

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 shew them his covenant.
Psalm 25:14

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These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;



Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. (Revelation 2:8, 10)



The Three Angels' Messages

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, 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 14:6–12)

Within these seven verses we find the heart of God's last-day message, the message of Adventism. No other portion of scripture gives with such clarity and vividness the message of God that is to go forth in the last days. The messages of the three angels were not applicable to a prior time, for they speak of the hour of God's judgment that has (present tense) come.

Our purpose and goal in this study is to obtain an overview of the messages of the three angels and to see how it is a complete message that, in reality, encompasses all the pillars of our faith. All of the pillars of our faith—the three angels' messages, the heavenly sanctuary, the law with the Sabbath, the personality of God and Christ, the faith of Jesus, the testimony of Jesus, and the non-immortality of the wicked—are truths that are connected together just as the pieces of a jigsaw picture puzzle interlock to form one great picture.

The beginning of Revelation 14 speaks of the 144,000 who, in chapter 7, are described as coming out of the twelve tribes of Israel: twelve thousand from Juda, twelve thousand from Reuben, etc. Most evangelical commentators do not understand the spiritual nature of being a "Jew" or the spiritual nature of "Israel" referred to in the New Testament. They assume that the 144,000 are from literal tribes of Israel, and that the message of the three angels is to go to the Gentiles. The Bible teaches, however, that those who believe are considered spiritual Israel today, regardless of their national or ethnic background. Paul wrote:

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. (Romans 2:18, 29)

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:26–29)

Being a Jew today, according to the Bible, is not based upon national origin, but upon faith. Clearly those of faith are the children of Abraham, who are considered by God as part of the promised seed, regardless of their skin color, where they are born, or any other classification.

The Apostle Paul was a

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Roman citizen (Acts 22:25). There were various ways a person could become a Roman citizen. If a man served in the army for twenty-five years, he automatically became a Roman citizen. A person could pay a large sum of money to be a Roman citizen (Acts 22:28) but in Paul's case, he "was free born" (Acts 22:28), or born as a Roman citizen. His father, his grandfather, or someone else had become a Roman citizen, making Paul a Roman by birth, and, dear reader, that is the only way you can become a child of God. You must be born, born again, into the family of God. You cannot be his child by serving in his army, even if it is for a long time (twenty-five years), nor can you with a great sum of money become a part of his family. "Ye must be born from above" (John 3:7, margin).

The First Angel's Message

John begins the message of the first angel by stating that the angel is seen flying in the midst of heaven. Not only does this message have a worldwide hearing, but it is given from a vantage point to be easy, for all who wish, to hear this message. When the sun is high in the sky, it is easy for all to see, but the lower it travels along the horizon towards the evening or in the morning, the harder it is to see, for it will be obscured by surrounding hillsides or other physical features. As this angel is flying in the midst of heaven, none need be ignorant concerning its message. In the time of Jesus, the world was dark. "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up" (Matthew 4:16). Certainly we are living in a time that is even darker, a time when the good news of the gospel must be given.

Revelation 14:6 declares the first angel to have "*the* everlasting gospel." In the Greek there is no definite article in this verse. In fact, while Greek has twenty-four variations of the definite article, it has no indefinite article. The lack of the definite article in this verse has led some translators to supply an indefinite article. The ESV, a very popular translation, as well as NRSV and others, translates this "an eternal gospel." The context implies an article should be there, but should it be *the* or *an*? Let us rethink the question. Can there be more than one true gospel? No, of course not! Notice what Paul writes: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto *another* gospel" (Galatians 1:6).

Here Paul speaks of "*another* gospel." The Greek word for *another* is *heteros* which means another of a different kind. This gospel that the believers in Galatia had accepted was not a true gospel, for Paul goes on to say: "Which is not another [Greek: *allos* one of the same kind]; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (v. 8). Beloved, there is the gospel of Christ, period. The seriousness of preaching only this gospel is expressed by Paul, when he next says: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so

say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (vs. 8, 9).

There is not a gospel for the Jews and another for the Gentiles. There is one gospel and one gospel only, and it is given the emphasis in Revelation as being everlasting; therefore, we agree with the translators of Authorized Version which calls this "the everlasting gospel."

This angel gives the gospel with a loud voice, and it is to go to Jews and Gentiles, to everyone. God wants no one to be missed with this message: "To every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," and it needs to go to all of these people, for they are all living today in a time of unparalleled darkness. A generation ago it was not uncommon for families to read the Bible and to pray together at the beginning and at the end of each day. The father would gather his wife and children around the family altar, and they would worship God. This is, sadly, not the case today. The homes that even pray before meals are few and far between. Crime, violence, and unnatural affections abound. The need to speak with a loud voice is certainly here!

Peter says, "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:25). The gospel, or good news, is to be preached with or without us. The gospel for today is the same gospel that Paul and Peter both knew and in Revelation 14, it is set in contrast to the mark and the image of the beast. Neither the beast of Revelation 13, the second beast, nor the image of the beast have the real gospel.

The beast centers its *heteros* gospel around a doctrine called the trinity, upon which a whole system of error is presented. Sometimes we speak of what we call the *Godhead message* or the *truth about God*. It is fine to use these terms, but what we are really talking about is the gospel. The good news is that there is a God in heaven who has an only begotten Son and that he sent his Son to die for the sins of the world. If we say that the churches of *Babylon* have the gospel, then we have no right to call them *Babylon* or a part of *Babylon*, for if they really have the gospel, then they are Christian churches sharing the gospel. The gospel is the dividing line between those who worship God and receive his seal and those who receive the mark of the beast. God will not withhold his seal from nor condemn anyone who really accepts the gospel. All who receive the mark of the beast will be devoid of the gospel.

This gospel, dear reader, is a gospel that saves men not just from the penalty of sin, but from the power of sin. This is the final, great goal of the gospel. God says, "I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir" (Isaiah 13:12). The worldly churches all reject this power of the gospel; and it is this power, even more than the Sabbath, the state of the dead, or the refraining from eating of pork, that makes God's people unique. The churches of *Babylon* teach that it is fine to disregard the law of God, especially the Sabbath. They teach, in effect, that

Jesus is not a complete Saviour who can save them from all sin.

The beast of Revelation 13 is the papacy, a religious-political power that claims to have truth, even all the truth. As you examine this masterpiece of the devil, however, you find it void of truth. If you look at the seven pillars of the gospel, you will see that the papacy has a counterfeit that destroys each pillar of the truth. Instead of the heavenly high-priestly ministry of Jesus, the papacy has confession to a man and the intercession of saints. Instead of the law of God and the Sabbath, it has a changed law and Sunday. Instead of the Father and the Son, it has the trinity. Instead of the faith of Jesus, it has the faith of saints and of church fathers. Instead of the testimony of Jesus, it has popes, false prophets, and relics. Instead of the non-immortality of the soul, it has undying souls and offers eternal hell to accommodate this barbaric teaching. Ever hear of a hymn entitled “To Canaan’s Land, I’m On My Way”? Part of the refrain says “and the soul of man never dies.” For the three angels’ messages, the papacy has futurism and preterism which totally disregard the need to understand the mark of the beast.

The Threefold Command

The first angel’s message is a threefold command. We are to fear God, give glory to God, and worship God. All three verbs in the Greek are aorist imperative. Aorist is the equivalent of the English past tense. Imperative expresses a command to the hearer to perform a certain action by the authority of the one giving the command. The second and third commands are in the active voice while the command to fear God is in the passive voice. While we may give glory to God and worship him actively, our fear, or reverence, for God comes based upon his revelation to us of himself.

If you do not understand God and his character, you cannot properly reverence, or fear, God. If our understanding of God is faulty, our worship will assuredly be faulty. For example, our music in worship will, to a great degree, reflect our thoughts about God. If we believe that God is a pop, jazzy kind of person, our music will reflect that. Recently I was given an older copy (Sept./Oct. 2009) of *Message* magazine. The cover story was about a musical group that was billed as “Setting the Standard.” This group claims to be composed of Seventh-day Adventists. The main article declares they have a “jazzed-styled religious and secular a capella sound” (p. 9). The article says that this group “testifies, preaches, scats, claps their hands, snaps their fingers, and sings with a synergistic conviction inspired by ‘the One who directs the work in their lives . . . ’” (*Ibid.*).

After watching and listening to a few minutes of this group on YouTube, it was very clear that their billing as a jazz-styled group was certainly correct. The music was very heavy on rhythm and light on spiritual substance. When we hear of music like this, we may wonder—why? Why do so-called Christian groups use worldly music and worldly movements? Beloved, they believe that God approves of

such music and movements, and they believe he approves because they envision God to be like the music they *perform*.

We are to reverence God, but we are also to give glory to him. Jeremiah 13:16 states:

Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.

We are commanded, in God’s word, to give glory to him. Darkness is coming to those who refuse the glory due God. Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Our sinning brings us short of God’s glory, but when a sinner surrenders his sinful heart to God and depends upon God’s grace to live above the clamors of the flesh, he is giving glory to God. It is God, and God alone, that can lift a sinner out of his or her sin and set him or her upright through Jesus Christ. God is calling out a people who, through the preaching and receiving of the three angels’ messages, will give glory to him.

The first angel also calls upon us to worship God as the Creator and to acknowledge that the hour of his judgment has (present tense) come. In his day, Paul spoke of “judgment to come” (Acts 24:25) and that God had appointed a day in “which he will judge the world in righteousness” (Acts 17:31) but since 1844, we preach that the judgment day has come!

The worship of God is based upon him being our creator. Part of the fourth commandment is quoted in Revelation 14:7, clearly connecting the judgment hour message and the seventh-day Sabbath.

The Second Angel’s Message

“And there followed another (Greek: *allos*) angel.” This angel and his message are of the same kind, or type, as the first angel and his message. Nobody has ever seen an angel or angels (in nature) flying in the heavens, shouting these messages. These angels represent the people (angels in function) who are sharing God’s message in the last days.

The second angel declares that Babylon is fallen. The history of Babylon goes back to Babel: “And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel” (Genesis 10:8–10). A. T. Jones comments:

The earliest rulers whose names have been discovered in Babylonia, did not bear the title of king at all. In every instance before the time of Nimrod, the word used is one which signifies “viceroy.” The god is king, and ruler claims no higher authority than that of substitute or servant of his god who is really the king. For instance, a certain Idadu made an inscription running as follows: —

“To [the god] Ninridu, his King, for the preservation of Idadu, Viceroy of Ridu, the servant, the delight of Ninridu.”

And again, a certain Gudea wrote as follows: — “To [the god] Ninip the King, his King, Gudea Viceroy of [the god] Zirgulla, his house built.” “To [the goddess] Nana the Lady, Lady splendid, His Lady, Gudea, Viceroy of Zirgulla . . . raised.”

This points clearly to a time when God was recognized as the only King, and the true Ruler. And when false gods were put in the place of the true God, they were yet recognized as the real kings, and men in places of authority were but their substitutes. This change was so recent, too, that rulers were not yet bold enough to take to themselves the title of king. It was not much longer, however, before this step was taken. One arose who was bold enough to do this and all that it involved.

Nimrod was this bold man. The name that he bears “signifies rebellion, supercilious contempt, and, according to Gesenius, is equivalent to ‘the extremely impious rebel.’” And “he began to be a mighty one in the earth.” Or, as another translation gives it, he “was the first mighty one in the earth.” That is, he was the first one to establish the power of an organized kingdom, or government, as such, in the world.

“With the setting up of Nimrod’s kingdom, the entire ancient world entered a new historical phase. The oriental tradition which makes that warrior the first man who wore a kingly crown, points to a fact more significant than the assumption of a new ornament of dress, or even the conquest of a province. His reign introduced to the world a new system of relations between the government and the governed. The authority of former rulers had rested upon the feeling of kindred, and the ascendancy of the chief was an image of parental control. Nimrod, on the contrary, was a sovereign of territory, and of men just so far as they were its inhabitants, and irrespective of personal ties. Hitherto there had been tribes — enlarged families — Society; now there was a nation, a political community — the State. The political and social history of the world henceforth are distinct, if not divergent.” (*Empires of the Bible*, pp. 50, 51)

What religious power also claims to be a political power and a ruler of men? What power is imbued with the spirit of Babel? What power claims the title of God and king today? What power says confess your sins to me? The papacy! It was at Babel that the tower of Babel was built. Babel, in the language of the Babylonians, meant *gate of god*. Babel claims to be the way to God and to heaven. Babel claims that it is the only way to God. Originally God called Babel by that name because of the confusion of languages: “Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth”

(Genesis 11:9). Today it is still a confusion, but of doctrines and teachings.

Historically Babylon was associated with idols and false gods: “And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground” (Isaiah 21:9). Associated with the fall of Babylon are graven images and false gods. It is not a coincidence that Catholic churches are full of icons and that they teach false gods in the trinity.

Babylon, in its basic core, “is employed in Scripture to designate the various forms of false or apostate religion” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 381) “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT,” of Revelation 17 is clearly the papacy, but who is the Babylon spoken of in Revelation 14:8?

The message of Revelation 14, announcing the fall of Babylon must apply to religious bodies that were once pure and have become corrupt. Since this message follows the warning of the judgment, it must be given in the last days; therefore it cannot refer to the Roman Church alone, for that church has been in a fallen condition for many centuries. Furthermore, in the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation the people of God are called upon to come out of Babylon. According

to this scripture, many of God’s people must still be in Babylon. And in what religious bodies are the greater part of the followers of Christ now to be found? Without doubt, in the various churches professing the Protestant faith. (*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 383)

The Protestants have accepted the false doctrines of MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, especially the trinity, Sunday sacredness, and the immortal soul. The Protestants may not have the icons seen in the papal churches, but they have steeples which are the modern-day images of jealousy from Ezekiel 8:3, and their walls, pulpits, and altars are full of imagery of the second abomination of Ezekiel (8:9–11). The Protestants worship Tammuz under the name of the second person of the trinity, fulfilling the third abomination of Ezekiel, and they worship with their backs to the sanctuary and their faces towards the sun. They claim to keep Sunday holy. Lest we fail to see how God views this, let us remember that God himself calls these things “abominations” (Ezekiel 8:6, 9, 13, 15, 17). The Hebrew word translated abomination is *toebah*, and it means something disgusting, or loathe.

One might claim that one is worshiping God in spirit on Sunday, but God, dear reader, calls it an abomination, something that is disgusting and loathe to him. Will God declare something acceptable that is disgusting and loathe? No. This



Babel is confusion

is worship according to the commandments of men, and Jesus said in Matthew 15:9 “but in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” When the children of Israel were preparing to go into the Promised Land, God knew that it was a land full of sun worship, sun pillars, groves dedicated to Baal, and sun worshipers. Did God give his people freedom to worship with these sun worshipers at their phallic symbols? No, God did not. Instead, God instructed Israel to destroy these images (Deuteronomy 7:1–5; 12:3). Sadly, all of these same abominations are in or are quickly coming into Adventism.

For the last thirty years, the Adventist Church has been rapidly growing. The reason? Thirty years ago we began to use new growth ideas and strategies—ideas and concepts that the evangelical churches of Babylon were using for rapid growth—and the truth is, friends, these ideas have worked and have worked well. In the last thirty years, we have grown many evangelical churches, just like the rest of the daughters of Babylon. We have raised a whole new generation of Adventists who know almost nothing of the seven pillars of our faith. We have a new church, with new doctrines, and a new organization.

I want to make a point very clear. I am not accusing the Adventist Church of being Babylon the Great. No, we cannot do that, for the papacy fulfills that prophecy. But remember that Babylon is a mother who has daughters, and do you know what name the daughters of a harlot always get? They never take the name of the father but, instead, the name of the mother. Beloved, it does not matter if the animal in the field is white, black, red, or mixed. If it looks like a cow, eats grass like a cow, and bellows like a cow, it is a cow, even if it says it is a horse. If we accept the central doctrine of the whore and step-by-step come into conformity with the world, we will not find it a hard matter to accept the mark of the beast.

Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 81)

The whole world is progressing toward the mark of the beast. It is drunk with the wine, or doctrines, of Babylon. Jesus compared wine to teaching, or doctrine (Mark 2:23). New, or sweet, wine would be good doctrine, but fermented wine that makes one drunk represents false doctrines. The nations are so drunk with Babylon’s wine that it is impossible for them to understand truth, and God declares them to be fallen.

The Third Angel’s Message

The third angel’s message is the most solemn warning given in the Bible! This angel, like the first angel, speaks with a loud voice. The emphasis is not on volume but on its importance. Declaring the message to be given with a loud voice

indicates that it is to be given with the force of God’s Spirit and that all will be able to hear who wish to have ears to hear.

Like the Sabbath reform mentioned in Isaiah 58:1, where we are told to “cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins,” the third angel’s message will be given in a loud voice, so that all may hear.

Especially the people who claim to be God’s elect need to receive the message and bring reform into their lives.

Not all who profess to keep the Sabbath will be sealed. There are many even among those who teach the truth to others who will not receive the seal of God in their foreheads. They had the light of truth, they knew their Master’s will, they understood every point of our faith, but they had not corresponding works. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 213, 214)

Notice that they knew the truth, even “every point of our faith,” but their works did not match the truth they knew. How sad it will be for them to receive the mark of the beast! This class represents those who receive the mark in their hands. They do not mentally assent to the error, but they do what they are told to do, knowing it is wrong, to save their temporal lives, only to lose eternal life.

Those who receive the mark of the beast receive the wrath of God without mixture, or undiluted. In the past history of the world, God’s wrath has been mixed with mercy. God has, throughout the history of man, claimed to be a God of mercy. Especially in the Old Testament, do we read of God’s mercy:

Shewing *mercy* unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:6)

And thou shalt make a *mercy* seat of pure gold. (Exodus 25:17)

Keeping *mercy* for thousands. (Exodus 34:7)

For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in *mercy* unto all them that call upon thee. (Psalm 86:5)

Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is *mercy*, and with him is plenteous redemption. (Psalm 130:7)

He delighteth in *mercy*. (Micah 7:18)

The warning in the third angel’s message, however, tells of a time when all probation is over forever, and mercy will not be given nor extended. This closing of probation is not a fixed time decreed by fiat of God. God is not capricious. Right now there is a general polarization occurring, with the wicked becoming more wicked and the righteousness more like the character of God and Christ. There are still conversions and backslidings, but overall we are seeing a polarization, and the more time passes, the more things will, and must, polarize. The close of probation is simply when this polarization is final in such a way that nobody will ever change his or her mind. The wicked, who are the great

majority, will never repent and confess Christ, and the righteous will never be induced to sin again.

The wrath of God is defined in Revelation 15:1: “And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.” Those who fail to have the seal of God and who receive the mark of the beast will partake of the last plagues.

The third angel declares that the wicked “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” (Revelation 14:10, 11) The expression for ever and ever in the Greek is *eis aionas aionon* (ἕως αἰώνιᾳ αἰώνιῳ) and certainly can be translated forever in the sense of eternity, especially when linked with God. However, the root word *aion* can mean world or age, referring to a time period. In non-biblical Greek, *aion* is used “for the relative time allotted to a being” (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*) or for “vital force,” “lifetime,” or “generation” (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Abridged in One Volume*). This concept is the same for the wicked, for the expression *eis aionas aionon* is also used to refer to the wicked in Revelation 20:10: “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” Allowing one scripture to interpret another, we see in Revelation 20:8, however, that the wicked are “devoured.” Furthermore, the earth, where the lake of fire is said to be, will “melt with fervent heat” (2 Peter 3:10) and will be “passed away” (Revelation 21:1). Thus we know that the destruction of the wicked is sure and will be for their time allotted. It will only continue as long as the wicked last, certainly not forever, without an end. Eternal life is not promised to the wicked who reject Christ but only to those who believe in Jesus Christ and accept his life for their sins. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him *should not perish*, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). The wicked will, at last, perish.

The Completeness of the Message

Every fundamental aspect of our message is found in the three angels’ messages. Some people say that the incarnation of Jesus is not a pillar of our faith and has nothing to do with the original platform; however, the incarnation is certainly a part of the “everlasting gospel” that the first angel carries and shares with a loud voice. Within the everlasting gospel we find all the events that are connected to the birth, victorious life, death, resurrection, and ministry of Jesus Christ. If our gospel leaves out any of these, it is not the complete or right gospel.

In the first angel’s message, we find the hour of God’s judgment, or the sanctuary message, brought out. Furthermore, anytime there is judgment, there must, by definition,

be law! Without law, no judgment may take place. At the heart of any judicial process, there must be law. In connection with the law, the Sabbath commandment is echoed in Revelation 14:7.

For one to properly reverence God (Reverence 14:7), one must have a conception of who he is and what he is like.

The faith of Jesus mentioned in Revelation 14:12 is declared to be a characteristic of the saints. More than a superficial reading of Revelation 14, comparing it with other verses, describes the non-immortality of the wicked and the nature of man in death to be rest (Revelation 14:13).

Finally, without the testimony of Jesus there would be no three angels’ messages or revelation on anything.

In the three angels’ messages, we see a completeness that helps us to understand the whole picture that we call the great controversy. The detractors of these messages are not few, but these messages are true, and no one in the world understands the big picture better than Adventists who follow the Bible and the Testimonies. We have a message that is wonderful and admits of no compromise.

We have a truth that admits of no compromise. Shall we not repudiate everything that is not in harmony with this truth? (*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 205)

No man or woman who compromises this message can be a part of the last great work or receive the seal of the living God. Babylon, with all her idols, graven images, and false gods, is going down. We can choose to build upon the solid rock of Jesus being the Son of God (Matthew 16:16–18), or we can build upon the shifting sands of traditions (Matthew 7:26, 27; 15:9). The choice is ours. God give us free will.

Satan will work by force when allowed, or by intrigue and subterfuge, if that will aid his cause. Satan will do anything to stop the messages of the three angels from going forth. Today many of us live in a time of relative ease if we wish to live as Christians; however, there are terribly fearful times ahead and only if we now purpose within our hearts to do what is right will we stand.

Whatever may be their profession, it is only those who are world servers at heart that act from policy rather than principle in religious things. We should choose the right because it is right, and leave consequences with God. To men of principle, faith, and daring, the world is indebted for its great reforms. By such men the work of reform for this time must be carried forward. (*The Great Controversy*, p. 460)

Let us each determine that by God’s grace we will be such a man or woman that will carry forward the work of reform. Do not let anyone tell you that Adventism is wrong. The three angels’ messages are based upon solid truth that will stand the test of time and the word of God. It will not go away. Come, be a part of that truth and the movement that will give the loud cry!

Allen Stump

Youth Campout

After our regular camp meeting in June, there was a youth campout that lasted for three days and three nights. Our group traveled to a little town called Mouth of Seneca, West Virginia, site of the famous Seneca Rocks. This camp had been quickly planned, and we were sorry that some who would have liked to have gone were not able to attend. The few, however, who were able to brave the threatening weather were well-rewarded with some great experiences. The weather forecast called for thundershowers each day and night we were to be gone. I considered canceling the campout and trying to reschedule it, but we plowed forward in faith, packing ponchos and umbrellas and knowing that God “sendeth rain on the just and unjust” (Matthew 5:45)!

After taking care of the camp meeting clean-up duties on the Sunday following camp meeting, we gathered our gear on Monday morning and set off for Seneca Shadows Campground, near the base of Seneca Rocks. Even though we had some rain and cloudy skies as we traveled there, the campground greeted us with dry sod. We found the camp hosts, Jeff and Diana, to be very friendly and helpful. In fact, after getting to know them, I found out, as we shared our names, that I was not too distantly related to Jeff and that he grew up just a few miles from where my father was born! We found this friendship to be a blessing, and it later opened to us a very unique witnessing opportunity.

Our goal was to have good Christian fellowship and to see the hand of God in his creation. Seneca Rocks is a large vertical ridge of rocks in Pendleton County, West Virginia. Seneca Rocks is one of the best-known scenic attractions in West Virginia where rock climbers come to accept the challenge of the sheer rock faces which rise about nine hundred feet above the floor of the valley. Fortunately there are trails that allow one to visit the observation deck near the top and also to ascend to the top of the rocks which narrow down to just under ten feet wide in places at the top.

Using Seneca Shadows as our hub, we could venture to other areas close by without the need to tear down and reassemble camp each day. We planned to visit Canaan Valley, Blackwater Falls, Dolly Sods, Spruce Knob, and at least one cavern in our short trip.

After setting up camp we started a campfire and prepared food for our hungry troops. I must admit that we did not cook much from the campfire. It was mostly for fun and the spirit of camping. We had propane stoves for most cooking, and we also had electricity at our campsite, so we could use our griddle for pancakes and have power for our toaster and popcorn popper. The menu was varied, with different types of cold and hot cereal and fruit or potatoes and pancakes in the morning. The afternoon and evening meals were selections of beans and rice, veggie links roasted over the fire, spaghetti, and other camping regulars and non-regulars. The

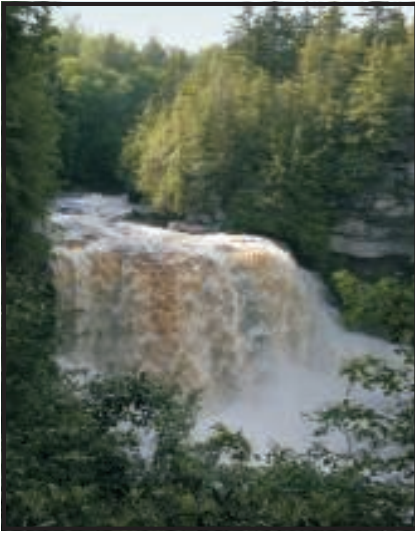
oil-free pancakes were even a favorite with one person! On a scale of one to ten, with one being not fit for the dogs and ten being food fit for a king, our campers gave the food a 7.5 average rating, but one thing was sure—nobody left any meal hungry. From popcorn to watermelon and oranges and from rice to potatoes, there was an abundance of good food.

On Tuesday morning we headed to Seneca Rocks and were disappointed to learn that the main trail was closed for repair. But we learned from a kind park service worker that there was a back trail for climbers that could be used. So off we all marched to the back. The way was steep and rough and not all felt that they could go on, but for those who were able to finish the hike, the view was breath-taking. To sit astride the top of the rocks and to see for miles down the valley was beautiful. Though rain had threatened again, we did not have to break out our ponchos, and we reunited at the bottom, all hungry and ready for good food.

The day was mostly gone by the time our meal was finished, so we decided to have a light evening at the camp, with songs, another campfire, and worship. The fellowship, unity, and bonding were considered the spiritual highlight of the campout by most of the campers. One said that they were reminded of Psalm 133:1: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

After worship and food the next morning (Wednesday), we headed to Canaan Valley and did some hiking in this huge valley. West Virginia is a very mountainous state, and valleys are few, and large valleys are even fewer, but none are more breath-taking in their beauty than Canaan Valley. Canaan Valley boasts a state park by that name with a ski resort and another private ski resort, as well. With names like “Gravity” for some of the slopes, you know that the hills are steep. Canaan Valley is filled with an abundance of wildlife. Though our experience did not include bears, we did see some deer, raccoons, many birds, and other creatures that God made on the fifth and sixth days of creation week.

Shortly after arriving at Canaan Valley and before we were ready to go on a hike, we had an interesting experience. On the first full day of camp, Sister Elaine Nailing witnessed to a young family at Seneca Rocks, and the next day we encountered this same family at Canaan Valley; however, it was a bad situation. The mother-in-law of this family was publicly and loudly being very rude to her daughter-in-law and to her grandchildren. A crisis was developing, and Sister Elaine went to the young mother and offered that we could have prayer with them. After praying with the daughter-in-law and children, we offered to do whatever we could to be of help. The young mother was greatly appreciative. A park ranger came along about that time and took this family back to their campsite. The mother-in-law and some others in her group went to nearby Blackwater Falls. Though our contact with this family was brief, we knew that God had allowed Elaine the chance to meet them the day before and then for the rest of us to be at the right place at the right time.



Black Water Falls

After hiking in Canaan Valley, we went to nearby Blackwater Falls. Just a little north of Canaan Valley, the Blackwater River travels over a sixty-two foot drop on its way to Canaan Valley. The river gets its name from the black appearance of the water which is due to tannic acid. Many years ago I lived near Blackwater Falls and often visited them, but

neither during that time, nor at any of several later visits, have I seen the falls so full of water and so majestic and powerful! Everyone enjoyed these falls, and Ashleigh, our youngest member, liked them best of all!

After leaving Blackwater Falls we traveled back to camp via Dolly Sods. According to Wikipedia “Dolly Sods is a U.S. Wilderness Area in the Allegheny Mountains of eastern West Virginia, USA, and is part of the Monongahela National Forest (MNF) of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). It is a rocky, high-altitude plateau with sweeping vistas and lifeforms normally found much farther north in Canada. The distinctive landscape of Dolly Sods is characterized by stunted (‘flagged’) trees, wind-carved boulders, heath barrens, grassy meadows created in the last century by logging and fires, and sphagnum bogs that are much older. The name derives from an 18th century German homesteading family—the Dahles—and a local term for an open mountaintop meadow—a ‘sods’.”

At first I was not sure if Dolly Sods would be something that would be enjoyed by the group, but since we were so close it did not make sense to pass it by, but to at least drive through and hike a little there. Interestingly, more of our



Mountain Laurel at Dolly Sods



Seneca Rocks

campers declared it to be their favorite destination than of any other place we went.

Being Wednesday we needed to leave in time to return for some food before getting ready for prayer meeting. I had planned to broadcast the prayer meeting talk from the campground, via my cell phone. Despite coverage maps that indicated a signal should be present, no such signal brought my phone to life. We learned, however, that if we traveled on



Happy hikers in Canaan Valley

the main highway two miles south of the campground, we would obtain excellent reception. So off we went and set up in an open field near a side highway. There we joined the rest of the Smyrna family, either in the chapel or in their homes, and our virtual congregation. I gave a brief talk on praising God and the blessing of testifying, using texts such as Psalm 34:2: “My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.” Then the rest of the campers each took a short turn sharing some of the blessings of the campout.

That night we had another fire and an unusual request. I noted earlier that the camp hosts were really nice people and were even related to me. Jeff and Diana began to call me *cousin*. They, of course, learned that we were a Christian group and that I was the pastor. Interestingly they had been clearing out a large, overgrown area near the campground

and had found a forgotten cemetery that had not been used for at least sixty or seventy years. Some of the grave markers showed that the cemetery dated back to the last part of the 18th century! Jeff and Diana told us that they wanted to clear the area and restore it. Jeff then made his unique request. He asked if I would come the next day and “bless” the cemetery. I told Jeff that I had never blessed a cemetery before, but we could certainly come and have a memorial service for those buried there and a consecration service for the land. This met with his full approval.

So the next day, after our worship and after packing up (it was our last day), we found Jeff and Diana, and they led us to the newly-discovered cemetery. Not knowing what to say or to do, I asked God the night before for special words. Jeff and Diana were sweet people who knew little about God but believed in him. God answered my prayer and gave me special words that filled the 8–10 minutes we stood in that special place. Jeff and Diana were very touched, and we plan to keep in contact with them.



One of the few rains we had made this meal fun

After leaving Seneca Shadows we drove to Seneca Caverns and toured this beautiful cave. Our tour guide was a very nice young man. As expected he said the caverns were millions of years old. When someone from our group suggested a much younger age and that the flood of Noah could explain much of the seeming mysteries of geology, we were shocked to learn that this poor youth had never heard of the flood!

After leaving Seneca Rocks we drove to Spruce Knob, the summit of Spruce Mountain. Spruce Knob is the highest point in West Virginia, with an elevation of 4,863 feet. From there we drove a short distance to Spruce Knob Lake, the highest elevated lake in West Virginia. After taking a few pictures, we began the journey home.

All who attended the camp said they would like to go again and overall, the campout was declared a great success, with it being rated from very good to excellent by all campers.

God blessed us to see some of his wonderful handiwork, and we were all drawn closer to each other. Psalm 19 and

Psalm 8 are two chapters that come to mind in thinking back about the camping and the visiting of the natural wonders. One person was reminded at Seneca Rocks of God coming down to Mount Sinai, with thunder and lightening.

Speaking of thunder and lightening, remember our forecast for rain, rain, rain? It sprinkled just a little bit the first two nights after we had retired but not enough to cause any wet tents or damp sleeping bags. We had just enough rain during one of our meals that we sought the shelter of a car or used a poncho for about ten minutes. God was certainly merciful to us and gave us a 99% dry campout!

What could have made the youth campout better? For one thing, you being there! One of the suggestions for improving the campout was to try to have it better organized well ahead of time so many, especially youth, could plan to come. We are planning a larger youth campout for next year. Some suggested

locations include Yellowstone National Park, Yosemite National Park, and Sequoia National Park, but where would



Pastor Stump at the top of Seneca Rocks

you like to have a youth camp? If we can obtain enough feedback quickly, we can, Lord willing, begin planning a youth camp that could be the spiritual experience of a lifetime. So let us hear back from you. Call or email me with your ideas. We hope to hear from you soon! If you are older or are someone who doesn't have the camping spirit and understands the value of what such a campout can be for our youth, perhaps you would like to help sponsor a camper for next year. Please call or write me for details.



Feature in Seneca Caverns

Allen Stump

California Camp Meeting Report

By Ann Ford

Nestled in a valley between snowcapped mountains, the big tent was erected for the camp meeting under blue skies near Lookout, California. Brothers and sisters came from many different places to attend the spirit-filled meetings and reminded us of the sweet hymn which says, "they come from the east and west, they come from the north and south."

Brother Chuck Clifford extended a hearty welcome at the opening meeting Wednesday night. Thursday morning worship was followed by a delicious, wholesome breakfast and a trip to Burney Falls to view the falls and to take a leisurely hike. Burney Falls is a beautiful falls that President Theodore Roosevelt christened the eighth wonder of the world. After seeing the falls and hiking around the park, we were treated to a nature presentation by Sister Ann Ford, followed by a very tasty picnic lunch prepared by Sisters Linda Akens, Raquel Akens, Lisa Clifford, Rebecca Clifford, and Elyssa Sims. On the way back home, we also got a better look at Mount Shasta and Mount Lassen, reminding us of the following gem:



Brother Akens leading song service

Friday and Sabbath were rich days of study and fellowship. One of the highlights of the camp meeting included Pastor Allen Stump's presentations on compromise. There



Burney Falls

The beauties in nature are a theme for contemplation. In studying the natural loveliness surrounding us, the mind is carried up through nature to the Author of all that is lovely. All the works of God are speaking to our senses, magnifying His power, exalting His wisdom. Every created thing has in it charms which interest the child of God and mold his taste to regard these precious evidences of God's love above the work of human skill. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 377)

The spiritual theme of the camp meeting was "Prepare To Meet Thy God." The messages were pointed and timely, as each speaker presented different elements necessary for God's people to be able to meet Him in peace. The speakers included: Thomas Akens, Mike Brown, Chuck Clifford, Morgan Polsky, David Sims, Allen Stump, and Michael Woodward.



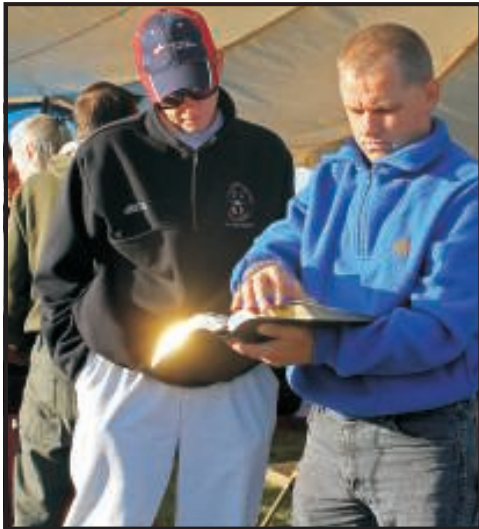
Pastor Sims playing hymns during a hike

was a special emphasis that when one compromises in what seems like the smaller matters, there are concessions involved, thus lowering the standards and making it easier to compromise weightier matters.

Other messages focused on repentance and how to become ready for the coming of Christ. There was also an emphasis upon our need to

boldly share the message of salvation with others, calling them to repentance, as John the Baptist called the people of his day to repentance. All the messages dovetailed together, leaving the people encouraged and determined to make their calling and election sure.

We had some precious feast-keeping brothers attending the camp meeting. While we did not agree with them on this point, they were of a kind Christian demeanor, and there was a spirit of Christ in the way all were treated. No rule-or-ruin spirit was allowed to displace the spirit of freedom, with all being extended Christian free-



Brother Larry reading a text

dom of speech and action. On Sabbath Pastor Sims shared Bible texts and several Spirit of Prophecy references as to why feast keeping is not necessary today.

There was a peaceful, spiritual atmosphere all during the encampment, and many spoke of how they were blessed with the song services, the messages, the music, as well as lots of wonderful special music. We even had special music via the telephone. Thank the Lord for modern technology.

Sister Elyssa Sims had some activities and stories for the youth that were enjoyed by the young in heart as well.



Resting at stream during Sabbath hike

Sunday morning the camp meeting ended with a very sweet communion service which included some rich, heartfelt testimonies from those locally in attendance, as well as participants online. As always at such gatherings, the partings were sad, indeed, but we look forward to the soon coming of Jesus when all such partings will be forever ended! ✍️

He Is Able

No matter how deep the ocean,
 However expansive and wide,
 We know Your love is unending,
 That we in You can abide.

No matter how deep the waters,
 Or how many problems there be,
 Your love is as vast as the ocean,
 And just as deep as the sea.

Whatever the depths we plummet,
 They're never too deep for You,
 For we know that You are able
 To lift us and carry us through.

Vera Antisdell, taken from *From the Heart*

Roan Mt. Family Camp Meeting

Brother Malcolm McCrillis has requested we inform you that there will be a family camp meeting at Roan Mountain State Park Conference Center at Roan Mountain, Tennessee, October 4–8, 2011. The meetings will begin Tuesday evening and last through Sabbath evening.

You may camp at the park, and cabin rental is available. For more information please call Brother McCrillis at 423-772-3161, or contact him by email at John17three@earthlink.net.

From Patmos, Messages for Seven Churches



Smyrna, the Suffering Church

In the visions of the night . . . One of authority was speaking, and he said, “. . . To John the Lord Jesus opened the subjects that he saw would be needed by his people in the last days. The instruction that he gave is found in the book of Revelation. (*The Review & Herald*, October 22, 1903)

And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. (Revelation 2:8–11)

The History of the City of Smyrna

The ancient city of Smyrna has roots that reach back to 3000 BC, when the earliest settlement was built on a hill. A few thousand years later, Greek colonists arrived. The city grew until approximately 600 BC, when the king of Lydia captured Smyrna and destroyed, among other things, its temple to Athena. Sixty years later, the Persians arrived, destroying more

of the city, and by the 400s the city was abandoned. Its demise, however, lasted only a few decades, for Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) was instructed in a dream to refound the city, which he failed to do but which his general and successor,



Smyrna Velvet Castle

Lysimachus, began. Lysimachus chose the site of ancient Smyrna, against the slopes of the mountains which surround the gulf. The city subsequently prospered, so that by the time of the apostle John, it was described by the ancient historian Strabo as the “most beautiful of all” cities. It had straight, paved streets, with many temples erected over the years—temples to the “mother goddess”; to Homer; to the emperors Tiberius, Hadrian, and Caracalla; and to the goddess Roma, a personification of the spirit of empire. Smyrna had close ties to the city of Rome, sending Rome money for different projects and looking to Rome for help in rebuilding after earthquakes. Smyrna was given the privilege of building a temple to the Roman emperor Tiberius over ten other competing cities. “This strong allegiance to Rome plus a large Jewish population that was actively hostile to the Christians made it exceptionally difficult to live as a Christian in Smyrna” (Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 74). The city also had a theater (the largest in Asia), a stadium, a silo near the harbor, a commercial agora, and a state agora. All that remains of these structures today, however, is the state agora.



View of Izmir (ancient site of Smyrna)

Archeological Remains

The modern city of Izmir, Turkey, is built on top of ancient Smyrna, so only a few ruins of Smyrna are visible today.

Courtesy of Panegyrics of Granovetter_Flickr



Smyrna Underground Agora

Remnants of the old city walls of Lysimachus can be seen in a few places. The ruins of the citadel (the Velvet Castle) built on top of Mt. Pagus, dominate the scenery and are of Byzantine origin, but their lower parts go back to Roman and Hellenistic times.

The most interesting ruins of the city “are those of the agora, or market place, which was found in the heart of the modern city after World War I. For a long time archaeologists had unsuccessfully searched for the agora of Smyrna, which was famous in ancient times as the only agora constructed in three stories. The lowest level of shops was below ground, another row of shops was found at the street level, and a third row was on top of the colonnaded sidewalks surrounding the whole market place. Since its discovery, excavation and some restoration work has [sic] been carried out, which affords a modern visitor a vivid impression of this, the most famous market place of antiquity. The subterranean halls and shops are well preserved; in fact, some are in so excellent a state of preservation that they could be put to use in their

Courtesy of Panegyrics of Granovetter_Flickr



Ground level Smyrna Agora (Forum)

present state. Of the ancient structures at the street level only a few columns now remain, and all traces of the second-floor level vanished long ago” (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 92).

Ignatius and Polycarp

Besides being honored as one of the cities receiving a letter from Jesus, Smyrna is also known as the city Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch in Syria, visited on his way to execution in Rome and from which he wrote letters to several congregations in the area around Smyrna. His martyrdom supposedly occurred in AD 107 (some scholars question this) and after he left Smyrna to continue his trip to Rome, Ignatius wrote back to the church in Smyrna and to its bishop, Polycarp, who was martyred in the stadium at Smyrna around AD 156.

Polycarp is said to have known the apostle John, in fact several of the apostles, and to have even been appointed by John to be head of the Christian church in Smyrna. It is interesting to note that Polycarp was martyred because he refused to burn incense to the Roman emperor, who, at that time, would have been Antoninus Pius, and even though Antoninus is sometimes known as one of the five good emperors of the Roman Empire and one who did not actively persecute Christians, he did expect his citizens to acknowledge that he was divine.

More interesting than Antoninus Pius, however, is Polycarp. We know that he was familiar with Paul’s writings (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 125) and familiar with the apostles (*Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 625), that he had a leadership role in the early Christian church, and that he was martyred for his faith. We also know that he sought to forge an alliance with the Bishop of Rome. He went to Rome shortly before his death, making the journey when he was well over eighty years of age, for the sole purpose of discussing certain differences that existed between the churches of Asia and of Rome. Irenaeus informs us that these differences were speedily resolved, except for the timing of the so-called easter festival. Generally speaking, the Western churches observed this event on the first day of the week, while the Eastern churches followed the Jewish rule and kept it on the fourteenth day of the first month of the Jewish calendar. Polycarp urged the observance of fourteenth day, the knowledge of which he had received from the apostles, but the Roman bishop declined to admit the Jewish custom in the churches under his jurisdiction. Polycarp then departed, and each leader adhered to his own belief. Irenaeus does not tell us what the other differences were that they were able to speedily resolve, but any resolution obtained with the Bishop of Rome most likely only meant compromise on the part of Polycarp, although it is true this occurred during the 150s when the papal system not yet well-established.

Historians have noted that Polycarp was not a theologian, for we have no surviving works by him except a letter he wrote to the Philippians, and even that contains a lot of rephrasing of Paul’s words and theology. Polycarp, instead,

is remembered by church historians as a man who went about doing good—an example of godly living, so to speak, rather than a man of letters—but I recall the words of Ellen White that Satan’s “one aim is to lead men in various ways, *according to their gifts*, to array themselves against God, that he may counteract the influence of the Spirit of God on human hearts” (*The Youth’s Instructor*, November 16, 1893; emphasis supplied). If your gift, for example, is working with people, Satan *will* work to pervert that gift, maybe by a desire to keep peace through compromise in spiritual issues or in other ways. If your gift is in the field of theology, he *will* work on your mind to counteract God’s work through a perverted



Antoninus_Pius

understanding in and a teaching of theology. We do not know what Polycarp’s gifts were; we only hope that his apparent gift of working with people, which included even the Bishop of Rome, was not perverted with theological compromise. Perhaps it wasn’t, for his witness was faithful at his death. In the stadium in Smyrna, he was given one last opportunity to recant, but he replied, “Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never did me any injury. How then can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?” It should be noted that the church at Smyrna later wrote to the church at Philomelium that the Jews were as avid for his death as were the pagans, and we should also note that history records Polycarp’s martyrdom to have occurred on a Sabbath and that Jews attended, taking faggots with them to the stadium, where a boisterous crowd still lingered from the usual morning games (which could very well have been gladiatorial in nature). The Jews were more eager to aid in the execution of Polycarp than in keeping the Sabbath holy and in refraining from gathering sticks and from frequenting a place where secular crowds had gathered for entertainment.

Persecution

The persecution against Christians continued until 324, when Constantine was able to stop it by forcing the surrender of the persecuting ruler, Licinius, but prior to this, in the early 300s, Diocletian, the Roman ruler of the east (Egypt, Palestine, Pontus, Asia, and Thrace), had renewed persecution of the Christians. He, with Galerius, his next in command, was especially known for a ten-year reign of cruelty from AD 303–313 which some have seen as a fulfillment of the ten days of Revelation 2:10 in which the days are prophetic and

do not figure as literal years. In AD 303 Diocletian pronounced the first of his four decrees against Christians. Christian assembly became illegal, and the burning of all churches and houses containing Christian contents was authorized. He renounced the legal status of Christians who refused to recant, he required anyone coming to court to first offer a pagan sacrifice to the gods, and he commanded the arrest and imprisonment of Christian clergy. Anyone arrested, however, was released if he or she agreed to sacrifice to the gods. Romanus, a Christian deacon from Caesarea visiting Antioch, publicly denounced former Christians on their way to perform these pagan sacrifices. He was, of course, arrested and brought before Diocletian, who was in Antioch at the time, and later martyred.

Diocletian’s final edit in 304 ordered *all* inhabitants in his prefecture to gather and to sacrifice and pour libations to Roman gods, which made it increasingly hard for Christians to hide. Eusebius says the number of martyrs was uncountable, occurring in cities and towns across the empire (<http://www.fourthcentury.com/notwppages/persecution-timeline.htm>), and history records that some of the attendees at the Council of Nicea (in 325) came maimed—without eyes, without limbs—from the persecutions.

Nearly all early Christian writers agree that the book of Revelation was written during the reign of Domitian (81–96), an emperor who also persecuted the Christians. In fact, he is reported to have had members of his own family



View of Izmir (ancient site of Smyrna)

executed who were believers. Ellen White tells us that Domitian’s persecution of John was instigated by the Jews. Domitian first attempted to boil John in oil. This, however, was unsuccessful, and he exiled John to Patmos.

The rulers of the Jews were filled with bitter hatred against John for his unwavering fidelity to the cause of Christ. They declared that their efforts against the Christians would avail nothing so long as John’s testimony kept ringing in the ears of the people. In order that the miracles and teachings of Jesus might be forgotten, the voice of the bold witness must be silenced.

John was accordingly summoned to Rome to be tried for his faith. Here before the authorities the apostle's doctrines were misstated. False witnesses accused him of teaching seditious heresies. By these accusations his enemies hoped to bring about the disciple's death.

John answered for himself in a clear and convincing manner, and with such simplicity and candor that his words had a powerful effect. His hearers were astonished at his wisdom and eloquence. But the more convincing his testimony, the deeper was the hatred of his opposers. The emperor Domitian was filled with rage. He could neither dispute the reasoning of Christ's faithful advocate, nor match the power that attended his utterance of truth; yet he determined that he would silence his voice.

John was cast into a caldron of boiling oil; but the Lord preserved the life of His faithful servant, even as He preserved the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace. As the words were spoken, Thus perish all who believe in that deceiver, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, John declared, My Master patiently submitted to all that Satan and his angels could devise to humiliate and torture Him. He gave His life to save the world. I am honored in being permitted to suffer for His sake. I am a weak, sinful man. Christ was holy, harmless, undefiled. He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.

These words had their influence, and John was removed from the caldron by the very men who had cast him in.

Again the hand of persecution fell heavily upon the apostle. By the emperor's decree John was banished to the Isle of Patmos, condemned "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 1:9. Here, his enemies thought, his influence would no longer be felt, and he must finally die of hardship and distress. (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 570)

Eusebius records that Domitian's successor, Nerva, released John (among others) and that John returned to Ephesus.

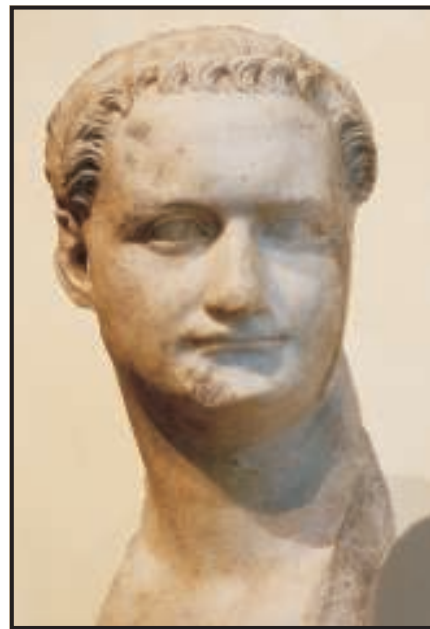
Such conditions of persecution for refusal to worship at the emperor's shrine doubtless constitute the immediate background of John's exile to Patmos, and thus of the writing of the book of Revelation. Apparently all the twelve apostles but John were dead, and he was an exile on the isle of Patmos. Christianity had entered its second generation. Most of those who had known the Master were now in their graves. The church was faced with the fiercest external threat it had yet known, and it needed a new revelation of Jesus Christ. Thus, the visions given to John met a specific need in their own time. Through them heaven was opened to the suffering church, and Christians, who refused to bow to the pomp and circumstance of the emperor, were given reassurance that their Lord, now ascended and standing at the throne of God, infinitely transcended in majesty and power any earthly monarch

who might demand their worship. (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 722, 723)

Persecution ran as a current through the early Christian church, from the time of Nero's reign (under whose reign Peter and Paul were martyred), AD 54 to his death by suicide at age 30 in 68, to the surrender of Licinius to Constantine in 324, but were the Jewish synagogues involved with this persecution?

For the most part the persecutions recorded in the book of Acts were occasioned by the enmity of the Jews. [This is before Nero.] The case of Demetrius (ch. 19:24) is the only exception, and even there the Jews seem to have been responsible for the bitter reaction of the Greek craftsman. At a considerably later date, after the middle of the 2d century, the Jews were very active in bringing about the death of Polycarp at Smyrna... Early in the 3d century Tertullian called the Jewish synagogues of his day "fountains of persecution." (*Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 295)

So from the death of Christ to the death of Stephen, the works of Saul, and beyond, the Jewish synagogues have fostered persecution of God's people, and the letter in Revelation to the church of Smyrna deals particularly with this suffering.



Domitian

The Christian community in Smyrna has experienced numerous and severe periods of persecution. It is of interest to note that since ancient times the name Smyrna has been interpreted to mean "myrrh," a bitter but aromatic gum resin obtained from East Africa and Arabia, which symbolized bitterness and suffering. Modern scholars discredit this traditional interpretation in favor of a derivation from Samorna, the name of an Anatolian goddess who was worshiped in this city. Whatever the true interpretation of the city's name, it is a historical fact that the Christians of Smyrna have seen more suffering than those of any other city of the region.

The city has frequently been destroyed, sometimes by earthquakes, more often by foreign armies. In the Christian Era it has been conquered and sacked by the barbarous Goths, the cruel Mongols, the fierce Seljuks, the zealous Crusaders, and in modern times by the Kemalist Turks. As

an example of the horrors at times experienced by the Smyrneans, mention may be made of the massacre of almost all the inhabitants of the town by Timur (Tamerlane), the bloodthirsty Mongol conqueror of the 14th century who built a tower with the heads of captured Smyrneans. Even in modern times some of the greatest of massacres have taken place in Smyrna, as, for instance, in the struggle between the Greeks and the Turks after World War I. The city repeatedly changed hands, and unspeakable atrocities were committed in which it is claimed that tens of thousands perished. (*Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 93)

Pertinence of the Message to the People of Smyrna

Just as the Ephesians could readily relate to the message sent them by God, so could the Smyrnaeans. Jesus introduced himself to the church at Smyrna as he “which was dead and is alive” and later encouraged his people in Smyrna to be “faithful unto death.” The Greek in this phrase *faithful unto death* implies up to and including death. Jesus was telling his people in Smyrna to expect death but to not fear it, for he who was dead, lives and so would they if they were faithful.

Smyrna was home to gladiatorial games and was even famous for them. One inscription found in the agora, for example, states: “To Julius Meneclis Diophantus, Asiarch, who has gloriously and zealously presented (a show of combat) with sharpened (weapons) five days successively, his dearest city (pays homage).” Julius must have defended himself for five successive days, with the city proclaiming him a hero posthumously.

We can assume it was to these “games” that many of the Christians of Smyrna were sent, but God, with sweet care and tender concern for his people, sent a message of high honor—he, the great God of the universe, knew of their poverty, their tribulation, and those they faced from the synagogue of Satan. He told them not be afraid, for the second death would have no power over them, and that he had a crown of life to give them. Precious words from our God and King! Words I am sure they held close to their hearts during their relentless pursuit by Satan.

The Synagogue of Satan

Jesus says in Revelation 2:9 that the synagogue of Satan claims to be Jews, but really is not. Who can these people be? We have been told:

Satan has a large confederacy, his church. Christ calls them the synagogue of Satan because the members are the children of sin. (*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 16)

Here we learn that all who follow Satan and work against God’s people are of the synagogue of Satan, but when Jesus addressed the church of Smyrna, he spoke specifically of a synagogue of their day that falsely claimed to be composed of Jews.

There are only two times the phrase *synagogue of Satan* is used in the Bible, and both times it is in the book of

Revelation, first in the message to the church at Smyrna and then in the message to the church at Philadelphia. Since no explanation in the Bible is given for the meaning of the term, we can assume it was readily understood by the churches in John’s day as written, and the *only* synagogues they knew were their local Jewish synagogues, which contained people claiming to be Jews. These synagogues were actively persecuting the believers in Christ—seeking them out as Paul did—casting them into prison and even killing them. The Bible says, for example, that Saul entered *every* house, taking men and women to prison (Acts 4:3); that the Jews stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, causing them to be expelled (Acts 13:50); that the “Jews which believed not, moved with envy” (Acts 17:5) against the house of Jason; and that the Jews of Thessalonica stirred up the people against Paul (Acts 17:13). Ellen White elaborates on these references by saying:

After the death of Stephen there arose against the believers in Jerusalem **a persecution so relentless** that “they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.” Saul “made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 103)

The priests and rulers had hoped that by vigilant effort and stern persecution the heresy might be suppressed. Now they felt that they must carry forward in other places the decided measures taken in Jerusalem against the new teaching. (*Ibid.*, p. 113)

As the gospel message spread in Pisidia, **the unbelieving Jews of Antioch** in their blind prejudice ‘stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them’ from that district. (*Ibid.*, p. 176)

As the truths of the gospel were thus proclaimed in Thessalonica with mighty power, the attention of large congregations was arrested. “Some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.”

As in the places formerly entered, the apostles met with determined opposition. “**The Jews which believed not**” were “moved with envy.” These Jews were not then in favor with the Roman power, because, not long before, they had raised an insurrection in Rome. They were looked upon with suspicion, and their liberty was in a measure restricted. They now saw an opportunity to take advantage of circumstances to re-establish themselves in favor and at the same time to throw reproach upon the apostles and the converts to Christianity.

This they set about doing by uniting with “certain lewd fellows of the baser sort,” by which means they succeeded in setting “all the city on an uproar.” In the hope of finding the apostles, they “assaulted the house of Jason;” but they could find neither Paul nor Silas. And “when they found

them not,” the mob in their mad disappointment “drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

As Paul and Silas were not to be found, the magistrates put the accused believers under bonds to keep the peace. Fearing further violence, “the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea.”

Those who **today** teach unpopular truths need not be discouraged if at times they meet with no more favorable reception, **even from those who claim to be Christians**, than did Paul and his fellow workers from the people among whom they labored. . . .

The unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica, filled with jealousy and hatred of the apostles, and not content with having driven them from their own city, followed them to Berea and aroused against them the excitable passions of the lower class. (*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 229, 230)

The leaders of the church in Jerusalem knew that by non-conformity to the ceremonial law, Christians would bring upon themselves the hatred of the Jews and expose themselves to persecution. **The Sanhedrin was doing its utmost to hinder the progress of the gospel.** Men were chosen by this body to follow up the apostles, especially Paul, and in every possible way to oppose their work. Should the believers in Christ be condemned before the Sanhedrin as breakers of the law, they would suffer swift and severe punishment as apostates from the Jewish faith. (*Ibid.*, pp. 404, 405)

Christ’s followers throughout the generations have faced opposition and persecution. It has always been so and always will be until God announces “It is done” (Revelation 16:17) and Jesus returns for his people—a people without spot or wrinkle.

The longest journey is performed by taking one step at a time. A succession of steps brings us to the end of the road. The longest chain is composed of separate links. If one of these links is faulty, the chain is worthless. Thus it is with character. A well-balanced character is formed by single acts well performed. One defect, cultivated instead of being overcome, makes the man imperfect, and closes against him the gate of the Holy City. He who enters heaven must have **a character that is without spot or wrinkle** or any such thing. Naught that defileth can ever enter there. **In all the redeemed host not one defect will be seen.** (*The Youth’s Instructor*, January 17, 1901)

But until that time, a great controversy rages:

The members of Satan’s church [“the synagogue of Satan”] have been constantly working to cast off the divine law, and confuse the distinction between good and evil. Satan is working with great power in and through the children of disobedience to exalt treason and apostasy as truth

and loyalty. (*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 16)

And a new energy separates men and women, boys and girls, into just two groups:

A new energy proceeding from beneath is taking possession of the whole synagogue of Satan; and a new life descending from Heaven is taking possession of every human agent who is consecrated, devoted, and who is seeking to work the works of God. (*R & H*, April 9, 1895)

It is this church of Satan which later worships at the feet of God’s people:

By this time the 144,000 were all sealed and perfectly united. On their foreheads was written, God, New Jerusalem, and a glorious Star containing Jesus’ new name. [Revelation 3:12.] At our happy, holy state the wicked were enraged, and would rush violently up to lay hands on us to thrust us in prison, when we would stretch forth the hand in the name of the Lord, and the wicked would fall helpless to the ground. Then it was that the synagogue of Satan knew that God had loved us who could wash one another’s feet, and salute the holy brethren with a holy kiss, and they worshipped at our feet. (*A Word to the Little Flock*, pp. 14, 15)

The Strength of Those Persecuted for Christ’s Sake

What was the strength of those who in the past have suffered persecution for Christ’s sake? It was union with God, union with the Holy Spirit, union with Christ. Reproach and persecution have separated many from earthly friends, but never from the love of Christ. Never is the tempest-trying soul more dearly loved by His Saviour than when he is suffering reproach for the truth’s sake. “I will love him,” Christ said, “and will manifest Myself to him.” John 14:21. When for the truth’s sake the believer stands at the bar of earthly tribunals, Christ stands by his side. When he is confined within prison walls, Christ manifests Himself to him and cheers his heart with His love. When he suffers death for Christ’s sake, the Saviour says to him, They may kill the body, but they cannot hurt the soul. “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.” John 16:33; Isaiah 41:10. (*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 85, 86)

Let us hold this beautiful promise close to our hearts, as we approach the end of time:

They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever. (Psalm 125:1–3)

Onycha Holt

Youth's Corner

September starts a new school year for most of you, young people—new books, new subjects, and maybe new teachers. As you enjoy the freshness of a new year, please consider the following poem, reprinted from the third issue of *The Youth's Instructor*, and if you fail in any of the questions asked, make a fresh start in your spiritual life, too!

Self Examination

Did I this morn devoutly pray
For God's assistance through the day?
And did I read his sacred word
To make my life therewith accord?
Did I for any purpose try
To hide the truth or tell a lie?
Was I obedient, humble, mild—
To prove myself a Christian child?
Did I my thoughts with prudence guide,
Checking ill-humor, anger, pride?
Did I my lips from aught refrain
That might cause my fellow-creatures pain?
Did I with cheerful patience bear
The little ills we all must share?
To all my duties through this day
Did I a due attention pay?
And did I, when the day was o'er,
God's watchful care again implore?
Saviour, thy grace divine impart,
To feed my soul and cleanse my heart.
Prepare me for thine advent, Lord,
Thy coming kingdom—bless'd reward.

In the very first issue of *The Youth's Instructor*, published by James White in August 1852, Ellen White wrote the following thoughts for children and entitled them "Communication." At the end of her article, she states that her next one would be about the beauties of the New Earth, and we will publish it next month.

Communication, Part 1

Dear Young Friends:—You live in a dark and wicked world, subject to sickness, pain and death. You may see many things that look beautiful; but how soon they fade away. You may have a dear friend that you love; but soon that one may be torn from you by sickness and death, and you will then feel lonesome.

You should have something substantial to fix your minds and affections upon, that can give real satisfaction and joy,

and cheer your spirits in this dark world, and cause your sorrows to bring joy in the end.

There is a blight upon everything. The earth feels the curse that God pronounced upon it, because of the disobedience of our first parents. They broke the command of God in eating of the forbidden tree, after he had given them the privilege of eating of all the other trees in the garden. They listened to the tempter, ate of the forbidden tree, and were expelled from the beautiful garden of Eden.

The earth that was then so beautiful, was cursed, and the flaming sword was placed around the tree of life to guard it, lest man, in his sin, should approach that tree, and eat of its immortal fruit, and by so doing, live in sin forever.

The tree of life was designed to perpetuate immortality. Adam and Eve could eat of that tree, and enjoy its rich immortal fruit, until they transgressed the command of God. Death was then pronounced upon them, and all that should ever live upon the earth. There was no way of escape for us; no provision that we might again have access to the tree of life, if we would repent. Whatever evils might befall us, there was then no other way than to bear them without hope of having right to the tree of life, to eat of its leaves and fruit, and be healed. We must ever suffer and groan beneath the curse.

But the Son of God, who was with the Father before the world was, took pity upon us in our lost condition, and offered to step in between us and the wrath of an offended God. Said Jesus, I will give my life for them. I will take the burden of the sins of the world upon men, and will make a way possible for these transgressors to find pardon and enjoy thy favor again, that they may repent and keep thy commandments, and again have access to the tree of life. God consented to give his only Son to die for lost man.

The lovely Jesus laid aside his glory, and came into this dark world, and took upon himself our nature, to be wounded for our transgressions, to be bruised for our iniquities. O, what love for us.—He led a self-denying life, and had not where to lay his head. He was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief, was despised and rejected, and finally was crucified for us.

But you must not think that you have nothing to do, because Christ died for you. You must repent of all of your sins, and give your hearts to God, and then believe that the blood of Christ will cleanse you from all sin. Then if you keep all the commandments of God, the Sabbath with the rest you may through the merits of Christ, be brought back to the tree of life. This will be when Jesus comes to raise the righteous dead, and change the living saints. Then you will have right to the tree of life, and eat of the leaves, and immortal fruit of the tree of life and live for ever in perfect happiness.—Read Revelation 22:14.

In the next paper I will speak of the beauties of the New Earth.

Ellen White

Compromise in Worship (Part 2)

Allen Stump

In Amos 4:12, we read: “Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.” Amos said this because judgment was coming. Last month we began our series on compromise, and we saw how the Bible tells us that as we begin to partake of the spirit of the world, we lose our ability to have spiritual discernment. Let us consider Romans 12:2, where Paul says: “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Beloved, we are going to be translated when our bodies are changed, but we can be transformed *now* by the renewing of our minds. Our bodies will not be translated unless our minds are first renewed through the word of God. Romans 12:2 continues, “That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” Friends, if we do not have our minds renewed, then we cannot prove, try, or test that which is true, and what we need is truth!

Jesus, in his high-priestly prayer, said: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Jesus also said it would be the truth that would set us free (John 8:32). Beloved, I wonder if we really have that quest for truth. Do we have it enough that we are willing to dig deeply for it as for hid treasure?

I recently received an email concerning a statement that Pope Benedict XVI had supposedly made concerning Matthew 28:19. This statement was quoted from his book *Introduction to Christianity*, written in 1968 when the Pope was known as Joseph Ratzinger. This book is a compilation of university lectures he gave on the Apostles’ Creed.

The quotation is from pages 50 and 51 of his book, and it has circulated the Internet a good bit; in fact, you can find this quotation today in many different websites. What I found interesting is that it is misquoted in every single website I checked. Here is what was sent to me and what is on all the websites I checked:

The basic form of our (Matthew 28:19 Trinitarian) profession of faith took shape during the course of the second and third centuries in connection with the ceremony of baptism. So far as its place of origin is concerned, the text (Matthew 28:19) comes from the city of Rome.

That is a very strong statement, if it is true. When you read something in a book, newspaper, or magazine and you see a set of parentheses (), you know that what is within the parentheses was written by the author of the article. If the words, on the other hand, are enclosed in brackets [], standard grammatical rules tell you that what is enclosed in the brackets is something that was added by someone other than the author and that it is not a part of the original text. Now, in the quotation that I received in an email and found in dozens of

sources on the Internet, “Matthew 28:19 Trinitarian” is in parentheses and so is “Matthew 28:19,” but what I couldn’t find was a free e-copy of the whole book. It is available if purchased as a download, but I surely did not want to pay royalties to the Pope, so a used copy was found on eBay and interestingly, I found the book to read as follows on these pages:

The answers can only be found by looking at the concrete shape of Christian belief, and this we now mean to consider, using the so-called Apostles’ Creed as a guiding thread. It may be useful to preface the discussion with a few facts about the origin and structure of the Creed; these will at the same time throw some light on the legitimacy of the procedure. The basic form of our profession of faith took shape during the course of the second and third centuries in connection with the ceremony of baptism. So far as its place of origin is concerned, the text comes from the city of Rome; but its internal origin lies in worship; more precisely, in the conferring of baptism. This again was fundamentally based on the words of the risen Christ recorded in Matthew 28:19: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, pp. 50, 51)

The parts that are in parentheses in the quotations being circulated on the Internet and sent to me by email are not in the original book. Beloved, the Pope is not my friend, and I have no burden to defend the Pope, but I do have a burden to defend what is true, and if we are falsely maligning even the Pope, it is wrong.

Ratzinger speaks about the “profession of faith” and a “text.” When you read the book, the context is the Apostles’ Creed. The Apostles’ Creed is their profession of faith, the Apostles’ Creed is the text that he said originated in Rome, but someone has decided that he could equate Matthew 28:19 with that because Ratzinger says he uses Matthew 28:19 as the basis for the creed. To make this change, however, is taking matters too far from the context, and we are now putting words into someone’s mouth. We are making a compromise with the truth to try to promote the truth, and that is wrong. Whether you believe in the trinitarian formula or whether you believe in a nontrinitarian formula, you should use only truth to promote truth!

One of the areas we need uncompromised truth in is righteousness by faith which is a subject that gets a lot of discussion. There seems to be as many versions of it as flavors of Breyers ice cream. However, I am reminded of a statement that is in the book *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* on page 65. There we are told that “the righteousness of Christ, . . . is pure, unadulterated truth,” and I think that makes it as about as simple as it can come.

Perhaps one of the most pointed lessons the Bible has on compromise is illustrated in the life of the apostle Paul, a

staunch devoted follower of Jesus who was usually unbending.

Paul had travelled to Caesarea, and a prophet by the name of Agabus came down from Judaea. Acts 21:11 tells us he took Paul's girdle and bound his own hands and his feet and said, "Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." Well, everybody knew whose girdle it was. Everybody knew exactly what Agabus was saying. So some of the brethren decided that they needed to encourage Paul to *not* go down to Jerusalem at this time—don't go because the word of the Lord is that if you go, this is going to happen. Paul had such a desire, however, to share this message with his brethren and with everybody that even if it meant that he must be bound, and I don't think Paul disbelieved Agabus, he was willing to go. Paul was willing to walk into hell, if necessary, to try to free a soul. Paul went down to Jerusalem (verse 17), and the brethren received him gladly.

And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law. (Acts 21:18–20)

Paul went in and gave a report of his work among the Gentiles. What kind of statistics could he share? We are not told but in Romans 16 and in 1 Corinthians 16, Paul mentions the church that was in *the house* of Aquilla and Priscilla. Most of those houses were not like our homes today, with multiple rooms and two and a half baths. They were actually small homes, sometimes only one room. Did you ever think how many people, at the most, could be packed into those kind of houses? But James said that there were *thousands* of Jewish believers in Jerusalem, and they were all zealous for the law.

It is clear that James is not talking about the Ten Commandment law which Romans 7 declares is holy, just, and good. That is not the law he was talking about. He was talking about the ceremonial law:

And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together. (Acts 21:21, 22).

The multitude must needs come together. We have to have unity here; we *must* have unity. So, Paul, here is what we want you to do:

. . . for they will hear that thou are come. Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their

heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication. Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. (Acts 21:22–28).

We understand that all of these charges against Paul were not correct, but we do understand also that Paul did agree to submit to the plan of James and the elders. He agreed to join the four men who had taken a Nazarite vow, to go into the temple, and to even pay for the sacrifice he would have to offer at the end of his purification before he could shave his head.

I want to share with you a section from the book *The Acts of the Apostles*, written by Ellen White about this scenario, and I want you to read it carefully because last month, in the first part of this study, we discussed a few key words—one was *compromise*, another was *concession*. Compromises are always based in concessions—in giving up or yielding something. This selection is long, so that the complete context can be clearly understood. There will be some comments between parts, but there will be no ellipses or, as in the the misquotation from Ratzinger's book, added materials.

This was the golden opportunity for all the leading brethren to confess frankly that God had wrought through Paul, and that at times they had erred in permitting the reports of his enemies to arouse their jealousy and prejudice. But instead of uniting in an effort to do justice to the one who had been injured, they gave him counsel which showed that they still cherished a feeling that Paul should be held largely responsible for the existing prejudice. They did not stand nobly in his defense, endeavoring to show the disaffected ones where they were wrong, but sought to effect a compromise by counseling him to pursue a course which in their opinion would remove all cause for misapprehension. (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 403)

James and the leaders were asking Paul to compromise; therefore, we can deduce that they were asking him to make concessions, but let us read on:

The brethren hoped that Paul, by following the course suggested, might give a decisive contradiction to the false

reports concerning him. They assured him that the decision of the former council concerning the Gentile converts and the ceremonial law, still held good. But the advice now given was not consistent with that decision. (*Ibid.*, p. 404)

Did you get that? This counsel of the brethren was not consistent with the decision of the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. You might think that decision of the Jerusalem Council was only for the Gentiles and since these people were Jews, there should be no contradiction, but she says it was not consistent.

The Spirit of God did not prompt this instruction; it was the fruit of cowardice. The leaders of the church in Jerusalem knew that by non-conformity to the ceremonial law, Christians would bring upon themselves the hatred of the Jews and expose themselves to persecution. The Sanhedrin was doing its utmost to hinder the progress of the gospel. Men were chosen by this body to follow up the apostles, especially Paul, and in every possible way to oppose their work. Should the believers in Christ be condemned before the Sanhedrin as breakers of the law, they would suffer swift and severe punishment as apostates from the Jewish faith.

Many of the Jews who had accepted the gospel still cherished a regard for the ceremonial law and were only too willing to make unwise *concessions*, hoping thus to gain the confidence of their countrymen, to remove their prejudice, and to win them to faith in Christ as the world's Redeemer. Paul realized that so long as many of the leading members of the church at Jerusalem should continue to cherish prejudice against him, they would work constantly to counteract his influence. He felt that if by any *reasonable concession* he could win them to the truth he would remove a great obstacle to the success of the gospel in other places. (*Ibid.*, pp. 404, 405).

Paul felt that by any *reasonable concession* he could win them to the truth. Who does he have to win to the truth? Paul must win the leaders of the Christian Church at Jerusalem. To do this he is willing to make a *reasonable concession*, if that can be done, so that the gospel might succeed in other places. Now, let us continue reading:

But he was not authorized of God to concede as much as they asked. (*Ibid.* p. 405)

He was not authorized by God to concede—remember, concessions, concede, compromise. Going on, she says:

When we think of Paul's great desire to be in harmony with his brethren, his tenderness toward the weak in the faith, his reverence for the apostles who had been with Christ, and for James, the brother of the Lord, and his purpose to become all things to all men so far as he could without sacrificing principle—when we think of all this, it is less surprising that he was constrained to *deviate from the firm, decided course that he had hitherto followed.* (*Ibid.*)

You see, Paul wanted to be all things to all people. He wanted unity. He wanted to bring the brethren together. He desperately had that desire, and he was willing to make any reasonable concession that did not violate or sacrifice principle. Concerning the Nazarite vow, Numbers 6 tells us that there were two things that were included in it. After the days of purification, the person was to offer a burnt offering and a sin offering (Numbers 6:10, 11), and it would have been a virtual denial of the cross of Christ and the efficacy of that cross to have offered an animal sacrifice, and Paul at this point was unwisely willing to make that concession and compromise. Paul, however, did not have the liberty from God to make the concession that he made. Ellen White goes on to say:

But instead of accomplishing the desired object, his efforts for conciliation only precipitated the crisis, hastened his predicted sufferings, and resulted in separating him from his brethren, depriving the church of one of its strongest pillars, and bringing sorrow to Christian hearts in every land. (*Ibid.*, pp. 405, 406)

You see, when we begin to compromise, even in what we think are small things, we get into trouble. There is evidence that Paul attended the feasts at various times. It was his desire to win as many as he could, and the concept of the new covenant experience—what it meant to be in Christ and how types were meeting antitype—was developing, and Paul was trying to meet people where they were.

Now, I would like to ask you a question that seems to be very different from what we are discussing right now, but it does pertain. Why do people fall out of bed when they are sleeping? Because they sleep too close to the edge! If you get away from the edge, you don't have to ever worry about falling out of bed. That is why people fall off the edge of the Grand Canyon and other places—they just get too close to the edge.

Recently Shannon Stone made national headlines after he tragically fell to his death at the Texas Rangers' Ball Park in Arlington. A ball had been thrown up into the crowd but did not quite make it to the seating area. Mr. Stone stretched over a safety rail in an attempt to catch the ball, but he reached over too far. He fell twenty feet onto a concrete area, and he died. He was just too near the edge. More recently a nineteen-year-old woman from Japan fell to her death off the railing at Niagara Falls. She was too near the edge! In July of this year, three hikers in Yosemite National Park fell 317 feet over Vernal Falls, after they had climbed over a safety rail.

As Christians we also try to get too near the edge, but we do not go from one side to falling over the edge on the other side in one step. It is step-by-step process, with little conformities and little compromises that, at the time, do not seem as such.

to be continued

Kitchen Spices

Cumin

Dr. Bharat Aggarwal (a professor at the M. D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas, and director of its Cytokine Research Laboratory) states in his book *Healing Spices* that the increased levels of blood sugar flooding the bodies of those with type 1 and type 2 diabetes raise their risks of heart disease and stroke, to the point that 75 percent of people with diabetes eventually die from heart disease and/or stroke. Complications from diabetes also include blindness and kidney disease. People with diabetes, for example, have a 60 percent higher risk of developing cataracts than those without the disease, but those of us in the kitchen can help the body control the disease of diabetes, as well as the complications of elevated blood sugar (if only in a small way) through the use of a spice that has been used for millennia—cumin.

The early Romans used cumin to pay taxes. Ancient Greeks kept cumin in a box on the dining table. It has been a staple in kitchens around the world—in Africa, Asia, India, Turkey, the Caribbean, the Netherlands, Spain, Morocco, Mexico, and Latin America—and researchers are now beginning to study its effects on the body.

One study in India found cumin to work equally well as a medication given to treat type 2 diabetes (Diabeta) in reducing levels of cholesterol and triglycerides in laboratory animals with type 2 diabetes (but the book does not report the dosage used). The animals also had “significant reduction” in their blood sugar and lowered levels of the amount of glucose attached to red blood cells, as determined by an A1C blood test. They also had lower levels of damaging fat and inflammation in the cells of the pancreas, the organ that manufactures insulin. The researchers of this study concluded that, amazingly, cumin “supplementation was found to be more effective than glibenclamide [Diabeta] in the treatment of diabetes mellitus.”

In another animal study in India, cumin was found to delay the progression of cataracts in laboratory animals with diabetes because it prevented the changes in the lens caused by high blood sugar.

Not only has cumin been associated with several beneficial effects on diabetes and its complications, but another study has concluded that “cumin can help postmenopausal women from losing their bone and seems to be a potential candidate for the development of new herbal approaches for osteoporosis treatment without any serious side effect.” Wonderful! This is because cumin is rich in phytoestrogens and has an osteoprotective effect. Osteoporosis is a systemic disease characterized by low bone mass and micro-architectural deterioration of the skeleton. Over 1.5 million fractures are caused annually by osteoporosis in the

United States, and in this study, the laboratory animals given cumin had greater bone density than the animals who received no cumin. In fact the result was comparable to the hormone estradiol (Estrace) which was once used for the prevention of osteoporosis until it was linked with increased risk of heart disease and breast cancer, and cumin, of course,



Cumin Plant

does not have these serious side effects. A word of caution, however, should be stated, and Dr. Aggarwal leaves this part out of his book: Cumin was found to be osteoprotective in laboratory animals only when administration began immediately after the cessation of the production of estrogen (i.e., at the time the ovaries were removed), and it cannot be said that the same effect is obtainable in women when menopause and aging are factors. Additional studies are, however, being currently performed by these researchers to determine if this would be so. The researchers also admit that the dose of cumin given in the laboratory is too high to be used by humans. According to our quick calculations, this dosage translates to approximately two ounces of cumin a day for an 120 pound person, an impossible situation, but the researchers are addressing this difficulty also with ongoing efforts to isolate and purify the active agents and thus minimize the amount of cumin needed. So be on the lookout for new developments with cumin.

Cumin has also been found to prevent the formation of colon tumors in rats fed cancer-causing substances, to reduce the risk of cervical cancer by 82 percent compared to animals not receiving the spice, and to significantly decrease the incidence of stomach and liver cancers in animal studies. In addition it has been documented to suppress convulsions in animals and to be effective in blocking the action of the bacteria that cause food poisoning. In all of these areas, however, I have not been able to read the original reports, so I do not know how much cumin was used, but let's use it when we can for the flavor it gives, as well as for the health it imparts.

When you shop for cumin, buy whole seeds, if you can, rather than ground cumin, for once cumin is ground, the flavor starts to deteriorate and will not retain its quality for more than a few months. If you cannot find seeds or freshly ground powder in a grocery store, try shopping at an Indian market



Cumin Seeds

or at an international store or search for them on the Internet. At Indian markets cumin seeds are often called *jeera*.

Cumin is a versatile spice and although it is quite pungent when ground, it mellows as it cooks. It is used in many ways around the world—in couscous in Morocco; in tacos, enchiladas, and other popular dishes in Mexico; in curry mixes in India; in bread in parts of France; and in casseroles, along with cinnamon and saffron, in Spain. It pairs well with many spices, including basil, caraway, coriander, garlic, onion, and oregano and complements any bean dish and most stews. It is one of those spices that adds flavor and benefits health at the same time!

Onycha Holt

Virtual Junior Sabbath School

If you are young or young at heart, we have a new virtual Sabbath school class you might enjoy and by it be blessed. Sister Onycha Holt is conducting a Junior Class, geared toward students from 9–13 years of age, but students of all ages may find it a blessing.

The class begins at 9:40 a.m. EST each Sabbath. How do you join in the class? Simple—the Sabbath school uses the same call-in procedure as for listening to our on-line services. You join by dialing 1–201–793–9022 and, when prompted, entering room number 2692202# to access the audio portion of the class. If you use Skype, the number to use in order to hear the audio portion is +9900827042692202. You may also join the Internet classroom in order to view the visual presentations at <http://www.webmeetinglogin.com/go/sdhcf/ss>. You need to type your name under the guest tag to enter.

The Juniors also have a story hour each Tuesday at 7 p.m. EST. We are currently reading a book about William Tyndale entitled *Thrilling Escapes by Night*, published by Rod & Staff.

We also use part of our story time to develop our own Bible studies—the 5 Ws Bible Studies—covering who, what, when, where, and why on each topic. We are currently working on creation.

Parents without a regular church family, this is a wonderful opportunity for your children to have a high quality Sabbath school lesson and interaction with other young people. Youth, here is a class that is geared just for you, so we really do hope you will join us this coming Sabbath and be a part of an interesting and informative experience. You will be glad you did!



Youth story time

Allen Stump

Prayer Request

This month Pastor Allen Stump will travel overseas to help with a camp meeting hosted by Brother Marc Fury in France. Will you join us in prayer that God's Spirit will be present in each meeting and that each person will leave spiritually refreshed and renewed in determination to live for the honor and glory of God?

May God also comfort those who are ill this month, such as Brother Aland Ashton in Peru, Sister Justine in Florida, and Sister Ann Ford's sister, Dorothy, in Maryland, who recently fell and fractured her knee.

Let us not fail to pray for more workers in the field and for the Waldensian Center, where they are putting forth good effort to train as many as who will go!

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