

Old Paths

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

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

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The oldest and youngest at camp together



Almost Home

By Onycha Holt

Editor's Note: An abridged version of this article was presented at the recent 1889 HSDA camp meeting in Tennessee.

On February 9, 1942, the French transatlantic ocean liner, SS *Normandie*, was berthed in the New York City harbor. She was the fastest, the longest, and the largest of all French liners, the pride of France. She had three funnels, although one was actually a dummy, and a masterpiece of an interior. The first class dining room was longer than the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, three decks high, and illuminated with magnificent Lalique-designed lighting. The dining room was walled with hammered glass and large bronze murals, and its entrance doors were twenty feet high, the medallions of which now adorn a church in New York. A walk-through garden was on board, with exotic birds and sprays of water. The main lounge had glass panels wrapping each corner created by artist Jean Dupas, one of which is with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Each of the first class cabins had a different decor and theme, and two deluxe apartments were located



SS *Normandie*

on the Sun Deck, each with four bedrooms, a private terrace, extra living quarters, a private dining salon, and at least one with a grand piano.

The SS *Normandie* was impressive and a work of art, but it was wartime, and it was being refitted in the New York harbor to be a Navy ship for Allied troops, but on February 9, at 2:30 p.m., the ship caught fire. A strong wind fanned the flames, and within hours the SS *Normandie* began to list to port and soon capsized. Efforts made to salvage her eventually became too costly and too complicated, and she was scrapped four years later.

The burning of the SS *Normandie* started a chain of events that reaches to our century. Cries of sabotage were raised, and suspicions of Fifth Column activity were whispered. The New York Commissioner of Investigations imposed an immediate blackout on the waterfront, and three months later he assigned an official to make a full investigation, who eventually learned of gangster activity permeating the waterfront. He made contact with Joe "Socks" Lanza, racketeer boss of Fulton Fish Market in New York City; with Meyer Lansky, a Jewish mobster in control of the longshoremen's union; with Frank Costello, a gambler with numerous shady interests throughout the waterfront; and with the father of modern organized crime, "Lucky" Luciano, who was in prison at the time of the fire. Operation Underworld resulted, a clandestine group of high-level organized crime figures working with American intelligence for the benefit of both. OSS was formed, followed by the CIA.

Luciano's sentence was soon commuted, and he was deported to Italy. Several other Italian crime figures were also deported, and a nucleus formed in Italy that reached into France, and the French Connection, a pipeline for drugs,

was born. The Italian mobsters also began activity in Mexico, and a drug route into the United States was begun.

In China the Green Gang rose to prominence. Opium became the currency of choice. Silver didn't matter, paper was useless, but opium was in demand. Taxes were expected to be paid with opium; bribery was in opium. The sale of opium supported the Nationalist Party of Chiang Kai-shek, who was warring with Mao Zedong and the Communists. Chiang Kai-shek did not deal in drugs, but the Green Gang did, and the Green Gang heavily supported his operations financially. Chiang rose to power on the backs of addicts, which is interesting because Adventist Paul Quimby claims in his book, *Yankee on the Yangtze*, that Chiang Kai-shek was a Christian.



Chiang Kai-shek

housing projects in New York City were extorted \$1-2 per window, but how did the Adventist Church fare during this intensifying of criminal power?

The twentieth century was a time of immense change in the Adventist Church. The latter half of the nineteenth century were years of growth and stability in faith and belief, but most of the twentieth century were years of upheaval. Doctrines were changed or were dropped altogether. Books for the small people were written to promote these changes. Books for theologians were also written, such as Desmond Ford's book on Daniel 8:14, and books for both groups, such as *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* in 1957.

The twentieth century also saw the faith of the righteous trampled upon in Russia so that true believers were not seen, either because they had gone underground or because many had been persecuted and had died. Adventist leadership advised its members to harvest their crops on collective farms on the Sabbath and to engage in full military service, including the bearing of arms, both in an effort to acquire and to maintain peace with the government.

Intelligent and socially conscious Adventists in Germany supported and praised a despot responsible for the deaths of many millions.

Over a thousand Adventists were disfellowshipped in Hungary because they opposed the church's move into ecumenical fellowship.

Righteousness by faith in America was turned into unrighteousness by leadership decree, as seen in the General Conference's reaction to issues raised by Elders Weiland and Short. Sacred funds were invested in stocks and in financial schemes, and unequal pay for equal work was the accepted standard.

Beauty was turned into ashes, joy into mourning, and praise into heaviness. The mighty fell, and the church resembled a daughter.

But not all Adventists in Germany supported the Third Reich. In December 1941, Pastor Karl Harress held public lectures for the annual week of prayer. Unnoticed by him, three undercover Gestapo agents were sitting in the audience pretending interest. At the end of one lecture, they arrested him. After intense interrogation, Harress admitted his opposition to the Nazi regime. In February 1942, the same month and year as the fire on the SS *Normandie*, he was convicted and transferred to the Sachsenhausen Oranienburg concentration camp. Though severely weak, he was ordered to clean sidewalks with a toothbrush. Many times he collapsed unconscious. Soon he was transferred to the concentration camp of Gross-Rosen in Lower Silesia (Poland) and forced to labor in a granite quarry. Harress managed to send short letters home and in one wrote that he refused to use the greeting Heil Hitler. Five months after his first internment, Karl Harress died. (Adapted from Daniel Heinz, "The Legacy of Adventist Martyrs in Europe," *The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*.)

Adventists suffered particularly hard in the Soviet Union during persecutions ordered by Stalin. Entire congregations were wiped out. About 70% of all preachers and church leaders were killed. Nearly 3,000 to 4,000 church



The concentration camp of Gross-Rosen

members, about one fourth of the Soviet Adventist membership, lost their lives due to persecution, hunger, and detention in labor camps. (Ibid.)



Karl Harress

gather our crops on the Sabbath nor send our children to school on that sacred day. We hold dear the great truths given the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the first fifty years of its growth, including the perpetuity of the law of God and the ministry of our great high priest in the heavenly sanctuary and his sanctifying work in our lives, preparing us for the end of the greatest of all controversies.

One hundred thirty years ago the first Seventh-day Adventist camp meeting in the southern hemisphere was held in Napier, New Zealand. On Friday Ellen White left Auckland, New Zealand, by steamer, and on Sabbath the ship cast anchor in Gisborne. The brethren of the Adventist group, including W. C. White, went ashore to visit the church members. Sabbath school was in progress, and they were invited to speak. What do you think they shared? The many evidences that the coming of the Lord was drawing nigh. (See Ellen White, “The New Zealand Camp-Meeting,” *The Bible Echo*, June 1, 1893.) What could the many evidences have been in 1893? Perhaps the World’s Fair that opened in Chicago, Illinois, for which a national Sunday law had been introduced into Congress. Or the crash of the New York Stock Exchange and the panic of 1893 that resulted in many banks and a thousand businesses closing, causing high unemployment and the proliferation of free soup kitchens. Or perhaps it was the mysterious sinking of the SS *Naronic* and other sea disasters.

During the camp meeting in New Zealand, theological issues which had the potential of causing division among God’s people were present on many minds. One of them was the teaching of phrenology—a theory that the bumps on and the shape of the head were a predictor of traits of character and of mental abilities, and it was popular to have one’s head read. The shape of the skull was thought to be indicative of a criminal mind, for example, or of a maternal

But everybody learns and grows. Perhaps things are changing in the twenty-first century. Perhaps ashes are turning back into beauty and heaviness into joy because here we are in the twentieth-first century at our first camp meeting of a union of churches based on the historic Adventist beliefs of 1889. We are true Seventh-day Adventists. We would never

mind, or of a low-functioning mind, which led to the spiritualistic thinking that one had no real control over one’s thoughts and actions. It was anatomy that mattered. This so-called science resulted in the juxtaposition between the power of God to form holy characters, with man’s cooperation, and the so-called power of anatomy. Such teachings are to be avoided:

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: (1 Timothy 6:20)

Satan uses so-called scientific problems to deceive:

Yesterday I suffered all day with heartache as I thought of how Satan is working to gain entrance to every mind that is open to his devisings. He will use his artifice as he used it among the heavenly angels, presenting his scientific problems to deceive . . . (Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 6, p. 6.2; all emphasis supplied in this article unless otherwise noted)

Sin is a product of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16), and these impact on how we reason. We read above that Satan will present scientific problems in order to deceive. Satan has planned his temptations not only to address unholy emotions and desires, but also to capture our intellect. Eve looked at the forbidden tree as a means of gaining wisdom, and Satan has equal temptations for us. Satan presents quandaries which have no easy answers. He presents, for example, uncertainties about interpretation of Scripture, dilemmas about spiritual things that God has chosen not to reveal, and perplexities about the choice of words used by inspired writers.

Another issue addressed at the New Zealand camp meeting was that of higher criticism. An example of higher criticism concerns biblical authorship. Did Moses really write the book of Genesis, for example? And what about the book of Daniel? It was written, so higher critics say, after the rise of the kingdoms it portrays; therefore, Daniel could not have written it and thus it is not a book of prophecy. By the time of the New Zealand camp meeting in 1893, proponents of higher criticism in the world’s theological circles were many, and its popularity was growing within Adventist circles.

To illustrate the rise of higher criticism, consider the reports in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* on Noah’s ark over the years, starting with the first edition published during 1768–1771. A long article was written in the first edition quoting Scripture but also questioning the accuracy of Scripture because the dimensions of the ark were deemed inadequate to hold all the creatures and their food. The *Encyclopædia Britannica*, however, appealed to the French

mathematician, Johannes Buteo, and to the German scholar, Athanasius Kircher. Both had calculated the dimensions of the ark and had demonstrated its size to be more than adequate. The encyclopedia also referred to Snellius, a mathematician and scientist who computed the ark to have been more than an half acre in size, and the article stood as written for eighty-four years until 1852, when it became much shorter in length but still voiced the concern about the apparent insufficient size of the ark. This time the problem was solved not by Buteo, Kircher, and Snellius but by simply stating the flood was not worldwide, so the number of animals was less. This is higher critical thinking—placing eisegesis above the inspired word of God. In 1877 there was no article at all; instead, one sentence re-directed readers to the topic entitled “Deluge,” which reported on deluge accounts across civilizations, starting with Babylon, and stated: “It is possible, therefore, to hold that the Jewish story is a distinct offshoot of a common Semitic tradition. Bolder critics will maintain that the account in Genesis must be taken in connection with the other narratives which can be explained by, and are therefore possibly dependent upon, parallel Babylonian narratives” (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. 7, p. 55; 1877).

And there we have it—an example of the progressive ascendancy of higher criticism. Let us return now to 1893 and the camp meeting in New Zealand. How did they handle the issue of higher criticism of the Bible? The spiritual leaders provided lessons and a sermon on the the topic, and they exalted the Bible and stressed the importance of knowing its riches of wisdom and power.

Two years earlier Ellen White had warned that the Bible had been placed in the background and that the sayings of so-called great men had taken its place:

The Bible has been placed in the background, while the sayings of great men, so-called, have been taken in its stead. May the Lord forgive us the slight we have put upon his word. Though inestimable treasures are in the Bible, and it is like a mine full of precious ore, it is not valued, it is not searched, and its riches are not discovered. Mercy and truth and love are valuable beyond our power to calculate; we cannot have too great a supply of these treasures, and it is in the word of God we find out how we may become possessors of these heavenly riches . . . (Ellen White, *The Review & Herald*, November 24, 1891, par. 5; also *Christian Education*, p. 80.1)

Who were the men considered to be great? She did not say, but whoever they were and whoever they are today, we know Jesus spoke as never any of them have spoken or speak (John 7:46), so however intelligent and wise they were or are, Jesus is more intelligent and more wise. Were

he to withdraw his beams of light, intelligence, and wisdom from us, we would be left in the darkness of eternal night.

You may have wished that your parents guided you as a child into certain attainments, such as playing an instrument skillfully, or in gaining expert knowledge in certain academic fields, but whatever you have missed or whatever knowledge of which you may be ignorant, if you accept by simple faith the pardon offered at infinite cost, then you are more wise than the most accomplished of godless men. Jesus saw us ignorant, separated from him and from the Father, “standing under the penalty of the broken law, and he came to bring deliverance, to offer a complete pardon, signed by the Majesty of heaven” (Ellen White, *Christian Education*, p. 78.1). This is amazing grace!

We come to camp meeting to grow closer to God and to grow in grace. We want to be like our heavenly Father and like our Saviour, Jesus Christ. We want to have their character. This is why we are here. We are willing to leave comfortable homes and camp, maybe in the rain, just to sit at the feet of Jesus and to drink in the sunshine of his presence. In so doing, pain is soothed, grief is comforted, indecision and confusion are guided, and rebellion is quelled.

Christ is the Instructor of His people. He would have them sit at His feet as little children and learn the lessons that are so essential for them to know. (Ellen White, *Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 3, Ms 89, 1898, par. 4)

Camp meeting is also a time of contemplation, of heart-searching, and of decision-making, and hopefully no one will return home with a burden still on the heart or with an unanswered question still weighing on the mind. Jesus wants to lift every burden and untangle every perplexity.

I do not remember who spoke at a camp meeting decades ago or about any sermon preached. I do not remember the theme of the meetings. I do not even remember where it was held. I was a young adult staying in a tent set up by the conference when a pastor came down my row, stopping at each tent to visit. And so he arrived at my doorstep, a pleasant, older person possessing an old, established faith, stopping to chat with a young person in possession of a young, untested faith. He could sense I wasn’t going to share any concern or ask for prayer—we were strangers—so he told me a story instead.

He was piloting a small aircraft, and he needed to land. The airport was beneath him, that he knew, but he could not see the landing strip, for dark, heavy clouds engulfed him. He continued to search for a break in the clouds, but nothing. His fuel was low, and he knew if he didn’t land soon, he faced certain death. So he prayed and asked God to open the clouds for him, and it happened. A circle of

light opened in front of him, he could see the runway, and down he safely went. “God answered my prayer and saved my life, and I’ve been thankful ever since,” he said, as he waved and walked on, smiling a genuine smile of love for his Redeemer, a love that spilled over into my path. His faith became part of my faith, and now I, too, have an old, enduring faith. When everything seems hemmed in with no way out, God will part the clouds so you can see your way to safety. Nothing is too hard for him.

Colossians 2 is about our heavenly Father and our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and it is addressed to us, in addition to those at Colosse and at Laodicea, for we are part of that group that has not seen the face of Paul. In the first thirteen verses, Paul makes fourteen points about Jesus and about our heavenly Father, but we will only be able to focus on verses 9–11:

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: (Colossians 2:9–11)

Let me reread these verses with a few words changed, allowed for by the Greek:

For in him dwelleth all the completeness of the deity bodily. Likewise ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and authority: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, stripping away or removing from the body the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.

Simply put, this is perfection of character. Perfection of character is what it means to be complete in Christ, but Adventists today who believe in perfection of character are rare and are even rarer in the larger field of Christianity. Methodists believe in perfection, although it is rarely preached by them, and so do Quakers, but that is about all.

Let us review a few of the texts in Scripture that command us to be perfect.

God’s command to Abram was to be perfect:

I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. (Genesis 17:1)

Moses instructed the Israelites to be perfect:

Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God. (Deuteronomy 18:13)

Solomon also instructed the Israelites to be perfect:

Let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day. (1 Kings 8:61)

Noah and Job are referred to as being perfect, King Asa’s heart was perfect, and Abram’s belief in God was counted as righteousness.

Jesus commands us to be perfect:

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)

And he told the rich, young ruler:

... If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me. (Matthew 19:21)

James counsels us to be perfect, wanting nothing:

But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. (James 1:4)

Paul and Epaphras also state we are to stand perfect:

Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. (Colossians 4:12)

Ellen White clearly makes perfection of character equal to being complete in Christ:

Are we striving with all our power to attain to the stature of men and women in Christ? Are we seeking for His fullness, ever pressing toward the mark set before us—the perfection of His character? *When the Lord’s people reach this mark*, they will be sealed in their foreheads. Filled with the Spirit, *they will be complete in Christ*, and the recording angel will declare, “It is finished.” (Ellen White, *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 216.5)

All heaven is interested in *the restoration of the moral image of God in man*. All heaven is working to this end. God and the holy angels have an intense desire that human beings shall reach *the standard of perfection* which Christ died to make it possible for them to reach. It is His desire that we shall be one with Christ, *complete in Christ*, that we shall be heirs of heaven; but we are left free to choose. (Ellen White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 285.5)

To create the soul anew, to bring light out of darkness, love out of enmity, holiness out of impurity, is the work of Omnipotence alone. The work of the Infinite, as He engages, by the consent of the human being, *to make the life complete in Christ, to bring perfection to the charac-*

ter, is the science of eternity. (Ellen White, *My Life Today*, p. 340.3)

But if we constantly seek to follow Jesus, the blessed hope is ours of standing before the throne of God *without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; complete in Christ*, robed in His righteousness and perfection. (Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 355.4)



C. H. Watson

or her sacred duty to make an unblemished character. It is not your first duty to be intellectual, but it is your first and fullest duty to possess a spotless character.

... That we should develop a character without blemish is a truth that is written indelibly in the gospel; a truth that is written large upon all that is true in life; a truth that is inscribed in all that is noble of human aspiration; and to deny it is to drift along with events until the star of our destiny falls from the heavens and goes out in the blackness of Sodom. (C. H. Watson, “The Value and Power of Character,” *Australasian Record*, September 29, 1919)

We are to regain our perfection:

Every facility has been placed in reach by our Heavenly Father, that men may, through well-directed efforts, *regain their perfection*, and stand *complete in Christ*. (Ellen White, “The True Higher Education,” *Union Conference Record*, May 31, 1909, par. 2; also *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, February 17, 1909, par. 2)

And this perfection is to be in the smallest details:

In order that the earthly tabernacle might represent the heavenly, it must be perfect in all its parts, and it must be, **in every smallest detail**, like the pattern in the

heavens. So it is with the characters of those who are finally accepted in the sight of heaven.

The Son of God came down to this earth that in Him men and women might have a representation of **the perfect characters which alone God could accept**. Through the grace of Christ every provision has been made for the salvation of the human family. It is possible for **every transaction** entered into by those who claim to be Christians to be as pure as the deeds of Christ. (Ellen White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 60.2)

John Wesley believed that the concept of full sanctification was the reason God had raised him and the Methodists up, but Methodism rarely promotes it today. Likewise, we have a certainty from the Bible and from the Spirit of Prophecy that character perfection is the achievable goal of Christians, but it is also not promoted and, in fact, is usually proclaimed as impossible to achieve before glorification since sin is supposedly our nature and since we will continue to have this nature until Jesus returns. However, under inspiration, Ellen White explains that Christ’s righteousness is both imputed and imparted to us, and we have read that we are to become like Christ in character now:

... Christ actually bore the punishment of the sins of the world that His righteousness might be imputed to sinners, **and** that through repentance and faith they might become like Him in holiness of character.

... **Man must co-operate with divine power, and put forth his human effort to subdue sin, and to stand complete in Christ**. Christ’s work was to restore man to his original state, to heal him, through divine power. Man’s part is to lay hold by faith of the merits of Christ, **and** co-operate with the divine agencies in forming a righteous character. It was thus that God could save the sinner, and yet be just and His righteous law vindicated. (Ellen White, *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, February 17, 1909, par. 3, 4)

Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to **impart** to us. . . . By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God’s commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. **THIS is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness**. Then as the Lord looks upon us, He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedi-

ence to the law of Jehovah. (Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 311.4)

A godly character is of more value than the possession of gold and earthly riches. It is of more value than a college education or any formal education, and it is of more value than an highly esteemed position or a powerful influence. Being truthful, upright, virtuous, honorable, and gifted with the presence of the Spirit of God is true worth and true power and is cherished by the faithful of God's remnant and not the wisdom of the world, the traditions of men, the foolish deceptions, and the principles of worldly practices. To value the first is one of the steps in standing complete in Christ, to cherish the second is always, always to be incomplete.

But the question is often asked, how perfect is perfect? And what does Jesus mean when he tells us to be perfect? I wish we could discuss each verse quoted earlier, but we do not have time, so we will focus on the one that is most familiar to us—Matthew 5:48. The Greek word translated *perfect* in this verse is *teleios* and is used nineteen times in the New Testament, seventeen of which are translated *perfect*. It has the meaning of perfection, of completeness, and of lacking nothing, and we know this does not mean being mature, as some teach, because *teleios* is also used in the same verse to describe God. Is God mature? Maturity has a sense of growth implied. I may be mature today, but in a year I hope to be more mature, and near the end of my life, I would hope to be most mature, if cognitive illness does not intervene, but this cannot be said of God. Today, in the past, and in the future God is the same. He is, always has been, and always will be complete, lacking nothing.

In one place in Scripture *teleios* is translated *full age*. Age also implies a sense of growth. Is God of full age? Has he grown? No, he is ageless, although he is called the Ancient of Days three times in Daniel 7. The word *ancient* implies a movement from youth to being ancient, but the Hebrew phrase *Ancient of Days* does not imply age or growth; instead, it is a title of respect, honor and veneration. In fact, the New Jerusalem Bible translates the phrase *one most venerable*. Let us go back to the phrase *full age* and read Hebrews 5:14, the place in Scripture where it is used:

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age [*teleios*], even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:14)

Let us now add verses 10 and 11 for context:

Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. (Hebrews 5:10–11)

The Hebrews of Paul's day were dull of hearing. The Greek word for *dull* is *nōthros*, which means *lazy, sluggish, slothful*. Picture the movement of a sloth. This is the way the Hebrew's mind moved when considering Christ and his work, the most important topic in the world to us. They were not perfect or complete in their knowledge, and Paul wanted them to be. He chided them because they were not, and we also must not be slothful. Many in the Adventist world do not want to hear about perfection because they are dull of hearing the hard words needed to be uttered. The phrase *hard to be uttered* in the Greek means hard to explain, hard to interpret, hard to utter. Because the idea of perfection is hard to explain, it is sometimes quickly tossed aside because it is thought to be synonymous with legalism. This can happen for a number of reasons—perhaps those doing so do not know the love of God and of his Son, Jesus; or they may not know the power God so generously offers us to overcome and the peace that passeth understanding that follows; or they may have not experienced the great joy found in both heaven and earth in obeying God. The angels in heaven experience this joy:

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells . . . (White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 109.2)

It is a great joy because God makes it so—all glory goes to him—and it becomes legalism when we try to accomplish it on our own, which never works and which becomes a grinding, dreadful, unachievable task because we do not have the fellowship of him who has invited us to come unto him:

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

When we think of the suffering of Christ, we probably first think of the cross and of the events surrounding his death, including the mental anguish caused by the withdrawal of his Father's presence and rightly so. We may not be called upon to suffer in a similar way, but we might. Jesus also suffered because of the reproach of others. Their taunts and insults, their misrepresentations, their rejection of his truth and mercy, and their lack of faith in him all caused him to suffer. And then he suffered because of self-

denial. It is not easy to deny self. It is not easy to put the good of others first and always. It is not easy to be like Isaac on the altar, who trusted God to raise him up again, or to be like John the Baptist in a lonely cell:

And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. (Luke 9:23)

God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon. "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." Philippians 1:29. And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor. (Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 224.5)

Many Christians, instead, choose a life centered on self, on ease and pleasure, and on finding fulfillment in the things of this world. God says through Isaiah:

I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way *that was* not good, after their own thoughts. (Isaiah 65:2)

But this need not be. God has promised to make a way of escape when we want to go our own way and follow temptation, and to give us strength, for nothing is too hard for him:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. (Psalm 18:32)

I can do all things through Christ which strengthen me. (Philippians 4:13)

Behold, I *am* the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me? (Jeremiah 32:27)

He has also promised to change us:

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do

them. . . . I will also save you from all your uncleanness: (Ezekiel 36:26–27, 29)

Chiang Kai-shek had a highly esteemed position and a powerful influence, and this is what it seems he valued most. He had four wives, promising one in a Buddhist temple that he would not divorce her but then sent her to the United States and divorced her while she was gone. He sought Soviet support for his government, worked out back-room deals with world leaders during World War II, and ordered at least one massacre and one assassination; yet, he claimed to be a Christian. He attended part of the Christmas Day program at the Government Institute for the Sons and Daughters of the Revolution near Nanking, China, a school run by Seventh-day Adventist Paul Quimby. Partway through the program, the curtains on stage closed, and Chiang Kai-shek walked onto the stage. In a calm and subdued voice he began to tell the students the wonderful story of Jesus. Quimby wrote of the experience this way:

Beginning with His birth, he traced that holy life through His years of service, His ministry to the poor and the sick; then he described the events of Passion Week, His unjust trial, His crucifixion, His death, resurrection, and ascension. The beautiful language flowed like a shining river, bearing on its bosom the glorious news. No one who heard the Generalissimo that day could doubt his personal experience with Christ.

Standing there in all the majesty of his position and the humility of a disciple, he made his final appeal. "Christ died for my sins and for your sins. He was nailed to the cross for my sins and for yours. He is my Saviour, and He is your Saviour."

I had risen from my place and had gone to the rear of the auditorium to stand beside one of the bodyguards. I felt the emotion of the whole vast audience during the final appeal. Then I looked up at the strong, hard man—a tough and determined soldier—beside me. Tears flowed down his face. The Generalissimo's appeal had reached his heart. It had reached mine and without doubt many others in that enormous crowd. (Paul Quimby, *Yankee on the Yangtze*, pp. 130, 131)

Was he a Christian? Only God knows, but certainly his known actions contradicted his profession of faith, which could be said of all of us, but our goal is reformation of these actions. His contradictory actions, unfortunately, continued after this school event, but maybe all he thought a Christian had to do was to believe and that perfection of character in this lifetime was not necessary.

Continued on page 12

Camp Meeting Report

By Winnie Anderson

These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. (John 15:11)

Unbounded joy, peace, inspiration, love permeated every aspect of the camp meeting in Fall Creek Falls State Park in Tennessee held May 16–21. The quiet, forested setting of the campsite invited peace and harmony with our Creator and our fellow believers. Every message presented gave a clear understanding of various aspects of the camp meeting theme, “Complete In Christ,” with one speaker giving evidence we can be complete in Christ because Christ, Himself, is complete. The music we enjoyed during our meetings was beautiful. There were solos, duets, a choir, a men’s chorus, as well as congregational singing, all accompanied by capable accompanists. There was much musical talent among the attendees.

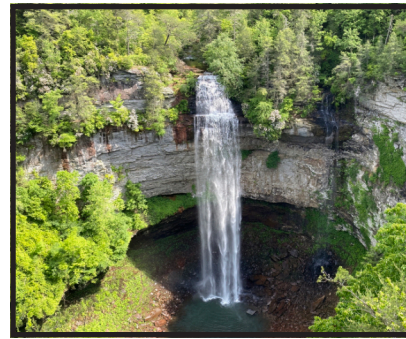


Sheri Yohe leading the choir

Repast was bountifully set before us twice daily, with a light evening meal for those who desired such. Every meal was well balanced and nourishing. The kitchen staff was sensational.



Kitchen help taking a break



Fall Creek Falls

the short journey to Fall Creek Falls, itself, at least once. The beauty and serenity of the falls was worth the time to go see it.

We had a baptism in a small lake near our campsite. What a joy and blessing to witness, during a brief rain shower, a precious soul surrender their entire being to our Redeemer in the midst of God’s beautiful nature.



Visiting Fall Creek Falls

All of these blessings that we enjoyed during camp meeting were compounded by the fellowship with other campers and like believers. Old friendships were renewed and new acquaintances made. The presence of the Holy Spirit was definitely experienced during camp meeting. We are so privileged to have been called into the family of God. With certainty, I believe I can say every attendee will agree being at the first 1889 HSDA camp meeting was worth every effort, and if there is a next year, by God’s grace, may everyone join us in the 2024 HSDA camp meeting that our “joy might be full.”

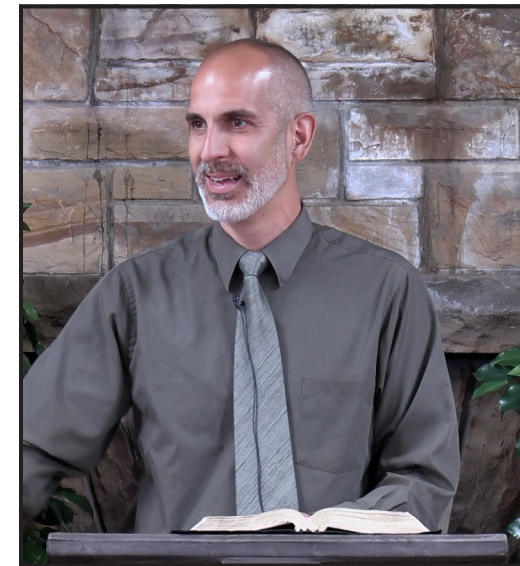
Editor’s Note: The meetings were all recorded, and several are posted already with the rest to follow soon. You may view the current video play list by scanning this code:



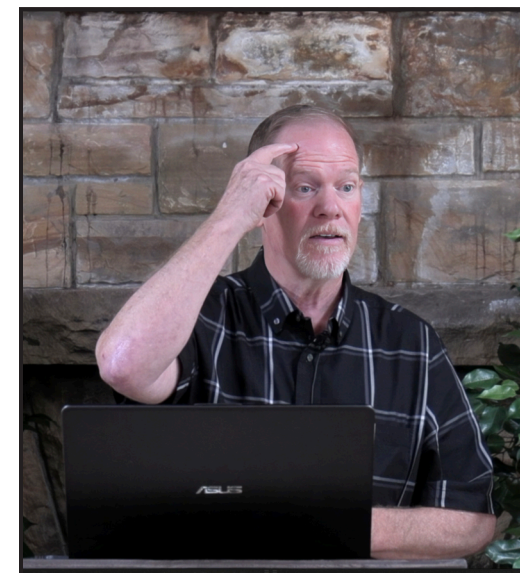
Our lodging was rustic, but charming and quite adequate. Sleeping at Fall Creek Falls was very refreshing—so quiet and peaceful. I believe most campers made



Pastor Jean-Christophe Bolotte



Pastor Daniel Mesa



Pastor Martin Barlow



Learning how to bind an arm



Learning how to transport an injured person



Congregation

“Almost Home,” continued from page 9

There are many who fail to understand the relation of faith and works. They say, “Only believe in Christ, and you are safe. You have nothing to do with keeping the law.” But genuine faith will be manifest in obedience. (Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 153.4)

Seventh-day Adventism was formed by simple folk like you and me under the guidance of God. No theologians were involved; no high-ranking or influential people joined the ranks. Early Adventists were just home-grown people who could read their Bibles and reason and who had a hungering and a thirsting for truth, so it always amazes me to read the words of current, intelligent Adventist theologians obscuring issues that should be plain to all. For example, in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, we read:

Even after conversion, sin besets Christians, making it possible for them to fall. In such cases there is an Advocate who can represent the sinner before God and through whom one can be forgiven. (Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “The Sanctuary,” *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Raoul Dederen ed., p. 393)

It is the first sentence upon which we wish to focus. Rodríguez is writing that sin persistently threatens Christians, making it possible for them to sin. In other words, transgressing the law threatens Christians, making it possible for them to transgress the law, but transgressing the law does not make you transgress the law. This is doublespeak and makes no sense and, of course, cannot be what Rodríguez means. Most likely he is saying that since sin is one’s nature, it constantly threatens the Christian, making it possible for the Christian to commit sin, and we now find ourselves in a theological maze about what sin is—our nature or our actions—but it doesn’t have to be so if we accept the only definition given in the Bible for sin—the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4).

In another article in the *Handbook*, we are told:

The predominant biblical view of the nature and essence of sin is that of personal estrangement from God. As such, it is relational at its core and rebellious in its expression. . . . It is an act as well as a state. (John M. Fowler, “Sin,” *Handbook*, p. 244)

How did the Adventist denomination move from believing sin to be the transgression of the law to believing it to be a state of being? It all started with a theory called original sin.

Ralph Larson, an Adventist pastor in the 1970s, stated in a Sabbath sermon:

The doctrine of Original Sin is an ancient error which has historically had no place at all in Seventh day Adventist theology, or in the writing of Ellen White . . .

Stated briefly and simply, the doctrine of Original Sin includes these points:

1. All men are guilty before God because of the sins of Adam, even if it were possible for them to live without performing a single sinful act in their entire lives.

2. They are judged and condemned by God for this guilt, which they inherit from Adam as fully as for their own sins.

3. This condition which is inherited from Adam is the fountain or source of all their temptations, lusts, and evil desires.

4. It is not possible for man to get rid of this condition while he lives upon this earth, even through the power of Christ.

5. It is therefore utterly impossible for men to ever achieve complete victory over sin while living upon this earth, and it is dangerous for them to try.

6. Since it would be impossible for Christ to be a saviour if the inheritance of Original sin passed to Him from Mary, a variety of theological schemes have been introduced to prevent this from happening. (Ralph Larson, “Who Needs Original Sin?”; [http://www.sdafend.com/MINDEX-N-O/Original sin.pdf](http://www.sdafend.com/MINDEX-N-O/Original%20sin.pdf))

Larson went on to state:

. . . the doctrine of Original Sin firmly rules out the possibility of a total victory over sin by any human being, with or without the enabling power of Christ. The Spirit of Prophecy totally, disagrees. Within its pages, the goal of character perfection through the power of Jesus Christ is constantly held before the reader. It never recommends a partial solution to the problem of sin. (Ibid.)

And this is where the concept that sin is our nature originates and with it the belief that we can never overcome sin in this life. It was a new, startling concept in Adventism in 1978 when Ralph Larson preached this sermon in the Campus Hill Adventist Church in Loma Linda, California, but in 2023, only forty-five years later, it is thoroughly engrained in Adventist thinking, despite the fact that it has no biblical or Spirit of Prophecy support. (You can read his explanation of the texts used to support original sin at the sermon link given above and in Appendix C in his book *The Word Was Made Flesh*.)

In the 1,027 pages of the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, you will not find doctrinal support for

perfection of character other than, possibly, it should be our aim, unattainable though it is thought to be. Remember, the Spirit of Prophecy and the Bible never support a partial goal of perfection, a just-do-whatever-you-can approach, for this kind of thinking discredits God’s ability to help all of us become new creatures in Christ. In the *Handbook*, however, you will find the following from Dr. Fowler about perfection:

The fixation on perfection arose from early Adventist identification of themselves with the 144,000 of Revelation 14:1; 7:4, a special group who are said to be spotless and blameless. This, in combination with the NT eschatological goal that at the end of time God will have a church “without spot or wrinkle or any such thing” (Eph 5:27), led some Adventists to argue for perfection *here on earth*. (Fowler, “Sin,” *Handbook*, p. 265)

And Fowler closed the section with a short quotation from page 678 of *The Great Controversy* about when the universe beats with one pulse of harmony because sin is no more. Sadly, he does not tell us what is required for those who live through the time of Jacob’s trouble to be part of that vast harmonious universe—perfection of character:

Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father’s commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage. **This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.**

It is in this life that we are to separate sin from us, through faith in the atoning blood of Christ. Our precious Saviour invites us to join ourselves to Him, to unite our weakness to His strength, our ignorance to His wisdom, our unworthiness to His merits. God’s providence is the school in which we are to learn the meekness and lowliness of Jesus. The Lord is ever setting before us, not the way we would choose, which seems easier and pleasanter to us, but the true aims of life. It rests with us to co-operate with the agencies which Heaven employs in the work of conforming our characters to the divine model. (Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 623.1, .2)

In 1909 Ellen White presented a sermon on Sabbath morning at the San Jose Adventist Church in California, focusing on perfection and overcoming, and here are some thoughts she shared at that time:

It is not enough that now and then you offer a prayer and now and then you deal righteously. You are to have the attributes of an abiding Christ working out in your life **constantly**. How many of us have this experience?

Yet we may have it; and having it, we will be the happiest people on the face of the earth. With Christ’s Word abiding in us, we shall give evidence that we have wholly received Him who in His humanity lived a sinless life. **In the strength of divinity we shall overcome every tendency to evil.** (Ellen White, *Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 24, Ms 97, 1909, par. 9)

It is only the overcoming Christian who will reach the kingdom of heaven. May God help us in this matter, is my prayer. (Ibid., par. 11)

Christ took humanity and bore the hatred of the world that He might show men and women that **they could live without sin**, that their words, their actions, their spirit, might be sanctified to God. **We can be perfect Christians** if we will manifest this power in our lives. (Ibid., par. 18)

There are some among us who refuse to purify their souls by obedience to the truth, and they bring forward their sophistries to show that those who adhere strictly to a “Thus saith the Lord” **are altogether too particular. They seek to divert the mind from** purity and truth and holiness and **the development of Christian character**; but such souls stand on Satan’s side of the question. (Ibid., par. 19)

. . . Shall those who refuse to be converted, reject the right of entrance through the gates into the city, **charge God with severity and harshness?** (Ibid., par. 20).

In the life of Christ a perfect pattern has been given to every child of humanity. From infancy to manhood the life of Christ was perfect, teaching us that **in everything we should seek perfection**. To His work at His father’s bench, He brought the same principle. Some would laugh at Him for the pains He would take; but He would not be turned from His purpose *to bring out of that which was imperfect something that would stand the test of proving*. (Ibid., par. 22)

Jiří Moskala, the dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Berrien Springs, Michigan, has written:

When our names are called during the pre-Advent judgment, Jesus as the True Witness of our lives presents our principal choices, deep convictions, and life orientation before the universe’s representatives (Daniel 7:9, 10, 13, 14). (Jiří Moskala, “Misinterpreted End-Time Issues: Five Myths in Adventism,” *God’s Character and the Last Generation*, Jiří Moskala, John C. Peckham, eds., Kindle location 7864)

First of all, evidence is presented to the Ancient of Days by Jesus Christ, sometimes contested by Satan, and the Ancient of Days makes the decision. Holy beings of the universe are present to witness the proceedings, as far as we know, but not as the jury, as could be implied from his statement. As far as stating that Jesus presents for each case principal choices, deep convictions, and life orientation, the Bible simply states we are judged by our works:

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. (Revelation 20:12–13; see also Ecclesiastes 12:14; 2 Corinthians 5:10)

And the works reviewed are not just the “principal” ones:

Could the veil which separates the visible from the invisible world be swept back, and the children of men behold an angel recording every word and deed to meet them again in the Judgment, how many words that are daily uttered would remain unspoken; how many deeds would remain undone. When all the details of life appear in the books that never contain a false entry, many will find too late that the record testifies against them. There their hidden selfishness stands revealed. There is the record of unfulfilled duties to their fellow-men, of forgetfulness of the Saviour’s claims. There they will see how often were given to Satan the time, thought, and strength that belonged to Christ. Sad is the record which angels bear to Heaven. Intelligent beings, professed followers of Christ, are absorbed in the acquirement of worldly possessions or the enjoyment of earthly pleasures. Money, time, and strength are sacrificed for display and self-indulgence; but few are the moments devoted to prayer, to the searching of the Scriptures, to humiliation of soul and confession of sin. (Ellen White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 312.1)

I have seen an angel standing with scales in his hands weighing the thoughts and interest of the people of God, especially the young. In one scale were the thoughts and interest tending heavenward; in the other were the thoughts and interest tending to earth. And in this scale were thrown all the reading of storybooks, thoughts of dress and show, vanity, pride, etc. Oh, what a solemn moment! the angels of God standing with scales, weighing the thoughts of His professed children—those who

claim to be dead to the world and alive to God. The scale filled with thoughts of earth, vanity, and pride quickly went down, notwithstanding weight after weight rolled from the scale. The one with the thoughts and interest tending to heaven went quickly up as the other went down, and oh, how light it was. I can relate this as I saw it; but never can I give the solemn and vivid impression stamped upon my mind, as I saw the angel with the scales weighing the thoughts and interest of the people of God. Said the angel: “Can such enter heaven? No, no, never. Tell them the hope they now possess is vain, and unless they speedily repent, and obtain salvation, they must perish.” (Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 124.2)

Moskala continues:

If we are found hidden “in Christ,” then our destiny is sealed with the seal of the Living God, and we will be protected from the seven last plagues and be ready for the second coming of Christ. (Moskala, *Last Generation*, Kindle location 7864)

Paul tells us in Galatians 2:20 that Christ lived in him and in Philippians 2:7 that we are to have the mind of Christ. Whether this is what Moskala means by hiding in Christ, we are not told, and we will discuss this in more detail soon, but as far as the sealing of our destiny is concerned, in the investigative judgment it is our record that determines our sealing, a record that reveals repentance and forgiveness or the lack thereof. But in addition, a special work of purification is to be accomplished among God’s people during this time of investigation. It is only when this special work of purification is completed that the followers of Christ will be ready for the second coming:

Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort, they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. While the investigative Judgment is going forward in Heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, **there is to be a special work of purification**, of putting away of sin, among God’s people upon earth.

When this work shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ will be ready for His appearing. . . . **Then** the church which our Lord at His coming is to receive to Himself will be a “glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Ephesians 5:27. (White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 425.1, .2)

The dean of the seminary never mentions this special work of purification nor sins being removed from the heavenly sanctuary. Why? Again, he does not say, but understanding the correct definition of sin is crucial to comprehending both the special work of purification and the investigative judgment. If one understands sin to be one’s nature and not the transgression of the law, as the Bible states, then no special work of purification can be done before the return of Jesus.

The time period after Jesus leaves the sanctuary and before his return is known as the time of Jacob’s trouble, and Ellen White compares this time to the experience of Jacob wrestling with the angel. It will be a time of intercession, pleading, and petitioning by God’s people and a time of affliction of soul:

[God’s people] *afflict* their souls before God . . . they do not cease their *intercessions*. . . . Like Jacob, all are wrestling with God. Their countenances express their internal struggle. Paleness sits upon every face. Yet they cease not their earnest *intercession*. . . . the wrestling ones urge their *petitions* before God . . . *pleading* for divine protection. (White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, pp. 437.1, 446.2, 449.2, 452.1)

Do you remember the story of the pilot and the parting of the clouds? God’s people at this time experience their own parting of the clouds:

Through a rift in the clouds, there beams a star whose brilliancy is increased fourfold in contrast with the darkness. It speaks hope and joy to the faithful, but severity and wrath to the transgressors of God’s law. Those who have sacrificed all for Christ **are now** secure, hidden as in the secret of the Lord’s pavilion. (Ibid., p. 456.1)

And **this** is the meaning of being hidden in Christ. Yes, God’s people are sealed at the close of probation, but there still remains a work that must be done in their lives—the removal of earthliness:

Their affliction is great, the flames of the furnace seem about to consume them; but the Refiner will bring them forth as gold tried in the fire. God’s love for his children during the period of their severest trial is as strong and tender as in the days of their sunniest prosperity; but it is needful for them to be placed in the furnace fire; their **earthliness** must be removed that the image of Christ may be perfectly reflected. (Ibid., p. 438.1)

When this is done, they are secure and hidden in the secret of the Lord’s pavilion. It is a shame Moskala never explains this hiding in Christ. It is not when their names “are

called during the pre-Advent judgment” (Moskala, Kindle 7859) at which time they are sealed and are hidden in Christ, as he states, but it is after their sealing and after their wrestling, interceding, and pleading with God that they are hidden in the secret of the Lord’s pavilion.

Jean Zurcher taught at the Adventist Seminary in Colonges-sous-Salève, France, during World War II and later became a recognized Adventist theologian. He was on the board of the Ellen G. White Estate, wrote for the Biblical Research Institute, and was a delegate to the 1980 General Conference Session in Dallas, Texas, at which time he was nominated and approved to be the secretary of the Euro-Africa Division, and at which time he is not on record as challenging any of the changes made in the fundamental principles. He has authored a book on perfection, in which he wrote, concerning Ellen White:

In spite of certain expressions that seem absolute, some of which people have used to draw wrong conclusions from, she presents Christian perfection as an essentially relative concept. . . .

. . . a careful reading leaves no doubt concerning the relative nature of perfection in Ellen White’s mind. “All righteous attributes of character dwell in God as a perfect, harmonious whole” (COL 330). But, as we shall see, human beings do not have all of them nor have them in the same way. (J. R. Zurcher, *What Inspiration Has to Say about Christian Perfection*, p. 79)

Zurcher states we “do not have all of” the righteous attributes of character that dwell in God, but Ellen White said every one who receives Christ as a personal Saviour may have them. Let us read the context of the quotation he uses from *Christ’s Object Lessons*:

Moral perfection is required of all. Never should we lower the standard of righteousness in order to accommodate inherited or cultivated tendencies to wrong-doing. We need to understand that imperfection of character is sin. All righteous attributes of character dwell in God as a perfect, harmonious whole, and **every one who receives Christ as a personal Saviour is privileged to possess these attributes**. (Ellen White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 330.2)

Ellen White continues:



J. R. Zurcher

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

Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character. If you come to this decision, you will certainly fail of obtaining everlasting life. The impossibility lies in your own will. If you will not, then you can not overcome. The real difficulty arises from the corruption of an un-sanctified heart, and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God.

The heavenly intelligences will work with the human agent who seeks with determined faith that perfection of character which will reach out to perfection in action. To everyone engaged in this work Christ says, I am at your right hand to help you. (Ibid., p. 331.1–332.4)

The context is painfully plain. We are to overcome our defects of character. We are to obtain perfection of character. The question is will we accept Zurcher's words or the testimony of Jesus. Will we accept the clear and abundant statements of inspiration or the statements of men which say we will continue to sin until Jesus comes and that "the Biblical doctrine of perfection" is "the perfecting of a right relationship to God" (Edward Heppenstall, "Let Us Go On to Perfection," *Perfection*, p. 67 of the PDF copy)?

Let us look at another quotation from Ellen White that Zurcher uses in an attempt to discount the achievement of perfection of character. Under the heading "A completely relative perfection," he states Ellen White "presents Christian perfection as an essentially relative concept" (Zurcher, p. 79), which we noted earlier, but with this idea he uses a quotation from volume 2 of *Testimonies for the Church*. Zurcher states:

Even though we are "privileged to possess these attributes" (ibid.) by imitating our perfect and divine Example, we will never be more than a reflection of His image. "We cannot equal the pattern; but we shall not be approved of God if we do not copy it and, according to the ability which God has given, resemble it" (2T 549). **In fact, God asks each of us to do only that which we are able.** "He places every human agent under obligation to do his best. Moral perfection is required by all" (COL 330). (Zurcher, p. 79)

Again, let us read her quotation in context. In a letter written to Brother A, whom she described as a selfish and grasping minister, Ellen White wrote:

Ministers especially should know the character and works of Christ, that they may **imitate** Him; for the character and works of a true Christian are like His. He laid aside His glory, His dominion, His riches, and sought after those who were perishing in sin. He humbled Himself to our necessities, that He might exalt us to heaven. Sacrifice, self-denial, and disinterested benevolence characterized His life. He is our *pattern*. Have you, Brother A, *imitated* the Pattern? I answer: No. He is a perfect and holy example, given for us to *imitate*. **We cannot equal the pattern;** but we shall not be approved of God if we do not *copy* it and, **according to the ability which God has given, resemble** it. (White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 549.1)

The testimony to Brother A was written July 6, 1870. She reiterated some of those thoughts in 1895:

Christ is our pattern, the perfect and holy example that has been given us to follow. We can never equal the pattern; but we may imitate and resemble it according to our ability. (Ellen White, *The Review & Herald*, February 5, 1895, par. 7)

We cannot equal the pattern for the pattern is Christ, and we will never be equal to Christ, but we can imitate the pattern; we can copy it; we can resemble it. And the ability she is referring to is the ability available to every human. It is not arbitrarily or unequally supplied. All of us have the ability, through the power of Christ, to perfect our characters. We are to be perfect in our sphere as Christ is in his:

We are to perfect in our sphere as Christ is perfect in His sphere. Let us not be unconcerned regarding our responsibility to form righteous characters, but let us place ourselves under the molding influence of the Holy Spirit, that we may form characters that will reflect the divine life. (Ellen White, *Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 25, Lt 66, 1911, par. 12)

When Zurcher says "God asks each of us to do only that which we are able" in gaining character perfection, i.e. in overcoming, he implies that some are more able than others, but God is no respecter of persons. He does not give some more ability to overcome than others. We are all tempted differently, it is true. One may be strongly tempted with alcohol and another not at all, or another with theft, etc., but the point is whatever the temptation and whatever the strength of that temptation, God will give to each the power needed to overcome, if it is sought by faith; otherwise, how unfair would God be? And this is exactly what

Satan wants us to believe—that God was unfair to him and that he is also unfair to the children of men. We are victorious by faith in God and in his promises, and God will work his miracles in the unseen world to force Satan back.

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith. (1 John 5:4)

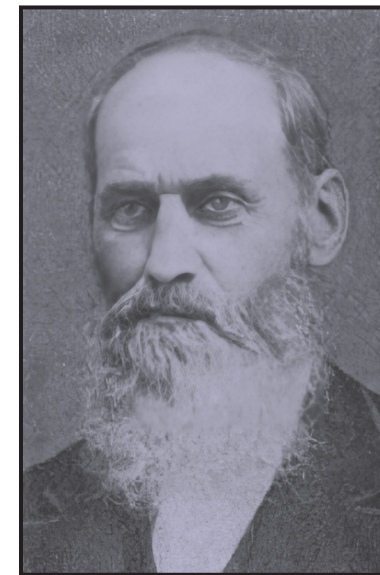
God hears our cries for help, and he has promised to answer:

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. (Jeremiah 33:3)

He shall call upon me, and **I will answer** him: *I will be* with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. (Psalm 91:15)

And it shall come to pass, that **before they call, I will answer;** And while they are yet speaking, I will hear. (Isaiah 65:24)

Perfection of character is being mystified and reworked just as the concept of God, the work of Jesus in the most holy place, the investigative judgment, and the fundamental beliefs at the 1980 General Conference session have been. Why do you think there is resistance to the perfection of character? It is because some people do not view sin as repulsive as Jesus does, and thus they do not fight it with determination. Instead, sin becomes watered down and is easily lived with, and God is considered too particular, too harsh, and too severe to require otherwise.



Roswell F. Cottrell

filling believers with solemn joy, seem very much like the beginning of the end. And we may enjoy the like in other places. God is ready to pour his Spirit upon all who are ready to receive it. His hand is not shortened. He is not a respecter of

In 1873 Roswell F. Cottrell wrote of wanting to be part of the humble few who keep the commandments of God and who have the testimony of Jesus:

The recent report of the camp-meeting in California was cheering indeed. Such order and unity, and such evidences of the presence of God and holy angels, binding every wild spirit and evil influence, and

persons, nor is he confined to places. He that does the will of God is accepted; and where true worshipers are, his Spirit is, and a pentecostal season may be enjoyed. If we prepare our hearts to receive the Comforter, if we open the door, we shall receive the great blessing.

But though this is our privilege, our trials are not ended. We shall meet with these all the way till our work is done. But God will sustain all who trust in him and are faithful in duty. The faithful in all places will ere long see greater things than these. The living God will vindicate his truth, and will save those who truly trust in him. Let me have a part with the humble few that keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (R. F. Cottrell, "The Beginning of the End," *The Advent Review and Herald of the Sabbath*, December 16, 1873)

Rather than the influential, the powerful, the beautiful, the intelligent, and the rich who choose the ways of the world, the humble few who love God and his ways and who wish to vindicate him before the teeming millions who mock him and before the universe which loves him are the ones who are of true value and worth. Always remember that.

Perhaps at one time you had a youthful, untried faith but now possess an established, settled one, a durable fire, so to speak. A fire that will last through rain, bleakness, and fear. Yet, you and I can still stumble, if that fire should chill, but God knows how to fan the flames, how to bank it for the long nights, and he always hears our cry when lost in the cold. His helping hand reaches down, his encouraging words warm the shivering spirit, and he stays the feet on the narrow path Ellen White saw in an impressive dream. It is a path we all are on, a path that many have left for the pleasures, entertainments, and other enticements of the world. Brothers and sisters, we will have to symbolically take off our shoes and socks to stay on this path, we will have to free ourselves of every weight, and we will have to endure hardship and privation, but be of good courage.

WE ARE ALMOST HOME



Youth's Corner – Kidnapped in Ecuador!

A Story of Faith, Surrender, Forgiveness, and Trust in God, Part 8

By Sheri Yohe

The Trial

The trial was finally held March 3–5, 2015.

Friends and supporters I didn't even know from Vilcabamba came in. Eight of them were there all three days. So many showed up the first day that there wasn't room. Someone came to let me know about the situation and assure me that they were still with me in spirit even though they couldn't get into the courtroom. The first day, when I gave my testimony, many packed in anyway. Our landlord is an attorney. He came that day to hear my testimony and lend support. When I arrived at court with the police escort, I was led into a private side room where I waited. The police officer stood at the door. My attorneys soon arrived and our landlord attorney. They talked with me about what was happening and what to expect. We had requested that the judges allow a screen to stand between myself and the criminals for emotional protection. I did not want to look directly in front of where I sat at the criminals. They were only about five feet away, their chairs facing mine. The judges granted permission.

My police escort ushered me into the courtroom once everyone, including the criminals, were seated. All eyes were on me. It was uncomfortable, but I kept my eyes down, watching my feet until I was seated behind the screen. The courtroom was packed with many people standing along the back wall.

The judge sitting in the center of the three judges, who is the president judge, controls the trial. During the introductions, he informed my attorney she would not be allowed to represent me because we had not retained her in time for her to file with the court as my attorney. That was a distressing shock! I had practiced my testimony with her asking me leading questions to prompt me so I would not leave anything important details out. I would be on my own! There was some heated debate over the restriction, and then it was decided there would be a discussion involving my attorney, her boss attorney and a judge. They left the courtroom, and the trial continued without that issue being settled.

The defense attorneys stated that their clients admitted there had been a kidnapping but denied that it was for money. This would make a significant difference in the prison sentence they received. Just kidnapping was eight years more or less, depending on extenuating circumstances. With extortion it would go up to a ten to thirteen year sentence.

The United States Embassy had sent someone to the trial who was to represent both Allen, a US citizen, as well as myself. This representative testified that the United States Embassy was conducting another criminal investigation involving Allen and produced documents to verify the testimony.

My testimony was next. The district attorney, whom I respected and felt comfortable with, called me to the witness stand. She asked me simply to begin my testimony when I first met Allen and continue to the end, unless she asked for clarification. I spoke in English with a court-appointed Spanish translator. I have worked with translators in the past so it flowed easily. My attorney thought the testimony would take the better part of the first day but I was finished within two hours. I cried as I told my story, but it flowed from me in the correct order of events. I did not leave anything out that my attorney and I felt would be important, even though she was not there to prompt me. I found the judges to be compassionate and even saw a tear in one of the judge's eyes during my testimony.

I dreaded the cross-examination but was pleasantly surprised when Allen's attorney asked only one question. Did Allen deliver the ransom note to myself or my husband? I said, "No." I did not explain that Allen was arrested just a few miles from our home with the ransom note on his person. They knew that. It was my job to answer exactly what I was asked and always to look at the president judge when I answered. The district attorney would cover the details.

The attorney who represented the kidnapper who scared me most and was tall and thin stepped behind the protective screen, which had been carefully moved along with me when I rose to take the witness seat continuing to block any view of Allen or the others, and said in a quiet voice, "I'm so sorry!" He was a court-appointed defender for his client. His one question escapes my memory now, but it seemed insignificant and did not require any more than a yes or no answer.

After my testimony, the president judge called a recess for lunch. I was escorted back to the main police station to the Protective Services Office to wait while friends purchased lunch for me. I chose to have a carrot juice and a fruit juice. It was all I thought my stomach could handle. The hardest part for me was over. I arranged for a friend to call Don during the lunch break to let him know my testimony was complete. He knew I feared speaking in the same room as the kidnappers, telling the story truthfully

and not being afraid of their retaliation. Friends in the back of the courtroom could watch the criminals as I told my story. They reported to me that the two main criminals (Allen and the tall thin man) looked disinterested in what I said, as though it was of no interest to them. At times they looked as though they disagreed.

There was no sorrow in their expressions, no regret.

Allen's girlfriend/wife, Karol, attended the trial. She had been released from jail a few months earlier due to lack of evidence. She seemed to be in a negative mood. She did not appear happy. Her facial expression was so different from the friendly face of the smiling, happy Karol who had helped prepare food at our home and sat with us at our table when we first met. It was sad to see the change in her.

After we returned from lunch there were more testimonies. Two of the UNASE detectives gave their testimonies. I then saw the venom of the defense attorneys, especially Allen's attorney. I was so glad they had not attacked my testimony as they did the detectives.

Day 1 was finally over. After returning to the police station and waiting the required amount of time to make sure family members and friend of the kidnappers had left the general area we were allowed to return to Vilcabamba, one hour south of Loja.

The same procedure was repeated the following day. I arrived at the police station and was escorted to the side room in the courthouse. While I was waiting, a strange lady entered the room, crying. Her attention was focused on me. She had her arms out, indicating she intended to hug me. She said in Spanish that she was Allen's mother, and she was so sorry for what he did. She said it was all her fault because she raised him. She didn't know what went wrong. She continued to cry and hug me, begging for my forgiveness. I hugged her back and cried with her. I felt her pain. I also felt like a mother figure in Allen's life. I felt as though I were somehow responsible for his failure, his criminal activity. I grieved the consequences he was facing. Allen is the same age as my son. I was keenly aware of the grief a mother would feel in this situation. She spent her tears, secured my forgiveness, and left. When I entered the courtroom I realized she was sitting very near my seat. She cried off and on through the trial.

A young psychologist expert witness gave her testimony that morning. She had met with me only once and what she said I did not agree with. I wondered why she had been called to give testimony since I had informed my attorney I would not return to her after only one visit. It was apparent to me that she would not help me with her approach.

After her testimony, my psychologist assigned to me through protective services testified. I had met with her

several times. Although the Spanish language was a challenge, I liked her and felt she gave a much better evaluation of my condition than the young psychologist had. The defense attorneys cross-examined her, using the younger psychologist's testimony as proof that she was not accurate in her evaluation. While she was giving her testimony, one of Allen's two attorneys was caught taking pictures with his cell phone. He knew better and received stern rebuke from the president judge. My friends and I suspected it was on purpose to disrupt the psychologist's train of thought. It didn't ruffle her in the least. She was very professional and continued her testimony as though there had not been an interruption.

The testimonies were going so well that my attorney told me we may be able to conclude the trial in less than the expected three days. Just when I thought things were wrapping up, Allen stood to his feet and declared his intention to testify. I had read on the Internet that a suspected criminal should never testify! It is suicide. The courtroom was quite surprised. Allen stepped to the witness stand and was sworn in to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Shortly it was clear to me that he had not taken his oath seriously. He placed all blame for the kidnapping on the other men, especially the one who had escaped and could not defend himself. Allen tried to discredit the fact that my husband had a heart attack in Cuenca just five months prior to the kidnapping. Obviously, for Allen to orchestrate a kidnapping of an elderly person who had a well known heart condition was a huge negative in his defense. As he explained in his carefully practiced doctor lingo, the third judge, a small-built female who appeared to be very experienced in her role as judge stopped Allen's arrogant doctor explanation and asked Allen to inform the court of his education level that gave him the right to evaluate my husband's medical condition. Allen tried to sidestep the question, but the small judge held fast to her intention of gaining knowledge of Allen's medical training. Allen finally admitted that he had four months of medical assistant training. He was not a cardiologist, not even a general doctor. He was totally unqualified. The female judge had become so incensed with Allen's evasiveness that the President Judge had lightly placed his hand on her arm to calm her during her interaction with Allen.

Allen, dressed in a fine quality suit for the trial while the other kidnappers were in jail clothes, looked very professional, but his testimony was childish in my opinion. Blaming others for his participation in the kidnapping when he had, in fact, planned the whole thing lowered his character to a childish elementary school level. He did his best to discredit me and said he was not our friend and we had treated him as though he were our taxi driver but without pay. He slipped that we had purchased an iPhone for him

and brought it back as a big thank you when returning from the states in January. Of course, my testimony informed the court of Allen accompanying us on more than one family vacation with all his expenses paid for. Allen concluded his testimony by saying he regretted the pain he had caused his mother. He did not say he regretted the kidnapping and the harm it had brought to Don or myself.

It was hard for me to hear his harsh, criticizing testimony. It was hard to hear his voice. When he rose from the witness chair to step back to his seat he stepped into my line of vision unblocked by the screen. I saw a very thin version of the Allen we had known. Prison life had taken many pounds off Allen.

Since Allen had testified and blamed everything on the others, they now had to defend themselves. I was disappointed that the trial would indeed take the three days originally scheduled. I trembled throughout the trial. My emotions were raw, and I was exhausted in every way. I often cried during the kidnappers testimonies, hearing details of how long they had been planning the kidnapping and remembering that Allen had intended to kidnap me while my grandchildren were with me. How diabolical he was! I didn't know this man at all. What a fool I had been. I trusted a psychopath with my grandchildren! We took our kidnapper on vacation with us, trusting him to keep us safe and help us understand the Ecuadorean culture. Only by God's grace had his plans been foiled somehow.

There was craziness in the courtroom—lots of contradictions when it came to the defense attorneys and their clients' testimonies. It was very confusing. I didn't have to look at Karol, whom my friends nicknamed the "Bruja negro" (black witch, in Spanish), for her scary, angry looks and demeanor, the way she wore her makeup, the black she wore each day, and her defensiveness. And I didn't have to look at Allen, who fit the description I had read on the Internet of a true psychopath. He remained expressionless for the entire proceedings. The lead judge had almost cried with me during my testimony, but friends told me that the tall thin man, the other key kidnapper, had sneered at my tears. I think the judges took notice.

Day 3 was needed to complete the testimonies and final statements from the attorneys. I was more than impressed with the district attorney. Her ability to remember each argument given by the defense attorneys without writing notes, then repeat their points back in perfect order and logically destroy each argument was remarkable. I concluded the super talented lady had an amazing memory!

With all the arguments and final statements concluded the president judge ordered everyone to vacate the courtroom for the final sentences to be determined by the three judges. It was such an authoritative order I almost jumped

to my feet with all the rest which would had resulted in my walking out of the courtroom next to the kidnappers. An attorney's hand gently settled on my shoulder pressing me back into my seat. I was informed that I would leave the courtroom last. The police escort led me into my familiar side room to await the judges' decision.



Sheri Yohe

After a 45-minute recess, I was again escorted back into the courtroom after everyone else had returned. The courtroom was packed more than it had been for my testimony. I was told that other judges and attorneys had crowded in to hear the sentence. This was a big trial in Ecuador. It involved a North American couple which meant the United States was keeping close tabs on the results.

The president judge announced that the court had thrown out all the confusing nonsense and was making its judgment based on my testimony and the facts presented by the expert witnesses.

When the sentence was read, military men with large automatic weapons filled the center aisle of the courtroom, small as it was, and surrounded me. I was alarmed, and wondered what they expected. When the judge finished reading the sentence, the police rushed me out of the courtroom and the court building and back to the main police station. No one was allowed to leave the room until I was a safe distance away. 卍

To be continued

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