for Jesus as a Father from that point). Do you see what I am saying? The scriptures do not ask us to behold the love of the Father for a fellow God, or for some mysterious fellow companion. The emphasis all through is the Father’s love for His Son. This is how we may measure the greatness of the Father’s love for us.

If the pioneers were non-Trinitarian, the Bible is even more so.

The doctrine that Jesus was not originally the Son of God is a most destructive one and is diametrically opposed to the foundation teachings of the gospel.

Hebrews 1:5, 6 is used as a key reference used by Trinitarians to prove that Jesus only became God’s Son at His birth. It says: “For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.”

It is correctly claimed that this reference applies to Jesus’ arrival into the world. However, this becomes the basis of the claim that all references to the Sonship of Jesus must be applied from that time. It is this kind of reasoning which tempts me to question the sincerity of these men. These are men who quote profusely from the writings of Ellen White when it suits them. They surely know what Ellen White has said on this matter. How is it that they ignore her so completely on this point? This is what Sister White has to say about the arrival of Jesus into this world:

“Before the foundations of the world were laid, Christ, the Only Begotten of God, pledged Himself to become the Redeemer of the human race, should Adam sin. ...

“In His incarnation *He gained in a new sense the title of the Son of God*. Said the angel to Mary, ‘The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God’ (Luke 1:35). While the Son of a human being, *He became the Son of God in a new sense*. Thus He stood in our world—the Son of God, yet allied by birth to the human race.” (1 SM, pp. 226, 227 - emphasis supplied)

It seems clear to me that there is a convenient use of the *Testimonies* by these men. When it suits them, they champion the writings. When it doesn’t, they ignore them completely. One glaring example of the misuse made of Sister White is in the case of a paper put out recently by one of these independent ministries. The author, in attempting to prove that Jesus is the absolute equal of the Father in every respect, quotes from the *Signs of The Times* of May 3, 1895, as follows: “He gave His only begotten Son— *not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by adoption, as is the forgiven sinner*, but ... one equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” (emphasis supplied)

When we see what the complete quotation says, as quoted below, it is difficult not to question the sincerity of the writer. The **bold** section is the part which was left out. The full quote reads as follows:

Since when did the Catholic councils become authoritative for Adventists?

“He gave His only begotten Son— not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by adoption, as is the forgiven sinner, but **a Son begotten in the express image of the Father’s person, and in all the brightness of his majesty and glory**, one equal with God in authority, dignity, and divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

When I see things like this I am sad for the people who are being deceived and righteous anger stirs my soul! This is not a matter of mere words. What are we contending for here? Popularity? Financial support? Acceptance? The scoring of points? No, no, no! The very character of our God is the issue in question here. God’s sincerity, the reality of His love, the foundation of our relationship with Him are the issues in question and shall we endanger these concepts by manipulat-

ing words? God help us to be honest! How can we escape the wine of Babylon while imbibing in schools reeking with Babylonish philosophies? No wonder God has “hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes and sucklings.”

PAPAL ADVENTISTS

The *Encarta Encyclopedia* has this to say about the origin of the Trinitarian doctrine (all emphasis supplied):

“Trinity (theology)

“In Christian theology, doctrine that God exists as three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who are united in one substance or being. *The doctrine is not taught explicitly in the New Testament, where the word God almost invariably refers to the Father*; but already Jesus Christ, the Son, is seen as standing in a unique relation to the Father, while the Holy Spirit is also emerging as a distinct divine person.

“The term trinitas was first used in the 2nd century, by the Latin theologian Tertullian, but the concept was developed in the course of the debates on the nature of Christ. In the 4th century, the doctrine was finally formulated; using terminology still employed by Christian theologians, the doctrine taught the co-equality of the persons of the Godhead ... For an adequate understanding of the Trinitarian conception of God, the distinctions among the persons of the Trinity must not become so sharp that there seems to be a plurality of gods, nor may these distinctions be swallowed up in an undifferentiated monism.” (*Encarta Encyclopedia*)

The description here of how the Trinity doctrine originated is not unique to the *Encarta Encyclopedia*, but is basically the same as that which may be found in any reliable encyclopedia. Note the statement: “The doctrine is not taught explicitly in the New Testament, where the word God almost invariably refers to the Father.” Here is an assessment of the situation from people who do not have a religious agenda. The Trinity is not a doctrine which is taught in the Bible. So where did it originate? We are provided with an answer to this question as well: “the concept was developed in the course of the debates on the nature of Christ. In the 4th century, the doctrine was finally formulated ...” (*Ibid.*)

God help us to be honest! How can we escape the wine of Babylon while imbibing in schools reeking with Babylonish philosophies?

The implications of this are devastating. This is a doctrine which was formulated after the Bible was completed. A doctrine which was formulated in the Catholic councils of the 4th century! No wonder the Catholic Church has stated:

“Our opponents sometimes claim that no belief should be held dogmatically which is not explicitly stated in Scripture ... But the Protestant Churches have themselves accepted such dogmas *as the Trinity for which there is no such precise authority in the Gospels.*” (*Life Magazine*, October 30, 1950 emphasis supplied)

This doctrine does not belong to historic Adventism and upon the testimony of unbiased researchers, neither does it belong to the teachings of the Bible or the apostolic church. In actual fact, this doctrine originated in the Catholic councils of the 4th century. Since when did the Catholic councils become authoritative for Adventists?

In adopting this Trinitarian teaching, Adventists have placed themselves right alongside the false Protestant churches, the daughters of Babylon who claim the scriptures as their authority, but in actual fact, adopt the traditions of Rome. In following this dangerous trend, the “mother” Adventist church and the “reformers” alike have adopted the Catholic principle of accepting tradition as an authoritative source for defining Christian belief. When all things are considered, perhaps a more fitting title for Adventists who believe in the Trinity is neither, “historic Adventists,” nor “Biblical Adventists,” but rather, *Papal Adventists.* □□□

(David writes from his home in Jamaica. His address is: P. O. Box 23, Knockpatrick, Manchester, Jamaica. David shepherds several home churches in Jamaica where the work is currently growing very rapidly. He has produced an excellent series of cassette tapes called “The Omega Series.” These tapes are available from Smyrna Gospel Ministries.)

Christ not a Created Being

By E. J. Waggoner

Before passing to some of the practical lessons that are to be learned from these truths, we must dwell for a few moments upon an opinion that is honestly held by many who would not for any consideration willingly dishonor Christ, but who, through that opinion, do actually deny His Divinity. It is the idea that Christ is a created being, who, through the good pleasure of God, was elevated to His present lofty position. No one who holds this view can possibly have any just conception of the exalted position which Christ really occupies.

The view in question is built upon a misconception of a single text, Rev. 3:14: “And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God.” This is wrongly interpreted to mean that Christ is the first being that God created; that God’s work of creation began with Him. But this view antagonizes the scripture which declares that Christ Himself created all things. To say that God began His work of creation by creating Christ is to leave Christ entirely out of the work of creation.

The word rendered “beginning” is *arche*, meaning, as well, “head” or “chief.” It occurs in the name of the Greek ruler, *Archon*, in *archbishop*, and the word *archangel*. Take this last word. Christ is the *archangel*. See Jude 9; 1 Thess. 4:16; John 5:28, 29; Dan. 10:21. This does not mean that He is the first of the angels, for He is not an angel but is above them. Heb. 1:4. It means that He is the chief or prince of the angels, just as an archbishop is the head of the bishops. Christ is the commander of the angels. See Rev. 19:11-14. He created the angels. Col. 1:16. And so the statement that He is the beginning or head of the creation of God, means that in Him creation had its beginning; that, as He Himself says, He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Rev. 21:6; 22:13. He is the source whence all things have their origin.

Neither should we imagine that Christ is a creature, because Paul calls Him (Col. 1:15) “the First-born of every creature;” for the very next verses show Him to be Creator, and not a creature.. “For by Him were all

things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.” Now if He created everything that was ever created, and existed before all created things, it is evident that He Himself is not among created things. He is above all creation, and not a part of it.

The Scriptures declare that Christ is “the only begotten son of God.” He is begotten, not created. As to when He was begotten, it is not for us to inquire, nor could our minds grasp it if we were told. The prophet Micah tells us all that we can know about it, in these words: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity.” Micah 5:2, margin. There was a time when Christ proceeded forth and came from God, from the bosom of the Father (John 8:42; 1:18), but that time was so far back in the days of eternity that to finite comprehension it is practically without beginning.

But the point is that Christ is a begotten Son, and not a created subject. He has by *inheritance* a more excellent Name than the angels; He is “a Son over His own house.” Heb. 1:4; 3:6. And since He is the only-begotten son of God, He is of the very substance and nature of God, and possesses by birth all the attributes of God; for the Father was pleased that His Son should be the express image of His Person, the brightness of His glory, and filled with all the fullness of the Godhead. So He has “life in Himself.” He possesses immortality in His own right, and can confer immortality upon others. Life inheres in Him, so that it cannot be taken from Him; but, having voluntarily laid it down, He can take it again. His words are these: “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” John 10:17, 18.

If anyone springs the old cavil, how Christ could be immortal and yet die, we have only to say that we do not know. We make no pretensions of fathoming infinity. We cannot understand how Christ could be

God in the beginning, sharing equal glory with the Father, before the world was, and still be born a babe in Bethlehem. The mystery of the crucifixion and resurrection is but the mystery of the incarnation. We cannot understand how Christ could be God and still become man for our sake. We cannot understand how He could create the world from nothing, nor how He can raise the dead, nor yet how it is that He works by His Spirit in our own hearts; yet we believe and know these things. It should be sufficient for us to accept as true those things which God has revealed, without stumbling over things that the mind of an angel cannot fathom. So we delight in the infinite power and glory which the Scriptures declare belong to Christ, without worrying our finite minds in a vain attempt to explain the infinite.

Finally, we know the Divine unity of the Father and the Son from the fact that both have the same Spirit. Paul, after saying that they that are in the flesh cannot please God, continues: “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” Rom. 8:9. Here we find that the Holy Spirit is both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. Christ “is in the bosom of the Father;” being by nature of the very substance of God, and having life in Himself, He is properly called Jehovah, the self-existent One, and is thus styled in Jer. 23:56, where it is said that the righteous Branch, who shall execute judgment and justice in the earth, shall be known by the name of *Jehovah-tsidekenu*—THE LORD, OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Let no one, therefore, who honors Christ at all, give Him less honor than he gives the Father, for this would be to dishonor the Father by just so much; but let all, with the angels in heaven, worship the Son, having no fear that they are worshiping and serving the creature instead of the Creator. □□□

(This study was reprinted from Dr. Waggoner’s book, *Christ Our Righteousness*, pp. 20-25. This book sets “forth his precise teaching and phrasing [as given] at Minneapolis [in 1888].” (*Eternal Verities Triumphant*, p. 61) Referring to the teachings given at the Minneapolis conference, Ellen G. White stated that “the Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message [to His people] through elders [E. J.] Waggoner and [A. T.] Jones.” (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 91) Editors)

Forgiveness

By Allen Stump

The Bible says that sin is the transgression of God's holy law. (1 John 3:4) Sin, any sin, in its very nature of rebellion against God is a terrible thing. Its awful impact on the universe can only begin to be measured in the light of the sacrifice that was necessary to eradicate it.

Many times people are predisposed to think of some sins as worse than others. Sins such as adultery, sodomy, or murder, are held with great contempt in the eyes of most people. Yet, many of these same people carry the sins of pride, a lying tongue, or they sow strife and discord among the brethren. Interestingly, these latter sins are mentioned in God's Word as sins that He hates and are even called "an abomination unto him." (Proverbs 6:16)

Friend, sin is sin and it does not matter what the sin is! The Bible says "the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23) Paul, writing under inspiration, goes to great lengths in the third chapter of Romans to bring home the point that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) Therefore, all need forgiveness of their sins unless they wish to face the wages of sin for themselves. How thankful we should be that God, through Christ, has provided "redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin" for every person who wishes to be in God's kingdom. (Colossians 1:14)

The word "forgive" means to "give for." What did God give for your sins? That's right, all of heaven in the gift of His only begotten Son! Doesn't that tell you how much God loves you and wants to forgive you

no matter how bad and terrible of a sinner you are?

God forgiving Us

God, through Moses, instructed His people to confess their sins: "Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the LORD, and that person be guilty; Then they shall confess their sin which they have done." (Numbers 5:6, 7) Many times when we have done wrong, instead of confessing our guilt we so often times wish to hide our wrong. However, sins cannot be hidden from God. God tells us that "your sin will find you out." (Numbers 32:23) Paul writes: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Hebrews 4:13) Since "the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth," the only sane and right thing to do is to admit that we are sinners in need of God's grace and confess our sins to Him. While this is a humbling experience, the Lord provides this beautiful promise as found in 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That means murder, adultery, sodomy, pride, evil tongues, and any other sin that we bring to Him.

Not only is it natural for man to deny his sin, but when confronted with sin, he is prone to cast the blame upon another. Both Adam and Eve, when confronted with their sin, cast the blame elsewhere. "And the man said, *The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is*

this that thou hast done? And the woman said, *The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.*" Here we find Adam blaming both Eve and also God Who had provided him with his mate! Eve blamed the serpent. (Genesis 3:12-13)

What a difference confession makes! Solomon stated, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." (Proverbs 28:13) Even if other people do not choose to forgive you for wrongs you have done, remember you have a kind loving heavenly Father Who has promised you "mercy."

Perhaps one of the greatest examples of forgiveness recorded in the Bible involves the Apostle Peter. All four gospels record the shameful denial of Peter concerning his association with Jesus. The gospel of Mark provides one of the most detailed descriptions of the denial. The significance of this is realized when we understand that Mark received a great deal of his information for his record from Peter! Peter did not try to hide his sin. Peter's disgraceful denial of Jesus was followed by a very sincere repentance. When Peter realized the enormity of his sin, the Bible says he "wept bitterly." (Luke 22:62) Because of his broken hearted repentance and confession of his guilt, Peter received forgiveness.

A little more than fifty days later at Pentecost, it was Peter, who had denied his Lord, that was the chief spokesperson for the apostles! It was Peter who boldly stood before the high priest and the rulers of Israel and told them that they had crucified the Lord of glory. Yet not one place in the record do we find anybody bringing up Peter's sin to

him and taunting him about it. Nobody dared to say to Peter, "Who are you to say anything to us after you denied with cursing that you even knew Jesus?" Why? Peter was forgiven and his face shone with heaven's forgiveness so much that it was obvious to all who saw him and heard him speak.

True confession is specific in character: "And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he hath sinned *in that thing*." (Leviticus 5:5)

David confessed his sin: "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." (Psalm 32:5) He put his hope for forgiveness in the Lord. His plea was: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." (Psalm 51:1)

Even the repentance that brings us to confession comes from God through Christ. "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:29-31)

God's Great Mercy

God is ready to forgive the sinner when called upon. "For thou, Lord, art good, and *ready to forgive*; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee." (Psalm 86:5) "For as the heaven is high above the

earth, *so great is his mercy toward them that fear him*." (Psalm 103:11) I have had the opportunity to fly in airplanes at elevations over 33,000 feet high. Looking down from that height even large buildings appear very small. Yet, this is nothing compared to the awesome sight of our blue planet from the vastness of space. However, God's heavens and mercy are infinitely higher than these examples.

God's infinite mercy is demonstrated to us by forgiving us of our transgressions. He says: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. (Ps. 103:12) The impact of this statement sinks in when you consider the earth, its position in space, and the way it rotates on its axis. Regardless of our starting point, if we travel north, we can only go north until we reach the north pole. Once at the north pole, the first step we go starts us southward. Likewise, regardless of our starting point, if we travel south, we can only go south until we reach the south pole. Once at the south pole, the first step we go starts us northward. However, traveling east or west one can continue to travel in that direction forever. Even though we will return to our starting point after circumscribing the earth, we will still be able to keep going east without ever starting west or west without ever starting east.

God is ready to forgive the sinner who repentantly seeks pardon. Just as soon as David confessed his sin, he was assured of pardon. "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." (2 Samuel 12:13) This should be encouraging. God hates sin and He

wants us to hate and shun it because it brings trouble and death. But, *as soon as we acknowledge and sincerely confess our sin, that very moment it is forgiven*.

No Fishing!

God promises us that He will abundantly pardon us when we come to Him. (See Isaiah 55:7.) He abundantly pardons us because he delights in mercy! The Bible says in Micah 7:19: "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Someone commenting upon this verse once said, "When God buries our sins in the deepest seas, he posts a sign which reads: NO FISHING!" In other words, if God is willing to forgive our sins and restore us into fellowship with Him and cast our "sins into the depths of the sea," nobody has the authority to try to bring them back out of the depths! Jesus said that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." God, Christ, and the holy angels all rejoice over a sinner that repents. In the light of heaven, how can mortal man refuse to forgive a sinner when God can? Remember that it is God who has been offended above all.



Forgiving others

One of the most important conditions to having our sins forgiven is to be forgiving of others. Jesus taught us to pray: "And forgive us our debts [sins], as we forgive our debtors [those who sin against us]." (Matthew 6:12) Jesus went on to say: "For if ye forgive men their tres-

passes, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: *But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*" (Matthew 6:14, 15) God is not arbitrary or capricious in the matter. He longs to forgive our sins. However, when we fail to forgive others, we place God in the position where He *cannot* forgive us. The fact that we refuse to forgive others reveals that we have not the proper spirit of repentance ourselves.

The Apostle Paul counsels us: "And *grieve not the holy Spirit of God*, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, *forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*" (Ephesians 4:30-32) Friend, do you realize that you grieve "the holy Spirit of God" when you speak evil of others and fail to be tenderhearted and forgiving?

Paul also noted: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:1-2) One very discerning Christian writer commented on these verses as follows:

"Here is a special direction to deal tenderly with those overtaken in a fault. This 'overtaken' must have its full significance. It is something different from deliberate sin, to be led into sin unawares, not meaning to sin, but sinning through want of watchfulness and prayer, and not discerning the temptation of Satan, and so falling into his snare. There is

a difference to be made in the case of one who plans and deliberately enters into temptation, and marks out an evil course, covering his sin skillfully, that he shall not be detected. The treatment cannot be the same in both cases. More effective measures are needed to check the premeditated sin; but the apostle directs the treatment to be given to those who are 'overtaken,' or surprised, or overcome, by temptation. 'Ye which are spiritual,' you who have evidenced that you have a connection with God, 'restore such a one in the spirit of meekness,' — not crush all hope and courage out of the soul, but restore him in meekness, 'considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' Faithful reproofs will be needed, and kindly counsel and supplications to God, to bring him to see his danger and sin." (Ellen G. White - *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 28, 1887)

Our work as Christians is not to destroy, that is Satan's work. Our work as Christians is to mend, to restore, and to heal.

Love does not Keep a Record of Wrongs

Perhaps you have heard someone say, "I'll forgive him, but I won't forget." Beloved, if we are not willing to forget, we are truly not forgiving. The *Good News* version of the Bible states that "... love does not keep a record of wrongs." (1 Corinthians 13:5) Our attitude should be like that of Jesus who could pray on the cross, "Father, forgive them." (Luke 23:34) If we are to be a partaker of the divine nature, then we must be willing to forgive as God forgives. This character can be imparted by the grace of Christ. Stephen was a partaker of this nature for as he was being stoned he could

pray, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." (Acts 7:60)

How much should we forgive others? "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." (Matthew 18:21-22) Jesus was not referring to a literal number of times that should be kept track of, but rather used the number 490 as a symbol of the infinite number of times that we must be willing to forgive.

We are to love our neighbor as our self. (See Leviticus 19:18) Love, instead of broadcasting someone's sin should seek to hide or cover them.

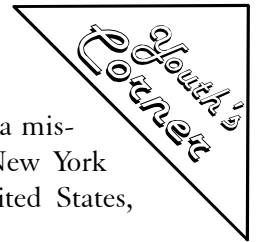
"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and *shall hide a multitude of sins.*" (James 5:19, 20)

"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: *for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*" (1 Peter 4:8)

Beloved, our Lord has commanded us to forgive and restore the erring sinner and He holds us responsible in the judgment if we pursue a course that will drive them to discouragement, despair, or ruin. As we experience the grace of God's great love in forgiving our sins, we must, by being a partaker of the divine nature, forgive those who trespass against us and then we can be free. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:36) □□□



The Sequel to Sensational Story



The first story took place in eighteenth-century Poland. The second one took place in modern-day Japan.

George Muller, the founder of the successful Bristol, England, Orphanages monumental testimonies to God's protection and providings for believing prayers visited Japan. He was asked to sit for a special photograph that could be a memorial of his visit to Japan.

No, he said, let one of your Japanese Christians found an orphanage. That will be my photograph.

Mr. J. Ishii, a young Okayama medical school student, took up the challenge. He, like Muller before him, had no income. He, like Muller, was determined to never let anyone outside the orphanage know of any need. Like Muller, he was going to prove that God will provide without asking anyone for help.

Ishii met with immediate, though not gigantic, success. He and his beautiful orphans and staff lived day to day in full dependence on God. Then came a severe time of difficult post-war days in Japan. The drain on Christian benevolences was seen as something that would close most faith endeavors and stop the forward motion. The little orphanage enterprise of J. Ishii felt the terrible pinch more than others as it was not soliciting any outside help as did all the others. Practically all of their monthly contributors simply forgot the orphanage.

The supply of food grew less and less until, on September the 24th, only a little rice remained. At the five o'clock supper time Mr. Ishii made a speech to the children, telling them that the food was nearly all gone and there was no money to buy any more.

You will have to be content with a little rice gruel for this meal. And before you are served, I want to tell you a true story of something that happened to a man and his family who faced this same problem.

Then he related to them an amazing story that was published in *Old Paths* earlier this year.

Now, children, he continued, that happened many, many years ago, but the same kind heavenly Father still watches over His children, and I believe He will help us. All of you who believe this please meet with me when you have finished your meal, out to the little graveyard in the back of the house. We'll pray in faith for the Lord to do it again for us.

About thirty of the children got up from the dining tables and went immediately out to the graveyard, without touching their meal. Mr. Ishii, still overwhelmed by the faith of the young orphans, opened the little prayer service for the kneeling youngsters. After offering a deep petition for God to provide once again, he left the children praying in the cemetery. He went inside, made his way to an upstairs room, and began another prayer service for adults living outside the orphanage who came there once a week.

None of the orphanage staff was in attendance. None of the regular outside attendants were aware of the circumstances concerning the lack of food. He had not been in the meeting but a few minutes when his wife was asked to come downstairs to the front door.

There, waiting just inside the door, was a missionary lady who had just arrived in Okayama from another city. Just after greeting the neatly dressed lady, Mrs. Ishii was handed an envelope.

This is from a mission group in New York City, in the United States, the guest said.

When Mrs. Ishii opened it she was dazed. It was a large sum of American money, which was more valuable than the Japanese currency. She immediately rushed to tell her husband the good news.

When Mr. Ishii assembled the children together from the cemetery along with the staff, it was a thrill to relate the exciting events that had all taken place within a matter of a few minutes. All of them rejoiced over the fact that God had once again proved that He does care for His own, who trust and ask Him.

Children, Mr. Ishii told the reassembled group, the story I told you at the evening meal has almost been repeated exactly. God still sees to it that the people who believe in His ability to provide care are not disappointed.

The children appreciated the story, but they were even more thankful to have been alive and part of the modern one.

By the way, Mr. Ishii told them the story of Dobry receiving the ring from the raven. Remember it? □□□

(The story of Dorby entitled, *The Polish Peasant Knew How The Prophet Felt* was published in the February, 1998 issue of *Old Paths*. This story was reprinted from the book, *The Hand That Still Intervenes*, - W. A. Spicer and Helen Spicer Menkel © 1982 by Concerned Publications. Permission to reprint this article was graciously granted by the publishers.)

Christ Our Righteousness

Bondservants and Freemen

1. Who is the servant of sin? **John 8:34**

2. What is the end of those who remain slaves to sin? **Romans 6:16**

3. When we sin, who is our master? **1 John 3:8**

4. Can the carnal mind break the bondage of sin? **Romans 8:7, 8**

5. Through whom is freedom found? **John 8:31-36**

6. What does God desire for us? **Romans 6:1, 2**

7. Into what has God called us? **Galatians 5:13**

8. Where is liberty to be found? **2 Corinthians 3:17**

9. What must happen to the old man (self) so that we may cease to serve sin? **Romans 6:6**

10. When the old man is dead, from what are we freed? **Romans 6:7**

11. How is the old man put to death? **Romans 6:13**

12. How complete must our yielding(surrender) be? **Romans 6:19** (See note 1.)

13. Who gives us life after we are dead to sin? **Romans 6:11**

14. What great promise may we claim when Satan tempts us to re-enter his service? **Psalms 116:16**

15. What promise do we have that God will continue with us? **Philippians 1:6** (See note 2.)

Notes:

1. The yielding to God must be as complete as it was formerly to Satan, ...

The whole secret of overcoming, then, lies in first wholly yielding to God, with a sincere desire to do His will; next, in knowing that in our yielding He accepts us as His servants; and then, in retaining that submission to Him, and leaving ourselves in His hands. (*Christ Our Righteousness*, p. 98)

2. Do you feel that it is too great a sacrifice to yield all to Christ? Ask yourself the question, What has Christ given for me? The Son of God gave all life and love and suffering for our redemption. And can it be that we, the unworthy objects of so great love, will withhold our hearts from Him? Every moment of our lives we have been partakers of the blessings of His grace, and for this very reason we cannot fully realize the depths of ignorance and misery from which we have been saved. (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 45)

The Fish as an Early Christian Symbol

The fish quickly became Christianity's chief symbol. Early Christians who gathered for secret meetings in the catacombs of Rome used the sign of a fish to signal fellow Christians that a meeting was near. They probably chose the Greek word for fish (*ichthus*) as a code for the name of Christ: *Iesous Christos Theou Huios Soter* (Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour). The first letters of these Greek words combine to make the *ichthus* in Greek. (*The Bible Almanac*, p. 236)



Bulk Rate
U. S. Postage
PAID
Welch WV
Permit No. 35

SMYRNA GOSPEL MINISTRIES
HC 64 BOX 128 B
WELCH WV 24801-9606 U.S.A.
Address Correction Requested

A MAN OF INTEGRITY

A man of integrity cannot be swayed, by the crime and the vice of his day,
The latter will cause untold heartache, but respect and honour are at stake.

Iniquity prevails throughout the land, and there must be men willing to take a stand.
To call sin by its right name and realize that this is not some game.

Some will give heed and renounce their sin, others want smooth things preached again and again.
Heaven must be where his heart and mind dwell, that sin in its true state will continue to repel.

Close communion to God must be attained by them, that the living righteous will not be condemned.

Debbie Lewellen