

# Old Paths

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

The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant. Psalm 25:14

Vol. 31, No. 11

Straight and Narrow

November 2022



Photo courtesy of William Shelton

**Though the towboat is one of the smaller boats on the river, without any fanfare it does a big job. Christians can learn a lot from this humble vessel of the waters!**



## He Still Waits

By Allen Stump

(This study is based on a sermon preached October 22, 2022.)

October 22 only comes on a Sabbath about once in seven years. This year it has been one hundred seventy-eight years since that great day of October 22, 1844. That day was a day for a group of believers who unapologetically faced the scorn of the world because of their belief that Jesus was coming on that specific day, even though Jesus had said, “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32). How could they, how dare they claim to know the day of Christ’s coming in the face of Jesus’ own statement?

October 22, 1844, began as the happiest and most exciting day of their lives, and ended as the most bitter and disappointing day ever. It was truly a day which will live in infamy. Those believers’ experience was spoken of by the Revelator as the experience of eating a little book:

And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. (Revelation 10:9–10)

The days immediately leading up to October 22 and the morning of it were as sweet as honey to those believers, but at the end of the day it was very bitter in their bellies.

William Miller had been the greatest proponent of a supernatural event happening on October 22, 1844. Ellen White has given us some of the history:

He [William Miller] had devoted two years to the study of the Bible, when, in 1818, he reached the solemn conviction that in about twenty-five years Christ would

appear for the redemption of His people. (*The Great Controversy*, p. 329.2a)

He began to present his views in private as he had opportunity, praying that some minister might feel their force and devote himself to their promulgation. But he could not banish the conviction that he had a personal duty to perform in giving the warning. The words were ever recurring to his mind: “Go and tell it to the world; their blood will I require at thy hand.” For nine years he waited, the burden still pressing upon his soul, until in 1831 he for the first time publicly gave the reasons of his faith. (*The Great Controversy*, p. 330.2)

In 1833 Miller received a license to preach, from the Baptist Church, of which he was a member. A large number of the ministers of his denomination also approved his work, and it was with their formal sanction that he continued his labors. He traveled and preached unceasingly, though his personal labors were confined principally to the New England and Middle States. (*The Great Controversy*, p. 332.1)

As White noted, “. . . in 1818, he [Miller] reached the solemn conviction that in about twenty-five years Christ would appear. . .” Adding twenty-five to 1818 brings us to the year 1843 which was the date first set by Miller for Jesus to come. But when that time came and went it was discovered that there was an error in Miller’s reckoning and finally the date of October 22, 1844, was chosen as the correct date. After that date had come and passed there was a very great disappointment such as we can hardly imagine.

The Millerites, as they came to be known, had carefully calculated the prophecy of Daniel 8:14:

And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed. (Daniel 8:14)

Beginning with the decree of Artaxerxes as recorded in Ezra they were able to calculate the time of the 2,300 years, each prophetic day for a literal year of time, to begin in the fall of 457 BC and it would end in the fall of AD 1844, specifically October 22 of that year. Their problem was that, without any scriptural justification, Miller and others assumed the earth to be the sanctuary, but as they studied further they saw the Bible spoke of a sanctuary in heaven.

Paul writes about the heavenly sanctuary in Hebrews:

Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. . . . Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things **according to the pattern** shewed to thee in the mount. (Hebrews 8:1, 2, 5)

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; (Hebrews 9:11)

The book of Revelation is very specific:

And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail. (Revelation 11:19)

John sees not just any temple but the temple of God, and he sees it in heaven. Further, just as in the type, the anti-type, or sanctuary, in reality has an ark of God as the central focus of the sanctuary.

Daniel was told it would be 2,300 days, or prophetic years, before the sanctuary was cleansed.

The cleansing of the sanctuary was performed on the Day of Atonement. This happened on the tenth day of the seventh month of the Jewish religious year. This was understood to be a day of judgment and represented the day of final reckoning of humanity.

The sanctuary on earth needed cleansing, in type, because of the defilement that sin brought to it. The sanctuary in heaven, what the earthly pointed to in type, likewise needed to be cleansed because of the sins of the people. This must occur for heaven to be finally pure and undefiled.

Let us never forget that God is a holy and pure and right and just. The ancient prophet writes:

Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity . . . (Habakkuk 1:13)

Paul states that “. . . our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29). Sin cannot continue in the presence of God. Our sins have put a barrier between us and him:

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. (Isaiah 59:2)

God loves his people so much he gave his only begotten Son for us (John 3:16). God wants to be with his children, and Christ wants us too:

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:24)

God has chosen to use the sanctuary as means to deal with sin:

Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God? (Psalm 77:13)

Seventh-day Adventists have especially understood the sanctuary and its services and place in the plan of salvation. In October of 1944, the *Review and Herald* published a “Centennial Special” edition, the then official organ of the church.

It was devoted to the history of the movement, its goal and mission of giving the three angels’ messages and the sanctuary truth. The authors of that special issue were a who’s who of Adventism at that time. General Conference President McElhany had the lead article on “Our Great Commission.” Future General Conference President Branson and former General Conference President Spicer wrote articles, and M. L. Andreasen had an article on the sanctuary.

But what a shame that one hundred years had passed and Jesus had still not come.

But, wait, it is good that the Millerites were wrong. Why?

Firstly, we would not be here, but, of course, this is based upon a selfish premise, and the gospel is based upon giving and not upon what we receive. That greatest of all promises speaks of God’s love in giving his only begotten Son:

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)

We also have the promise that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). So, although it was not good for the Advent to be delayed this long, we are here because it was.

Secondly, the character of God could not have been adequately revealed and the great controversy theme was not ripe enough to have been settled in 1844.

How could God's character of love have been properly revealed (not fully for that is for eternity) by Trinitarian, Sunday-keepers, who for the most part believed in the immortal soul? That is a lot to consider, especially when we understand that:

Error is never harmless. It never sanctifies, but always brings confusion and dissension. It is always dangerous. (Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 292.2)

The Bible proclaims that God is love. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:8), and that love was demonstrated in the gift of God's Son:

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:9–10)

While the Bible has history and is a book of prophecy, above all, "from cover to cover the Bible is a revelation of the Father's love." Ellen White has noted it this way:

"God is love" is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass. The lovely birds making the air vocal with their happy songs, the delicately tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air, the lofty trees of the forest with their rich foliage of living green—all testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God and to His desire to make His children happy. (Ellen White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 10.1)

Further in 1844, the great controversy theme of good and evil was not ripe enough to be settled. The time had not come yet when Jesus could say:

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. (Revelation 22:11)

In 1844 and shortly thereafter, wickedness was more ripe towards evil than God's people were righteous. As early as 1883, Ellen White could write:

Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward. (*Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 4, Ms 4, 1883, par. 52)

Later, she would again note the same theme in time:

Had the purpose of God been carried out by His people in giving the message of mercy to the world, Christ would have come to the earth, and the saints would ere

this have received their welcome into the city of God. (Ellen White, *Union Conference Record* (Australasian), October 15, 1898)

By the actions of God's people the time table from shortly after 1844 would be set. Peter writes:

Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? (2 Peter 3:12)

### JESUS STILL WAITS—on us!

As we know by the above statements of Ellen White, the coming of Christ did not have the need to wait long, and we are certainly past the time needed for all questions to be answered and all points revealed, but in 1844 the earth and its people were not ripe enough for the polarization needed to clearly distinguish God's people from Satan's people. The polarization that would so firmly seal the people of God in his truth that nothing could move them and the polarization of the wicked to be so entrenched that they have committed the unpardonable sin had not happened by 1844, but, Beloved, we are very, very, very near that point today!

Yet, due to the delay of God's people, this world has cataloged a terrible list of tragedies, such as two World Wars, the terrors of jihad, and moral corruptness expressed in wokeness, and LBGTQX lifestyles, etc.

Let us be clear without any reservations, on October 22, 1844, Jesus Christ did not come to this earth. Instead, he moved from the holy to the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary to begin his final work of mediation and investigative judgment. When we hear the word *judgment*, many people commonly have negative thoughts associated with that word. To the righteous, however, judgment is not bad news. In fact, five times in the Psalms David asked God to judge him! (See Psalm 7:8; 26:1; 35:24; 43:1; 54:1.) For example:

Save me, O God, by thy name, and *judge me* by thy strength. (Psalm 54:1)

The Hebrew word we translate *judge* is דין (*din*), meaning to judge or in this sense to vindicate. David is saying that God will be able in his judgment to vindicate him. *Din* is also used in Proverbs 31:9:

Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead [*din*] the cause of the poor and needy. (Proverbs 31:9)

Judgment is only bad news if one is not ready to face the judgment. If you had a school test but completely knew all the material backwards and forwards, you could look with eager anticipation to the test.

If we have Christ as our competency, we can look forward to the judgment, for Christ is our righteousness, standing in our place as we accept him and his righteousness in the place of our sinful lives.

Another place David asks God to judge him is in Psalm 43:

Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. (Psalm 43:1)

Here David knows he cannot plead his own cause or save himself but asks God to do both, and he will do both for us, too, if we depend upon him. Paul writes:

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; (2 Corinthians 3:5)

It has been one hundred seventy-eight years since the great Day of Atonement began. I wonder what people who once preached the investigative judgment with love and zeal are thinking today? I wonder what *boasting* they may have in their hearts that they have been “saved from error” or perhaps *fears* in their hearts that they have erred and are leading people astray today? What are they *thinking*? One day they will *know* that they have rejected the most vital present truth for this last generation, but, at that time, it will be too late forever to change and repent.

Our time is short, brothers and sisters. We are to do our work in the proclamation of the three angels’ messages because our time is very short. Even in Paul’s day, he could declare:

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. (Romans 13:11)

One final point that is often discussed among Adventists. Has the judgment passed from the dead to the living? This is an interesting question, but it need not be a concern unless we know things are not right with us and God.

Well over one hundred years ago Ellen White wrote:

The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. For many years this work has been in progress. *Soon—none know how soon—it will pass to the cases of the living.* In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review. At this time above all others it behooves every soul to heed the Saviour’s admonition: “Watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.” Mark 13:33. “If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” Revelation 3:3. (Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 490.1; emphasis supplied)

So Ellen White said the judgment would soon move from the dead to the living, but has that happened today? Are we in that most solemn time now?

To help answer that let us ask a simple question, What comes first the report card or the final test? Before a student receives a class grade, the final examination must be

taken. When I was in college I took a “Modern Algebra” course my second year. At that time in my life I was not enthusiastic about my studies and because I did not like the non-concrete nature of the subject, I gave it almost no effort. Before the final I was failing, and I knew that grade would not work well on a résumé, but I also knew that if I could make a solid A grade on the final, I could at least achieve a C grade for the class. Therefore, for about three days I did nothing but read, study, and go over the few notes I had taken in class. Somehow I made an A on the final and brought my class grade up to a C.

By this logic and example, we can see that before the judgment of a person, they must have their final test by which the judgment is determined. This fits perfectly with what Ellen White wrote about the final great test of God’s people:

The Lord has shown me clearly that the image of the beast will be formed before probation closes; for it is to be the great test for the people of God, by which their eternal destiny will be decided. (Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 80.4)

The great test for God’s people will be determined by how they relate to the Sunday law brought about by the image of the beast. Since that test has not come, we cannot now be in the time of the judgment of the living, but soon, none know how soon, that test will come. So, Ellen White could write “soon—none know how soon—it will pass to the cases of the living” because the image of the beast will bring about the Sunday law test soon. When it does come, we may then know that we are in the judgement of the living. Dear friend, how will you stand in that day? How will I stand? We have a mediator today!

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; (1 Timothy 2:5)

But there will come a time when Jesus will throw the censer down, and probation will finally close forever. Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day to confess and forsake your sins.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Accept this promise in your life and have Christ as your Saviour who will stand in the judgment for you. I cannot know the exact time of the close of probation, but the signs are rapidly fulfilling. Time as we know it is almost over. I cannot imagine how time can last until the end of next year, let alone to 2044. He waits on the church. May the church respond and go forward!



# Loving our Neighbor

By Ellen G. White

(Reprinted from the *Review and Herald*, June 26, 1894, paragraphs 7–8)

The second commandment is like unto the first, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” We can love our neighbor as ourselves, only as we love God supremely. The love of God will bear fruit in love to our neighbors. Many think that it is impossible to love our neighbor as ourselves; but it is the only genuine fruit of Christianity. Love to others is putting on the Lord Jesus Christ; it is walking and working with the invisible world in view. We are thus to keep looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

The solemn warning that was given to the foolish rich man, should be a sufficient warning for all men to the close of time. Lesson upon lesson was given by our Lord to take every one away from selfishness, and to establish close bonds of fellowship and brotherhood between man and man. He desired that the hearts of believers should be closely knit together in strong bonds of sympathy, so that there might be unity in himself. They are together to rejoice in hope of the glory of God, looking for eternal life through the virtue of Jesus Christ. If Christ is abiding in the heart, his love will diffuse itself to others through its possessor, and will bind heart to heart. The grace of Christ must be the sole dependence of the Christian, and when it is, he will love his brethren as Christ has loved him. Then he can say, “Come,” and beseech and woo souls, entreating them to be reconciled to God. His influence will be more and more decided, and he will devote his life to Christ, who was crucified for him. Where love is perfected, the law is kept, and self finds no place. Those who love God supremely, work, suffer, and live for him who gave his life for them. We can keep the law only through making the righteousness of Christ our own. Christ says, “Without me ye can do nothing.” When we receive the heavenly gift, the righteousness of Christ, we shall find that divine grace has been provided for us, and that human resources are powerless. Jesus gives the Holy Spirit in large measure for great emergencies, to help our infirmities, to give us strong consolation, to illuminate our minds, and purify and ennoble our hearts. Christ becomes unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. From the first to the last of the Christian life, not one successful step can be taken without Christ. He has sent his Spirit to be with us constantly, and by confiding in Christ to the uttermost, surrendering our will to him, we may follow him whithersoever he goeth.



# Minutes for 1889 HSDA- USA Annual Council October 16, 2022

**Members present:** Winnie Anderson

Martin Barlow

Todd Brown

Robert Chisum

Ralph Fisher

Pauline Herndon

Onycha Holt

Catherine Mesa

Daniel Mesa

Robert Motsinger

Em Ropka

Allen Stump

Allen Uhl

Donovan Ulett

Ana Maria Woodward

**Also present:** Brian Thomas and Michael Woodward

**Members absent:** Gilbert Hernandez

Our Chairperson, Robert Motsinger, bade us a warm welcome, followed by Robert Chisum offering the opening prayer.

The secretary's report was read; Pastor Allen Stump moved it be accepted as read, with Robert Motsinger giving the second. It was carried.

The question was asked if non-members of the Annual Council should attend, as sensitive discussions may take place. The two non-members, Brian Thomas and Michael Woodward, voluntarily exited. Pastor Allen Stump also suggested there should be a roll call of the delegates to the Annual Council.

Elected delegates present as representatives of the following churches:

Cedar Lane Chapel: Pauline Herndon, Em Ropka

Online Virtual Church: Ralph Fisher, Robert Motsinger

Seal of God International: Robert Chisum, Donovan Ulett

Smyrna Sabbath Chapel: Onycha Holt, Allen Uhl

Delegates present as outgoing officers of the organization:

Winnie Anderson, Martin Barlow, Catherine Mesa, Robert Motsinger, Ana Maria Woodward

Delegates present as trustees: Todd Brown, Daniel Mesa, Allen Stump

Delegates-at-large present as ministers: Martin Barlow, Allen Stump

Discussion ensued on the clarification of the online church and the conference. Pastor Allen Stump and Robert Motsinger gave clarity on the issue.

Robert Motsinger gave a brief dissertation on the purpose of the reorganization work. He expressed the need for us to press together. He said because of the intensity of the work to be done it might be of benefit if he would step down from the position as chairperson because his health would not allow him to give 100% to the work required.

Pastor Allen Stump moved we take nominations for chairperson. Catherine Mesa seconded the motion; it carried.

Ralph Fisher, Robert Motsinger, and Allen Stump were nominated. By vote Allen Stump was elected as chairperson. Pastor Stump took over as chair of the meeting.

Pastor Daniel Mesa moved we retain Martin Barlow as vice-chairperson, Catherine Mesa as treasurer, and Ana Maria Woodward as auditor. Em Ropka seconded, and it was carried.

Winnie Anderson requested someone with greater skills be elected for the secretarial position. Ralph Fisher, Onycha Holt, and Brooke Motsinger were nominated. Onycha Holt was voted to fill this position.

Onycha Holt assumed the duties of recording secretary.

*Winnie Anderson*  
Secretary

## Old Business:

**Joint meeting with sister 1889 HSDA organizations:** A possible date to meet virtually with the 1889 HSDA organizations of France and of Philippines is December 11, 2022. Allen Stump will contact Pastor J. C. Bolotte in France and Pastor David Sims in Philippines to see if this date is agreeable and to further coordinate the meeting.

Daniel Mesa moved we accept this action by general consensus; all in favor.

Allen Stump reminded the Annual Council that each church will need to select a representative to attend the international 1889 HSDA meeting with France and Philippines.

**Open letter to 1889 HSDA and Seventh-day Church of Revelation:** Allen Stump reminded the Annual Council of the open letter sent by Remnant Road Ministries at Aurora

Adventist Fellowship in Arkansas to 1889 HSDA, Seventh-day Church of Revelation, and all other associated groups and ministries in the One True God movement in an effort to resolve the differences between them. Allen Stump asked if we, as an organization, are desirous of seeking a solution and of working together with the other ministries to hasten the Lord's coming. Several responded affirmatively; none voiced opposition.

## New Business:

**Amendment to bylaws:** Allen Stump recommended section 3.1 of the 1889 HSDA Bylaws be amended to read: Membership in the 1889 HSDA organization shall consist of individuals who have no local or virtual church to join and of duly recognized churches who meet the criteria of 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4. The words *or virtual* have been added.

Robert Chisum moved this recommendation be accepted; Robert Motsinger seconded; no discussion; all in favor.

**Online virtual church:** Allen Stump asked Robert Motsinger for an update on the online virtual church. Robert Motsinger explained that the online virtual church is a meeting place for those people who have joined the 1889 HSDA organization as individuals. Not all who have joined as individual members have chosen to join the online virtual church. The online virtual church does not have a website. They meet online every Sabbath at 10:30 am PDT for Sabbath school using a Zoom room.

As it is unclear if the online virtual church was part of the original group of churches accepted into membership at the first annual council meeting, Ralph Fisher and Robert Motsinger, delegates representing the online virtual church, requested the online virtual church be accepted as a sister church in the 1889 HSDA organization.

All in favor; none opposed. The online virtual church will inform us of the name they choose for their church.

**Committee for 2022–2023:** Membership of the committee was discussed.

Emmond Ropka suggested the committee continue with the same members. Ralph Fisher voiced agreement, with the exception of those officers and delegates who are no longer serving. Onycha Holt suggested that in addition to the current Annual Council members a few other people be added to the committee to broaden input and the base of representation.

Martin Barlow moved that the committee be composed of the current members of the Annual Council. Those members are the elected delegates, the delegates-at-large, the trustees, and the newly-elected officers of 1889 HSDA. The committee members would thus be:

**Delegates:** Robert Chisum—Seal of God International  
Ralph Fisher—Online Virtual Church  
Pauline Herndon—Cedar Lane Chapel  
Gilbert Hernandez—Second Advent Movement  
Onycha Holt—Smyrna Sabbath Chapel  
Robert Motsinger—Online Virtual Church  
Emmond Ropka—Cedar Lane Chapel  
Allen Uhl—Smyrna Sabbath Chapel  
Donovan Ulett—Seal of God International

**Delegates-at-large:** Martin Barlow  
Allen Stump

**Officers:** Martin Barlow—Vice-Chairperson  
Onycha Holt—Secretary  
Catherine Mesa—Treasurer  
Allen Stump—Chairperson  
Ana Maria Woodward—Auditor

**Trustees:** Todd Brown

Daniel Mesa  
Allen Stump

Seconded by Emmond Ropka; no discussion; all in favor.

**Committee meeting:** Allen Stump suggested the committee meet on November 13, 2022, at 12 noon EST.

Daniel Mesa moved we accept this date by general consensus; all in favor.

**Camp Meeting 2023:** Allen Stump asked the committee members to be thinking of camp meeting for 2023 in preparation for their meeting in November. An eastern camp meeting and a western camp meeting may be best. Smyrna Sabbath Chapel would be willing to work with 1889 HSDA to host these meetings. A possible site for an eastern camp meeting is Fall Creek Falls State Park in Tennessee, where a youth camp was recently held. Possible dates for the eastern camp meeting are in late May or in late July.

**Podcasts:** Allen Stump asked the committee to also pre-consider the possibility of monthly podcasts as a means of outreach. Topics addressed could include marriage, the needs of young adults, and doctrinal issues.

**Adjournment:** Robert Motsinger moved the Annual Council be adjourned; Ralph Fisher seconded; all in favor.

**Closing Prayer:** Allen Uhl

*Onycha Holt*  
Secretary

(It should be noted these minutes are tentative.)

# Religious Liberty

By A. T. Jones

(From Bible Training School June 1905)

RELIGION is “the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it.” Liberty is “the state of being exempt from the domination of others, or from restricting circumstances. In ethics and philosophy, the power in any rational agent to make his choices and decide his conduct for himself, spontaneously and voluntarily, in accordance with reasons or motives.”

Religious liberty, therefore, is man’s exemption from the domination of others, or from restricting circumstances: man’s freedom to make his choices and decide his conduct for himself, spontaneously and voluntarily; in his duty to his Creator, and in the manor of discharging that duty.

Since God has created man, in the nature of things the first of all relationships is that to God; and the first of all duties could be nothing but duty to God.

Since God has created man, in the nature of things the first of all relationships is that to God; and the first of all duties could be nothing but duty to God.

Now: Though that is the first of all possible relationships, and the first of all duties; though that relationship and duty are inherent in the very existence of intelligent creatures; yet even in that inherent obligation, God has created every intelligent creature free—free to recognize that obligation or not, free to discharge that duty or not, just as he chooses. Accordingly it is written: “Choose you this day whom ye will serve.” “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Thus it is absolutely true that in religion—in the duty which we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it—God has created man entirely exempt from the domination of others and from restricting circumstances: has made him free to make his choice, and decide his conduct for himself, spontaneously and voluntarily. Thus religious liberty is the gift of God, inherent in the gift of rational existence itself. 卍

**“The banner of truth and religious liberty held aloft by the founders of the gospel church and by God’s witnesses during the centuries that have passed since then, has, in this last conflict, been committed to our hands” (Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 68.2).**



# *Youth's Corner – Kidnapped in Ecuador!*

## **A Story of Faith, Surrender, Forgiveness, and Trust in God, Part 1**

By Sheri Yohe

**Tuesday, August 12, 2014, 10:30 pm**

I was awakened by loud, angry men's voices outside my bedroom door. My mind was aware that these voices were inside my house! I lifted my head from the pillow, and just then the door opened abruptly, and a strange man came into the room. He came to where I was lying, put his finger to his lips and said, "No grita!" ("Don't scream!"). I nodded, and then he took my hand and led me to the living room. In passing I saw my husband being restrained and that a friend who was staying with us had also been restrained.

He sat me on the loveseat facing the exterior door, which was standing ajar. I looked in disbelief—there were no signs of anyone breaking in. I wondered if we'd forgotten to lock the door, but we'd never done that before. We were living in a strange country, and I was always concerned about our safety. Don wouldn't have opened the door at night. Who could have opened it?

The second man brought Don to the living room and set him on the couch. He started wrapping silver duct tape around Don's head, hands and feet. I was tense with fear. Don sat quietly, almost as though he felt the same shock I felt. What did these men want? Why were they here? How could this be happening to us out here in the country, so far from the city?

My racing thoughts were interrupted by the men asking me, in Spanish, "Where's your money? We just want your money." One man took me back to the bedroom to get our cash, and I opened the closet door. It was dark, and I was confused; I lifted out a purse I wasn't using at the time, and he grabbed it. It was almost empty. I'd forgotten that I had left my other purse on the kitchen counter.

Impatiently, he took me back into the living room and started wrapping my head with duct tape. He led me to the kitchen counter by the door. It was too close to the exterior door of the house, and I began to consider that they may take me from the house. I started praying that God would not let them take me. "Please God, let me stay here! I'll give them everything, just let me live and stay here with my husband."

My hands weren't bound, so I pushed the duct tape up to see what was going on, but he quickly pulled the tape back down. I could still see just a little bit under the bottom edge of the tape. One of the kidnappers grabbed the purse I was

currently using off the counter, along with my cell phone. My credit cards, passport, cedula (Ecuador ID), and a little money were in it, too.

I continued praying, "Take anything you want, but please let me stay here." I was praying aloud, and then I saw a man stand Don to his feet and push him forward. Don fell to the floor. He couldn't break his fall because his hands were bound, and he hit the floor hard. He groaned in pain. I prayed more earnestly. I begged God to help us. These were heartless men. What did they have planned?

One of the men dragged Don into the bedroom, and the other started dragging me out the door. This was my worst fear. In my head I was praying for them not to take me out of the house.

My hands weren't bound, but there was duct tape over my mouth, and they had pulled the tape down over my eyes again. The men said something about going to Columbia. They asked which one of us could drive. Allen said he would drive. He knew the way to Columbia.

Then they started pulling me through the open door to the parked car outside and pushed me in, and we started down the bumpy gravel road very fast. Tears were coursing down my face! What was I to do? I was in a third world country, in the backseat of my car with angry kidnappers, leaving my home and my 84-year-old husband! He was there, alone, bound and hurt. He had had a heart attack just eight months before and has high blood pressure. Surely this would cause another heart attack!

Allen was driving and told me to please cooperate because the man in the front seat had a gun at his side.

They threw a stinky coat over my head. It was heavy and smelled of sweat. They repeatedly pushed my head down toward the floor of the car to make sure no one saw me as we drove.

I prayed fervently that God would cause a police roadblock or that someone would see something suspicious and call the police or that the men would have heart attacks . . . ANYTHING! I was begging Him to set me free. I was very, very frightened. My heart was beating wildly. I tried to take some slow deep breaths. I needed to calm down.

After a while I realized that I was telling God how and when to free me. I was not surrendered to His plan. I real-

*Continued on p. 23*

# Martin Luther on Touching Christian Duties of Faith, and the Proof Thereof

“The faith of the Cross,” said Luther, “doth the deed, for faith cannot subsist without the Cross. When the water runneth above the chin, as we use to say, then we see what faith’s strength is, and what it is able to do. It is not a speculation, or a work of the fancy,—it is a sure and certain confidence of the heart in God, and a work of the Holy Ghost.”

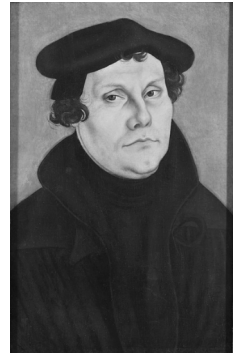
“No better dying,” said Luther, “than as St. Stephen died, who said, ‘*Lord Jesus receive my spirit*,’—to lay aside the register of our sins, or of our deserts, and die relying only upon God’s mere grace and mercy in Christ Jesus.”

“Upright and faithful Christians,” said Luther, “do always think that they do not believe and are not faithful\*, and, therefore, they are diligent; they strive and wrestle continually to keep and to increase faith. It is with them as with good and ingenious workmen, who can always perceive that something, yea, much, is faulty and deficient in their workmanship. Whereas the palterers and botchers think that nothing is wanting in what they do, but that every thing is well and as it should be. So the Jews think they have the Ten Commandments at their fingers’ ends, when, in truth, they neither learn nor regard them.”

Luther speaking in company concerning the excellent works of creation, said, “I should never have believed that the dew had been so sweet and amiable a creature, if the Scripture itself had not so highly extolled it; where God saith, *Dabo tibi de rore caeli*, ‘I will give thee of the dew of heaven.’ The works of creation are most excellent things, and what a help to faith, if we did rightly use them!—but,” said Luther, “in this matter *balbutimus et blæsi sumus*, [we stammered and we were blown] and we say, *cedo* for *credo*, as the little children say, *bed* for *bread*; the words are strong, but the heart is weak, and it saith *cedo: sed per hoc salvamur quod cupimus credere*. [the key: but we are saved by this because we are willing to believe] Oh! our Lord God well knows that we are poor children: if we could but acknowledge so much ourselves. The holy apostles said, ‘*Lord increase our faith*,’ but we will all be wiser than God, although we understand nothing, *nisi per Filium, id est, Christum* [except through the Son, that is, Christ]. And what was His discourse, but altogether this? ‘*Per me, per me, per me*: [Through me, through me, through me] ye are not able to do it, though you should fret yourselves into pieces. We are brought to the Father through the Son:

therefore we should get well forward, if we could but believe that God is wiser than we are.”

“We must take fast hold of the Word,” said Luther, “and must believe that all is true which it speaketh of God, although God, and all His creatures, should seem to us different from what the word speaketh of Him: as we see the Canaanitish woman did. The word is sure and faileth not, though heaven and earth must pass away, as Christ saith. But,” said Luther, “oh! how hard and bitter is this to nature, sense, and reason, that he must strip himself naked, and forsake all that he feeleth and conceiveth, and must depend upon the bare word alone, especially when he feeleth and conceiveth quite the contrary. The Lord of His mercy help us to such a faith, in our necessities, and at our last end when we strive with death.” (Martin Luther, *Luther’s Table Talk*, pp. 247-249)



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## Martin Luther on John Huss the Martyr

“The blood of John Huss is cursed yearly by the Papists. Truly,” said Luther, “he was an honest and a learned man, as may be seen in his Book of the Church, which I love exceeding well. There is, indeed, a weakness in him, but it is the weakness of a Christian, and God’s power bestirreth itself in him, and raiseth him up again. The combat of the flesh and of the Spirit of Christ, in Huss, is sweet and delightful to behold. There remains sure and undoubted evidence of this, that Jerome of Prague\* was an eloquent, but Huss a very learned man. He accomplished more than the whole world was able to do. From the time of the shedding of that innocent blood, Popery by degrees began to fall. Constance, since the death of Huss, is grown a miserable poor city,” said Luther. “I verily believe that God’s punishment struck it, because the citizens therein armed themselves, and led that holy man Huss to the fire. The Holy Ghost was powerful in Huss, who so joyfully and constantly maintained God’s word against so many great and powerful nations: namely, against Germany, Spain, Italy, England, and France, then assembled, by their representatives, in the council at Constance. Against their assaults, cries, and alarum, he only stood, was constrained to bear them, and thereupon was burned to ashes. Even so,” said Luther, “shall I (God willing) be more secure in death, than in this life.” (Martin Luther, *Luther’s Table Talk*, pp. 319-320)

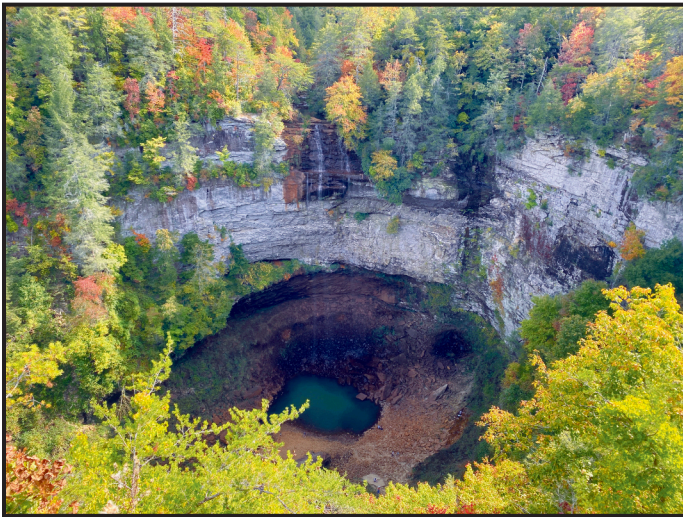
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# Tennessee Youth Retreat

By Allen Stump

The Maranatha Seventh-day Chapel of Graysville hosted a spiritual retreat October 6–9, 2022, at Fall Creek Falls State Park in Tennessee. It was especially focused on our youth, but it was certainly a blessing for all who attended. The theme was “The Gospel in Creation.”

Brothers and sisters assembled from Tennessee and from as far away as Florida and West Virginia.



## Water trickling at Fall Creek Falls

While all were to be responsible for their own meals except for Sabbath afternoon and for evening fruit and popcorn, many people pitched in and helped others with extra food. Kevin and Tonya Stephens brought a very large gas grill with which they made hash brown potatoes for everyone. Many other delightful things came from their corner of the camp. Many thanks to them!



## One of many campfires

Sister Rhonda Brown was in charge of the Sabbath afternoon meal and with her helpers Raquel and Tracy, we were blessed then and in the evenings with popcorn and fruit! *Muchas gracias* to them!

Part of a large camping field and a pavilion were rented to facilitate camping, some of the meetings, and the meals.

The favorite location for many campers was the large fire pit in the field, where the campers warmed themselves early in the morning while the sun began to rise. At the fire pit we had evening and morning worships, which included singing hymns and Scripture songs, prayers, lessons from God’s word, and testimonies. As it says in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

Concerning testimonies, we read: “I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad” (Psalm 34:1–2). A very special testimony that made us very glad came from Sister Sheri Yohe, as she told, in parts, about being a missionary in Ecuador and being kidnapped, followed by a miraculous deliverance. We are going to be sharing her story in our Youth Corner for the next few months, so don’t miss it!

The youth also had the chance to do the lessons and activities for the Tennessee Junior Ranger project, with certificates, badges, and even a picture with Ranger Elijah on the last day available to the youth.

Part of the Junior Ranger project was to have several small sessions on things like water, astronomy, park history wildlife, and plants. Several of the adults taught these sessions to the youth, and there was even a telescope available for viewing the planets and stars when it became dark.

On Friday afternoon the campers took a hike to see Fall Creek Falls. At two hundred fifty-six feet, it is the highest waterfall in the eastern United States, though at this time of the year there was hardly more than a trickle of water running over the falls. After the hike a ranger by the name of Savanna gave us a talk about the park and life as a park ranger. All really enjoyed that too.

On Sabbath morning we meet in the field near the pavilion so we could get some warmth from the sun. The Sabbath school was very interesting and worship included several songs and a talk on God being the great Creator.

On Sabbath afternoon we took a hike to another waterfall called Piney Falls. There was some confused map reading, so some took a longer route than necessary, and some

# Men



# Memories from the Tennessee Youth Camp





### Pledging to be a Junior Ranger

did not get there at all. Thankfully we all were reunited in the evening for popcorn, worship, and fellowship.

It was with sad hearts that goodbyes were said Sunday, with many of us repeatedly saying goodbye and not really wanting to leave. We all had experienced the truth found in Psalm 133:1, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”



### Ranger Elijah and Mia

Thankfully Todd and Rhonda Brown did not leave too quickly and took some time to see extra areas of the park. They found that there is a camping area that has several cabins and a large building with a meeting hall and a kitchen which can be rented at a very reasonable price. We are considering having a camp meeting there next year, possibly in place of the annual Smyrna camp meeting. It is a good location in the eastern part of the United States and would have the room we need for a large combined camp. There are cabins with beds for the older folks who do not tent well. Any feedback you might have on such an idea would be very welcome. 卐

# WHERE IS THE LIGHT?

## THE BIBLE IN TRANSLATION

By Onycha Holt

In 1937 Edgar J. Goodspeed, a renowned University of Chicago biblical scholar, acquired the *Archaic Mark* for the university, a forty-four page miniature copy (like a pocket Bible) of the Gospel of Mark, handwritten in minuscule Greek.

The *Archaic Mark* was considered an important evidence to the early text of Mark and the closest in dating to the Vaticanus, but in 2009 it was demonstrated to be a forgery created somewhere between 1874 and the early 1900s.

Pigment analysis was used to pinpoint the approximate date of the manuscript, and the presence of a modern blue pigment dated the *Archaic Mark* to around 1900.

For most of these cases forensic testing is only a last resort. Throughout the history of collecting, *people have relied on the subjective opinion of experts, connoisseurs, and in addition to that they look at provenance, the documented history of the object.* Now if those two things check out, nobody bothers with the scientific testing. (Noah Charney, interview with Leonard Lopate, minute 9:34, at <https://www.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2015/june/11/noah-charney-hirst-and-koons-are-like-old-masters/>; all emphasis in this article supplied unless otherwise noted)

What do we mean by scientific testing? Very small pieces of pigment are examined under extremely high-powered microscopes. The pigment can also be subjected to spectrum analysis and to chemical analysis. The artwork can be x-rayed and examined under ultraviolet rays and under infrared rays. The type of canvas and the type of art material—metal, wood, and marble, etc.—can be determined and dated. Carbon-14 testing is usually not done on art work because a quantity of material must be destroyed in order to obtain the carbon for testing.

In the case of the *Archaic Mark*, scientific analysis was done:

*Barabe determined the Archaic Mark was created after 1874—using materials not available until the late 19th century—on a parchment substrate dating from about the middle of the 16th century. Carbon dating determined the animal hide was from some time between 1485–1631. (https://news.uchicago.edu/story/scholarly-sleuthing-exhaustive-examination-uncover-forgery-library)*

The content of a work, the person who composed the work, and when it was created are all important factors in deciding authenticity, and you and I hold in our hands every day ancient words that have transformed our lives. Many manuscripts of these words exist, however. Can we decide which manuscript is more correct? Is it the earliest one?

### Autographs and manuscripts of the Bible

No original document of any part of scripture has survived to our day. What we have are copies of copies for an unknown number of generations, and we call these copies manuscripts, for they are copied by man. The Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, are manuscripts. A codex is a manuscript bound in a book form, and the the most complete codices of the Bible are four: Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Alexandrinus, and Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus. The Codex Vaticanus is in the Vatican Library and is dated to the fourth century AD. Most of the Codex Sinaiticus is in the British Library, but parts are also in the Leipzig University Library, in the National Library of Russia, and in St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai peninsula. Sinaiticus is also dated to the fourth century. Codex Alexandrinus, also in the British Library, was probably written in the late fourth to early fifth centuries, and Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus in the National Library of France is from the fifth century.

Codex Sinaiticus is generally dated to the fourth century, and sometimes more precisely to the middle of that century. This is based on study of the handwriting, known as palaeographical analysis. (<https://codexsinaiticus.org/en/codex/date.aspx>)

So, the dating for the Sinaiticus is determined by a study of the handwriting of the text, but the dating is not precise:

While standard reference works give a date of 'ca. 360 C.E.' vel sim. for Codex Sinaiticus, this overly precise mid-fourth century date is *more a matter of habit rather than the result of reasoned argumentation based on reliable evidence*. Either a date earlier in the fourth century or a date in the later fourth or early fifth century is equally possible. (Brent Nongbri, "The Date of Codex Sinaiticus," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, published July 22, 2022, p. 18; <https://academic.oup.com/jts/advance-article/doi/10.1093/jts/flac083/6652265>)

Scientific analysis of pigment ingredients and of their proportions might be of help in dating, but:

The Codex Sinaiticus inks have never been chemically characterized, and the type and proportions of ingredients mixed together have never been determined. ([https://codexsinaiticus.org/en/project/conservation\\_ink.aspx](https://codexsinaiticus.org/en/project/conservation_ink.aspx))

Much of the practice of making manuscripts, such as if one source of ink was provided to all the scribes in a scriptorium or if each scribe made up his own ink, is unknown, so solid answers based on ink are challenging. The composition of the ink, however, can be tested, and this can be useful in dating the manuscript, but this has not been done, as far as we know, for either of the codices Sinaiticus or Vaticanus. We do know the material upon which they were written is parchment, but do we know anything about the provenance?

There has been an enduring debate with regard to the provenance and origin of Codex Vaticanus. . . .

From the time of its creation, which scholars generally date around the fourth century, until its appearance in the Vatican library in the fifteenth century, little is known about the history of Vaticanus. . . .

As already noted, just where and when the codex saw the light of day is disputed. Paleographers agree that the letter forms belong to the fourth century and represent the full flower of the biblical majuscule style. (Edward D. Gravelly, "The Text Critical Sigla in Codex Vaticanus," pp. 3, 4, 69)

The Masoretic Hebrew text was used for translating the Old Testament of the King James Version, and the Textus Receptus was used for the New Testament. The importance of the Textus Receptus has diminished in the eyes of many scholars since the discovery of the Sinaiticus, since the renewed interest in the Vaticanus manuscript, and since the recent discoveries of other valuable biblical manuscripts. Some scholars favor the Sinaiticus and others the Vaticanus. The Westcott-Hort Greek New Testament, for example, favors the use of the Vaticanus in its translation, but differences in manuscripts are noted in extensive footnotes. These footnotes facilitate critical analysis of the ancient documents of the New Testament. Instead of the Textus Receptus continuing to be held in high esteem, however, the Nestle-Aland's Greek New Testament is used extensively and has even been called the new *textus receptus* because it is the basis for most modern Bible translations.

This information may sound esoteric, but information about biblical manuscripts is important, for they affect all of our doctrinal beliefs as Protestants. Manuscripts give birth to our tenets, and here is where Satan intruded early, and here is where paganism unabashedly sought to establish itself in Christianity.

Dr. Robert Olson, former head of the Ellen G. White Estate, wrote: "Are there discrepancies in the Holy Scriptures? The answer is, yes" (Robert Olson, "The Question of Inerrancy in Inspired Writings," p. 1). These discrepancies he stated are found in records of events, in numerals and

chronology, in citations by New Testament authors, in grammar, and in the Bible manuscripts themselves.

There is no chapter of the Bible for which all ancient manuscripts have exactly the same wording. Many chapters, in fact, display textual problems in virtually every verse. . . . The vast majority of textual divergencies involve an inability to choose between equally plausible and usually synonymous wordings, simple haplographies (losses of words) that do not affect the overall meaning of a passage, or conflation (adding words from elsewhere in the same book) which are quite often helpful to the sense of the passage. (Douglas Stuart, "Inerrancy and Textual Criticism," *Inerrancy and Common Sense*, p. 98, Roger R Nicole and J. Ramsey Michaels, eds.)

The "goal of textual criticism is to establish as far as is possible the original wording of the books of the Bible. Using fairly well-defined procedures, the textual critic collates copies of scriptural portions, whose exact wordings usually differ at certain points, in order to decide which wording is most likely that of the text when it was first written down" (Ibid., p. 97). Most theologians, including Dr. Olson, agree with Douglas Stuart that nothing essential to the major doctrines of the Bible are affected by the results of textual criticism:

Having acknowledged these difficulties [the difficulties with the discrepancies in the original manuscripts], we must underscore the fact that **they do not relate in any way to doctrine, morals, or behaviour. They occur in insignificant areas of technical detail only.** In no way do they dilute the inspiration of the Scriptures or detract from its authority. Christ treated the Old Testament as a totally trustworthy document. He repeatedly settled arguments with His opponents by quoting Scripture (e.g. Matt. 4:10; 19:3–5). In spite of imperfections **in matters not essential to its purpose**, the Bible unquestionably furnishes us a safe and sufficient guide to truth and salvation. (Olson, Ibid., p. 6)

These statements are striking—the discrepancies do not relate **in any way** to doctrine, they are in insignificant areas of technical detail, and they are in non-essential matters. This is true for most of the variants, yes, but some are significant and some do relate to doctrine. For the New Testament there are more than 5,800 Greek manuscripts, 10,000 Latin manuscripts, and 9,300 manuscripts in other ancient languages. These "manuscripts contain approximately 300,000 textual variants, most of them involving changes of word order and other comparative trivialities" ("Textual criticism," Wikipedia). It is true that most of these 300,000 variants deal with language issues, such as word order, spelling, grammar, etc., and are not related to doctrine, but some are. Scholars generally agree that the oldest manu-

script for the Old Testament (the Masoretic text) is mostly reliable. The Old Testament of the King James Version and of most modern translations is based on the Masoretic text. It is in Greek New Testament manuscripts where problems surface more, and they can relate to doctrine, they can be significant, and they can be essential, but let us first look at the bigger picture.

### Baghdad, Iraq, 1979

Muhyi Adbek Hussein, also known as Muhyi Abd al-Husain Rashid, was led to the podium in a conference room in Iraq, where about one hundred people of the Central Committee of the Ba'ath Party and other members of the Ba'ath Party had been gathered, none knowing why.

The new president of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, chaired the meeting, and he opened by calmly telling those assembled the reason they were there. He had uncovered a plot to overthrow the government and the Ba'ath party, and Muhyi Adbek Hussein was the ringleader.

Muhyi Adbek Hussein (no relation) had been tortured during the previous two days. His wife and daughters were under arrest, and he had been promised they would be raped and murdered if he did not cooperate. So he stood before the Central Committee on July 22, 1979, and confessed. He begged to be executed. Other members of the Central Committee were with him in this plot, he said, and their names were read out, sixty-eight in all. As their names were read, President Hussein told the betrayers to get out. As they arose, some loudly protesting their innocence, the guards moved in. After about a dozen had been led out, panic began to spread among those who remained. Some jumped up and yelled *Glory to Saddam Hussein, our leader; all praise to him*. The faces of the Central Committee members seemed to grow pale.

All this was video-recorded; Hussein had ordered it so. The meeting lasted a couple of hours, but only thirty-minute or less portions are posted on YouTube, but, still, it is there. Hussein said he was purging the body for the security of the nation and for the stability of the government. If you watch the segments, you see people crying and wiping their eyes, and at first you think it is because of fear, but it becomes evident through translation, for it is all in Arabic, that it is not so. The men are emotional concerning their love for Hussein and for the nation, or so they state. One crying man called for the execution of the traitors. Others also called for their executions and voiced support of Hussein.

Brothers and sisters, so it will be in the future. In the halls of government our fate will be debated. Evidence will be presented. Witnesses will testify against us. Our lives will be called for. All for the stability of the government and for the peace of the land. If you watch the video record



of July 22, 1979, you will see how easily man can turn on man. This was not a staged event. It is a recording of how things actually occurred. You will see how cold and calculating, even though smiling, one man can be over the lives of others.

Under the leadership of the Roman Church, every possible means was employed to cause God's people "to appear in the eyes of the people and **even to themselves** as the vilest of criminals" (White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 591.1). They were denounced as evildoers and of being in league with Satan, and they were covered with reproach.

In 1979 Muhyi Adbek Hussein proclaimed himself a criminal worthy of death, and in like manner he was vilified by the president of the nation and by his peers and fellow leaders. He was denounced and reproached. The video broadcasts the evil and chilling treatment of man by man. It speaks of the calculated purge of enemies. It reveals the terror of men realizing their sure and imminent violent death, and it puts on display the pandering willingness of men to praise a cruel despot and to denounce others in a pathetic attempt to save their own lives. It has the ring of reality of a future day and place when those who are true and faithful to God will be condemned for their faith and made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men (1 Corinthians 4:9).

Those who honor the Bible Sabbath will be denounced as enemies of law and order, as breaking down the moral restraints of society, causing anarchy and corruption, and calling down the judgments of God upon the earth. Their conscientious scruples will be pronounced obstinacy, stubbornness, and contempt of authority. They will be accused of disaffection toward the government. (White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 592.1)  
God's people will prevail, however, as Jacob prevailed:

His victory is an evidence of the power of importunate prayer. All who will lay hold of God's promises, as he did, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he succeeded. . . . When waves of despair which no language can express sweep over the suppliant, how few cling with unyielding faith to the promises of God. (Ibid., pp. 618.3, 621.2)

But how does all of this relate to Bible translations? During the time of trouble, we will need a courage that empowers us to face death rather than sin, a faith that enables us to suffer want rather than defraud, and a determination to endure hunger rather than lie. We will need strength in the place of weariness and resolve during delay, and only trust in God's promises can provide this; therefore, we must know that the Bible we hold in our hands **is** his word, and we must understand that the process of biblical translation has not destroyed his word; otherwise, we will be overcome

with doubt during the dark days and nights of Jacob's trouble, and we will lose our grip on the unseen but knowable God in the most difficult of times. You can be sure Satan will seek to cause you to doubt the certainty of God's word, but God has protected his word. We know this because Satan would have destroyed it long ago, if he could have, and we would have been left with nothing to hold close to us as the voice of God to the soul. Without question, God has preserved his word. That is the first premise.

The second premise is no one can tell us which manuscripts are closest to the autograph, for we have no autograph with which to compare them. We can only make an educated choice.

Thirdly, we must be honest enough to acknowledge there are differences, or variants, in the manuscripts. Many of these variants, but not all, are in spelling, word order, or in other linguistic areas. We need to recognize that

. . . not all copies of the Bible in the original language read exactly alike. In fact, the total number of variations between the manuscripts runs into many thousands. (*Problems in Bible Translation*, p. 16)

Fourthly, we must also recognize that languages change over time. The purpose of biblical translation is to render in current language the meaning of the original, but this is a challenging task. There may not be equivalent words, or the English word chosen by the translators of the KJV, for example, may have a different meaning today. Or the original word may have several meanings, and the translator has to choose one meaning over the others or choose to cite more than one meaning, causing the translation to be more vague and less precise.

If we are not familiar with these and other issues of translation, we could very easily be undermined by people more intelligent and more knowledgeable than we are concerning them and who may seek to turn us from our faith to skeptical reasoning.

### Examples of discrepancies in manuscripts

The Vaticanus and the Sinaiticus are generally accepted by scholars to be from the fourth and fifth centuries AD. These are Greek codices. The Old Testament in these codices is a translation of the Hebrew/Aramaic into Greek. Concerning the use of manuscripts in the New International Version, we are told:

For the Old Testament the standard Hebrew text, the Masoretic Text, as published in the latest edition of *Biblia Hebraica*, has been used throughout. The NIV translators have sometimes used variants of the Hebrew Masoretic tradition or other ancient versions, where these seemed to provide a superior text than the Masoretic tradition. These are **all** noted in footnotes.

(<https://www.thenivbible.com/manuscripts-used-translating-niv/>)

Again, the Masoretic Text is considered to be reliable and is consistently used in modern translations.

The description for the New Testament translation for the NIV states:

The translators have used the accepted Greek New Testament text, as printed in the Nestle-Aland and United Bible Societies' Greek New Testaments. Here also the translators have occasionally accepted a variant printed in these editions. Footnotes **usually** indicate the options in each case. (Ibid.)

The NIV translators used the Greek New Testament text as printed by both Nestle-Aland and the United Bible Societies for their translation, but what manuscript(s) did Nestle-Aland and the United Bible Societies themselves use? Its complicated, for the Nestle-Aland/United Bible Societies Greek New Testament is a critical text that has changed over the years due to the manuscripts used in their revisions. It is complicated also because the Nestle critical text has relied on other critical Greek texts in some of its editions and thus has been at least one step removed from the original manuscripts, and it is also complicated because now are included recent early papyri and other recent manuscript discoveries in its analysis. The bottom line is we do not readily know what manuscripts the NIV depended upon for its New Testament translation. The best we can say is that they are whatever the Nestle-Aland/United Bible Societies relied upon for their Greek translation.

Let us also consider the Majority Text. It is called so because it is the reading that occurs most often in different manuscripts. The Received Text, or *Textus Receptus*, is the Greek text of the New Testament passed down to us first from Lucien and later from Erasmus, who first published his work in 1516, which was revised various times thereafter so that by 1633 the text was known by the Latin term, *textus receptus*. The *Textus Receptus* is the manuscript used for the New Testament in the King James Version, and editions of the Greek New Testament used this manuscript until the 1800s.

In the 1800s discoveries of new manuscripts began to occur, concluding in comparisons between these newly discovered Greek manuscripts and the older ones. This study resulted in a new Greek text being published for the New Testament. Manuscripts used for this new Greek text were compared for word usage, grammar, syntax, etc. This is called critical analysis. Westcott and Hort's critical Greek translation was first published in 1881. The Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament, which many scholars accept and rely on today, is another example of a critical Greek text.

Both the Westcott-Hort text and the Nestle-Aland text provide extensive footnotes of variant readings for the benefit of students and scholars.

All of this may sound good and appropriate for study, but remember all manuscripts from which translations are made are simply copies of copies made over centuries and millennia, and because they are copies, they have been exposed to unintentional human error and to possible human manipulation. So how can we make our way through the manuscript maze?

First of all, a decision must be made on what manuscripts are trustworthy. Are the earliest ones the best, or perhaps the majority rules. One problem with the earliest manuscripts is that there are fewer of them and they can be incomplete in scope. The Vaticanus and the Sinaiticus stand alone in their near completeness, but other less complete manuscripts also exist from the same time period. Papyrus 66, for example, contains many verses of John. An issue with the Vaticanus and the Sinaiticus is the long, empty gap before their discoveries that provides no provenance and the long, empty gap after them to the next manuscripts. If they contain what was taught among believers, shouldn't there be at least a few more copies of them scattered around Egypt and the Roman Empire? On the other hand, the Majority Text is based on many manuscripts, but these copies are often fragmented and are dated much later than the Vaticanus and the Sinaiticus, allowing more time for copy error to take place and allowing a greater length of time for which a provenance is needed and for which an accurate understanding of how biblical truth is passed down through the years is needed. Those who accept the Majority Text as the most reliable should understand that there are discrepancies within its manuscript base also.

These concerns and others are what Bible scholars face and have faced and are why skeptics sometimes remain skeptics, but we do not need to be skeptical. We can know what we believe doctrinally, as well as what we believe concerning the manuscripts used in Bible translations.

Siegfried H. Horn, a past Adventist archeologist and college professor, wrote the articles in volumes 1 and 5 of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* on the manuscripts of the Old Testament and on the manuscripts of the New Testament. His introductory remarks concerning the New Testament may be of help:

The books of the New Testament were written some 14 centuries before the art of printing was invented in the Western world. For long centuries the only method of reproducing the Bible was to copy its text by hand. Since all original manuscripts of the Scriptures are lost, the New Testament is available now only in copies, the

earliest of which were made many years after the death of the original authors. Almost certainly none of the copies extant today were made from the original writings, but rather from other copies. In the process of re-copying the Scriptures for centuries various copyists' errors were incorporated into later Bible manuscripts.

Printed works can be checked for accuracy if the original manuscript of the author is available. Changes or corrections can be made when a new edition is published, and such changes are easily recognized by comparison with earlier editions. The process is different, however, in regard to works which for centuries have been transmitted by hand and of which the original manuscripts are unavailable. In this case laborious scientific comparison often is necessary before the scholar can feel that he has probably reached the original reading of each passage. Although only a few of the thousands of variations in New Testament manuscripts are theologically significant, nevertheless since the Christian theologian and Bible student must base his faith on the authentic statements of Bible writers, this work of obtaining a reliable text is extremely important.

Therefore it is the task of the textual scholar to study carefully all extant New Testament manuscripts in order to establish a text that is as close to the original as is humanly possible. Such work is generally known by the name of textual, or lower, criticism. As contrasted with higher, or literary, criticism, which has done much to undermine faith in God's Word, lower criticism does not concern itself with the Bible as such. It endeavors, rather, by a process of critical and diligent study, to detect and eliminate copyists' mistakes and thus to arrive at a form of Biblical text that is as nearly as possible the same as that which came from the hands of the original writers. Such work has been extremely rewarding, and its accomplishments and discoveries have done much in recent years to re-establish confidence in the Bible text.

Many of these manuscripts were produced, not by professional scribes, but, especially in the early centuries when the churches were still poor, by Christians who had little education. Poor handwriting, many spelling mistakes, and other scribal errors due to unfamiliarity with the art of writing show this to have been so.

A typical copyist's error is the interchange of synonyms such as "to speak," "to say," or "to tell." Many such exchanges appear in New Testament manuscripts, although the meaning of the text is in such cases not affected. For example, some manuscripts have the word *ēlthon*, "came," instead of *erchontai*, "come" in Matt. 25:11. The difference is only one of tense and may not even be noticeable in a translation. (Siegfried H. Horn,

"The Manuscripts of the New Testament," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5. p. 110)

His conclusion? Modern archeological discoveries and linguistic studies:

. . . have made significant contributions toward refuting many of the more extreme criticisms. Second, it must be recognized that the great majority of critical arguments against the authenticity of the Bible stand only as unproved hypotheses. Although it is not possible categorically to disprove many of these, neither can they be proved . . . In such a situation the burden of final proof rests upon the critic who would disavow that which the Bible claims for itself, and as such proof is not forthcoming, the conservative Christian is justified in continuing to believe that the plain statements of the different books of the Bible regarding their authorship are trustworthy. (Ibid., pp. 188, 189)

Volume 5 of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* was published in 1956. In 1953 the General Conference established a committee on Bible translations, and its findings were published in 1954 in a book entitled *Problems in Bible Translation*. Here is the committee's conclusion about the multiplicity of Bible translations:

Some sincere Bible students have been troubled that there should be so many different versions in the world today. Has God preserved His Word through all the centuries of the past only to have it lost in the many translations of modern times? The translators of the King James Version expressed almost three and a half centuries ago a most reasonable attitude toward this problem of multiplicity of versions. If the preface to this most famous of all Bible versions were still published as originally intended, these wise words would be available for all to read: "We do not deny, nay we affirm and avow, that the very meanest translation of the Bible in English, set forth by men of our profession . . . containeth the word of God, nay, is the word of God: As the King's speech, which he uttered in Parliament, being translated into French, Dutch, Italian, and Latin, is still the King's speech, though it be not interpreted by every translator with the like grace, nor peradventure so fitly for phrase, nor so expressly for sense, every where. . . . No cause therefore why the word translated should be denied to be the word, or forbidden to be current, notwithstanding that some imperfections and blemishes may be noted in the setting forth of it." (*Problems in Bible Translation*, p. 34)

Never in the world's history has so much information been available for textual analysis of biblical manuscripts:

There has seldom if ever been a time when more illuminating manuscript resources have come into the

hands of textual critics than in our own day. We do recall that fifth-century Alexandrinus reached London a few years after the King James Bible appeared. A century ago fourth-century Sinaiticus emerged from monastic obscurity. But the critic today has for the first time extensive third-century papyrus texts. The Beatty Library in Dublin thirty-five years ago acquired the notable codex of the Pauline Corpus, and portions of the Four Gospels and the Acts, and one-third of the Apocalypse. The Bodmer Library in Geneva recently acquired two copies of John and one of Luke and a fragment of the General Epistles.

. . . These early Egyptian copies do not agree with one another. There is sometimes agreement with Vaticanus, again a distinctive agreement with Sinaiticus, again they attest the Caesarean recension, and yet again some fragments favor Bezae.

What shall we say of the testimony of these newest and earliest witnesses? They come to light with joyous announcement and high expectation, only to reveal that they further complicate where we hope for clarification. Recensional variety is now seen to have originated as early as A.D. 200. Although we are now enabled to move earlier, the picture does not clear. We have acquired new evidence that textual bifurcations occurred in the earliest stage of transmission. What is more, it is now clear that variant recensions originated *prior* to Hesychius and **Lucian**. (Kenneth W. Clark, “The Critical Text of the New Testament” *Transitions in Biblical Scholarship*, J. Coert Rylaarsdam, ed., p. 162; italicized emphasis in original)

### Lucien of Antioch

So, let us consider Lucian. He was born in Samosata, Syria, (now Samsat, Turkey) around AD 240 and moved to Antioch as an adult. He chose a life of piety and religious study. Erroneous teachings had already begun to spread through Christendom that were more deadly “to early Christianity than the poison of serpents” (Benjamin G. Wilkinson, *Truth Triumphant*, p. 45). What were those teachings, and how could they have developed so quickly?

We do not know if the original letters of Paul and John were extant at the time of Lucian, but early copies surely were available. Early copies of the Gospels were also in circulation. In the Bodmer collection mentioned above, the copy of John, though not complete, dates to about 200, but by this time copies were already being altered. According to Kenneth W. Clark, quoted above, **variant** revisions occurred **prior** to AD 240. In 325, at the Council of Nicæa, the papal church stamped its approval on one of these deadly teachings—Jesus was coeternal with the Father.

The early church was obliged to combat on the one hand the accusations of the pagans that they had three Gods.—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost—and on the other hand to combat the Hellenizing and philosophical Platonic doctrine which of course later developed into the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity.

The Platonic doctrine was that all the attributes of God evolved into personalities such as His wisdom, His love, His power, His knowledge, and these evolved personalities were connected with the Godhead as a ray of light is connected with the sun, or a stream of water with the source, or heat with the furnace. These evolved personalities they called “demons”. Of course in the later evolution of language the word “demon” has come to mean an evil spirit. This was not its first use, however. In its first use among the Greeks the word rightly meant “a son of God.” (B. G. Wilkinson to D. S. Teters, Letter, November 3, 1936)

Individual students and scholars might think to discredit Wilkinson’s books as antiquated and inadequate, as more information is available to us today than was available to him, and it is true that facts today can be in contradiction with what was printed as fact in his day and earlier, but the broader issues he raised still stand. An example is the erroneous teachings that resulted in the doctrine of the trinity. These errors were major issues in the early centuries of Christianity, and Arius tried to counteract them. His theology was wrong, but so were the doctrines that established trinitarianism.

. . . we have never taken the position of Arius or the position with which the Catholics accuse him, namely, that Jesus Christ was created; nor have we taken the Catholic position on the other hand to the effect that “there never was when Christ was not.” Rather we have taken the Bible position in which Christ said: “I proceeded and came forth from the Father;” and again when Jesus said, “My Father is greater than I.” (Ibid.)

As far as the speed by which these errors came into existence, before the first church council ever occurred, the man of sin was already at work to change the truth of God into a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:7; Romans 1:25). The pagan thinking of multiple gods became a dogma of Christianity in approximately three hundred years, and pagan trinitarianism became the doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in little over one hundred thirty. Adventism was easily changed, and no one stood up against trinitarianism’s increasingly strong hold except a handful of men in the first half of the twentieth century, B. G. Wilkinson being one of them, and in 1980 trinitarianism was voted by the church in session to be a fundamental belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But there is more.

Another error active in early Christianity was that Christ was not divine. Eusebius, born c. 260, explains how **Scripture** was **altered** to accommodate this error:

(1) IN A WORK written by one of these authors against the heresy of Artemon, which Paul of Samosata again attempted to revive among us, there was a narrative well-adapted to the history we are now investigating. (2) This writer, in refuting the heresy mentioned which asserted that Christ was a mere man, since its leaders wished to boast as if it were the ancient doctrine, besides many other arguments that he adduced in refutation of their impious falsehood, he gave the following account: . . .

“The sacred Scriptures,” said he, “have been **boldly perverted** by them; the rule of the ancient faith they have set aside, Christ they have renounced, not inquiring what the holy Scriptures declared, but zealously laboring what form of reasoning may be devised to establish their impiety. . . . For this purpose they fearlessly lay their hands upon the holy Scriptures, **saying that they have corrected them**. And that I do not say this against them without foundation, whoever wishes may learn; for should any one collect and compare their copies one with another, he would find them greatly at variance among themselves. For the copies of Asclepiodotus will be found to differ from those of Theodotus. Copies of many you may find in abundance, altered, by the eagerness of their disciples to insert each one his own corrections, as they call them, i.e. their corruptions. Again, the copies of Hermophilus do not agree with these, for those of Appollonius are not consistent with themselves. For one may compare those which were prepared before by them, with those which they afterwards perverted for their own objects, and you will find them widely differing. But what a stretch of audacity this aberration indicates, it is hardly probable themselves can be ignorant. For either they do not believe that the holy Scriptures were uttered by the holy Spirit, and they are thus infidels, or they deem themselves wiser than the holy Spirit, and what alternative is there but to pronounce them demoniacs? For neither can they deny that they have been guilty of the daring act, when the copies were written with their own hand, nor did they receive such Scriptures from those by whom they were instructed in the elements of the faith; nor can they show copies from which they were transcribed. But some of them did not even deign, or think it worth while, to mutilate the Scriptures, but directly denying the law and the prophets by their lawless and impious doctrine, under the pretext of grace, they sunk down to the lowest depths of perdition.” But let this suffice on this subject. (*Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History*, Book 5, Chapter 28)

Other errors flourished, and Lucian did what he could to protect God’s word. He is acknowledged by Wilkinson as copying the true record of God’s word. Wilkinson credits him with being the editor of the Textus Receptus, and Westcott and Hort agree with Wilkinson, although others disagree. Lucian’s copy of the Bible has been lost to mankind but because of his dedicated work and through the grace of God it has been preserved to our day as the Textus Receptus.

. . . Lucian’s day was an age of apostasy when a flood of depravations was systematically attempting to devastate both the Bible manuscripts and Bible theology. Origin, of the Alexandrian college, made his editions and commentaries of the Bible a secure retreat for all errors, and deformed them with philosophical speculations introducing casuistry and lying. Lucian’s unrivaled success in verifying, safeguarding, and transmitting those divine writings left a heritage for which all generations should be thankful.

Mutilations of the Sacred Scriptures abounded. There were at least eighty heretical sects all striving for supremacy. Each took unwarranted license in removing or adding pages to Bible manuscripts.

Consider how masterly must have been Lucian’s collection of the evidences which identified and protected the writings left to the church by the apostles. From that day to this the Received Text and the New Testaments translated from it are far in the lead of any other Bibles in use. (Wilkinson, *Truth Triumphant*, pp. 50, 51)

This was published in 1944. The Vaticanus had become known to the world about five hundred years earlier and the Sinaiticus in 1844. The Westcott and Hort critical edition of the New Testament was published in 1881 and with its publication, the decline of the regard for the Textus Receptus continued.

In 1952 the Revised Standard Version of the Bible translated John 3:16 as “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son” instead of only begotten Son, and so began the current modern understanding that *monogenēs* means *single of its kind, only, unique*, and not only begotten. Most current translations are similar to the RSV, but this is not a totally new understanding in Christianity. In 1526 Tyndale published his translation of the Bible and this portion of Scripture reads:

For God so loveth the worlde yt he hath geven his only sonne that none that beleve in him shuld perissh: but shuld have everlastinge lyfe. (John 3:16 Tyndale)

But Wycliffe’s translation published about one hundred fifty years earlier uses the term *only begotten*. These differences in translating John 3:16 extend back centuries to Lucian, Arius, and the early church debate about the Son of

God and about the Holy Spirit which eventually resulted in trinitarianism becoming dogma, and this is reflected in *Problems in Bible Translation*.

One of the problems addressed in this book is *monogenēs* in John 3:16. Not surprisingly the committee teaches that *monogenēs* means unique. We would expect this because Jesus cannot be begotten of the Father and co-equal with the Father at the same time, in the trinitarian belief, but the committee did not come to this conclusion on its own logic. They based it on manuscripts that say this, but remember that Eusebius clearly brought out that manuscripts were boldly perverted according to a person's own reasoning, thinking that they were correcting the manuscripts when in actuality they were corrupting them. And to what were they correcting the manuscripts? To a trinitarian thinking that is not supported by the Textus Receptus, which was preserved by Lucian, Erasmus, and others down to the King James Version of our day.

So, where do we go from here? What version(s) can we trust?

We cannot look to Ellen White for answers, for she always directed people to look to the Scriptures first and foremost. Everything is to be tested by them to determine spiritual truth, so we have to look for answers in the Bible itself, but when we turn to the biblical manuscripts themselves, how can we determine if they are reliable, since we have no autographs for comparison? And even if we did have autographs, how could we know the autographs actually contained the words and thoughts of God rather than those of men, no matter how decent the men might seem to have been.

The basis of our knowledge and trust is twofold. One is the effect the manuscripts have on our behavior, our conversation, and our lifestyle. What other documents, for example, consistently tell us to love our neighbor as ourselves and to treat others as we would want to be treated and show us how to do so? First Corinthians 13 has no peer.

The second basis is the plethora of manuscripts. No other work of antiquity offers as much. Only seven works of Plato have survived to our day, eight each for Thucydides and for Herodotus, and twenty for Tacitus. The number of copies of Homer's *Iliad* is highest at six hundred forty-three, but ten thousand plus Old Testament manuscripts were found in the Cairo Geniza, and the Dead Sea caves produced over six hundred manuscripts. There is no doubt that God has preserved his word, and the New Testament is also testified to by the thousands of manuscripts referred to earlier in this article.

Most theologians across denominations, including Adventism, teach that you can trust the manuscripts as reli-

able copies of God's word and that you should choose the version that is the easiest for you to understand and that affords you the most complete understanding of Scripture because the various translations do not differ in doctrine only in language issues.

Most theologians also advise that the Bible is not inerrant, for unavoidable variances have occurred through the centuries in hand copying the manuscripts.

Most theologians will tell you all translations teach the same about salvation, about forgiveness, about the reward of the redeemed, etc., and that this is what is important. The very rare variance in a biblical doctrine, they say, should not be a point of contention because such differences are minor compared to the overwhelming doctrinal agreement present in the manuscripts.

Most theologians will also tell you that there should be peace among Christians over spiritual matters, since all translations and manuscripts lead to the same truth and that the path to heaven, though narrow, is broad enough for all, but it was a Moses in the wilderness that objected to pleasant Aaron's golden calf, an Elijah on Mt. Carmel that rebuked Israel's idolatry, a John the Baptist at the River Jordan that called for repentance in an hypocritical church, and an Ellen White in America that sought to awaken God's people to their Laodicean, need-of-nothing state.

The Sabbath truth is important; the investigative judgment is important; the sanctuary doctrine and the atonement in heaven are important; the truth about the almighty God, the only begotten Son, and their Spirit is important; the three angels' messages and the message of the fourth angel are important; the gift of the spirit of prophecy is important; the time of Jacob's trouble, the death decree, and the seven last plagues are important; and the heavens rolling back as a scroll and the King of Kings appearing to end the great controversy is important. The translation you choose to trust must not diminish these truths, for eternal life depends on it.

For me, my trust is in the truth as expressed in the King James Version not because it is the translation most free of variants, for it isn't, but because its history goes the furthest back in time and is thus closest to the life of our Lord and Saviour on this earth and to the work of his apostles. The manuscripts and the translations they produce are victims of scribal error. We cannot change that, but it should not discourage us because we have all been changed, and continue to be changed, by the life the Holy Spirit gives us through the words of the translations we hold in our hands, and for this we will praise God throughout eternity.

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*“Youth’s Corner — continued from p. 9*

ized that God wasn’t surprised at what was happening. He knew right where I was and what the future would be.

God had stamped this trial with His approval. He had decided that the home invasion and kidnapping would be just right for Don, me, and the other people involved. It would accomplish His purposes. Was I willing to cooperate with His plan?

I changed my prayer to one of surrender to God’s will. I prayed that His perfect will would be accomplished, that whatever happened would bring the very best results for all involved, and that all of this would bring glory to God. I also surrendered to the idea that it could be God’s will that I die today. I mentally prepared myself to die and confessed my sins, reciting this Scripture in my head:

*If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)*

During the first part of what turned out to be a four-hour car ride, the kidnappers were arguing in Spanish about killing me and driving to Columbia. I had a good look at the man riding in the front passenger seat when he had brought my husband into the living room before they duct taped my head. He was tall and thin. He had a wrinkled face. His voice was evil, angry, loud, and frightening. He said over and over, “Kill them”. I knew I would never forget it that voice. They mentioned a few more times about wanting our money. I responded in Spanish that we were retired people. I heard a snicker in the car when I said that. They obviously didn’t believe me.

I remembered the story of Richard Wurmbrand, the founder of *Voice of the Martyrs*, and how he was imprisoned in Romania for preaching the gospel. He said the more they beat him, the more the love of God rose up in his heart for his persecutors. He couldn’t help saying to them, “I love you and God loves you—I forgive you.” I began to pray for my kidnappers, mean men who had hurt my husband and me, men who said they were planning to take my life.

I prayed that God would forgive them, give me forgiveness in my heart for them, and fill the car with peace and love. I chose to forgive them no matter what they did to me or to Don. I prayed that God’s peace would fill the car and that all the evil spirits would be pressed back.

Soon I felt as though God’s love was radiating from me to them. There was a difference in the anger level in the car. I noticed that the arguing had stopped. The men were silent. A supernatural calm had permeated the car.



**Sheri and Don Yohe**

We all sat in silence as I continued to choose to love them and pray for them. I knew in the midst of this horrific event that God would only allow that which would bring the most glory to Him. Whether I lived or died, I surrendered to God’s will for Don and me.

What peace! It was so calming. Later I would I experience additional moments of terror, but I knew God was with me. I fought the terror in my heart by singing silently in my head. I quoted Scripture verses, and recounted Bible stories of victory.

I remembered a friend whose family were missionaries. They had an orphanage in Haiti many years ago. The father was traveling to the city for supplies when he was attacked along the road. They had pummeled him with stones, and left him hanging over his truck’s steering wheel, far out in the country, thinking him dead. Some time later someone touched his shoulder, spoke to him in soothing words, and helped him. The Haitian president heard what had happened, gave them protection, and helped them with their orphanage. It turned out to be the very best thing that could have happened for the children they were caring for.

I prayed that whatever was best for Ecuador and being a good witness of the character of our loving God would happen. If God would be glorified with my death, then OK; I surrendered to it. If God would be better glorified with my life, then I accepted that.

As we traveled I reviewed our reasons for being in Ecuador. Again I questioned myself: “Did God really lead us here as we were so sure just a year ago?”

From 2002 to 2004, Don and I had lived in Costa Rica. Although we have some very dear friends there, we found



**The Yohes' rental house in Cuenca**

it a struggle to adjust to the culture. I was not anxious to leave the U.S. or try to adjust to a Spanish-speaking country again. My husband finds it hard to learn a second language, which makes me the translator and communicator and leaves him very vulnerable. This causes additional stress and challenges in our marriage.

Even with the obvious difficulties, my husband, Don, had said a few times in the year prior to our move to Ecuador that he felt we were going to live in another country. I would just reply with an emphatic “NO!”

Of course, when we say no, we must be careful. God may have other plans. A friend recently reminded me of the saying, “Man plans, and God laughs.”

As Don and I prayed for God’s perfect will in our lives, we looked diligently for areas near our home in Tennessee, so we could stay close to my grandchildren. After months and then years of searching for the perfect place, God began to bring circumstances into my life that convinced me to open my thoughts to the possibility that Ecuador may be where He wanted us.

We’d been praying that God would show us exactly where He could use us in His work. We discussed this many times and decided that He would sell our house in Tennessee when we were looking in the right direction. The house had been on the market for five years.

I have dear friends who made a missionary trip to Ecuador and loved it. They came back telling me they planned to move to Ecuador. I told them I thought it a bad idea and discouraged them.

In early August 2013, I went to see a biological dentist in Knoxville, about twenty minutes from our Tennessee home. While there, the dentist handed me a thick paperback book about a doctor who had developed a natural and very effective treatment for cancer and how, after getting his treatment approved and into use in several hospitals, the government officials began harassing him and raiding his offices in North and South Carolina, confiscating all his patient records. He left the country and went to Ecuador,

where his work was accepted, and he was able to teach doctors and dentists in Ecuador universities.

Ecuador, Ecuador, Ecuador. I began hearing about the country from different sources and began to wonder if God wanted us to consider Ecuador. I shared this with my husband, who agreed to pray with me about the possibility. I prayed and told God if He wanted us in Ecuador, I would go, but I wanted Him to show me clearly. Again my husband and I were convinced that when we were considering the right location God would confirm it by selling our house, which was still listed with a realtor.

A few days after I surrendered to the possibility that God might want us in Ecuador, we received our first solid offer on the house. The closing was set for the middle of November—sixty days before closing instead of the more conventional thirty-day closing. This helped me immensely, because I was going to be teaching a university class for three weeks in late October/early November, and the later closing gave me a week after teaching to finish packing and taking care of the many last-minute details. What else could we conclude? God had opened the door and showed us clearly what His will was, even arranging for a longer period of time between the purchase contract and the closing.

We sold almost everything, packed a few boxes to ship, and moved to Ecuador on November 20, 2013.

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## Meetings in Chino Valley, Arizona

Pastor Allen Stump will be at the Chino Valley Church, Sabbath, December 3, for meetings all day. For more information please contact Brother Abraham Verduzco at 323-308-8968 for more details. If you are in Arizona and cannot get to the meetings but would like a visit, please contact me at Smyrna, using the contact information below, and if possible we will arrange a visit.

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*Old Paths* is a free monthly newsletter/study-paper published by Smyrna Gospel Ministries, 750 Smyrna Road, Welch, WV 24801-9606 USA. The paper is dedicated to the propagation and restoration of the principles of truth that God gave to the early Seventh-day Adventist pioneers. Duplication is not only permitted, but strongly encouraged. This issue, with other gospel literature we publish, can be found at our website. The url is: <http://www.smyrna.org>. Phone: 1-304-732-9204. Fax: 1-304-732-7322.

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