

# 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. 8, No. 6

Straight and Narrow

June 1999

## The Love that Overcomes the Mark of the Beast

by Colin A. Gyles

### God's Sustaining Grace

God loves us more than anyone is capable of imagining. When God saw that you and I would cling to the destructive moral disease of sin and perish with it, He sacrificed His only Son, Jesus who willingly degraded Himself so as to enable us to cut loose from the bewitching influence of sin.

Sin is rebellion against the authority of God. When we disobey what God says, we automatically become mutineers in the universe which is governed and harmoniously co-ordinated by God. In addition, we choose to disconnect ourselves from the source which keeps us alive because in Him "We live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28) Even though we rebel against Him and in so doing express our desire to be cut off from His sustaining grace, He still continues to faithfully sustain us. What a merciful God! One may ask, what are the reasons for such unrelenting goodness? There are at least two reasons. First, such is the very nature of God's character. He is "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." (Exodus 34:6) Second, He knows that we are ignorant and do not fully understand the implications of our decision when we choose to reject Him, so He continues to sustain us while He tries to help us understand so that we can repent. His arms are wide open, ready to forgive us and reinstate us as though we had never rebelled. Through the grace of Christ, He also makes available the power to keep us from repeating and continuing the process of rebellion.

### Limited Probationary Time

A limited period of time is given to each individual to cast his/her lot. Based on the choices that we make during our probationary life-span, an assessment

(judgment) will be made by Christ as to whether our decision is to continue in rebellion and cut ourselves from off God's sustenance or to submit to His laws and authority which govern the universe and accept His sustaining grace. God has given us the freedom to choose and He respects our choice. He will not impose Himself on any of us beyond our wish, and keep sustaining us throughout eternity, when we consciously make up our minds to reject Him, His authority and His power, by which our lives are sustained.

It is not only for the individual that a limited probationary period is given, but also for the entire human race in this present world order. The Bible indicates that the time will come when the wheat and the tares will have come to full maturity (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43), when there will be a sharp distinction between those who love God and those who are rebellious. Those who love God will submit to His righteous and perfect laws which govern the universe while those who are rebellious, if allowed, will continually destabilize the universe until the cancer of their rebellion overruns and destroys the it.

### Second Coming Of Christ

At that time when all will have fully matured in either submission to God or rebellion against Him, Jesus will return to the earth as was promised (Acts 1:11). This time, not as a babe, but "the Son of man

### Also in this issue:

Coming Next Month . . . . .	p.8
Youth's Corner . . . . .	p. 9
Convocation Report - L. Beachy . . . . .	p. 10
Arizona Camp Meeting Report - A. Stump . . . . .	p. 11

shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels: and then He shall reward every man according to his works.” (Matthew 16: 27)

In describing this event which marks the end of this present world order, the Bible portrays Christ as riding out of heaven seated on a white horse (Revelation 19:11) “and the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses” (Revelation 19:14) “and He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” (Revelation 19:16)

In this scenario is also described the rebellious ones and how they are affected by Christ’s second coming. A characteristic feature that is common to those rebellious ones who are yet alive at that time is that they have the mark of the beast and are in company with the beast himself.

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse. (Revelation 19:19-21)

The mark of the beast will be a significant distinguishing feature between the righteous and the rebellious immediately before the climax, and is also evident in the description that is given of those who will be righteous at that time. They are described as those who gain the victory over the beast, his image and over his mark.

And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints. (Revelation 15:2, 3)

### **The Mark Of The Beast**

God is a reasonable, intelligent and rational Being who does not just arbitrarily hold a distaste for some mysterious secret number or mark and punish unsuspecting people who do not even know that they possess this mysterious curse, as some persons think.

The mark of the beast embodies a principle which inherently contravenes the laws of God which govern the universe, otherwise it would not be sin.

The warning that God issues against receiving the mark of the beast is the sternest in the entire Bible, but along with that warning He states unambiguously the distinguishing characteristic between those who receive the mark and those who do not. His words are as follows:

If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. (Revelation 14:9, 10, 12)

Those who do not receive the mark of the beast are distinguished by the fact that they keep the commandments of God. Hence, the mark of the beast is a breach of at least one of God’s commandments. James 2:10 states that “whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. This point should be noted carefully because it gives a very significant clue as to what is the mark of the beast. It involves breaking at least one of God’s commandments.

### **Forced Conformity**

A second characteristic of the mark of the beast is that it is a mark of conformity. This is evident from what the Bible says about the beast, the mark and the way in which the world will be affected by them. Speaking of the beast, the Bible says:

And all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him? ... All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life. (Revelation 13:3, 4, 8)

The Bible further indicates that a super power in the world will apply coercive measures in an attempt to force the entire world to worship the beast and receive his mark. With reference to that super power, the Bible says it shall:

... cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Revelation 13:15-17)

## Characteristics of the Mark

We have two (2) very specific characteristics of the mark of the beast that will enable us to identify this mark against which God utters such stern warning. We will list these characteristics for emphasis.

- 1. The reception of the mark of the beast is an act which involves breaking at least one of God's commandments (this means that reception of the mark in the forehead or the hand relates to an act that individuals perform based on either intellectual assent and persuasion (forehead) or the expediency and convenience of circumstances (hand).
- 2. The mark of the beast is an institution that involves popular conformity world-wide. (Eventually, coercive measures will be employed in an attempt to force the entire world to conform to it.)

## The Commandment Involved

In order to identify what is the mark of the beast, we will first identify the particular commandment of God that is breached by the acceptance of that mark. There is really only one commandment given by God that is breached in a manner that exactly fits both of the above specifications. It is a commandment that is generally considered not necessary to be kept, even though there is no statement in the Bible that says it should no longer be kept. Also, it is one that is widely disregarded by many simply because it does not suit their circumstances and convenience to keep it. Interestingly, this same commandment is the only one that has in its place an observance to which the world popularly conforms, and considers it a sacred duty, without any specific statement in the Bible that says it is necessary to so conform.

This commandment is the fourth of the Ten Commandments, which requires the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. It is appreciated that many persons conscientiously believe it is not necessary to keep this commandment and they have their reasons. It is also appreciated that many persons conscientiously observe Sunday, the first day of the week, as a religious duty and they also have their reasons. Each person is entitled to believe and practice whatever he/she is persuaded of, and this discussion does not in any way negate that. However, pertaining to the subject that is now being considered, we can establish a few facts that the average reasonable person will acknowledge:

- 1. There is no statement anywhere in the Bible that says the seventh-day Sabbath should no longer be observed.
- 2. Jesus and all the apostles kept the seventh-day Sabbath.
- 3. There is no statement anywhere in the Bible that says the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, is a sacred duty.
- 4. Whether or not one considers them applicable in the present dispensation, there are numerous specific statements in the Bible that say the seventh-day Sabbath should be kept.

The facts listed above are mentioned for this reason: We have established that the mark of the beast involves the popular setting aside of at least one of God's commandments and we see that the commandment which requires the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath is the only one that is almost universally set aside (for whatever reasons). It is only reasonable for us to make a careful assessment as to whether the setting aside of this commandment is in harmony with God's divine plan, and if it is not, then conformity to this popular practice certainly conforms to the Biblical description of the mark of the beast.

## The Historical Transition

A brief look at the historical transition from Sabbath to Sunday observance will help in our assessment of the matter.

We begin by looking at the custom of Jesus and the early church. Jesus consistently kept the Sabbath (Luke 4:16, 31). The followers of Jesus, even after His death, kept the Sabbath and did so in acknowledgment of the commandment (Luke 23:54, 56). The ladies who prepared spices for anointing the body of Jesus came on the first day of the week to do that which they considered inappropriate to do on the Sabbath (Luke 23: 54, 56; 24:1). The members of the early church, including the apostle Paul, kept the Sabbath (Acts 16:13; 17:2; 18:4). Looking into the future to the time when Jerusalem would be destroyed, Jesus told his disciples to pray that their flight would not be on the Sabbath day (Matthew 24:20). From these facts it is obvious that the church of Christ kept the Sabbath and considered it a Christian duty to do so as late as 70 A.D. when Jerusalem was destroyed.

Obviously, the change occurred subsequently. Even those persons who practice Sunday observance, gen-

erally admit this. So then, since there was no Biblical authority for the discontinuance of Sabbath observance, on whose authority was Sunday observance instituted to replace it? Historically, two authoritative decrees have been identified: the first by the Roman emperor Constantine on March 7, 321 A.D. and the second by a church council held at Laodicea 364 A.D.

### Emperor Constantine

Concerning+ the first decree. Constantine was a devout worshiper of the pagan sun god. Some persons claim that he was converted to Christianity. While he might have outwardly professed the Christian faith, the very words of the decree indicate that his devotion to the sun remained. He said “On the venerable Day of the Sun let all workshops be closed.” (*History of the Christian Church*, by Philip Schaff, 5th ed; vol. 3, p. 380)

He described the day as “the venerable Day of the Sun.” The word “venerable” is defined by the Concise Oxford Dictionary as “Entitled to veneration on account of character, age, association, etc.” The word “veneration” is defined as “deep respect, reverence.”

Constantine revered the “Day of the Sun.” His reverence for the day had nothing to do with Christ, otherwise he would have said “the venerable day of the resurrection.” He revered the day because it was the day of the sun. Hence, he attempted to force others to do the same by issuing this decree.

### Council of Laodicea

How did the decree of Constantine affect Christians? For Sabbath keepers, it would obviously have created much inconvenience. Did they love God enough to endure the inconvenience without allowing it to affect their commitment to keeping the Sabbath as their predecessors did in obedience to the commandment? The edict of the Council of Laodicea forty-three years later tells the story. They preferred to take the easy way out – just give in and go along. But this is not all; they went a step further to attempt to force the commandment-keeping ones to cease keeping the commandment. Wouldn't God be angry about this? Does it remind you of the mark of the beast? Here is the edict they issued:

Christians shall not Judaize (keep the Sabbath) and be idle on Saturday but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day (Sunday) they shall especially honor, and being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut

out from Christ. (*A history of the Councils of the Church*, Charles J. Hefele, Vol. 2, p.316)

This edict also betrays a tinge of anti-Semitism. The keeping of God's commandment which requires observance of the seventh-day Sabbath was described as “Judaizing.” This also indicates that the spirit behind the edict was one of expediency and conformity because the noble emperor who had decreed in favor of the “venerable Day of the Sun,” had, on occasions, publicly expressed anti-Semitic sentiments. An example of this is seen in the reason that Emperor Constantine gave for urging that the Passover be fixed on Sunday. He said:

Let us, then, have nothing in common with the most hostile rabble of the Jews. (Boyle's *Historical View of the Council of Nice*, p. 52. 1842 ed.)

### The Underlying Authority

So the authority behind the replacement of the Bible Sabbath with Sunday observance is the pagan, sun-worshipping, anti-Semitic Roman emperor, Constantine. In expression of his devotion to the sun and his hostility towards the Jews Constantine issued a decree to force his subjects to honor Sunday. The professed Christians of the day who were shown great favor by the emperor chose instead to take the easy road of conformity. Those who only outwardly professed Christianity obeyed man rather than God. They were not willing to accept the risk of persecution for the approbation of God. But worse yet, they went on to attempt to force the commandment-keeping ones to do the same. The mere fact that it was found necessary to issue an edict threatening Sabbath-keepers with excommunication is evidence that there was a significant number of Christians who kept the Sabbath and who did not desire to disobey God's commandments.

The subsequent history of Sunday observance is one of conformity and face-saving excuses. The Sabbath keepers were forced into obscurity because they were treated with hostility both by civil authorities and by the religious establishment. As a result, individuals were born into a tradition where Sunday observance was the norm. When confronted with the fact that there is no Biblical authority for the practice of Sunday observance and that no command was given in the Bible for discontinuance of Sabbath keeping, the response has been the construction of excuses to justify the tradition.



## Theories Advanced

It is one thing for excuses to be constructed in order to justify the tradition. Worse yet is the fact that the ideas upon which some of the excuses rest have had a significant effect in eroding righteousness and respect for God. We will mention briefly a few of the ideas that have been advanced.

- 1. God's Law is done away with.

Why would anyone want to think that the laws and principles governing God's kingdom are changeable, even though it has been declared in the Bible that God is unchanging? Normally, individuals would not have entertained such a thought, but in this case it provides an excuse for disregarding the Sabbath commandment. This is the only reason why such an idea is promulgated.

Is it any wonder that the world is becoming increasingly lawless? If individuals can so glibly declare the law of God null and void simply because they wish to disregard one of the principles contained therein, why should anyone expect that human laws would be any better respected?

- 2. The church can overrule the commands given in the Bible.

One church group has gone as far as to declare their authority superior to the Word of God as recorded in the Bible on account of the widespread acceptance of Sunday observance in place of the Bible Sabbath. Consider their words:

Sunday is our mark of authority. ... The church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of that fact. (*The Catholic Record*, London, Ontario, September 1, 1923.)

According to the above assertion, those who claim to be the church have the ultimate authority in matters that define Christianity and its principles. Is it any wonder that many persons feel that Christianity is a mere human contrivance that is used to advance either individual or institutional ambitions?

- 3. The Biblical account of creation is not literally true.

This idea virtually dismisses the reality of a personal God to whom human beings owe their existence. It reinforces the idea that man is just a mere primate with little difference from the apes. It is convenient for such an idea to be advanced, because the reality of a literal seven-day creation week gives the Sabbath perpetual relevance and meaning, since the

Sabbath was given as a memorial of creation. (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11)

## Results of Conformity

The ideas mentioned above are not the only ones that have been advanced in order to justify the tradition of Sunday observance. These have been highlighted in order to give an idea of the extent to which individuals and groups go in order to justify a practice which has no Biblical authority to support it and which involves an outright disregard for one of God's commandments. Such is the result of compromise and conformity. How much more consistent with the principles and spirit of Christianity would be the resulting concepts conveyed to the world if those who professed the faith of Jesus had the courage to defend the honor of God by obeying Him when the rest of the world bows down to expediency and convenience.

## This is the Mark

With this great weight of evidence, can anyone doubt that Sunday observance will be the mark of the beast? Sunday observance perfectly fits the Biblical description. It is the only institution that involves an almost universal disregard for a commandment of God and an enforcement of that disregard. Currently in many countries there are laws that limit the performance of secular activities on Sunday and, even now, calls are being made by prominent world officials for further legislation favoring Sunday observance. An example of such calls is that made by Pope John Paul II in a recent encyclical "Centesimus Annus," released May 1991. The call was reported by *Church and State* magazine as follows:

"(Pope Leo XIII) affirms the need for Sunday rest so that people may turn their thoughts to heavenly things and to the worship which they owe to almighty God," said John Paul II. "No one can take away this human right, which is based on a commandment. In this regard," the Pope continued, "one may ask whether existing laws and the practice of industrialized societies effectively ensure in our own day the exercise of this basic right to Sunday rest." (*Church and State*, August 1991)

In July of last year John Paul II released his apostolic letter, "Dies Domini," calling for a renewed sanctity of Sunday.

The Bible predicts that the mark of the beast will be enforced world wide and that those who do not conform with the enforcement will be subjected to

economic sanctions (they will not be able to “buy or sell”) and eventually will be declared worthy of death.

For those who are not convinced that Sunday observance will be the mark of the beast that the Bible warns about, a challenge is given: Identify one other institution, mark or observance that fits the Biblical specifications.

It should be noted that it is not being suggested that persons who, whether conscientiously or otherwise, worship on Sunday now have the mark of the beast. The mark of the beast will be the final test that humanity will face, which will distinguish among the living between those who serve God and those who do not. There will be a worldwide enforcement of Sunday observance and those who keep the seventh day Sabbath holy unto the Lord will not be able to buy or sell and eventually will receive the death penalty for their fidelity to God. Obedience to God in keeping the seventh-day Sabbath will then place one in breach of what will be an unjust law of the state.

God will not allow the world to enter blindly into this crisis without a warning. Accordingly, a symbolic angel is pictured announcing to the world:

If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. (Revelation 14:9-12)

Every individual will be brought face to face with the issue in which he/she must choose between the laws of men and the law of God. Those who then choose to disobey God’s commandment, when the issues are thus plainly set before them, receive the mark of the beast. They thus seal their fate for eternal damnation.

The door of mercy is still open. Therefore, it behooves everyone whose life is now not in keeping with God’s holy law to order their steps aright. “Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” (Hebrews 4:7)

Based on the facts of the situation involving the mark of the beast one can hardly fail to see why God would be particularly angry about it. Individuals are

free to disregard the commandments of God if they so choose (they will have the responsibility to give an account of their actions in God’s judgment), but when they undertake to force others to do the same, God’s anger is kindled.

God’s view of the situation would hardly have been different had the commandment in question been any of the others. However, a brief look at the seventh-day Sabbath and what it represents, will indicate that a disregard for this particular institution carries with it inherently a disrespect for God beyond that which would be otherwise evident.

### Creator's Sign

According to the Biblical record, after creating the world in six days, having furnished it with all manner of living things (including human beings), and having provided everything that was necessary for the sustenance, happiness, and beauty of life, “God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.” (Genesis 1:31) With this the divine record states: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” (Genesis 2:1)

Having declared a perfect work “finished” at the end of the sixth day, the Creator proceeded to create a seventh day. On this seventh day he rested, “and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” (Genesis 2:3)

The reason why God created this additional day is quite evident from the words that He spoke from Mount Sinai and afterward wrote with His own finger on tables of stone. He spoke thus:

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . . the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God. . . . For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” (Exodus 20:8, 10, 11)

He has declared the seventh day to be “the sabbath of the Lord thy God” and has invited human beings to keep the day holy in honor of the fact that He created the world in six days.

### Intended Recognition

Like a master artist who adds his signature to his completed masterpiece, the Creator, having completed His work of creation in six days and having declared it to be “very good,” added His “signature,” as an indicator and a perpetual reminder that it was He

who made it all. To the human race He then gave this token and said: "Hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God." (Ezekiel 20:20)

That this seventh-day Sabbath is not arbitrarily any one day in seven is evident from the experience of the Israelites as given in Exodus chapter sixteen. God provided manna from heaven for them six days every week for forty years. On the sixth day a double portion was provided, some of which was to be kept over until the following day which was the Sabbath, since none was provided on the seventh day. Hence, on the seventh-day Sabbath, a specific day every week, a day that God Himself had determined independent of their thoughts or wishes, no manna fell from heaven.

The weekly cycle with that specific seventh day Sabbath continued with Israel during the wilderness days when they ate manna, and after, even to this very day. God would so have it that in His divine providence the Jewish people are preserved with the same custom of Sabbath keeping that no one may be in doubt as to which day God blessed and sanctified in honor of the fact that He is the God who created the world and is the only One deserving of our worship.

Notice that the purpose for which the Sabbath was given is not merely so human beings might rest lest they be wearied by the labors of their daily occupation. Indeed, the natural mind knows of the need of rest, and will of itself, make provision for physical rest to be obtained. What the natural mind will not, however, prompt the individual to do, is to spend quality time with God so that His righteous character might be molded in him by means of a continued, progressive, and positive relationship. Hence, the Sabbath command reminds the human being to keep the *Sabbath day* holy.

Keeping the day holy is altogether a spiritual experience which involves spending quality time with God. The result of this experience on a regular basis will obviously be a transformation in one's life which will see the continual elimination of sinful habits and the formation of a righteous character. Accordingly, the Lord commanded:

Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them. (Ezekiel 20:12)

To sanctify means to make holy. Hence, keeping the Sabbath holy has an integral function in the process by which holiness is accomplished in one's life.

The seventh day of the week is chosen as the Sabbath because of the esteem in which that day is held by God Himself; that esteem being centered in the fact that God rested on that day after His work of creating the world in six days, and the fact that He blessed and sanctified it. Such an esteem is entirely independent from and infinitely greater than any esteem with which any human being can hold anything – be it another day or whatever one might choose to esteem. Oh that human beings might esteem that which is esteemed by God, the Creator, the One by whom all things consist.

### Significance of the Sign

As long as the Sabbath remains and the reason for its existence is understood, human beings will always be reminded that the world was created and is being sustained by an Almighty and Omniscient God who, alone, is entitled to and deserves reverence and worship.

Human beings can lose sight of the fact that there is a Creator and Sustainer in whom we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17:28) and consequently lose sight of His claims over our lives only if the Sabbath and the meaning of it is obscured or obliterated. Therefore, as the gods of human tradition and the pseudo-science of organic evolution (among others) rival the God of heaven for human obeisance and recognition, it should not be surprising to discover that there has been a well-calculated and orchestrated scheme to remove the Sabbath from human attention and consequently to diminish human recognition of the Creator and the fact of creation.

In place of the seventh-day Sabbath – the sign of loyalty to the God of heaven, this scheme seeks to inject the day of the sun – the mark of allegiance to another god and of deference to human tradition.

### The Love Which Overcomes

How can any reasonable person who claims to love God consider it appropriate to disregard the seventh-day Sabbath? Embodied in the Sabbath institution is the very essence of love and respect for God. The mark of the beast embodies the very opposite. The mark of the beast is a mark of conformity to human tradition in preference to God's commandments. Where do your loyalties lie? Are they wrapped up in love for tradition and personal popularity? Do you have the love which overcomes the mark of the beast?

The love which overcomes the mark of the beast is this: a love for God that will constrain you to obey Him even when to do so might result in personal inconvenience; when to do so might place you in the company of the unpopular and peculiar minority; when to do so might result in the loss of even your life.

For the true child of God death is only a temporary sleep because He who has the power over death has promised to raise him up at the last day, and when resurrected, it will not be to face the prospect of dying again but to live forever.

Certainly, there are more than adequate reasons to love God. Firstly, He created us. By Him our lives are presently sustained. He has made, for us, the ultimate sacrifice in giving His only begotten Son, Jesus, to die so as to redeem us to the life which we forfeited when we chose to rebel against Him. And still, in addition, He mercifully gives us a glimpse into the future so that we might be adequately warned against and guided from yet another deceptive scheme of the devil, which will lead virtually the entire world to eternal destruction. Oh, what manner of love the Father has given unto us! Should not we, in turn, love Him?

After all that has been said, it stands true upon the authority of the Word of God as recorded in the Bible, that the mark of the beast will be enforced worldwide. Notwithstanding the fact that some will be “beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands” (Revelation 20:4), it stands eternally sure upon the promise of God that “them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, [will] stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they [will] sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.” (Revelation 15:2, 3)

To you, dear friend, the challenge is given: Will you be among that number? Do you have the love which overcomes the mark of the beast?

To enable us to develop that love for God we are pointed to Calvary. See the Son of God expiring on the cross; His life being crushed out by the sins which He bore — your sins and mine. See the Father bowed with grief and inexpressible anguish, watching His only begotten Son suffer misery, rejection and torment at the hands of those whom He was dying to save. May this scene be forever etched on our minds, and the reality sink deep into our consciousness that “In this was manifested the love of God towards us,

because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” (1 John 4:9)

If we would have the love which overcomes the mark of the Beast, we must gaze long and thoughtfully at Calvary. At Calvary we see God’s love in the sacrifice the Father and Son made for you and me. It is only conviction strengthened every day, by beholding Calvary, that can elicit from us such a response of love for God that will constrain us to say, and truly mean:

“Take the world but give me Jesus.”

“Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also.”

“Death before dishonor to our Maker and King.” ✍

(*Brother Colin A. Gyles writes and lives in Kingston, Jamaica. You may write to Brother Gyles directly at: P. O. Box 542, Kingston 10, Jamaica, West Indies.*)

A man wrapped up in himself  
makes a very small package.

## Coming Next Month

The July issue of *Old Paths* will be dedicated to addressing the cover story from the April 22, 1999 issue of the *Adventist Review* entitled, “Heresy or Hopeful Sign?” In this article, Jerry Moon, associate professor of history at Andrews University, attempts to rewrite the history of the church concerning the acceptance of the Trinity doctrine. Brother Lynnford Beachy will have a detailed and extremely thorough examination of the article using a sizable amount of evidence from historical sources, the writings of Ellen G. White, and the Bible. We would do well to remember the counsel:

In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history. (*Life Sketches*, p. 196) ✍



## Little Sins

When preparing to journey to Europe, I found, among the articles of clothing I needed, some woolen goods which at first appeared all right, but when brought to the light and shaken thoroughly, revealed the destructive work of moths. Had we not made close inspection, we should not have discovered their depredations. The moth is so small a creature as to be scarcely observable; but the traces of its existence are apparent, and the destruction that it makes with fur and woolen goods shows that it is a practical worker, although out of sight and unsuspected.


Thinking of the secret but destructive work of these moths, reminded us of some human beings we had known. How often our hearts have been pained by some sudden revelation in the outward actions of those for whom we had hoped better things, bringing to light their true character, that had heretofore been hidden from the sight of all! When held up before the light of God's word, the character is found to be like the moth-eaten garment, which, when shaken out and examined, reveals the destructive work that has been going on secretly for years. While they have a form of godliness, sins small in their eyes have been eating into the warp and woof of their character; and that which at a casual glance appeared lovely, is unsightly and disgusting to look upon. Could the actor, as he entered upon this path of wrong, have seen himself as he appeared when his true character was opened to the light, he would have been as terrified and startled as was Hazael when Elisha told him what a wicked and cruel course he would pursue in the future. He made answer, "What, is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?" Little sins

oft repeated become habit, and demoralize the soul. They work for a time unperceived, but are at length brought to the light.

The formation of character is a work that is steadily advancing, and how careful children and youth should be in regard to the habits they form! You will be for time and eternity what the habits you now form make you. Your principles and practices once formed determine your character. No one suddenly develops, as did Hazael, into a deep-dyed sinner, cruel and merciless. It took time for the moth to do its work of destruction so quietly in the dark; and it takes time, little by little, for a child or youth to be easy and happy and feel secure in a course of prevarication, a course of sin hidden from human eyes. Any one act, either good or evil, does not form the character, but thoughts and feelings indulged, prepare the way for acts and deeds of the same kind. A single glass of wine may lead to the formation of a habit most difficult to overcome, and is the first step which may lead to dishonesty, theft, and murder. What you do once, children and youth, you will do more readily the second time. It is the starting in any wrong course that must be guarded against. Be careful not to let your feet take the first step in any evil way. If you will lay the foundation for your character in a pure, virtuous life, seeking help and strength from God, your character will not be like the moth-eaten garment, but it will be firm and solid.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. If you are indeed a child of God, you will be a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Let the youth ever remember that there is something to escape, evils to shun. God has given his children fac-

ulties, the right employment of which would make them happy. The Lord never designed that they should be employed for our destruction. The structure of a strong, well-balanced character is made by a faithful performance of individual acts of duty in little things. You need, dear youth, to be particular in regard to your words. Your deportment, the spirit and feelings that you cherish, care and thoughtfulness in the things which are least in every-day life, form the true test of character.

This life is full of gracious opportunities, which you can improve in the exercise of your God-given abilities to bless others, and in so doing bless yourself, without considering self in the matter. Trivial circumstances oftentimes prove a decided blessing to the one who acts from principle, and has formed the habit of doing right because it is right. Seek for a perfect character, and let all you do, whether seen and appreciated by human eyes or not, be done with an eye single to God's glory; because you belong to God, and he has redeemed you at the price of his own life. Be faithful in the least as well as in the greatest; learn to speak the truth, to act at all times the truth. Let the heart be fully submitted to God. If controlled by his grace, you will do little deeds of kindness, take up the duties lying next you, and bring all the sunshine into your life and character that it is possible to bring, scattering the gifts of love and blessing along the pathway of life. Your works will be far-reaching as eternity. Your life-work will be seen in heaven, and there it will live, through ceaseless ages, because it is found precious in the sight of God. 

(Ellen White — *The Youth's Instructor*, December 15, 1886)

# Illinois Conference Report

On April 14-17 the New Burnside, Illinois Home Church hosted a conference of believers to discuss ways of working together more effectively. This was a follow up meeting from the Convocation held in February in West Virginia. Some of the topics discussed were: gospel finance, a Bible conference, camp meetings, missionary outreach, and the production of literature. The meetings were very beneficial and provided us with plans to more effectively work together to spread the gospel.

## Gospel Finance

As noted in our report of the February meeting, we discussed the issue of Gospel finance. The idea was raised of starting a central fund that people could anonymously support, which would in turn be distributed to the ministers. When this subject was brought up at the February meeting it was met with opposition, however we agreed to get feedback from others and discuss it further at the next meeting.

This subject was one of the first discussed at the meetings in Illinois. The feedback we have received regarding a central fund has been negative. After having more time to consider the matter and to study into the subject, some of those who had been in favor of the idea had changed their position. After a brief discussion it was decided with great unanimity that having a central fund would not benefit the cause of God and could lead to problems in the future. Therefore, the concept of the central fund was dropped.

## Bible Conference

One issue that was brought up at the February meeting was the idea of studying in detail some of the teachings that are currently being agitated within Adventism. Some of these teachings include, the feast days, the sacred names, does God destroy, areas of prophecy, and concerns about the sanctuary. While the believers present at the meeting stand upon the historical positions we have taught concerning these matters, the necessity of being able to accurately defend the faith as well as the necessity of being open to receive truth prompted the brethren to decide that a Bible conference should be held to discuss various issues.

It was decided that the best way to enable as many people as possible to attend would be to have it right before the September camp meeting. This camp meet-

ing was tentatively scheduled for September 9-18. It was decided that we will hold a Bible Conference for the first six days and have a camp meeting the remaining four days. The Bible Conference will be September 9-14, and the camp meeting will be September 15-18. All are invited to attend these meetings. (Those planning to attend the camp meeting should arrive on September 14.) We will have various presentations on the before mentioned subjects and will examine them in as much detail as possible. Please pray for the Lord's guidance and direction as we seek to follow His will. If you would like to have input into the Bible conference, please contact Lynnford Beachy at the address at the end of this issue of *Old Paths*.

## Missionary Outreach

We discussed how we can be more effective in our missionary outreach. The Promise Keepers rallies are about to resume this year. These rallies have been a large part of our outreach in the last two years by distributing fliers offering the book *America in Prophecy (The Great Controversy)*. As a result we have had hundreds of requests for this timely book. We have followed up the contacts by including them on the mailing list for the monthly newsletter *Present Truth*. This has proven to be an effective way to spread the gospel. There is a great need for volunteers to participate in distributing these fliers. A rich experience awaits all those who will take this opportunity to help spread the gospel. For those of you who cannot help with your presence please help with your prayers.

For more information about the schedule for these rallies and how you can take part in this effort, please contact Lynnford.

Another event that will soon take place is the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Session to be held in the summer of 2000 in Ontario, Canada. We discussed the necessity of having literature available to distribute at this Conference. This project will require many volunteers to help distribute literature. One booklet that would be cost effective and easy to distribute would be the recently published booklet entitled *The Omega of Apostasy*, written by Allen Stump. This small 24 page booklet chronicles the history of the development of the omega of deadly

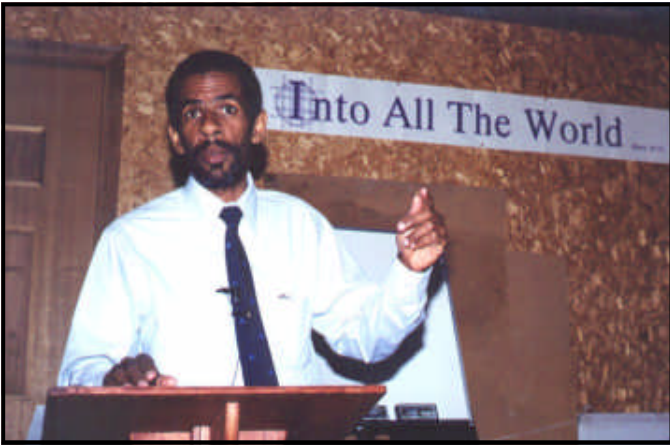
Continued on page 12 →



# Arizona Camp Meeting Report

The Wilhoit, Arizona Church hosted a camp meeting May 7-15. The theme was "Into All The World." Those in attendance were greatly blessed.

Brother David Clayton from Jamaica was the featured evening speaker. The Lord's messages through Pastor Clayton were fervent and to the point. Many people were blessed by the penetrating Bible studies that were presented.



**Pastor David Clayton Sharing the Gospel Story**

One of the highlights of the camp meeting was the early morning testimonies given by the ministers and elders in attendance. These were some of the most en-



**Sabbath Group Picture**

couraging meetings as the leading and providence of the Lord was clearly seen in the lives of these men.

Brothers Joe Harricharan and Richard Stratton discussed principles of health and other speakers spoke concerning the hope of Christ and eternal life with an emphasis on sharing that hope with others.

Kim Mauzy led out in the children's meetings and Brother Allen

Stump had some young adult meetings. On Thursday the youth went to the Grand Canyon for a hike to see this wonder of creation. Several adults went as well going part or all the way into and out of the canyon. The next day many were walking with sore legs in a manner that came to be known as "the canyon shuffle!"

The last Sabbath afternoon was filled with a personal testimony meeting that lasted almost three hours. The testimonies were so thrilling that most did not realize that so much time had elapsed.

Those who attended were truly inspired to carry the gospel "into all the world" sharing the three angels' messages with the precious souls that Christ died to redeem.

All of the meetings were recorded on cassette tapes and are available from the church at Wilhoit. For a list of the tapes, and the cost, please write to Sister Arlene Bailey, HC 68 Box 743, Kirkland, AZ 86332.



**A spectacular view of The Colorado River in the Grand Canyon**

*Allen Stump*

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

Address Correction Requested

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

*Illinois Conference Report* continued from page 10.

heresies within Seventh-day Adventism. Another book we could distribute is *What Did the Pioneers Believe?* For those interested in studying the subject in detail we can have the book *The Foundation of our Faith* available.

We also discussed the possibility of having a booth at the Conference where we can distribute videos and fliers. Further plans will be discussed at the Illinois meetings in September.

**Production of Literature**

We discussed the need for having more literature available in the form of fliers and small booklets that can be used for evangelism. Part of this work load will be carried by the publishing ministry which the church in Wilhoit, Arizona is setting up. Please pray that all the necessary components will come together to begin a printing work in the West.

**Sabbath - A Spiritual Feast**

The meetings were finished off with a wonderful Sabbath. Pastors David Clayton and Allen Stump shared penetrating messages that challenged the listeners. Spirit-filled testimonies filled the evening air as believers from several different areas shared the goodness of God as revealed in their experiences.

*Lynnford Beachy*

Kindness is the oil that takes the friction out of life.

*Old Paths* is published monthly by Smyrna Gospel Ministries, HC 64 Box 128-B, Welch, WV 24801-9606. It is sent free upon request. E-mail address - Stump: editor@smyrna.org; Beachy: berean@smyrna.org. Phone: (304) 732-9204. Our web site URL is: <http://www.smyrna.org>.

Editor . . . . . Allen Stump  
Associate Editor . . . . . Lynnford Beachy