

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



“Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow (Job 38:22)?”

Prayer Requests

Tragedy struck the Smyrna family on November 8 when Jason Dubbs, the twenty-five year old grandson of Glen and Ann Ford, was killed in an automobile accident. His father, Kevin Dubbs, was seriously injured also in this crash. Jason leaves behind a wife, Amanda, and daughter, Aliea Nicole. We sincerely ask that you lift up this dear family at this time in their bereavement. Please also remember Kevin who, at the time of this writing, has been on life support in the ICU at the Charleston Area Medical Center with head trauma. He has recently shown signs of improvement, and his condition is stable but guarded.

This will explain why many have not been able to reach us in the office the last few weeks. Please be patient with us, as Sister Ann needs as much time to be with Kevin as she is able to spend.

Continued on page 4

In this issue:

The Doctrine of Sin, Part 3	p. 2
Should We Celebrate Christmas?	p. 4
The Judgment	p. 5
Tasty Recipe	p. 10
News Note	p. 10
Bible Quiz	p. 14
Youths' Corner	p. 15

The Doctrine of Sin Part Three

By Allen Stump

In the last two articles we published on the doctrine of sin, we have seen that the doctrine of sin is one of the foundational issues of the Bible. Upon our understanding of sin are built many other doctrines. In fact, it is hard to think of a doctrine that is not affected, at least in some degree, by our concept of sin. We also noted that the Bible says that sin is the transgression of God's law and that the larger issue of sin comes down to the issue of the choices we make. We will not give an extensive review of this topic now, but we encourage anyone who has not read the articles published in the October and November issues of *Old Paths* to carefully read them. (Note: The October article was incorrectly titled "The Nature of Sin" instead of "The Doctrine of Sin, Part 1.")

In this part of our series, we wish to clarify some points that may not have been clear in Part 2, where we noted: "The sinful nature is not removed at conversion but guilt is, as we receive a new mind from Jesus in place of the carnal mind. The sinful nature of the saints will be changed when Jesus comes back at the second coming, but today we may have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16)." We clearly stated that we receive a new mind from Jesus when we are converted, and in the lead article of last month's paper we quoted Romans 8:6-9 and then stated.

We are to overcome as Jesus did by combining divinity with humanity, and Peter states that we are to become "partakers of the divine nature" through the "exceeding great and precious promises (2 Peter 1:4)."

When we mentioned the fallen nature last month in the article "The Doctrine of Sin," we were discussing the fallen sinful flesh with which we are all born. This was said to not be removed until Jesus comes. The timing of this removal was set in opposition to the removal of the carnal mind of man which must be replaced with the mind of Jesus Christ at conversion before Jesus comes.

The Bible speaks of the born again experience in different places and in different ways, but it actually only uses the expression "born again" three times (John 3:3, 7; 1 Peter 1:23). In our article last month, we spoke of "born-again" persons and wrote: "The sinful nature is not removed at conversion but guilt is, as we receive a new mind from Jesus in place of the carnal mind." Here we clearly made a difference between the sinful nature that is not removed at conversion and the carnal mind that is removed as we receive the mind of Jesus.

Some have misunderstood us to teach that sin is only outward actions; however, all sin begins in the heart. Did not Jesus say:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire (Matthew 5:21, 22). (See also verses 27 and 28.)

Further Jesus noted:

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man (Mark 7:21-23).

While sin is the transgression of the law, God's law is broad and includes the thoughts and intents of the heart. Before we strike our neighbor or kill him, anger has first boiled up in our hearts. That is why Jesus stated that we must be born again. We must have a new heart to replace the old heart, for the sinful heart is the root of the problem. This heart is of course a spiritual heart. The same heart of literal flesh is still within the person, as is his fleshly brain. This is why Ellen White wrote:

Talk of Christ, and when the heart is converted, everything that is out of harmony with the word of God will drop off. It is only labor in vain to pick leaves off a living tree. The leaves will reappear. The ax must be laid at the root of the tree, and then the leaves will fall off, never to return (*The Signs of the Times*, July 1, 1889).

Yet even in a converted person, the flesh will try to strive for the mastery. Temptations will still arise from within the born-again person because he still lives in sinful flesh which has the power to prompt the spirit within to do wrong. But when one is born from above, a new power is in operation within the person. The power of God's spirit is working within the man. Now instead of the clamors of the flesh controlling a sick, powerless, and carnal mind, the mind of Christ is in control of the sick, sinful flesh and keeps the sinful flesh under control. This is why Paul could write:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

Though the believer now has the mind of Christ, he still lives in sinful flesh and that sinful flesh does not give up the battle easily. Paul noted his need to have the mind reign over the flesh when he wrote:

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Paul was the greatest of apostles, and if ever a man was converted it was Paul. Yet, even Paul knew that the sinful flesh still was at war with the spirit. Though this was a constant conflict, Paul knew that victory could be found in Jesus Christ at every step of the Christian life as he chose to follow Jesus and deny self.

Sanctification is not the work of an hour, it is the result of the constant effort of a lifetime. We must fight the good fight of faith, struggle against the powers of darkness, resist evil, subdue the natural tendencies to sin, and by the grace of God perfect holiness, and work out our own salvation. The nearer we come to Jesus and behold the purity and greatness of his character, the less we shall feel like exalting self. The contrast between our character and his will lead to humiliation of soul and deep heart-searching. We shall not desire to boast of our holiness; but the more we love Jesus, the more will self be forgotten and humbled. When our souls are filled with self-esteem and pride we cannot realize the need of divine power; but when we are aware of our own insufficiency our hearts cry out, "Other refuge have I none," and we hang our helpless souls upon Him who is mighty to save (*The Signs of the Times*, February 10, 1888).

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

Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character. If you come to this decision, you will certainly fail of obtaining everlasting life. The impossibility lies in your own will. If you will not, then you can not overcome. The real difficulty arises from the corruption of an unsanctified heart, and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 331).

Now there is a verse in the Bible we wish to examine that was not the focus of the last part of this series. This text is found in a majestic section of Ephesians:

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the

"A noble character is earned by individual effort through the merits and grace of Christ. God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character (Ellen G. White)."

flesh and of the mind; and *were by nature the children of wrath*, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:3-6).

Speaking of believers who were saved by grace, sitting "together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Paul says they "were by nature the children of wrath." This verb, were, is an imperfect tense of the Greek which normally carries the concept of continual action, but with the verb "to be" or one of its forms the imperfect tense is used as a general past tense and does not carry the connotation of continual or repeated action. Paul is, therefore, speaking of a past experience for the believers of Ephesus. This is not the sinful flesh Paul is speaking of but rather the carnal mind, and Paul can say that because these believers who have been saved by grace have the mind or Spirit of Jesus. We know that they must have the mind of Christ, for inspiration tells us: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his (Romans 8:9)."

Ellen White wrote some excellent statements that speak of the "nature" being changed, and, of course, this is speaking of the carnal mind that must be changed.

The knowledge of God is the knowledge of all truth, and is the beginning of all understanding. It is our righteousness, our sanctification, our redemption. To those who receive and practise them, the truths of the Word of God are as the leaves of the tree of life. But before man can receive these truths, he must realize his need.

Self—the old disobedient nature—must be crucified, and Christ must take up His abode in the heart. Thus the human agent is born again, with a new nature. The newborn child of God begins to have some conception of what God is. To all intents and purposes, truth is truth to him. He has caught a glimpse of God's glory. A sense of his accountability to God quenches the unholy ambition that keeps upon the soul a galling yoke of guilt. The light in which he enters is softened and subdued, tempered to suit his condition. By daily beholding Jesus and striving to practise His virtues, his spiritual perceptions grow clearer and stronger.

God says, "A new heart will I give you." Every learner may be renewed in knowledge and true holiness. The ransom of an enslaved race was Christ's purpose in coming to this earth. Christ alone can make us free. And those whom He makes free are free indeed. His power breaks the yoke

of bondage that binds man to the great deceiver. But how many there are who are unwilling to allow Christ to break their shackles. How many there are who choose to cling to the thralldom of sin.

The Gospel of Christ is truly believed only when it is practised. Faith is justified by works. Self must be hid; Christ must appear as the Chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely (*The Signs of the Times*, July 26, 1905).

Jesus continued: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." By nature the heart is evil, and "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Job 14:4. No human invention can find a remedy for the sinning soul. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Rom. 8:7; Matt. 15:19. The fountain of the heart must be purified before the streams can become pure. He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. There is no safety for one who has merely a legal religion, a form of godliness. The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 172).

At conversion we receive a new heart and we are *transformed by the renewing of our minds* (Romans 12:2). Our flesh will not be changed until Jesus comes, at which time we will be translated by the renewing of the flesh. God has given us this fleeting time of probation, beloved, to seek him for the new heart so necessary to battle "the good fight of faith." If you have not fully given your life to Jesus, please do so today. If you have at one time given your life to Christ, I urge you to carefully consider your life, to see if you are really of the faith or not. Do you find sweet time with Jesus and is it your desire to fully understand the gospel and live it in your life? Remember, "The gospel of Christ is the law exemplified in character (*Maranatha*, p. 18)." A gospel that does not teach and provide for the "the law" to be "exemplified in character" is what Paul calls "another gospel." ✍

"Prayer Requests" continued from page 1

Please also keep the Bill Fairchild family lifted up in prayer as they have recently had a son and a grandson seriously injured. In a similar line, we all have families that need prayer so let us not forget those at home or close to home.

Let us also remember President Elect Obama, who is preparing to take office soon. The challenges he is facing are daunting. Editor

Should We Celebrate Christmas?

"It's the most wonderful time of the year," or so a popular song with that title says. Best-selling author and pastor Rick Warren recently wrote a book promoting Christmas time, describing the wonders of this holiday during which people feel a closeness and a love that does not seem to be felt at other times of the year. Most holidays are single-day affairs, but Christmas takes up more than the entire month of December, and each year it seems to extend a little longer. I remember that when I was young there were three distinct "holidays" in our secular calendar during the months of October through December. First was Halloween, which was followed by Thanksgiving, and then usually the day after Thanksgiving but not before, the Christmas season would begin. In most places in America today, the "Christmas season" begins before Halloween.

What is the history behind Christmas and its observance? Is it a holy day, a holiday, or a pagan festival? Let us begin with the name "Christmas." This is really a shortened version of the term "Christ Mass." Each year the Catholic Church has a special mass on December 25 to celebrate the supposed birth date of Christ, but according to the Bible, and virtually all Bible scholars agree, the birth of Jesus Christ was not on December 25. Luke 2:8 states, "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." It is very doubtful that shepherds would be in the fields of Palestine with their sheep on December 25. Also, according to the prophecy of Daniel 9 and corroborated by the gospel accounts, Jesus was to have a three and one-half year ministry. This ministry, according to the gospels, ended in the spring at the time of the Passover. Going back three and one half years from spring brings one to the fall season. If Jesus began his public ministry when he turned thirty (Luke 3:23), then that would put his birth in the early fall.

The Catholic Church first began to observe Christmas on December 25 due to the decree of Pope Julius I in A.D. 350. Christmas did not appear on the date books until it was marked on a Roman calendar in A.D. 336, which was shortly after Constantine's supposed acceptance of Christianity. Why was the 25th of December chosen?

To some the December date may seem completely arbitrary, but in fact it was a calculated choice that reflected the importance of winter solstice festivals for the cultures of pre-Christian Europe and Asia. To abolish these festivals in favor of strictly Christian forms of celebration would have been extremely unpopular. Though many early Christian leaders such as Gregory of Nazianzus spoke out against combining pagan and Christian ways, it became clear early on that rather than trying to beat the pagans, Christians would be wiser to join them in their own game – to incorporate their most deep-rooted traditions into Christian worship and celebration.

Continued on page 11

The Judgment

Getting the Big and Broad Picture

by Allen Stump

We are certainly living in an exciting time. Things of this earth are wrapping up very quickly. The world's economy is in an unending downward spiral. It has entered into a seemingly bottomless pit and nothing, I believe, is going to be able to effect a long-term solution. We may have a short-term reprieve to a degree. The leaders of the world are trying to find a solution. Many are looking to President Elect Obama in the hope that he will have an answer. Interestingly, the rumor mill had been stating for quite a while that some kind of financial crisis would happen in September. Some people even pinpointed the time specifically to mid-September. It is interesting to note that some of the same sources that predicted the mid-September financial crisis have also predicted that around February of next year there may be a total collapse.

The times we are living in are rushing past us quickly, and we are nearing the end rapidly. We have been told that “the agencies of evil are combining their forces and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. *Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones* (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 11; all emphasis in this article supplied unless otherwise noted).” In the same testimony, penned in 1909, she wrote:

There are not many, even among educators and statesmen, who comprehend the causes that underlie the present state of society. Those who hold the reins of government are not able to solve the problem of moral corruption, poverty, pauperism, and increasing crime. *They are struggling in vain to place business operations on a more secure basis* (*Ibid.*, p. 13).

What would Sister White say if she were alive today and could see the current events unfold before her? I am sure that she would have words no less strong. The greatest problem we face today is not the economy but the moral corruption that is so prevalent. The churches and the doctrines they teach and practice must be held accountable for the current state of affairs. Jesus declared that his people were to be “the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13).” The current state of affairs is due to a lack of the Christian being the preservative agent they have been called to be in this world. This becomes understandable when we realize that most professed Christian churches teach that humanity will not and cannot morally change until Jesus comes. The teaching is popular that one may come to Jesus and find forgiveness but not power to overcome all sin.

Recently I attended a funeral, and at the graveside service the minister read: “For this corruptible must put on

incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53).” He then remarked, “You see, here the Bible says that we are corruptible. We are all sinners. Not anyone of us is any better than the other, and we will all be just like this until Jesus comes.” These remarks were clearly not speaking of the flesh alone but of the spiritual nature of an individual.

It is interesting to note that if you look at the context of verse 53, you will see that in verse 50 Paul says “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,” and in verses 51 and 52 he tells us that “we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.” Paul speaks of that which is corruptible to be that which comes out of the grave. He speaks of two groups—those who have died and those who have not died at that point—and those who were corrupted by death and the grave will see incorruption and those who are living or mortal will become immortal.

Despite this clear explanation, the minister (a Seventh-day Adventist) said that we are all going to be sinners until Jesus comes. The implications of such a teaching are, in effect, the defects of a person's character cannot be remedied in this lifetime. However, we have been told:

Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character. If you come to this decision, you will certainly fail of obtaining everlasting life. The impossibility lies in your own will. If you will not, then you can not overcome. The real difficulty arises from the corruption of an unsanctified heart, and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 331).

Misunderstanding this issue is deadly! One who does not believe that their character can be perfected in this life is sure to not overcome. Notice the clear teaching from the Bible about this issue. Ephesians 5:27 says that Jesus is coming back for “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and *without blemish* (Greek: *amomos* – ἄμωμος).” Jude writes, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless (*amomos*) before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24).” Revelation 14:5 speaks of the 144,000 as being without guile and faultless (*amomos*).

The Christian may wear the spotless, white robe of Christ's righteousness. (See Revelation 19:8; 1 John 2:29; 3:7.) This righteousness is not a sham or a cloak for our filthiness, but the real thing. Of course, it only comes from Jesus as we fully surrender our lives to him.



The Centrality Issue

In our discussions of the gospel today we hear much about “the centrality of the cross.” In a current newsletter, Dr. Samuel Bacchiocchi wrote:

During the past 50 years several Adventist writers and popular preachers, have been engaged in a passionate campaign against the old Adventist legalism, promoting instead what is commonly called “Righteousness by Faith (*Endtime Issues*, #214).”

If you go back fifty years you are near the time of the publication of the book *Questions on Doctrine* which radically altered Adventist thinking on several key issues.

In the current Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, *Atonement and the Cross of Christ*, the author, Dr. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, teaches the centrality of the cross. It is the focus of the seminary at Andrews University. The Apostle Paul stated that he knew nothing “save Jesus Christ, and him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2).” That seems plain, doesn’t it? Would it not be considered almost blasphemy to offer another perspective? Let us make it very clear that the Bible does indeed teach over and over the necessity of the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. It is *the* sacrifice. Make no mistake about it, and it deserves a prominent place in the Christian’s soteriology. It is not, however, the only theme that should have a prominent place in our soteriology. I propose that, according to the Bible and the Testimonies, especially for Christians living at the end of time the sanctuary doctrine should have a position front and center in our soteriology. Psalm 77:13 says, “Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?” All of the types in the plan of salvation were illustrated in the sanctuary. Ellen White wrote:

The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin. It is of the *utmost importance* that all should thoroughly investigate these subjects and be able to give an answer to everyone that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them.

The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 489, 490).

No wonder we are told:

The subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. *All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. Otherwise it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this*

time or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill. Every individual has a soul to save or to lose. Each has a case pending at the bar of God. Each must meet the great Judge face to face. How important, then, that every mind contemplate often the solemn scene when the judgment shall sit and the books shall be opened, when, with Daniel, every individual must stand in his lot, at the end of the days (*Ibid.*, p. 488).

The Judgment and its Central Issues

To properly understand the work of Christ in the sanctuary and the judgment hour message, it is important to know that in any fair judgment there are always three phases. Firstly, there is an examination of the evidence. This has been called by some the investigative phase of the judgment or simply the investigative judgment. After the evidence has been clearly presented, the judicial phase of the judgment takes place wherein a decision is rendered and, if the one under judgment is not acquitted, the sentence is determined. Then the final phase of the judgment takes place, which is called the executive phase where the sentence is carried out for those condemned.

This is the procedure in any fair and just court. It is also the procedure that the Bible presents. Firstly, there is an examination of the evidence. This is depicted by the prophet Daniel:

A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time. I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him (Daniel 7:9-13).

Commenting upon this text in her masterpiece book, *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White carefully noted:

Thus was presented to the prophet’s vision the great and solemn day when *the characters and the lives of men should pass in review* before the Judge of all the earth, and to every man should be rendered “according to his works.” The Ancient of Days is God the Father.

[Daniel 7:13, 14 quoted.] The coming of Christ here described is not His second coming to the earth. He comes to the Ancient of Days in heaven to receive dominion and glory and a kingdom, which will be given Him at the close of His work as a mediator. It is this coming, and not His second advent to the earth, that was foretold in prophecy to take place at the termination of the 2300 days in 1844. Attended by heavenly angels, our great High Priest enters the holy of holies and there appears in the presence of God

to engage in the last acts of His ministration in behalf of man—to perform the work of *investigative judgment* and to make an atonement for all who are shown to be entitled to its benefits (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 479, 480).

This is the same judgment which is primarily referred to in Revelation 14:6, 7 that proclaims the message to worship God as the Creator and that the hour of his judgment is come. This phase of the judgment has been going on since 1844.

The second phase of the judgment is also taught in the Bible. This phase will actually be the longest, taking place during the thousand years of Revelation 20. In this phase of the judgment, the righteous will take a part, even judging angels.

“Know ye not that we shall judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3)?” Clearly this is not the first phase of the judgment of the fallen angels. They have already been judged as guilty of treason against God and his government and have been expelled from heaven. What Paul is speaking about is the judicial phase of the judgment. What a responsibility God will give to the redeemed, but God has placed his seal upon them and knows that they will do right. Not only the fallen angels will be judged during this time, but the wicked of humanity will also be judged. The righteous will be there to decide the judgment of the lost:

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20:4).

The Phillips translation says, “And I saw thrones, with appointed judges seated upon them.”

The third phase or the executive phase of the judgment is found in Revelation 20. It is sometimes also called the “great white throne” judgment.

And then I saw a great white throne, and One seated upon it from whose presence both earth and sky fled and vanished. Then; I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne; and the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books concerning what they had done. The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave gave up the dead which were in them. And men were judged, each according to what he had done. Then death and the grave were themselves hurled into the lake of fire, which is the second death (Revelation 20:11-14).

The Adventist pioneers understood this three-phase judgment well. Notice the testimony of Stephen Haskell, one of the church’s best Bible students:

The judgment involves, first, the investigation of every case, the testimony of witnesses, and the plea of the advocate, if there is an advocate. Then comes the decision of the court; after that follows the execution of the sentence rendered by the court (*The Cross and its Shadow*, p. 232).

Facing our Record

A court system is only beneficial to the accused if he or she wishes a trial and a chance to clear themselves. Only those who come to God are considered in the first phase of the judgment. Those who never claim the name of Jesus are judged guilty by default, but those who have claimed to follow Jesus are the ones who will be examined in the investigative judgment. They are the ones who claim to be innocent by the merits of Jesus. The books of heaven hold a thorough and faithful record. (See Daniel 7:10; Revelation 20:12.)

One book in heaven is called “the book of life.” It contains the names of all who have ever entered into the service of Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:3; Luke 10:20; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; etc.). Those who will be finally saved are written in the book of life (Daniel 12:1), and those who enter the city of God are in the book of life (Revelation 21:27).

There is also a book of remembrance. “Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name (Malachi 3:16).” (See also Nehemiah 13:14 and Psalm 56:8.) Our records and deeds are all recorded. Even “the counsels of the heart” are to be made known (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14; Matthew 12:36, 37; 1 Corinthians 4:5).

Despite the fact that the unerring God will have all the true facts concerning our lives, we need not despair, for the Bible says that we have an advocate, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man.

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John 2:1).

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 9:24).

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25).

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven (Matthew 10:32, 33).

The deepest interest manifested among men in the decisions of earthly tribunals but faintly represents the interest

evinced in the heavenly courts when the names entered in the book of life come up in review before the Judge of all the earth. The divine Intercessor presents the plea that all who have overcome through faith in His blood be forgiven their transgressions, that they be restored to their Eden home, and crowned as joint heirs with Himself to “the first dominion.” Micah 4:8. Satan in his efforts to deceive and tempt our race had thought to frustrate the divine plan in man's creation; but Christ now asks that this plan be carried into effect as if man had never fallen. He asks for His people not only pardon and justification, full and complete, but a share in His glory and a seat upon His throne.

While Jesus is pleading for the subjects of His grace, Satan accuses them before God as transgressors. The great deceiver has sought to lead them into skepticism, to cause them to lose confidence in God, to separate themselves from His love, and to break His law. Now he points to the record of their lives, to the defects of character, the unlikeness to Christ, which has dishonored their Redeemer, to all the sins that he has tempted them to commit, and because of these he claims them as his subjects.

Jesus does not excuse their sins, but shows their penitence and faith, and, claiming for them forgiveness, He lifts His wounded hands before the Father and the holy angels, saying: I know them by name. I have graven them on the palms of My hands (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 483, 484).

For all who wish, Jesus will be their Daysman, and he promises:

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37).

Proverbs 28:13 says, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” Those who will confess and forsake their sins may claim the promise of Jesus that his “grace is sufficient for” them (2 Corinthians 12:9). Jesus tell us:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).

Those who do not repent of their sins and seek God will be condemned, as well as those who have at one time professed Christ but have fallen away. They will both be blotted out of the book of life.

But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die (Ezekiel 18:24).

Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book (Exodus 32:33).

The choice is ours in the final settlement of all things. It is as an election where Jesus is voting for us and Satan is voting against us, and we must cast the deciding vote.

The Higher Aspect of the Judgment

While these aspects of the judgment are a sharp focus of the Bible, there is another aspect to the end-time judgment within which God has allowed his people to participate. This aspect is in relationship to the great controversy theme and God's honor and character. Satan has accused God of many evil things. It is an axiom of judgment that when one's word is called into question one cannot defend themselves with their own testimony. God's character and justice is on trial. God can say that he is just in his dealings with man, but Satan says otherwise. In effect, God is now on trial and the Bible does, indeed, speak of this. In Romans, Paul wrote: “God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged (Romans 3:4).” Here Paul is quoting Psalm 51:4.

The first recorded glimpse of this great controversy interaction between God and Satan is found in the oldest book of the Bible, Job. The very first thing that inspiration places in God's word is an inside view into the great controversy. On two occasions Satan directly challenged God that Job only served him out of selfish reasons, but God used Job to demonstrate that this was not true and that God was fair and just after all.

Since the fall of man, Satan has claimed this earth as his. He is even styled as “the God of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4)” and “the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2).” He has claimed that man was under his dominion and could not serve God and keep all his commandments. (See *Signs of the Times*, July 10, 1901; *Upward Look*, page 228.) Through his saints, however, God will demonstrate that all the charges of Satan are false. God will show that he can have a man that will obey his law perfectly. God declares, “I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir (Isaiah 13:12).” But wait, God will not just have a man to serve him, but a whole nation:

In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in (Isaiah 26:1, 2).

At his death, Jesus answered many questions about the great controversy, but even at that time Satan was not destroyed.

Yet Satan was not then destroyed. The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy. The principles at stake were to be more fully revealed. And for the sake of man, Satan's existence must be contin-

ued. Man as well as angels must see the contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. He must choose whom he will serve (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 761).

Through His people Christ is to manifest His character and the principles of His kingdom. . . . *He desires through His people to answer Satan's charges* by showing the results of obedience to right principles (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 296).

If there was ever a people in need of constantly increasing light from heaven, *it is the people that, in this time of peril, God has called to be the depositories of His holy law and to vindicate His character before the world.* Those to whom has been committed a trust so sacred must be spiritualized, elevated, vitalized, by the truths they profess to believe (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 746).

The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity. *The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people* (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671).

How blessed we are as a people to have the writings of Ellen White. She was given a balanced view of the plan of salvation and the great controversy which nobody in her time understood and perhaps few have ever know. We are so blessed to be able to live at this time. I am reminded of what the late Dr. Martin Luther King said the night before he was assassinated. He had traveled to Memphis to speak to a group of sanitation workers. After his opening remarks he said:

Something is happening in Memphis; something is happening in our world. And you know, if I were standing at the beginning of time, with the possibility of taking a kind of general and panoramic view of the whole of human history up to now, and the Almighty said to me, "Martin Luther King, which age would you like to live in?" I would take my mental flight by Egypt and I would watch God's children in their magnificent trek from the dark dungeons of Egypt through, or rather across the Red Sea, through the wilderness on toward the promised land. And in spite of its magnificence, I wouldn't stop there.

I would move on by Greece and take my mind to Mount Olympus. And I would see Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Euripides and Aristophanes assembled around the Parthenon. And I would watch them around the Parthenon as they discussed the great and eternal issues of reality. But I wouldn't stop there.

I would go on, even to the great heyday of the Roman Empire. And I would see developments around there, through various emperors and leaders. But I wouldn't stop there.

I would even come up to the day of the Renaissance, and get a quick picture of all that the Renaissance did for the cultural and aesthetic life of man. But I wouldn't stop there.

I would even go by the way that the man for whom I am named had his habitat. And I would watch Martin Luther

as he tacked his ninety-five theses on the door at the church of Wittenberg. But I wouldn't stop there.

I would come on up even to 1863, and watch a vacillating President by the name of Abraham Lincoln finally come to the conclusion that he had to sign the Emancipation Proclamation. But I wouldn't stop there.

I would even come up to the early thirties, and see a man grappling with the problems of the bankruptcy of his nation. And come with an eloquent cry that we have nothing to fear but "fear itself." But I wouldn't stop there.

Strangely enough, I would turn to the Almighty, and say, "If you allow me to live just a few years in the second half of the 20th century, I will be happy (Transcript from recorded speech of April 3, 1968)."

Dr. King saw what he believed to be progress in the struggle for freedom among the different races. He believed that living during his time was a great honor, and, of course, he was right, but Dr. King only had a partial view. There was much he did not understand about the great controversy theme and the vindication of God's character. King's view was limited to the work for the people of God. That work was and is important; but, as Adventist Christians with the blessing of the insight God has given to us through Ellen White, we realize that the higher work, the greatest work, for the people of God is for God and his honor and for the vindication of his character. As Adventist people, we understand by the Bible prophecies that we are living in the anti-typical Day of Atonement. If I were standing at the beginning of time with the possibility of taking a general and panoramic view of the whole of human history up to now and the Almighty said to me, "Allen Stump, which age would you like to live in?"; I would clearly answer, "Today!"

Oh brothers and sisters, may we see these days for the times that they are and understand the work not only of our great High Priest in Heaven but of our own duty to which we have we have been called. As we study the judgment hour message and the sanctuary message and see God's love, his care, and his involvement in this world and in the affairs of men and women everywhere, may we each respond to God's call as Isaiah did. "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me (Isaiah 6:8)."

We are now living in the great day of atonement. In the typical service, while the high priest was making the atonement for Israel, all were required to afflict their souls by repentance of sin and humiliation before the Lord, lest they be cut off from among the people. In like manner, all who would have their names retained in the book of life should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart. The light, frivolous spirit indulged by so many professed Christians must be put away. There is earnest warfare be-

fore all who would subdue the evil tendencies that strive for the mastery. The work of preparation is an individual work. We are not saved in groups. The purity and devotion of one will not offset the want of these qualities in another. Though all nations are to pass in judgment before God, yet He will examine the case of each individual with as close and searching scrutiny as if there were not another being upon the earth. Everyone must be tested and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing (*The Great Controversy*, p. 489).

Solemn are the scenes connected with the closing work of the atonement. Momentous are the interests involved therein. The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. For many years this work has been in progress. Soon—none know how soon—it will pass to the cases of the living. In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review. At this time above all others it behooves every soul to heed the Saviour's admonition: "Watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." Mark 13:33. "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Revelation 3:3


When the work of the investigative judgment closes, the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death. Probation is ended a short time before the appearing of the Lord in the clouds of heaven. Christ in the Revelation, looking forward to that time, declares: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:11, 12 (*Ibid.*, p. 490).

The righteous and the wicked will still be living upon the earth in their mortal state—men will be planting and building, eating and drinking, all unconscious that the final, irrevocable decision has been pronounced in the sanctuary above. Before the Flood, after Noah entered the ark, God shut him in and shut the ungodly out; but for seven days the people, knowing not that their doom was fixed, continued their careless, pleasure-loving life and mocked the warnings of impending judgment. "So," says the Saviour, "shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:39. Silently, unnoticed as the midnight thief, will come the decisive hour which marks the fixing of every man's destiny, the final withdrawal of mercy's offer to guilty men.

"Watch ye therefore: . . . lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping." Mark 13:35, 36. [And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch. v. 37] Perilous is the condition of those who, growing weary of their watch, turn to the attractions of the world. While the man of business is absorbed in the pursuit of gain, while the pleasure lover is seeking indulgence, while the daughter of fashion is arranging her adornments—it may be in that hour the Judge

of all the earth will pronounce the sentence: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." Daniel 5:27 (*Ibid.* p. 491).

Beloved, we will either be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus or be found wanting. If wanting, then we must face the next two phases of the judgment. All will either be inside or outside the city of God on that great day soon to come upon us. The final events will be rapid ones. We may just be seeing the beginning of these events now, but we have the immutable promises of God's word to depend upon:


He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways (Psalm 91:1-11). 

"Life and Health" Lentil Roast

Lightly sauté until tender one onion and one cup celery.
To this mixture, add:

2 cups cooked lentils, drained
12 ounces soy milk
½ cup oil
1 and ½ cup bread crumbs
1 cup chopped walnuts
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon sage
Onion and garlic powders as desired
1 to 2 teaspoons crushed basil
1 cup shredded carrots

Add more soy milk if mixture is too dry, place in sprayed casserole, and bake at 350 F for one hour. Serve with homemade catsup or tomato sauce. This very tasty dish is so easy, even I can make it!
Editor

News Note: Due to limited space, part 5 of the article "Ellen G. White and the Truth About God" and part 6 of "The True Remedies" will not be published until next month. 

“Should We Celebrate Christmas?” continued from p. 4

Ancient peoples believed that the days grew shorter in December because the sun was leaving them, perhaps dying. Festivals held right before December 21, the winter solstice, featured rituals designed to appease the sun and get it to return. After the solstice, the shortest day of the year, the days got longer again, and grand celebrations were held in honor of the sun’s return. Along with the idea of the physical presence of the sun were underlying themes of harvest, rebirth and light.

Although the basic conception of the solstice festival was common to all lands, each area had its unique variations. In the Zagnuk of Mesopotamia, a convict was sacrificed in atonement for the people’s sins.

The tradition that left its mark most indelibly on Christmas is the Roman Saturnalia. The Saturnalia was observed from December 17-24, and was a nominal celebration of a number of different events, among them Saturn’s triumph over Jupiter. According to belief, Saturn’s reign had heralded the Golden Age in Rome. Although the god later lost to Jupiter, during the Saturnalia he was believed to return, allowing Rome to relive the Golden Age for a brief time. It is not surprising that the Romans, who associated Saturn closely with the sun, would celebrate this festival near the solstice.

During the festivities, no one worked except those whose business it was to provide food, drink or entertainment. Masters and slaves became equals, and there was much feasting, dancing, gambling and general revelry. Candles were used as decoration to scare away the darkness and celebrate the sun and light. Another recognizable ritual was the giving of gifts, which was done in honor of the goddess of vegetation, Strenia. The people felt that in time of darkness and winter it was important to honor someone who had a hand in the harvest. At first, produce and baked goods were exchanged, but as time went on, inedible gifts became fashionable.

The Saturnalia was followed by the calends of January (the calends marked the first day of the month). Observed on January 1-3, this period meant still more parties.

It’s not hard to understand the Christian officials’ disapproval of these festivals and their reluctance to allow them either to continue by themselves, or to be incorporated as part of Christianity. After years of mostly futile attempts to abolish these pagan festivals and rituals, however, the church realized it would be better served by allowing them – revised so that their focus was now to honor Christ. Both church and popular interests were thus satisfied: The people got to keep their time of fun, while the church ensured that the birth of Christ would be celebrated with all due honor and festivity. In this way, many parts of the old festivals remained, while others were reformed to honor

Christ’s birth. Some of the retained elements that have remained popular to this day are greenery, candles, singing, tree decorating, Yule logs, and feasting.

But why December 25? Why not December 21 or 22, the actual time of the solstice? The use of this date was a remnant of the Mithraic religion, a major religion of the Roman era with close similarities to Christianity. Mithra, the god of light and wisdom, was said to have been born from a rock on December 25. Mithra, symbolizing the sun, was naturally a big part of solstice festivals, and believers celebrated his birth as a major holiday. In the third century (that is, in the century before Constantine’s ascension), Emperor Aurelian declared December 25 *Dies Invicti Solis* (the Day of the Invisible Sun) (<http://www.lone-star.net/mall/main-areas/xmas-not-first-choice.htm>).

Christmas, therefore, comes to the world as a pagan festival honoring the sun god that has been baptized by the Pope of Rome. It is interesting to note that believers during the Middle Ages celebrated Christmas by attending church services and then participating in a drunken, carnival-like atmosphere comparable to our modern-day Mardi Gras. This type of observance led Puritan England to ban Christmas to try to curb the decadence that accompanied it. Later, in 1660, Christmas was restored in England by Charles II but under the disapproval of the Puritans. The first Pilgrims that came to America in 1620 outlawed Christmas.

As the custom of keeping Christmas grew in England, it did not enjoy popularity in the United States because it was thought to be an “English Custom” in which the people in America did not wish to participate. Christmas was banned in Boston from 1659 to 1681. The United States Congress was even in session the first Christmas under America’s new constitution—December 25, 1789.

Slowly the observance of Christmas came to be viewed in America as a time of family togetherness and with its acceptance came many of the older customs such as pine trees being set up in homes and churches and gift-giving.

It was not until June 26, 1870 that Christmas became a federal holiday; however, this holiday at first only applied to federal employees in the District of Columbia. It was not until fifteen years later, in 1885, that Congress extended the Christmas holiday to federal employees outside the District of Columbia.

The scope of this article does not allow the complete history of Christmas and its pagan customs to be explained, but we can see from this brief sketch that its origin is of a pagan nature, as are virtually all of its customs and that this day within Christianity is littered historically with sacrilegious observance. Also, Christmas does not have a continual observance in the United States, as many suppose.

Interestingly, the merchants of the earth are among the biggest supporter of this “holiday,” and they have worked hard to build it up and keep its supposed importance before the people.

Does the Bible have anything to say about Christmas or its observance? As we have seen, the date chosen for the birth of Christ—December 25—does not come from the Bible. The Bible also does not instruct us to celebrate the birthday of Jesus Christ and does not give us the date that our Lord was born. The reason God did not reveal the date of Christ's birth is because his people would have worshiped that day, as Israel would have worshiped the grave of Moses had they found it. (If people observe December 25 knowing it is not Jesus' birthday, imagine what they would do if they knew the correct day!)

What does the Bible say about heathen customs and religious observances? "Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them (Jeremiah 10:2)." God says not to learn the ways of the heathen. We are not to learn the ways of the heathen, and we are certainly not to practice them (Leviticus 18:24; Ezekiel 20:32; Matthew 6:7). Jeremiah goes on to describe something that is very near akin to a common Christmas practice:

For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not (Jeremiah 10:3, 4).

Could a better description of a Christmas tree be given? Jeremiah continues to say, "They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good (v. 5)" There is no intrinsic good or evil in the tree itself; it cannot hurt or help us.

When one realizes the history behind Christmas and the pagan connections it has, it seems like a simple "no brainer" that it should not be observed by Christians; however, it is hard to ignore because it has become such a social occasion. Interestingly, Christmas is the one day of the year that carries an influence in almost all countries of the world. Christmas is a public holiday in Hindu India and Islamic Jordan. It is observed in Buddhist Japan.

So, how should Christians relate to this time of the year and to the specific day of December 25? Most children have learned that is it to be a time of joy, feasting, and presents. Can these desires be safely ignored without supplying something to replace them? Would that not, in principle, be a course similar to the early Christians who tried to substitute their holy days for the pagan holidays? Ellen White made this interesting observation:

As the twenty-fifth of December is observed to commemorate the birth of Christ, as the children have been instructed by precept and example that this was indeed a day of gladness and rejoicing, you will find it a difficult matter to pass over this period without giving it some attention. It can be made to serve a very good purpose.

The youth should be treated very carefully. They should not be left on Christmas to find their own amusement in vanity and pleasure seeking, in amusements which will be detrimental to their spirituality. Parents can control this matter by turning the minds and the offerings of their children to God and His cause and the salvation of souls.

The desire for amusement, instead of being quenched and arbitrarily ruled down, should be controlled and directed by painstaking effort upon the part of the parents. Their desire to make gifts may be turned into pure and holy channels and made to result in good to our fellow men by supplying the treasury in the great, grand work for which Christ came into our world. Self-denial and self-sacrifice marked His course of action. Let it mark ours who profess to love Jesus because in Him is centered our hope of eternal life (*The Adventist Home*, p. 478).

One of America's well known sayings is "keep Christ in Christmas." Actually, that is impossible, for Jesus was never in the pagan christ mass to begin with. According to the guidance of the Spirit of Prophecy, however, we can use this time to reflect upon the goodness of God and his mercies:

Not only on birthdays should parents and children remember the mercies of the Lord in a special way, but Christmas and New Year's should also be seasons when every household should remember their Creator and Redeemer. Instead of bestowing gifts and offerings in such abundance on human objects, reverence, honor, and gratitude should be rendered to God, and gifts and offerings should be caused to flow in the divine channel. Would not the Lord be pleased with such a remembrance of Him? O how God has been forgotten on these occasions (*The Review and Herald*, November 13, 1894).

At this point you may wonder, "Did not Ellen White mention something good about Christmas trees?" She did make a few statements concerning them. Let us notice carefully what she said:

God would be well pleased if on Christmas, each church would have a Christmas tree on which shall be hung offerings, great and small, for these houses of worship. Letters of inquiry have come to us asking, Shall we have a Christmas tree? will it not be like the world? We answer, You can make it like the world if you have a disposition to do so, or you can make it as unlike the world as possible. There is no particular sin in selecting a fragrant evergreen, and placing it in our churches; but the sin lies in the motive which prompts to action, and the use which is made of the gifts placed upon the tree (*Ibid.*, December 11, 1879).

The immediate context of the article this quotation is taken from, as correctly noted in *The Adventist Home* where it is reprinted, is the debt upon certain church buildings and the need for the people to share their means to help with the cause of God. Ellen White knew, as Jeremiah had written,

that the tree of itself is not harmful but rather the spirit and motive with which it is to be used. She also noted:

Let those who desire a Christmas tree make its boughs fruitful with gifts for the needy, and offerings for the treasury of God. And let the children learn the blessedness of giving by bringing their little gifts to add to the offerings of their parents (*Ibid.*, December 26, 1882).

These counsels are not direct commands, but they do make allowances for a tree under specific circumstances and for a specific purpose. If we do have a tree, we are to make it unlike the world. It is not to be a place under which we lay our presents for one another but rather a place to present our gifts to God.

Concerning her writings, Ellen White noted: “Regarding the testimonies, nothing is ignored; nothing is cast aside; but time and place must be considered (*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 57).” Would Ellen White give the same counsel to the much greater materialistic society we have today than the one in which she lived? We cannot know, but we do know that in the past God, due to the hardness of hearts, allowed divorce for reasons that he did not later allow. (See Matthew 19:7, 8.)

Ellen White discouraged gift-giving to herself on Christmas but also noted:

The holiday season is fast approaching with its interchange of gifts, and old and young are intently studying what they can bestow upon their friends as a token of affectionate remembrance. It is pleasant to receive a gift, however small, from those we love. It is an assurance that we are not forgotten, and seems to bind us to them a little closer.

It is right to bestow upon one another tokens of love and remembrance if we do not in this forget God, our best friend. We should make our gifts such as will prove a real benefit to the receiver. I would recommend such books as will be an aid in understanding the word of God or that will increase our love for its precepts. Provide something to be read during these long winter evenings (*The Adventist Home*, pp. 478, 479).

Ellen White specifically recommended for children books, including the *Life of Joseph Bates* and *The Spirit of Prophecy* volumes. She discouraged useless toys and candies as gifts. (See *The Adventist Home*, page 479.)

It is almost impossible to ignore Christmas in our material-centered world where Christmas has become such a social event, but we do not have to participate in it. The Scriptures tell us:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath

the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Light and truth are progressive, and this should include our understanding of how to relate to pagan holidays that do not have any biblical foundation. God allowed Christmas trees in churches in the past when used for a good purpose and not for the purposes of the world, but today do we, with increased light upon these subjects, dare to blur the differences between that which is Christian and that which is, in actuality, pagan? “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:7).” “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day (Proverbs 4:18).”

Proverbs 4:18 has a wonderful promise that the path of the just is as a shining light that shines more and more, but it is based upon a condition. “Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away (Proverbs 4:13-15)

First John 1:7 has a wonderful promise of fellowship, but it is only for those who walk in the light.

Second Corinthians 6:18 is a wonderful promise, but it is only for those who have come out from the pagan doctrines and practices.

Finally, the issue of violation of the second commandment needs to be considered. “We are never in any manner to treat lightly the titles or appellations of the Deity (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings*, p. 106).” The more I think of using the term “Christmas,” the more I cringe. Even if we think of it as pertaining to the true Christ and not a pagan deity, we are associating our Saviour with a pagan rite—the mass. One man became so convicted about this violation that he wrote a small booklet on the matter entitled “*Baalmas*.” I am endeavoring to break myself of the habit of wishing people a “Merry Christmas” this year and instead want to wish them a blessed season or something similar.

Will you be popular if you do not celebrate December 25th as the birthday of the Saviour? Maybe not, but neither was Elijah the prophet popular on the top of Mount Carmel when he stood alone against the hundreds of prophets of Baal. There is a call in Revelation 18:4 to come out of Babylon. Clearly the pagan christ mass is a part of Babylon. Are you willing to come out of Babylon all the way?

Allen Stump

Quiz on Genesis 33-36

1. As Jacob's party was approached by Esau and his men, how did Jacob arrange his family? What reason can be given for this arrangement?

2. Why did Jacob send flocks before to Esau on his way to meet him?

3. Along with their earrings, Jacob commanded those of his household to give up what items?

4. Do you think that Dinah was a willing participant in her being defiled by Shechem? Why do you think that the Bible says that she was defiled but mentions nothing of Shechem being defiled?

5. What two tragedies are mentioned in Genesis 35?

6. What would Reuben forfeit by his actions recorded in Genesis 35:22?

7. How much longer did Isaac live than Abraham?

8. Where did Esau dwell?

9. What title did the princes of Esau go by?

10. Compare Genesis 35:16-19 with 30:1. What lessons could be drawn from this?

Bonus: Compute the age of Isaac when Joseph was sold into slavery?

Answers to quiz on Genesis 28-32

1. Laban was the son was Bethuel, the uncle of Jacob

2. Leah was physically described as being tender-eyed, while Rachel was considered beautiful. Sadly, they both displayed negative traits of character. Leah 'hired' her husband, and Rachel envied her sister and stole her father's idols.

3. The time passed while working for Rachel as if a few days and it went quickly because he loved her so much.

4. When Jacob found he had received Leah for a wife instead of Rachel, he told Laban, "What is this thou hast done unto me? Did not I serve with thee for Rachel? Wherefore then has thou beguiled me?"

5. The fact that Jacob could not tell it was Leah until the morning suggests that there was not intimate contact between Jacob and Rachel before this because he could not tell Leah apart from her in the darkness of the tent.

6. The first eleven sons of Jacob in the order of their birth were: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah by Leah; then followed Dan and Naphtali by Bilhah the handmaid of Rachel; then followed Gad and Asher by Zilpah, handmaid of Leah; then followed Issachar and Zebulun by Leah; and finally Joseph by Rachel. (The record of Benjamin's birth is not until Genesis 35.)

7. When Rachel was childless, she told Jacob: "Give me children or else I die."

8. Jacob's reaction to Rachel's request was one of anger.

9. The evidence of Genesis 30 suggests that Jacob usually spent the evenings in Rachel's tent because Leah had to "hire" Jacob for him to spend the night with her.

10. Jacob worked for Laban fourteen years for Leah and Rachel and six years for cattle and flocks. Of his personal work for Laban, Jacob testified that he ate not of the rams of Laban's flock, that he suffered the loss of that which was torn of beasts and of that which was stolen, that he lost sleep over the flocks, and that he was cold with frost and dry with drought.

11. Laban changed Jacob's wages ten times.

12. Concerning an inheritance for Leah and Rachel: "It was what might have been justly expected, as they were his children, that they should have been used as such, and have had children's portions given them; but by the whole of Laban's attitude towards them, both at their marriage, and ever since, it was plain he never intended to give them anything; but kept all he had to himself, or designed it for his sons, and therefore it was in vain for them to hope for anything; signifying to Jacob hereby, that they were willing to leave their father's house, and go with him when he pleased, since they could expect nothing by their stay here (*John Gill's Expositor*)."

13. Rachel greatly upset Laban by taking his images though he never found out that she was the thief.

14. Laban did not harm Jacob, as he apparently intended to do, because he was warned of God to do Jacob no harm.

15. On his way back home, Jacob saw the angels of God.

16. Esau was coming with 400 men against Jacob.

17. Jacob sent many presents ahead to Esau to find grace in his sight.

18. In case of a battle, Jacob put his handmaids and their children in the front, followed by Leah and her children and this followed by Rachel and Joseph in the back. (We are sorry the information for this question was in Genesis 33:2.)

19. Hosea 12:4 says Jacob wrestling with the angel had power over the angel and prevailed.

20. "Jacob's experience during that night of wrestling and anguish represents the trial through which the people of God must pass just before Christ's second coming. The prophet Jeremiah, in holy vision looking down to this time, said, 'We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. . . . All faces are turned into paleness. Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it (Jeremiah 30:5-7)' (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 201)."



Youths' Corner – John G. Paton

Our story takes place in Scotland one hundred years ago during the same time that Fanny Crosby and Dwight Moody were living in America. A special family lived in a little cottage in Scotland, and in this cottage there were only three rooms. At one end of the cottage was the “but” and at the other end was the “ben” and in the middle was the “closet”! And under its thatched-roof lived eleven children, a mother, and a father. One end of the house was mother’s end. This was the “but” end. Here was found the kitchen, the dining room, and the beds hung with natty curtains, plus all the other items that mothers take care of and need. The other end, the “ben,” was father’s end and here he had his workshop where he made things to sell to provide for his family. As soon as they were old enough, all eleven children helped father in his workshop. Between each of these ends was the closet, otherwise known to John, the subject of our story, as “the sanctuary.”

John Paton was the oldest of the eleven children, and he observed that his father went to the “closet” every day. The “closet” was just big enough for a little bed, a table, and a chair, and it had a small window that let in just a wee bit of light. The children could hear their father when he was in this room and it always sounded like he was praying. In fact, it often sounded like he was pleading in a trembling voice, and they grew to think of this little room as a sanctuary, as much of a sanctuary as when the High Priest walked in the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place during the time of the Israelites. So, when they had to go from one end of the cottage to the other, they would always tiptoe past the sanctuary when their father was there, and often he was there more than once a day. He would retire there, and they knew he was praying for them.

When John grew up, it came time for him to leave home, for he obtained a job in another town and later as a clergyman for a church which later sent him to another country as a missionary. When he left home, his father walked with him through the main part of their home town to its far outskirts. They said goodbye to each other, and his father prayed for him. Then waving goodbye, John walked around a corner. Once he was around the corner, he started to cry because he did not want to leave his father. He kept walking away from town and then thought that if he could get up on the dyke by the

ocean, he could see his father one last time. So he did that and he looked for his dad, and do you know where his father was? Up on the dyke at his end of town, looking for him! He did not see John looking for him, but John could see him!

John was later sent as a missionary to Tanna Island in the country now known as Vanuatu. John gladly went there as a missionary, but he said his work on Tanna was uphill, weary, and trying because he was working for people whom he called “savages.” We do not usually use this term today, but this is how John described them, for the men were mean to each other. They painted their faces, they barely wore clothes, and they carried a club with them wherever they went. They robbed from each other and even killed each other, but John and his wife wanted to be missionaries to them to tell them about their heavenly Father and about his great love for them.

John later wrote a book about his experiences and the determination he needed in order to persevere in his work for the people in Vanuatu, and in this book he said: “My father walked with God, surely I can too.” Having watched his father faithfully and cheerfully work to support his family of eleven children and knowing that his father perseveringly prayed for his family every day in the “closet” helped John Paton be determined to stay with the people in Vanuatu until they knew their heavenly Father and his Son Jesus Christ. So, he stayed on Tanna Island. Missionary Paton said the hardest part of working with the native people was experiencing their continual dishonesty. They would take anything they wanted and hide it in their hair or under their arm or in some other way, and if a small object, like a spoon, dropped out of hiding, they would just cover it over with their foot, pick it up between their toes and walk on as if nothing had happened. It was very hard for Missionary Paton to deal with their dishonesty. He tried to tell them it was wrong to steal from one another and that it was very wrong to lie about it afterwards. Nevertheless, they continued to steal from the missionary.

On one occasion it had rained and rained for many days. Finally, the sun came out, and things began to dry out because the temperature became warmer and the rain had stopped. So, John took his bedclothes outside, cleaned them, and hung them up

over a rope to dry, but he was afraid to turn his back on his bedclothes. He knew someone might steal them, so he stayed outside with his bedding. The wives of two teachers were outside protecting their bedclothes too. Well, the chief of the tribe, Miaki, came running up, saying, “Missi, missi!” (Missi was the name they called the missionary.) “Missi! Missi! I have a problem. I need your advice. Come in quick, quick!” So, Missionary John ran inside the little hut with Miaki, and while they were in the hut, the chief’s friends came out of the bushes and stole all of the missionary’s bedclothes. Soon he heard the teachers’ wives calling, “Missi! Missi! come back! They are taking your sheets and your blankets!” He came outside as fast as he could, but it was too late. The men were gone, and his bedding was gone too. Everything he had on the rope was gone! Then Missionary John turned to the chief and said, “You were deceptive with me. You lied to me. You did not want to talk to me about a problem. You just called me inside so your friends could steal my bedclothes!” And the chief said, “Oh no, no, no!” But Missionary John said, “Yes, I know that is what you did, and it was wrong!” Well, the chief got so worked up denying his part in the theft that he started to bang his club on the bushes and finally said, “I will find the thieves, and I will smash them just like this! I will get your things back!” And he stomped off, but, of course, Missionary John never saw his things again.

Another time it was night, and Missionary John heard the chickens making a ruckus in the chicken house, and, sure enough, the natives were stealing his chickens—the chickens that he had bartered to get from the natives in the first place! He had given the natives knives, silverware, and other things just to get the chickens and now they were stealing them away from him! The chickens were all gone! Another time they came after his goats and drove them off or killed them to eat. So, Missionary John lost his goats, he lost his chickens, and he lost his bedclothes.

Missionary John had an outside kitchen at his home on the island where he lived because it was too warm to cook inside his little hut. So, he and his wife cooked outside, but they had to lock everything up when they were not cooking—all the plates, all the pots and pans, all the silverware, everything. Well, the natives broke into their cookhouse and stole e-v-e-r-y-t-h-i-n-g from the cookhouse. They did not leave them one thing to use. Missionary John complained to the chief about this, but the chief said again, “Oh, no, no,

no!” But John said, “Yes, yes, yes! They have taken my things.” Finally the chief once more became worked up and started pounding the bushes with his club, saying, “I will find the thief and I will bring your things back to you!” But it never happened. The chief always said, “I can’t figure out who took them,” or “I don’t know who took your things so I can’t get them back,” or “We don’t have your things.” The missionary said, “But, chief, I need at least one pot to boil water in,” but nothing was returned, and Missionary John could not, of course, *steal* his things back. That would not be right, so finally he said to the natives, “I will give a blanket to anyone who can bring my pot back to me,” and before long he received his pot back, but the lid was missing. Missionary John said, “I need my lid,” but they said, “Oh, the lid is way on the other side of the island with another tribe. We have no control over them. We cannot get your lid back.” But, at least Missionary John had his pot.

Well, the reason I am telling you all of this is because one day Chief Miaki and the chief from another tribe on the island came running to Missionary John, saying, “Missi, Missi! There is a God! Or a ship is on fire or something of fear is coming over the sea. We see no flames but there is smoke like a volcano. Is it a spirit, or God, or a ship on fire? What is it? What is it?” Well, Missionary John knew what it was, and he said, “Oh, that is probably a great warship coming from my country to check on me,” for England had sent a ship to check on him once before, and when he had lived on a different island in Vanuatu Missionary John had had to be rescued by boat from the harm the natives wanted to do to him. So, he knew this was an English Man of War coming to see if he needed help. “They are coming to check on me,” he calmly said, “to ask me if your conduct is good or bad, if you are stealing my property, or if you are threatening my life.” They pleaded with Missionary John to go and see if it were a ship, but the missionary made a great fuss about dressing and getting ready to meet the great Chief on the vessel and would not go with them. The two chiefs asked, “Missi, will it be a ship of war?” Missionary John called to them over his shoulder, “I think it will, but I have no time to speak to you now for I must put on my best clothes.” “What will

you say about us?” asked the chiefs. “Are you going to tell them that we stole all your things and that we lied to you?” Missionary John said, “Well, if the great Chief on the ship asks me, I will have to tell him the truth.” “Oh, no,” said the native men, “Don’t tell him that! Come and see if it is a ship! Come and see.” “Well, I do not have time to come and see,” said Missionary John, “for I have to get dressed in my best clothes.” The island chiefs said, “Don’t tell him we stole from you. We will get all your things back!” Missionary John said, “You had better hurry because I am getting dressed now and then I will go out to see the great Chief.”

The island chiefs ran quickly away, and do you know what? They rounded up all of Missionary John’s things and put them in a heap by the steps to his front door! They said, “Missi! Missi! Come out and see if everything is here!” Of course, Missionary John could not tell if everything was there, but he solemnly looked over the pile and slowly said, “I do not see the lid to my pot here.” And they said, “Oh, that is over on the other side of the island but we have sent a message and it is coming back tomorrow. Don’t worry. It is coming back.” Missionary John said, “Okay,” but they said, “Missi! Missi! Are you going to tell him we stole from you now because we will never do it ever again!” Missionary John said, “Well, I will not say anything, but you must stay right beside me when I go to meet the great Chief of the ship because if you run away the great Chief will ask me why you are running away and then I will have to tell him it is because you are afraid of him because you stole from me.” The two chiefs said, “Oh, this is great darkness. We are in fear of great darkness, but we will stay right beside you.” And that is just what they did. The chiefs stayed by the missionary as the great Chief came ashore. They talked and tried to become friends. The natives came to the shore with their clubs and as warriors, but they listened, and then the great Chief of the ship took them back to his ship and showed them the



Tanna Island dwelling

guns on the ship and he even shot one of the cannons. This made the native chiefs stay even closer to the missionary!

Missionary John had a hard time with the natives on Tanna Island. It was an uphill task, as he has said. It was difficult and wearisome. He lost most of his possessions to the natives because they did not know any better. Lying, stealing, and killing were the mainstays of their lives. The golden rule in Matthew says to do unto others as you would have them do unto you, but they did not understand this principle. Missionary John stayed in Vanuatu because he wanted them to learn about the love of God and to experience a better way of life. He wanted them to know that even when people treat you poorly and badly, you can still show the love of God to them.

Missionary John stayed in Vanuatu for many years. He returned to his home in Scotland for a short period but went back for decades to this group of islands. On one island he built a school and his wife taught the ladies how to sew and how to cook healthfully. On this island all of the people became Christians! The struggles and hardships in teaching the people about the love of God were worth it to Missionary John and his wife because he knew they were learning about Jesus and learning how to love one another. This is what we need to remember. Even though it may be a hard and unpleasant task to share the love of God with people who do not know about him, God still wants us to be missionaries and work for him.

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