Adventism's Unwritten History Mystery

Dave Fiedler

Adventism's Unwritten History Mystery

Dave Fiedler

Also by Dave Fiedler

Hindsight (Lessons from Seventh-day Adventist Church History—available from the author)

d'sozo: Reversing the Worst Evil (The rise and essential role of Adventist medical missionary work—available through Amazon)

Tremble (Kellogg's apostasy and its contemporary echoes—available through Remnant Publications)

Tactics (Lucifer's rebellion and the Lord's response—available through Remnant Publications)

Diasozo! The Ministry of Controversy and the Great Healing (The centrality of "sozo principles" in the great controversy—available through Amazon)

For Such a Time (When things get stressful, it's best to slow down, calm down, and look at the facts—available through Amazon)

Officially Challenged and *Directed by the Hand of the Lord* (Two essays sorting out the "official statement" confusion—available through Amazon)

Circumstances and Common Sense (Tithing provides the quintessential case history for addressing agitation of any kind within the church—available through Amazon)

Español

d'sozo: Revirtiendo el peor mal (El auge y el papel esencial de la obra médica misionera adventista—disponible a través de Amazon)

Diasozo! El Ministerio del Conflicto y La Gran Curación (La centralidad de los "principios sozo" en toda la gran controversia—disponible a través de Amazon)

Română

d'sozo: Reversarea celui mai mare rău (Creșterea și rolul esențial al misiunii medicale adventiste—disponibil pe dragmv@gmail.com)

© 2026 by Dave Fiedler
dfiedler@AdventistCityMissions.org

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Adventism's Unwritten History Mystery

I chose the title knowing that it would be confusing to some people. I did so for two reasons: first, I think it's an engaging title, the sort of thing that will make people say, "I wonder what that's all about." That's a pretty good attribute for any title. As a bonus, the title provides opportunity to refer to the old adage, "History may not repeat itself, but it often rhymes." There aren't a lot of words that rhyme with "History," so using "Mystery" in the title was too good to pass up. And finally, the confusion produced by the title provides opportunity to explain the genuine significance of what the book actually covers. So let's resolve that right up front.

The "unwritten" aspect of the topic does not mean that this is some sort of exposé based on hearsay evidence or even something striving to appear more dignified, like "Oral History." No, it is unwritten history simply because it hasn't happened yet. And the mysterious aspect is the logical outgrowth of that same fact: it hasn't happened yet, and although it certainly will happen, there are a host of possibilities as to how it all may turn out. We don't know which of the many options we will eventually see, hence, it is currently a mystery.

The reader is to be forgiven for questioning the value of spending time on a matter so vague, but this is no ordinary topic, and thanks to reliable input from One who could—if He saw wisdom and benefit in such a course—provide every detail of this history in advance, there's value and interest enough.

Our focus here, despite the ambiguity, is the as-yet unchosen track record of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the closing days of human probation. I say "as-yet

unchosen" for a reason. Choices are made all the time. Every year, every month, every week, day, hour, minute, and second, choices are being made by the leaders and the laity of the Church which will collectively determine the Church's ultimate place in the history of God's dealings with men. Anyone loyal to God's work hopes that all such choices will be according to the Lord's counsel and will work to the Lord's glory.

That's one end of the continuum. The desirable end. The end that "could be," that indeed "would be," if all were to prove true to the inspired instruction we have been given.

Unfortunately, that one end of the continuum is not the whole. Other possibilities exist, and while God knows the end from the beginning, we do not. This is ordained by love and divine wisdom, to grant us each the utmost freedom to determine our own course of action, to demonstrate which principles we freely choose as the guiding elements of our lives. And, as surely as there is a desirable end of the continuum, just so surely there is an opposite end. In between the two, there is effectively an infinite number of options—far too many to cover in detail.

Nevertheless, the Lord has seen fit to give us some glimpses, some insight into the condition of His church and the circumstances in which His people will find themselves as the current phase of the great controversy comes to its end. That's what this little booklet is about.

2. *About that rhyming thing....*

History has much to teach us, but knowing which part fits where, and how strongly to apply any lesson from the past to what we see in the present can be tricky. *Inspired* history obviously helps with this, so this is where we begin:

> Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.[1]

Paul's familiar admonition is preceded by five verses which cite the examples he had in mind: lust, idolatry, sexual immorality, tempting God, and complaining. Not a cheery picture, is it? No wonder he tacked on verses 12 and 13:

> Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.
>
> No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

We understandably cherish that promise, but it does little to make past history comforting! And the Bible does little to soften that impression!

> Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly.[2]

1. 1 Corinthians 10:11
2. 2 Peter 2:6

> As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.[3]

> Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent.[4]

It would seem that the talent of memory, and the examples of history, are largely intended to keep us from repeating the mistakes of the past. Jesus Himself echoed that idea in probably the punchiest of all such warnings:

> Remember Lot's wife.[5]

Nor was the issue all delegated to the distant past. Even recent events were cited as potent lessons from which rather obvious lessons were to be taken.

> Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up?[6]

The field of instruction is actually incredibly broad, with every Bible bedtime story serving as possible input for God's people.

> The Bible has accumulated and bound up together its treasures for this last generation. All the great events and solemn transactions of Old Testament history have been, and are, repeating themselves in the church in these last days.[7]

> In mercy God repeats His past dealings. He has given us a record of His dealings in the past. This we need to study carefully; for history is repeating itself. We are more accountable than were those whose experience is recorded in the Old Testament; for their mistakes, and the results of those mistakes, have been chronicled for our benefit.[8]

> What took place in ancient days will be reenacted in our days. What men did under the influence of Satan in times of old, men who are controlled by the same spirit will do today. Those who separate from God and His light will walk in darkness, and if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! Men will do strange things when they trust in their own greatness and wisdom.[9]

The value of Bible stories may seem rather general—the "Be honest, be brave" kind of thing. There is plenty of that, for sure, but Ellen White makes more direct connections as well:

> Bible history is to be repeated. Calamities will come, calamities most awful, most unexpected; and these destructions will follow one after another. If there will be a heeding of the warnings that God has given, and if churches will repent, returning to their allegiance, then other cities may be spared for a time.[10]

---

3. Jude 1:7
4. Revelation 2:5
5. Luke 17:32
6. Matthew 16:9
7. E.G. White, Letter to Brother and Sister Haskell, March 1, 1897; Letter 74a, 1897
8. *Review and Herald*, April 20, 1897
9. E.G. White, Letter to Dr. Burke, November 6, 1891; Letter 35, 1891
10. E.G. White, "The Judgments of God," April 27, 1906; Manuscript 35, 1906

Viewed from a military point of view, this is genius. Here's why: An army without a functioning communication and command structure is really just a mob. Soldiers need to know what to do and when to do it. So the enemy will obviously try to block or corrupt that communication system.[11] But with "all the great events and solemn transactions of Old Testament history"[12] already on record for our instruction, much of what God's people will need to know is already available.

> God "seeks again that which is past" recalling all the proceedings whether of judgment or of mercy. He recalls all the doings of different ages and repeats them in the present generation. It is for this reason that there is such value in the registered experience of the believers of other days. The biography of the righteous is among the best treasures that the church can possess. We have the benefit of the accounts of the workings of the power of evil in contrast to the deeds of those who through many centuries were living by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. This rich experience is bequeathed to us as a legacy of great value. When history shall be repeated, when the great men of earth will not come to the Bible for light and evidence and truth, when the commandments of men shall be exalted above the commandments of God, and when it shall be regarded a crime to obey God rather than the laws of men, then we shall not have to tread a path in which we have had but few examples of others who have gone before us.[13]

The picture of God's Church at the end of time[14] is not like a parade, with lots of flowers and marching bands. That comes just a bit later, at the second coming. Before that, it's a battlefield; but even that is not unrelentingly bleak; Paul balanced the mistakes of the past with the possibility that believers in Christ might actually learn the intended lessons, reject the path of the poor examples, cultivate patience, and look for something brighter on the horizon.

> For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.[15]

That's the pattern—hope over the horizon, but this side of the horizon is going to be notably dark. That's what we're likely to find as we explore the topic. So... fair warning: If you're balancing on the edge of depression already, you probably ought to be reading something else right now. There are other materials more suitable for you! Jesus said "Let not your heart be troubled" (twice in a

11. This is one reason spiritualism is such a threat. When people believe that their dearly departed are bringing messages straight from heaven, the chances of them doing the right thing at the right time (which is "the very essence of all right faith"— *Testimonies,* vol. 6, 24) fall nearly to zero.
12. I think it's probably safe to assume the same about New Testament history.
13. E.G. White, "The Witness of John Huss," 1887; Manuscript 38, 1887
14. Do note the constrained focus on the Church at the end of time. In other words, I'm not trying to cover all that might come under the title of "closing events." Though there will certainly be some pictures of the wider world along the way, the focus is God's church and that which most directly relates to His people at that time.
15. Romans 15:4

single chapter![16]) for good reason. All aspects of Scripture have their time and place, so don't feel bad if something else is calling your name.

Still with me? Fair enough. I'm guessing more than the not quite 1% Gideon was left to work with, are still reading, so let's press on.

3. To be forewarned....

An inspired historical account is a great help; at least we know what actually happened. An inspired application of history's lessons to contemporary circumstances is even more so, because now we know what to do in like situations. But in a league of its own, and by far the most philosophically interesting, is the inspired prediction of what is yet to come.

What makes predictions so special? The most obvious reason is that they provide a rare sense of certainty about the future. But God walks a tightrope in these cases, because—as previously noted—there are limits to how much of His foreknowledge can be profitably shared.

As a result, many predictions fall well short of a complete picture. Most often, they are missing any specific time element. For example, the second coming is a solid prediction, but we also have the "of that day and hour no one knows"[17] reality. Much the same can be said of many other predictions from both the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy.[18] Some will consider this a reason to doubt. I consider it a reason to pay special attention to the details that *are* given. It's in those details that we may hope to find useful instruction.

4. Salvation is an individual matter

The stated purpose of this booklet is to explore the "as-yet unchosen track record of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the closing days of human probation." This is a much larger issue than whatever may become of individual church members like you and me. And yet much of the significance of the topic comes from the fact that individual church members make up the church. As such, in our own small way we each contribute to the decisions which will determine the church's course of action. And, just as surely, individual church members are caught up in the currents of the church as a whole. We are each influenced by what the collective body does.

16. John 14:1, 27
17. Matthew 24:36
18. "Let all our brethren and sisters beware of any one who would set a time for the Lord to fulfill His word in regard to His coming, or in regard to any other promise He has made of special significance. 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power.'" *Review and Herald*, September 12, 1893

No, we are not saved because we are church members, and, no, nothing the church might do either good or bad can force either salvation or damnation upon us. We are individuals, and yet we are of the body. This is a reality, ordained by God, for our good and the good of others. This is also a reality well known to the devil, who would love nothing more than to turn it to his own advantage. Unsurprisingly, then, the questions of what it means to be a faithful Seventh-day Adventist Church member, and what the actions and decisions of the Church body mean to members, will be ever-present elements in the background of our discussion.

5. It's Personal... and Personnel

So, what are we told about the Adventist Church at the end of time? Not a great deal, but probably more than you know. There are some definite predictions, but the predominant silence follows an established pattern. In her discussion of Christ's parable of the unfruitful tree, Ellen White explains:

> Jesus did not in the parable tell the result of the gardener's work. At that point His story was cut short. Its conclusion rested with the generation that heard His words. To them the solemn warning was given. "If not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." Upon them it depended whether the irrevocable words should be spoken. The day of wrath was near. In the calamities that had already befallen Israel, the owner of the vineyard was mercifully forewarning them of the destruction of the unfruitful tree.[19]

This strikes me as eminently fair, not to mention desirable. I'm a big fan of "self-determination" and "individual responsibility." Leaving the outcome of a matter to be dependent on the choices made by those involved is actually one of the defining features of God's approach to the whole great controversy. It rings true.

But we are not left without "chart and compass" on such matters! The "predictive details" may seem few, but that's primarily because of the Lord's generosity when it comes to cautionary advice intended to cut short an undesirable outcome! And caution is certainly in order, for we all—as members of God's remnant church—have a target on our foreheads.

> Through heathenism, Satan had for ages turned men away from God; but he won his great triumph in perverting the faith of Israel. By contemplating and worshiping their own conceptions, the heathen had lost a knowledge of God, and had become more and more corrupt. So it was with Israel.[20]

The devil is no fool. He understands the concept of "return on investment." And so his effort is disproportionately directed at the Church, and even more so at anyone who carries any influence therein:

19. *Christ's Object Lessons*, 216
20. *Desire of Ages*, 35

> We are drawing near to the close of earth's history when everything will be in confusion. Satan is stealthily working to confuse the minds of those who know the truth by bringing in misleading sentiments. Unless they repent, and are converted, those who are living divided lives, professedly serving the Lord, but at the same time scheming to carry out their own plans—plans which retard the very work which Christ gave His life to accomplish—will be deceived by the enemy of souls.[21]
>
> Anything coming from ministers who should stand in the light has a powerful influence. And when they have not stood in the clear light of God, Satan has used them as agents and has through them transmitted his fiery darts to minds not prepared to resist what has come from their ministers.[22]

The possibility of danger in this way is clear, but what's the lesson? What is God's church to do to prevent the harm potentially inflicted by "ministers who... have not stood in the clear light of God"? As is common, prevention is better than cure, so this advice is of more value than gold:

> No man is to be trusted with high responsibilities unless he takes himself in hand daily and, through grace given, sets his heart in order. Often the ones who do the greatest harm are those who accept positions of trust, but who have not inquired at every step, "Is this the way of the Lord?"[23]

6. Conditions Apply

Ellen White tells us that "the promises and the threatenings of God are alike conditional."[24] Those two extremes, and all that lies between them, is what prophecy tends to be about, so it's no surprise that some aspects of predicted events should be affected by the actual conditions at the time. We commonly refer to this as "conditional prophecy," but there are some exceptions. Speaking of the prophecy of Jeremiah, Ellen White says: "The remnant of Judah were to go into captivity, to learn through adversity the lessons they had refused to learn under circumstances more favorable. From this decree of the holy Watcher there could be no appeal."[25] It's not that the prophecy of captivity wasn't conditional; it's just that the conditions which determined the outcome had already been met.

Marking out every boundary between fixed and conditional is certainly beyond human wisdom, but the concept is simple enough to understand in a general way, at least. For our purposes, that is sufficient.

Among the prophecies touching on God's church at the end of time, there are many which seem conditional, and a smaller number which sound less subject to variation. My judgment of such distinctions is almost certainly less than perfect,

21. E.G. White, Letter to the Colorado Conference, August 13, 1907; Letter 24, 1907
22. *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 378
23. E.G. White, "I Will Have Mercy and Not Sacrifice," March 26, 1899; Manuscript 40, 1899
24. E.G. White, "Suppression and the Shut Door," 1883; Manuscript 4, 1883
25. *Prophets and Kings*, 453

so nothing here should be considered the final word. After all, the pronouncement that Sodom was to be destroyed sounded pretty definite, but Abraham didn't hesitate to plead for more favorable terms. And then there is the famous case of Ninevah's non-destruction, much to Jonah's chagrin.

But with all those caveats in place, the plan is to examine the most solid-sounding prophecies first, and then take a look at some of the more likely conditional aspects. Let's get started.

7. Trials and Attitude

Of all the specific predictions about the end time role and condition of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, perhaps the most all-encompassing is introduced like this:

> We want to understand the time in which we live. We do not half understand it. We do not half take it in. My heart trembles in me when I think of what a foe we have to meet, and how poorly we are prepared to meet him.

A failure to understand the enemy's attack, and the obvious failure to prepare which must inevitably follow on the heels of that failed understanding, does not bode well, but here is the more specific statement of concern:

> The trials of the children of Israel, and their attitude just before the first coming of Christ, have been presented before me again and again to illustrate the position of the people of God in their experience before the second coming of Christ. How the enemy sought every occasion to take control of the minds of the Jews, and today he is seeking to blind the minds of God's servants, that they may not be able to discern the precious truth.

What all is included in these "trials"? How deep does this "attitude" run? God knows; we can only surmise. But that it was presented to her "again and again" strongly implies that the parallel is significant.

Now, it's important to note what that "precious truth" actually represented. No doubt it included a certain amount of "theoretical theology" like a proper calculation of the 70-weeks prophecy, but Ellen White puts her emphasis on a much more fundamental issue. It is, in fact, the central issue of the entire great controversy. See if you can spot it as this passage continues:

> When Christ came to our world, Satan was on the ground, and disputed every inch of advance in His path from the manger to Calvary. Satan had accused God of requiring self-denial of the angels, when He knew nothing of what it meant Himself, and when He would not himself make any self-sacrifice for others. This was the accusation that Satan made against God in heaven; and after the evil one was expelled from heaven, he continually charged the Lord with exacting service which He would not render himself. Christ came to the world to meet these false accusations, and to reveal the Father.[26]

26. *Review and Herald*, February 18, 1890

Self-denial and self-sacrifice are traits which the devil can only imitate. Much as the wealthy ones of Jesus' day would sound the trumpets to announce the magnitude of their generosity in making gifts to the temple—while cherishing selfishness in the heart—the devil will seek to hide his influence behind a mask of apparent "good will toward men."

> In His Word the Lord declared what He would do for Israel if they would obey His voice. But the leaders of the people yielded to the temptations of Satan, and God could not give them the blessings He designed them to have, because they did not obey His voice. This experience will be repeated in the last years of the history of the people of God, who have been established by His grace and power. Men whom He has greatly honored will in the closing scenes of this earth's history pattern after ancient Israel....
>
> History is being repeated. The perils that God's people encountered in past ages, they will encounter again, intensified. Satan has obtained influence over men whom God has honored above all human intelligence as He honored Solomon....
>
> The things that had been spoken by priests and rulers had become leavened with erroneous theories. The gospel of the Old Testament had been misinterpreted by the teachers who had desired to fit the presentation with their condition spiritually in the place of exalting truth and laboring to bring the people who claimed to be the chosen of God up to the holy principles given by Him.[27]

But back then, there was a problem, and this is the central point of Ellen White's prediction about the "trials" and "attitude" of the Jews in Jesus' day.

> Men would not receive the Light of the world. They were perfectly satisfied with their position....
>
> As Christ sought to place truth before the people in its proper relation to their salvation, Satan worked through the Jewish leaders, and inspired them with enmity against the Redeemer of the world. They determined to do all in their power to prevent Him from making an impression upon the people.

As anyone who has ever read the Gospels knows, "all in their power" included the crucifixion of One they knew to be innocent. Why did they do it? Because they had been taught, had accepted, had clung to Satan's principle of selfishness.[28] And nothing Christ could do could shake them free. But notice, first, how much He wanted to save them:

> O, how Christ longed, how His heart burned, to open to the priests the greater treasures of the truth! But their minds had been cast in such a mold that it was next

27. E.G. White, "Diary," January 20, 1904; Manuscript 5, 1904
28. The central nature of this issue is illustrated in these two quotations:
    "Another book was opened, wherein were recorded the sins of those who profess the truth. Under the general heading of selfishness came every other sin." *Testimonies*, vol. 4, 384
    "Unselfishness, the principle of God's kingdom, is the principle that Satan hates; its very existence he denies. From the beginning of the great controversy he has endeavored to prove God's principles of action to be selfish, and he deals in the same way with all who serve God. To disprove Satan's claim is the work of Christ and of all who bear His name." *Education*, 154

to an impossibility to reveal to them the truths relating to His kingdom. The Scriptures had not been read aright.[29]

Yes, the priests, scribes, rabbis, Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, and even the Essenes had gotten it wrong. They didn't get along well among themselves, and it showed in everything from the endless pontificating of the Pharisees, to the economic intrigues and political alliances of the Sadducees, to the steel dagger point of the Zealots, to the "We're just sick and tired of the whole batch of you" of the Essenes. But at the base of it all was Lucifer's original sales pitch that self-interest was better than unselfishness.

The law that none "liveth to himself" Satan was determined to oppose. He desired to live for self. He sought to make himself a center of influence. It was this that incited rebellion in heaven, and it was man's acceptance of this principle that brought sin on earth.[30]

This simple fact is our first and most important take-away lesson. For the health of the Church as a whole, as well as the health of every church member in the pew, selfishness must be rejected. On both an institutional basis, and for the life of the soul, we must not allow ourselves to retain an attitude of selfishness, for this was the tragic downfall of the children of Israel just before the first coming of Christ.

But all need not be gloom! Take heart. Look up!

We know something of what is before us. We know that trials await us. We know that unconsecrated Seventh-day Adventists, who have a knowledge of the truth, but who have linked themselves with worldlings, will depart entirely from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits. The enemy will gladly hold out inducements to them, to lead them to carry on a warfare against the people of God. But those who are true and steadfast will have a strong and powerful defense in God. My trust is unwavering. I am not discouraged, because I can hold to the hand of Christ. Let us be always cheerful, that others may not catch from us the spirit of discouragement. Sing praises to the Lord; sing praises to His holy name.[31]

8. The Hellish Torch

Here's one of the more well known specific predictions:

Many will stand in our pulpits with the torch of false prophecy in their hands, kindled from the hellish torch of Satan. If doubts and unbelief are cherished, the faithful ministers will be removed from the people who think they know so much....

Satan has laid every measure possible that nothing shall come among us as a people to reprove and rebuke us, and exhort us to put away our errors.

It sounds bad.[32] But if you think it's going to be clear-cut and obviously bad, you're probably mistaken. Just think about it for a moment: Without a fairly

29. *Review and Herald*, February 18, 1890
30. *Testimonies*, vol. 6, 236
31. E.G. White, Letter to S.N. Haskell, July 1, 1903; Letter 127, 1903

keen sense of discernment, a "torch" can look a lot like a "bright light." What percentage of church members will accept and promote "false prophecy"? Ellen White certainly implies the possibility that some, perhaps many or even most, of "the people" may cherish "doubts and unbelief." Given that this false prophecy carefully avoids anything to "reprove and rebuke us," it seems prudent to look closely—even critically or skeptically—at any message which tends to confirm our natural inclination to think rather well of ourselves.

Fortunately, the rest of that manuscript presents details God knows we need:

> The Lord would have His people divested of everything unscriptural in regard to the ministry. The men called to the ministry should not be made idols of; they should not be looked upon with superstitious reverence; and because of the power vested in them through their office, sin in them should not lose its offensiveness....
>
> All should bear in mind that Satan's special efforts are directed against the ministry. He knows that it is but a human instrumentality, possessing no grace or holiness of its own....
>
> Today the Lord declares to His watchmen that if they are unfaithful and do not warn the people who are in peril, they will be taken away in their sins. "And their blood," He says, "will I require at thy hands."...
>
> Let no soul now complain of the servants of God who have come to them with a heaven-sent message. Do not any longer pick flaws in them saying, "They are too positive; they talk too strongly." They may talk strongly; but is it not needed?[33]

In this passage, Ellen White presents a contrast between individuals who "do not warn the people who are in peril," and others who might be considered "too positive" because they "talk too strongly." The first group are unworthy of the "superstitious reverence" it appears they might receive, while the second class are bearing a "heaven-sent message." But this is a description of one possibility, not some sort of universal status report. Men who have been "made idols of" are certainly capable of issuing overly-strong statements, and those with divine truth can occasionally speak with the utmost tact. The amazing thing is that unconverted hearts will still likely be attracted to unbecoming error and reject the most diplomatically presented truth.

So, just imagine you run into someone who speaks "positively." Maybe even "strongly." Are they presenting something taken from the "hellish torch of Satan," or a "heaven-sent message"? Dollars to donuts, you'll find someone to champion both of those positions.

Given that those "with the torch of false prophecy in their hands" are said to "stand in our pulpits," it's likely that some of these will be ministers. This is reinforced by Ellen White's assertion that "the ministry should not be made idols of;

32. But do notice the conditional second sentence! ***"If*** doubts and unbelief are cherished, the faithful ministers will be removed." So why not refuse to cherish doubts and unbelief? The "torch of false prophecy" aspect may be unavoidable, but having some faithful ministers around seems like a helpful thing!
33. E.G. White, "God's Messengers," August 12, 1897; Manuscript 92, 1897

they should not be looked upon with superstitious reverence." Respect, yes. Superstition, no.

In other words, there's no easy out like, "Well, he's a minister, so he must be right."[34] Instead, church members will need to actually decide whether or not the message is from God, which will, of course, mean that opinions will vary, friendships will be strained, and churches will be split. Welcome to the "shaking."

Before we move on, consider the following selections from a single *Review* article which I consider something of a classic:

> Jesus has never instructed men to go to their fellow-men with all their cares, no matter in what position of trust He saw fit to place them. His instruction is, "Come unto *me*, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."...
>
> Whatever may be the position of trust that a man occupies, he is not raised above the frailties of humanity. His position does not make him sinless or divine. He must receive wisdom and goodness and power from the same source as others; and this source of supply is open to the lowliest and the least. Jesus has invited you to come unto Him; and you are not obeying Christ when you go to human sources for support and consolation. Is not this the reason that the people of God are destitute of the fruits of the Holy Spirit? Is not this one reason why their religious experience is of so dwarfed a character?
>
> Satan exults as he sees men looking to men, and trusting in men to be wisdom for them. The soul that looks to men as to God, is left exposed to the temptations and assaults of the enemy, and the evil one sees to it that human defects shall mar the work of God. Satan will make the man whom the brethren look up to as to God, a target for his fiery darts, and will ply him with his fiercest temptations.

We've seen this already; the devil is not stupid so he attacks the "high value targets" in the church. Where this article makes its most valuable contribution is in telling us *how* Satan attacks, and what happens to those who fall prey to his deception. Ellen White goes on:

> Though at first the brother may be reluctant to take so great a responsibility as that of being a counselor[35] to his brethren, if he does do it, he will finally encourage the very dependence that he once lamented, and he will come to feel grieved if matters are not brought to his attention. He will want to understand the reason for movements made in the cause, that have no connection with his branch of the work.
>
> To every man is given his work, and every man must do his own thinking and planning, in order that the work may be done in such a manner as to meet the approval of God. The worker must not be bound about too much with reproofs and commands; for God is his Master, and if he looks to Him for wisdom, his prayer will

34. That sort of thinking is entirely superstitious, by the way, since the core element of any superstition is thinking "If 'A,' then 'B,'" when there is no cause and effect relationship that actually links "A" to "B." So, breaking a mirror is said to produce seven years of bad luck, but exactly how it produces that bad luck is entirely unknown and unobservable.

35. The word "counselor" deserves some special attention here. Solomon quite famously declared, "in the multitude of counselors there is safety," so it's obvious that Ellen White has something else in mind. Simply put, *this* kind of counselor is the one "whom the brethren look up to as to God." That may sound like a far-fetched extreme, but the Lord presents it here as a rather common danger.

be answered. God will give him his own experience, that will not have its foundation in any human being, but in the living God....

More helpfully yet, this article not only points to the danger shadowing those in "positions of trust"; it not only illustrates the kind of authoritarian micro-management that results when the devil wins the battle; it lays out the whole line of defense needed to prevent defeat!

While brethren should counsel together at special seasons, yet they should individually seek for higher counsel than that heard in the assembly. It may be argued that the Lord gives special wisdom to those to whom He has intrusted grave responsibilities. The Lord does give special wisdom to him who has sacred trusts. If the human agent, moment by moment, makes God his only helper, and walks humbly with Him, God will then give light and knowledge and wisdom, in order that His human agent may be able to guide his brethren who would look to him for counsel as to their duty.

Don't miss this next paragraph! If you're one to whom others look when they should be looking to God, you need this. If you're one who looks to someone else when you should be looking to God, you need this. If you're trying to understand the devil's attack on the very structure of denominational authority, you need this. Seldom if ever will you find a more concise statement of our only effective defense against what Ellen White calls "the bane of the church."[36]

In a clear and forcible manner he [the one to whom others are looking for the wisdom that only God can provide] will point them to a Source that is untainted and pure from the defects and errors that are so apparent in humanity. He may, for it is his privilege, refuse to be brains and conscience for his brethren. He may tell them with softened heart that he goes to God for supplies of wisdom and grace, and that the Lord will give liberally to all who ask him for wisdom. He will discern and lay bare the peril there is in looking to human agents instead of to God, and will encourage them to do as Jesus has instructed His children to do—go to God for knowledge, wisdom, power, and grace.

That's it. That's how leaders can avoid the devil's trap and preserve the spiritual health of all who would look to them in an inappropriately "idolatrous" manner. But indulge me for another paragraph-and-a-part, so I can work in one of my favorite statements in regard to "education."

The danger in trusting to men is that men are liable to err. Even those who are in high positions of sacred trust, are men of like passions with the lowliest brother, and it is often the case that the man in high positions is influenced by the counsel of wife, mother, friend, or child, and his judgment is biased by human influences. But if he is continually appealed to for advice,[37] he is in danger of thinking that he cannot err, and that he is capable of judging the cases of his brethren, and in this way he brings

36. "God calls His people to... purge themselves from that which has been revealed as the bane of the church—an exalting of the men placed in positions of trust." E.G. White, "Diary," November 4, 1898; Manuscript 176, 1899

"Bane" isn't such a common word in our contemporary lexicon, but back in the day it meant "Poison of a deadly quality; hence, any fatal cause of mischief, injury or destruction." *Webster's Dictionary*, 1828 edition

peril upon the church. Spirituality will wane under an influence of this kind, and the knowledge of God's will, will become more and more indistinct, while the sayings of men become of more and more importance in the eyes of the people. In this way God is dishonored, and spiritual discernment is lost. The sacred and the common become intermingled, until nothing is looked upon as sacred. God is not exalted, but is put in the shade by human inventions and by those who may be so deceived as to think that they are doing God service.

The education that should be given to all is, that they should exercise faith, that they should go to God in earnest prayer, and learn to think for themselves. To meet difficulties and plow through them by the help of God is a lesson of the highest value. If men and women do this, they realize that their help has not come from a human source, but from the living God, and that, having sought wisdom of God, they have not sought in vain.[38]

Isn't that "plow through them" line a classic? Just imagine where God's church would be today if *that* education had been "given to all"!

9. Every Uncouth Thing

I haven't made any effort to arrange these prophecies in an exact chronological order. If anything, I've tried to list them in decreasing order of magnitude, though even that might well be questioned. And so perhaps it is worth mentioning that this next prediction may well be mostly fulfilled already. If not, I shudder to consider what may be yet to come.

Some aspects of the "Holy Flesh Movement" which resulted in the replacement of the entire Indiana Conference leadership team are well known; well known to such a degree that it may seem blasé to many Adventist members. After all, they have moved on past this rather "petty concern" long ago.

The things you have described as taking place in Indiana, the Lord has shown me would take place just before the close of probation. Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit never reveals itself in such methods, in such a bedlam of noise. This is an invention of Satan to cover up his ingenious methods of making of none effect the pure, sincere, elevating, ennobling, sanctifying truth for this time. Better never have the worship of God blended with music than the use musical instruments to do the work which last January was represented to me would be brought into our camp meetings. The truth for this time needs nothing of this kind in its work of converting souls. A bedlam of noise shocks the senses and perverts that which, if con-

37. Let's not get too carried away blaming the leaders. These continual requests for advice come from the folks "below" the one being tempted, and much of the blame for the resulting weakness rests on their shoulders. Why do they do this? Probably a mixture of self-defense ("Hey, that's what I was told to do.") and a genuinely "superstitious reverence."

38. *Review and Herald*, August 14, 1894

ducted aright, might be a blessing. The powers of satanic agencies blend with the din and noise to have a carnival, and this is termed the Holy Spirit's working....

No encouragement should be given to this kind of worship. The same kind of influence came in after the passing of the time in 1844. The same kind of representations were made. Men became excited, and were worked by the power thought to be the power of God. They turned their bodies over and over, like a carriage wheel, claiming that they could not do this except by supernatural power.[39] There was a belief that the dead were raised and had ascended to heaven. The Lord gave me a message for this fanaticism, for the beautiful principles of Bible truth were being eclipsed.[40]

Oh great. Who doesn't love a good argument over music and "worship styles"? For our purposes here, though, the key point is to simply note that this warning of what is to come "just before the close of probation" is still there, despite the dismissive attitudes of some.

For the sake of those not familiar with the history of the "Holy Flesh" fanaticism, let's look at a few of the details as recorded by Elder S.N. Haskell and his wife, both eyewitnesses of the Indiana camp meeting at the height of the error.

They have a big drum, two tambourines, a big bass fiddle, two small fiddles, a flute, and two cornets, and an organ and a few voices. They have Garden of Spices as a song book and play dance tunes to sacred words. They have never used our own hymn books except when Elders Breed or Haskell speak, then they open and close with a hymn from our book, but all the other songs are from the other book. They shout "Amen" and "Praise the Lord," "Glory to God," just like a Salvation Army service. It is distressing to one's soul. The doctrines preached correspond to the rest. The poor sheep are truly confused.[41]

Last Sabbath they [the Indiana ministers] took the early meeting [and] also the 11 o'clock hour, and called them front to the altar as they call the little fence they have around the pulpit. The poor sheep came flocking up until they were on the ground three rows deep. The ministers kept up their shouting and, shall I call it yelling. They invited Elder Haskell and Elder Breed to come down to the altar and help. They went down, and Elder Breed got down and tried to talk to some, but he felt so out of place he got up on his feet and stood and looked on. Elder Haskell left the tent and went to our own tent. Finally they had a season of prayer, then they got up and began shouting, "Praise the Lord," "Glory," et cetera, falling on one another's neck and kissing and shaking hands, keeping their music going with the noise, until many of them looked almost crazy.[42]

To describe it, I hardly know what to say. It is beyond all description. I have never seen any company held with a firmer grasp by a certain number of the leading ministers, than they are held in Indiana. Brother R.S. Donnell is president, and they have an experience in getting the people ready for translation. They call it the "cleansing message." Others call it the "holy flesh"; and when I say the "cleansing message" and the "holy flesh," no doubt these terms will bring to your mind experiences that illustrate what we saw....

39. This practice was imported from the more "charismatic" elements of Protestantism, and illustrates how the members of such churches came to be known as "holy rollers."
40. E.G. White, Letter to Brother and Sister S.N. Haskell, October 10, 1900; Letter 132, 1900
41. H.H. Haskell, Letter to Sara McInterfer, September 17, 1900
42. H.H. Haskell, Letter to Ellen G. White, September 22, 1900

> There is a great power that goes with the movement that is on foot there. It would almost bring anybody within its scope, if they are at all conscientious, and sit and listen with the least degree of favor, because of the music that is brought to play in the ceremony. They have an organ, one bass viol, three fiddles, two flutes, three tambourines, three horns, and a big bass drum, and perhaps other instruments which I have not mentioned. They are as much trained in their musical line as any Salvation Army choir that you ever heard. In fact, their revival effort is simply a complete copy of the Salvation Army method, and when they get on a high key, you cannot hear a word from the congregation in their singing, nor hear anything, unless it be the shrieks of those who are half insane. I do not think I overdraw it at all.[43]

Elder Haskell was deeply concerned with all this, but fortunately it was dealt with at the General Conference session the next spring, and ceased to be a significant problem.

There is, though, buried in the midst of this shocking picture (well, "shocking" when it was written, at least) a subtle point of truth. Ellen White, in the midst of decrying this perversion of "the pure, sincere, elevating, ennobling, sanctifying truth for this time," calmly states that such things would be "brought into our camp meetings." As regrettable and disconcerting as you might find this prediction, I think it's only fair to say that if I'm going to accept one part of her comment as valid, then consistency, integrity, sincerity, honesty, and the basic principles of literary interpretation all argue that I should place a similar emphasis on the whole of the warning.

And so I ask, "Whose camp meetings is she speaking of?"

Not the camp meetings of those who have renounced their Adventist membership, nor the camp meetings of some easily pilloried "Corporate Adventism." Ellen White says they are *our* camp meetings. And so it seems right that those who profess loyalty to God and loyalty to inspired counsel, should also acknowledge that these regrettable goings on are said to happen in *our* camp meetings.

I am not implying that anyone should feel compelled to approve of all that comes up as "special music," but I personally take this as an indication that just as Jesus "sat daily with you, teaching in the temple"[44] despite the perversion of the ceremonies there, so it is appropriate to maintain one's relationship with the local Adventist Church, notwithstanding any undesirable aspects. This is a door of opportunity that the devil would love to have closed. Yes, of course it will be a messy situation at times. Jesus occasionally fled Judea when homicidal tendencies became more pronounced than usual. But the temple was His Father's house and only when there was nothing more He could do did He give it up.[45]

43. S.N. Haskell, Letter to Ellen G. White, September 25, 1900
44. Matthew 26:55
45. One caveat on this: Parents should carefully consider the effect on children and youth:

And, further in this line, care should be taken that we not give up on people before God does! Jonah is not the only one who has found the Lord's longsuffering annoying! Blame it on TV or the internet if you wish, but our tendency to want every problem solved in thirty minutes or less doesn't mesh well with the divine methods.

> Many of the leading men have dishonored the Lord. They have been false shepherds and have led the flock of God astray. Teachers and rulers must be disciplined by disappointment, hardship, and affliction. Unless they are willing to learn of Christ His meekness and lowliness, they are not fitted to teach. Their example of self-righteousness will do nothing to advance the work of God.
>
> Lest the enemies of God should triumph over backsliding Israel, God bears long with the waywardness of their leaders, who though grown to the stature of men and women have not put away their childish faults and imperfections; who after having had years of experience still reveal that they are deficient in love, in grace, in purity. For the glory of His own name, not because of the righteousness of His church, or because of their obedience to His commandments, God has borne long with His people.[46]

One more take-away, this one more specifically confined to the details of these activities predicted to come into our camp meetings: all who have confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy should seek to use whatever talent and influence they have to ensure that the *our* Church's worship of God not degenerate into a carnival.

10. Licentiousness

The next prediction we will consider is a little different inasmuch as its focus is primarily on the activities of Satan and those working with him, though the implications are certainly pertinent to the Church:

> Near the close of this earth's history Satan will work with all his powers in the same manner and with the same temptations wherewith he tempted ancient Israel just before their entering the land of promise.[47]

"Elder Haskell, our testimony must be clear cut; there must be no daubing with untempered mortar. Sins of a grave character are cherished in our borders, and unless there is an awakening, such as we have not seen for some time, which will convict and convert professed Sabbath keepers, they will die in their sins. The punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah will be light in comparison with that of those who have had great light and precious opportunities, and have been earthly minded, corrupt in thoughts and practices, and have not purified their souls by obeying the truth....

"There is a little hope in one direction: Take the young men and women, and place them where they will come as little in contact with our churches as possible, that the low grade of piety which is current in this day shall not leaven their ideas of what it means to be a Christian." E.G. White, Letter to S.N Haskell, May 9, 1892; Letter 16f, 1892

The full context of this letter is difficult to convey in the limited space available, so—if this quotation strikes you as applicable to your circumstances—I encourage a complete reading.

46. E.G. White, "Qualifications of Workers," May 20, 1903; Manuscript 53, 1903
47. This basic idea of a parallel between the entrance into Canaan and the end of time shows up in many ways and in many places. Here's another one: "Satan's snares are laid for us as verily as they were laid for the children of Israel just prior to their entrance into the land of Canaan." *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 160

To cut out any suspense, and to make sure the rest of this quotation is considered in its proper context, the specific incident under discussion is the intoxication, heathen worship, and adultery committed at Shittim (KJV) or Acacia Grove (NKJV). Ellen White continues:

> [Satan] will lay snares for those who claim to keep the commandments of God, and who are almost on the borders of the heavenly Canaan. He will use his powers to their utmost in order to entrap souls, and to take God's professed people upon their weakest points. Those who have not brought the lower passions into subjection to the higher powers of their being, those who have allowed their minds to flow in a channel of carnal indulgence of the baser passions, Satan is determined to destroy with his temptations—to pollute their souls with licentiousness. He is not aiming especially at the lower and less important marks, but he makes use of his snares through those whom he can enlist as his agents to allure or attract men to take liberties which are condemned in the law of God.
>
> And men in responsible positions, teaching the claims of God's law, whose mouths are filled with arguments in vindication of His law, against which Satan has made such a raid—over such he sets his hellish powers and his agencies at work, and overthrows them upon the weak points in their character, knowing that he who offends on one point is guilty of all, thus obtaining complete mastery over the entire man. Mind, soul, body, and conscience are involved in the ruin. If he be a messenger of righteousness, and has had great light, or if the Lord has used him as His special worker in the cause of truth, then how great is the triumph of Satan! How he exults! How God is dishonored!

As noted before, it is common for Satan to aim at those of influence within the church. Killing a general is a big deal, whereas losing a platoon or even a whole company of dog-face grunts[48] is just one of those things that happens in a war. Our text continues:

> The licentious practice of the Hebrews accomplished for them that which all the warfare of nations and the enchantments of Balaam could not do.[49] They became

48. Lest it cause any confusion, that's military slang for a front-line infantry soldier.

49. I doubt Ellen White was thinking of this in any sort of positive light, but perhaps there was a merciful intent in the Lord's allowing Moses to be preoccupied:

    "During the time of their encampment beside Jordan, Moses was preparing for the occupation of Canaan. In this work the great leader was fully employed; but to the people this time of suspense and expectation was most trying, and before many weeks had elapsed their history was marred by the most frightful departures from virtue and integrity." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 454

    "The judgments visited upon Israel for their sin at Shittim, destroyed the survivors of that vast company, who, nearly forty years before, had incurred the sentence, 'They shall surely die in the wilderness.'" *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 456

    So, if there was an upside to this situation, it was probably akin to the "Crisis in Galilee" when "many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more." John 6:66

    Ellen White explains that there was a wise rationale behind what must have originally appeared to be a huge social media blunder: "When Jesus presented the testing truth that caused so many of His disciples to turn back, He knew what would be the result of His words; but He had a purpose of mercy to fulfill.... Had no previous test been given, many who were actuated by merely selfish motives would have been connected with them. When their Lord was condemned in the judgment hall; when the multitude who had hailed Him as their king hissed at Him and reviled Him; when the jeer-

> separated from their God. Their covering and protection were removed from them. God turned to be their enemy. So many of the princes and people were guilty of licentiousness, that it became a national sin; for God was wroth with the whole congregation. The very same Satan is now working to the very same end, to weaken and destroy the people who claim to be keeping the commandments of God, as they are just on the borders of the heavenly Canaan.[50]

What's the take-away here? Well, there's the obvious warning to all who have not "brought the lower passions into subjection." But if we back up the story just a bit, we can see another point or two worth considering:

> At first there was little intercourse between the Israelites and their heathen neighbors, but after a time Midianitish women[51] began to steal into the camp. Their appearance excited no alarm, and so quietly were their plans conducted that the attention of Moses was not called to the matter. It was the object of these women, in their association with the Hebrews, to seduce them into transgression of the law of God, to draw their attention to heathen rites and customs, and lead them into idolatry. These motives were studiously concealed under the garb of friendship, so that they were not suspected, even by the guardians of the people.[52]

And this is our other take-away: Balaam's plot was intentional; it was concealed; and, sadly, it was unexpected. Today, of course, anything described as secretive, concealed, and sinister is known as a "conspiracy theory." Fair enough. Just note that sometimes the conspiracy theorists have been correct, and paying at least a little attention to the worst case scenario is not always a sign of dementia.

11. Great Final Test

The fifth of the more seemingly unalterable predictions speaks of the "great final test" which is to come. The passage really doesn't give much of a picture of the Church or its "performance" on the test, so it's hard to draw conclusions without at least a little bit of extrapolation. The noteworthy aspect of this prediction is primarily the setting of the test. Here's the way the statement reads:

> The truth for this time, the third angel's message, is to be proclaimed with a loud voice—meaning with increasing power—as we approach the great final test. This test must come to the churches in connection with the true....

---

ing crowd cried, "Crucify Him!"—when their worldly ambitions were disappointed, these self-seeking ones would, by renouncing their allegiance to Jesus, have brought upon the disciples a bitter, heart-burdening sorrow, in addition to their grief and disappointment in the ruin of their fondest hopes. In that hour of darkness, the example of those who turned from Him might have carried others with them. But Jesus brought about this crisis while by His personal presence He could still strengthen the faith of His true followers." *Desire of Ages*, 394

50. *Review and Herald*, May 17, 1887
51. Modern sensibilities might bridle at the idea of "blaming the women," so it may be worth noting that the Spirit of Prophecy makes it clear that the primary architect of the event was Balaam. Nonetheless, modern sensibilities have done everything possible to eliminate the distinction between men and women, so I doubt we should bend over backwards in every point to avoid offending them.
52. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 454

Now, I've deliberately cut off the text, because what comes next has always struck me as something of an anomaly. The test is over "the truth for this time, the third angel's message"; it is the "great final test," and must "come to the churches," which sounds like it includes *all* churches; and finally, the test is said to be in connection with something described as *true*, presumably in contrast with something else which we might suspect is *false*.

So... what's this statement talking about? As I have taught and spoken of this over the last fifteen years or so, I have often asked the question, "This test comes to the churches in connection with the true... *what?*"

To be honest, I have always expected any good Adventist congregation to respond in unison, "The true Sabbath!" After all, it fits! We know the Sabbath test is the main issue at the end of time; it is imposed by a "universal Sunday law" which covers all the churches; and it certainly stands as the *true* Sabbath in contrast to the false sabbath of man's creation. But the Sabbath *is* the great final test, and what we're looking for is the sidecar, the addendum, the thing connected to it, so "Sabbath" is not the answer, not this time. Here's the full quote:

> The truth for this time, the third angel's message, is to be proclaimed with a loud voice—meaning with increasing power—as we approach the great final test. This test must come to the churches in connection with the true medical missionary work, a work that has the great Physician to dictate and preside in all it comprehends. Under the great Head we are to present God's Word requiring obedience to the system of Bible truth, which is a system of authority and power, convicting and converting the conscience. The demand of the Word to obedience is a life and death question. The present truth for this time comprises the messages, the third angel's message succeeding the first and second. The presentation of this message with all it embraces is our work.[53]

Hmm.... medical missionary work? Great final test? As I said, it seems like an anomaly. But if you take a bit of an expanded view of the various elements involved, it's not that hard to pull the whole picture together. Here's the way it all fits, in my mind. You are, of course, free to see things a bit differently.

What we know as the final test at the end of time comes from Revelation 12 and 13. The dragon (Satan), the composite beast (papacy), the lamb-like beast who ends up speaking like a dragon (United States), the image to the beast (the compelling power led by apostate Protestantism), the mark of the beast (Sunday worship), the number of the beast (whichever interpretation of 666 you prefer[54]), financial coercion, and finally the death decree—these are all quite generally understood at least at a basic level by most Adventists. But what does any of that have to do with medical missionary work?

53. E.G. White, Letter to Brother and Sister S.N. Haskell, August 13, 1900; Letter 121, 1900
54. My apologies to those who consider this an absolutely vital matter. My focus is elsewhere, so this isn't the place to hash that all out.

Think of the pressures to be brought to bear on anyone who has any inclination to serve God faithfully. The entire religio-political-financial world speaks with a voice of thunder, saying "You worship on Sunday or we'll bankrupt you, we'll starve you, we'll kill you."

What we often miss is the parallelism of God's response in Revelation 14: "If you worship on Sunday, I'll burn you." Talk about being caught between a rock and a hard place! But the key thought from all this is that the final showdown is a matter of faith. Every person on earth, fully informed of all the necessary features of the case because "this gospel" has gone to all the earth, now has to chose one power or the other. Can they see solid evidence of the final outcome? No, but they still have to choose. At this point, *no one* has the luxury of full knowledge.[55] True enough, all that has sustained the world is still there in some form; the "powers that be," the masses of the population, the politicians, the financiers, the most impressively capable AI platforms available, the spirits of the dead, and even the assurances of extra terrestrials[56] all strongly and visibly support Sunday.

If you're going to "walk by sight" your path is clear, even if you can't completely make out the end of the road.

The "elect," on the other hand, have nothing but the Word of God and the habits they've cultivated.

Habits? How did habits get into this picture?

So glad you asked... let's go here:

> Those who exercise but little faith now, are in the greatest danger of falling under the power of satanic delusions and the decree to compel the conscience. And even if they endure the test they will be plunged into deeper distress and anguish in the time of trouble, because they have never made it a habit to trust in God. The lessons of faith which they have neglected they will be forced to learn under a terrible pressure of discouragement.[57]

This is a great quote! A little dark in some of the "distress and anguish" details, but an absolute gold mine of hope. Let me explain:

Back on page 12 I said that I was a big fan of "self-determination" and "individual responsibility." It's fair to say that I'm more of an Arminian than a Calvinist. And this is the ultimate example of all that. This is where the rubber meets the road. And the best part of the whole business is *we aren't there yet!*

---

55. If you've got amazingly keep perception, you might now be sensing a parallel to the circumstances in which every angel in heaven found himself when Lucifer contradicted God back at the beginning of his rebellion. Without proof that either side was entirely correct, each angel had to choose between God and Lucifer. This is where "righteousness by faith" first came into play. Since absolute proof was lacking, decisions with eternal results were made on the basis of faith in God or faith in Lucifer.
56. This is a debatable point, but I suspect it will come to pass. Feel free to hold a different opinion.
57. *Great Controversy*, 622

Do you see that word "now" in the first line of that last quotation? That's where we are, and God is telling us that exercising "but little faith" is just about the most foolish thing we could be doing, *right now.* So, seriously, how hard is it to figure out what the "wise virgins" are working on, *right now?*

Faith, obviously! Making it a habit to trust in God. Unless you have some weird ambition to experience "deeper distress and anguish" than you need to. Unless you're willing to run the risk of "falling under the power of satanic delusions and the decree to compel the conscience." Developing faith—*right now*—is the name of the game, my friend, and medical missionary work is certainly right at the top of the "recommended exercises" to make faith grow.

The thing about genuine medical missionary work (yes, the devil has counterfeits for this, too) is that it is a constant exercise in self-denial and self-sacrifice. Whoever the Lord calls you to minister to, is going to be needing *something.* It may just be your time (though time tends to carry along with it a need for patient endurance). It may be physical exertion. You may be called on to work in ways you don't enjoy. (Think: *bedpans,* for example.) You may need to supply food, or clothes, or money. You may find yourself wrestling with problems bigger than you have any reason to think you can handle, and you may—increasingly, it would seem—find yourself at odds with the established systems of the world when it comes to acceptable methods of responding to the need.

Every one of these challenges is perfectly designed to stress test your faith, to make it grow and strengthen. Do this enough, and you'll have a confirmed habit of trusting God. This is the benefit of facing the great final test "in connection with the true medical missionary work."

By way of more explicit, inspired support for the linkage between the test over the Sabbath, faith, and medical missionary work, there is always this:

> We cannot afford to let one day pass in which we have not laid hold by living faith on the God of Israel. We need the clear light of the Sun of righteousness to shine upon us. This light is given to those who keep holy the Lord's Sabbath; but we cannot keep this day holy unless we serve the Lord in the manner brought to view in the Scripture: "Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free; and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him? and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh." This is the work that rests upon every soul who accepts the service of Christ.[58]

What are we to learn from all this? We need to learn what faith actually looks like. For one thing, presumption is still a danger, but perhaps more daunting is that we have generally exercised so little faith that we might not be able to pick out the genuine article in a police line-up. We are used to being "risk averse." We

58. E.G. White, "Talk: Let Us Publish Salvation," May 27, 1909; Manuscript 35, 1909

are used to having an approved budget to support everything we do. We are used to being well regarded by all the systems of power and polite society. How much of a shock would it be to suddenly "see every earthly support cut off"? That's the way Ellen White put it in *Desire of Ages*.

> In the last great conflict of the controversy with Satan those who are loyal to God will see every earthly support cut off. Because they refuse to break His law in obedience to earthly powers, they will be forbidden to buy or sell. It will finally be decreed that they shall be put to death.[59]

If we've never made it a habit to trust in God, that's going to be a big jump. But there's something special about that "every earthly support" wording. It turns out this isn't the only place she uses it. In fact, this is only the first of a quartet of truly great quotations. Here's number two:

> Doubts and fears grow by indulgence, and the more they are indulged, the harder are they to overcome.[60] It is safe to let go every earthly support and take the hand of Him who lifted up and saved the sinking disciple on the stormy sea.[61]

Okay, it's *safe* to let go of every earthly support. That's reassuring! But there's more to come.

> We cannot lean on any earthly support. The Lord God of Israel must become our helper.[62]

That seems a little restrictive, no? Why would Ellen White ever say something like that? Is there a good reason for it?

Well, yes there is.

> We can never perfect a round, full, Christian experience until every earthly support is removed, and the soul centers its entire affections about God.[63]

So there you have it. Habits are important. They may well decide our eternal destiny. And medical missionary work is the divinely recommended exercise to develop the habits that will serve us well in the end.

12. Good Things... and Resistance

This sixth prediction is couched as a warning, a "heads-up" to all who aspire to remain Seventh-day Adventists till the close of time. Sadly, there's evidence enough that many now listed on the Church records will not qualify on this account long enough for the announcement "It is finished!" to find them deserving of the Lord's "*Well done!*"

But the more instructive part of this prediction is that those who fail to endure, don't all fall in the same class, or fail for the same reason. That hardly seems like a

59. *Desire of Ages*, 121
60. Yes, *bad habits* are a part of the picture, as well.
61. *Testimonies*, vol. 4, 558
62. *Review and Herald*, July 2, 1889
63. E.G. White, Letter to Fannie Bolton, February 19, 1894; Letter 6, 1894

surprise, given the multitude of sins which might spoil a "believer" for heaven, but the point of this particular instruction isn't quite that generic. Let's look:

> If we are to bear a part in this work to its close, we must recognize the fact that there are good things to come to the people of God in a way that we had not discerned and that there will be resistance from the very ones we least expected to engage in such a work. A man that is sincere in the wrong is not justified in the wrong, because he has opened his heart to a class of evidence leading him to condemn the right and has closed his heart to a class of evidence which, if he would not cherish prejudice, would lead him to see and acknowledge what is truth.
>
> How long will the Lord have patience with men in their blindness? How long He will wait before leaving them to grope their way to final darkness we cannot determine.
>
> Should the Lord's messengers, after standing manfully for the truth for a time, fall under temptation and dishonor Him who has given them their work, will that be proof that the message is not true? No, because the Bible is true. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Sin on the part of the messenger of God would cause Satan to rejoice, and those who have rejected the messenger and the message would triumph; but it would not at all clear the men who were guilty of rejecting the message of truth sent of God.[64]

The historical context of this letter is significant: Ellen White is writing to the General Conference president, not quite four years after the Minneapolis General Conference session of 1888. With the advantage of hindsight that was not available at the time, we can easily see the accuracy of what she wrote.

"The Lord's messengers" Ellen White spoke of in her letter are—perhaps not exclusively, but certainly primarily—Elders A.T. Jones and E.J. Waggoner. Sadly, both men, "after standing manfully for the truth for a time," did eventually fall "under temptation." That, of course, was not proof that their message was not true.

The initial "we" of the first sentence takes in the great mass of church members. They are the ones who need to recognize both "good things" and "resistance" even when they come for unexpected sources. This is the main thrust of this counsel for the majority of the Church, and it's probably challenging enough to keep most of us on our toes.

But the recipient of this letter, O.A. Olsen, wasn't simply one of the great mass of church members. He was the General Conference president, with far more than the normal opportunity to rub shoulders with everyone else mentioned in this warning. The reference to people who were "sincere in the wrong" was a good description of a number of the Church leaders with whom Olsen worked closely,[65] and the problem was the president's unwillingness or inability to deal with that wrong. When Ellen White wrote "How long will the Lord have patience with men in their blindness?" she was almost certainly thinking of her

64. E.G. White, Letter to O.A. Olsen, September 1, 1892; Letter 19d, 1892

65. For a breakdown on all this, consider reading the two books by Ron Duffield, *The Return of the Latter Rain,* and *Wounded in the House of His Friends,* available from returnofthelatterrainpublishers.org

friend, Elder Olsen (among others similarly afflicted, of whom there were many at that time).

Elder Olsen was "a good man," but proved unable to bear some of the pressures that came with his position, as is shown in Ellen White's comments over the following years. To recount his role in the background story of the unexpected "good things" and "resistance" almost seems like "piling on."[66] The old saying about not kicking a man when he is down, comes to mind. The story is a sad one, but instructive in many ways—one of which that should not be overlooked is the gentleness of Ellen White when dealing with Elder Olsen's mistakes. And, indeed, there is a happier ending which deserves to be told—and celebrated—as well. It's a bit long, so I'll try to condense it some, but the details are important, so buckle up for an extended story-time. In all this, please do remember that Ellen White was in Australia during this time frame, and note the chronological progression of her letters.

> Men are bringing in false theories and principles and converting Elder Olsen to voice their unjust plans and methods, which are bringing the curse of God upon our institutions.[67]
>
> I have had conversation with W.C. White. He was presenting before me the necessity of our people heeding the voice of the General Conference. Then I said, "WCW, it is time you should understand that, notwithstanding the opinion that has prevailed, the General Conference so-called is no longer the voice of God. It has become a strange voice, and they are building strange fire. God does not speak through them. The work that is being done in the General Conference is a strange work. Elder Olsen is not in the light. Had he stood in the light, he would not have allowed us to be separated from him and come to this country. He has stood in a divided position in reference to the spirit brought from Minneapolis. He let the burdens fall upon me that never should have come upon me. Had he stood to his post of duty like a man after God's own heart, the clouds would have broken and light would have come in clear and bright. But his half-and-half position was acting out the Aaron, and God was displeased. We were needed at the heart of the work all the years that we have been away from America.
>
> "There is being done in America, by the General Conference, that which the churches in the conferences know nothing about. You were not wanted in their councils. They wanted to get you out of the way. Elder Olsen was not fully in all their projects at first, but they—Harmon Lindsay and A.R. Henry—deceived him. Elder Olsen has betrayed the cause of God. He is not in union with Elder Ellet Waggoner, neither is he in harmony with A.T. Jones. He is yoked up and united with the men who are working at cross-purposes with God, and the churches are becoming leavened with the spirit that prevails at Battle Creek."

66. The main factor in this "piling on" aspect is the number of warnings and the multiple years over which Ellen White pleaded with him to correct the situation. It was his failure (one might somewhat more charitably say, "his inability") to make the needed corrections which produced the progressive deterioration of affairs at the "heart of the work."
67. E.G. White, "The Review and Herald Office," 1893; Manuscript 61,1893

W.C. White appeared astonished when I told him that he was not wanted in Battle Creek councils and was crowded out, and meetings were held that he should have been notified to attend. But they took special pains that he should not know of these meetings. Elder Olsen could have wholly changed these things if he had stood free in God, bravely opposed to wrong, but he yoked up as a true yoke-fellow with A.R. Henry, who has carried things with a high hand.[68]

I am troubled for you [Elder Olson], my much-respected brother. I am bowed down with anguish of spirit, for the situation is becoming more and more perplexing.

A net has been spread to involve the Conference, a net that the people know not of, and that very few suspect the existence of. The condition of things is binding your hands and hindering the work. The crisis will soon be reached. The state of things is not fully revealed to me, but this much I know: to a great degree, the management of finances has been conducted on wrong principles. While all is supposed to be prosperous, there is peril.

You have connected with you men who have no living connection with God. You fear to exercise your judgment, lest there should be an explosion. This is why I feel so sad. I have written out matters that I dared not send to you, unless there were persons of a firm, decided character who would stand by your side as true yoke fellows to sustain you. The two men who have been especially associated with you should, in their present spiritual condition,[69] have no part in planning and carrying forward the work of God in any of its various lines. If they were to see themselves as God sees them, and fall upon the Rock and be broken, a decided change would appear in them. Confessions would be made to free their souls from every corrupting influence.[70]

Dear Edson, I see by your letter that you are again in Battle Creek.... I have written many things, Edson, in regard to the manner in which the work has been prose-

68. E.G. White, "Diary: Regarding O. A. Olsen, July 1894; Manuscript 114, 1894

69. The "spiritual condition" of the two men in question is perhaps best described in a letter Ellen White wrote six months later to her nephew, Frank Belden. Unfortunately, Frank had worked closely with Lindsay and Henry, and on much the same wavelength—until they turned against him. There is much more to the story, but that's perhaps enough to make sense of the following:

"Their dealings with you in reference to your books was after the spirit controlling human minds, but not according to the law of God or righteousness....

"A.R. Henry and Harmon Lindsay believe not the third angel's message. They are not only saying in their hearts, 'My Lord delayeth His coming,' but in spirit, in words and actions, wherever they go. It pains me to see these two bodies of death sent from place to place upon important business in connection with the cause of God, when they are imbued with the spirit of Satan working in secret. They have not the Spirit of God. They are separated from God, and have been ever since the Minneapolis meeting, walking in the imaginations of their own hearts. Isaiah 50:10, 11.

"When these men shall be converted, or else removed from the work, then there will be disclosures that will reveal a state of things in the General Conference financial standing that will be an astonishment to many. This is as far as I have the liberty to go....

"And these very men that are counterworking the cause of God, these selfish men, are the ones with whom you labored to receive from the treasury means. I knew that your voice did more than any other voice to rob the treasury of God and to put means into selfish hands, into the hands of men that were not sanctified through the truth. This is why, Frank, I could not sustain you." E.G. White, Letter to Frank Belden, November 13, 1895; Letter 13, 1895

Once again, the overarching evil of selfishness takes center stage, even to the point of "robbing the treasury of God," which naturally harmed the "financial standing" of the General Conference.

70. E.G. White, Letter to O.A. Olson, May 1, 1895; Letter 57, 1895

cuted in Battle Creek; but although the matter is prepared for the mail, I defer sending it. I feel sympathy with Brother Olsen. His associates do little to hold up his hands, but much to make them feeble....

You may be looked upon with suspicion and distrust, but I fully believe that in the providence of God your stay at Battle Creek will be a precious school for you....

If you can do so in an unobtrusive way, try to help Brother Olsen, and stay up his hands. He needs sympathy, and words of hopefulness and courage. But please do not cast reflection upon the men who have not a living connection with God. If you are considerate, you may do good to A.R. Henry, and Harmon Lindsay. Show by your attitude that you hold no bitterness toward them. Whatever their attitude toward you, let it not discourage you or embitter your experience. Hold fast to Jesus....

I have been, and am still, speaking very plainly to them, and your attitude must not give them the impression that I have written to you anything detrimental to them. These men have many temptations, and their souls are precious. If they can be won to see how they can come to Jesus and take Him as their counselor, what a victory will be gained on the Lord's side. Do not live over the past. Do not in any way give occasion for your good to be evil spoken of. You may save souls from death and hide a multitude of sins, if you walk circumspectly. The Lord bears long with the erring children He has purchased at an infinite cost. These men, A.R. Henry and Harmon Lindsay, are in the greatest peril of losing their souls because they do not discern their situation. Let the melting love of God abide and rule in your heart, controlling every action.

If you put your trust in God, I see great opportunity for you to be a blessing to others, even in Battle Creek.[71]

"You [Elder Olsen] are out of your place. You have not stood in faithful steadfastness. From your first connection with the work, you have not set wrongs right. You have been misled. Your individuality has been, in a large measure, merged in men who have closed their eyes and ears to the voice of Jesus, who is seeking entrance to the door of their hearts, longing to soften and subdue them. You have heard with their ears, and seen with their eyes, and followed their judgment....

Much that has been done for several years will have to be counteracted. This means, to some, the undermining of faith and confidence in the work. Woe unto men to whom God hath entrusted talents and acquirements, but who have perverted them to a wrong use. O, may God pity and save His heritage.[72]

When Elder Olsen linked himself with these men [Harmon Lindsay, the General Conference treasurer, and A.R. Henry, the Review and Herald Publishing Association treasurer, most notably], he perverted his spiritual eyesight, and saw things in a strange light. He knew that they were resisting the Spirit of God, but thought that by uniting with them, he could convert them. The result has been contrary to this, for to a large degree, they have converted him. His clear discernment between right and wrong has been injured.

From the beginnings of his work as president of the General Conference, Elder Olsen's policy has been a mistake. Instead of upholding that which he knew to be according to the law of God, instead of standing firmly as a faithful guardian for those holy trusts which would keep the great heart of the work pure, at any apparent ex-

71. E.G. White, Letter to J.E. White, September 25, 1895; Letter 86, 1895
72. E.G. White, "Communications to Leading Brethren," June 6, 1896; Manuscript 21, 1896

pense or financial loss, he has tried to occupy a position on both sides. He has not been altogether in harmony with the men I have referred to, but so much so that Satan has stolen a march upon him. Unconsciously he has been ensnared, and his principles of integrity and purity have been corrupted. God has been dishonored, and His Spirit has been grieved.[73]

Dear Brother Olsen, it is your privilege to draw nigh to God, and put your entire trust in Him. He understands all about the mistakes of the past, and He will help you. But wherever you may be, never, never tread over the same ground. You have done a sad work, but do not repeat it. Be decided, be firm. When you have a clear perception of the work the Lord would have done, take no divided or neutral course, but do that work in the fullest sense, irrespective of imaginary consequences.[74]

I feel so distressed over the matter of Elder Olsen going on and on in the face of so great light. How he can be excusable I cannot define. He has acted like a blind man, like a man dazed. There can be no spiritual union between a man who puts his entire trust in God and a man who is walking contrary to God....

I want you [W.C. White] to see Brother Henry and make every effort possible to inspire him with hope, to surrender to God. I am sure he could have been helped if Brother Olsen had not led him to suppose he sustained him. Had Brother Olsen not acted the Aaron and the Eli, but stood leaning upon the arm of God in the place of the arm of man, God would have worked for him and been his strength, his front guard, his rereward. But, oh, it has been so different than this! The eyes of men who have officiated in Battle Creek have been more or less blinded and their whole experience has become so confused they cannot discern light from darkness, truth from error. They do not know many things as they ought to know them, and yet the education of our people has been to look to Battle Creek for guidance....

Men have been led by men and depended on men and turned their faces from God to listen to the counsel of men.[75] When we all repent of doing this and greatly dishonoring God, we shall look higher than human wisdom. Let every one seek God for his individual self. Ministers and people are far from God. The living testimony must be revived, and the message of the Lord will go forth from unfeigned lips, the whole heart contrite and no more lifted up, but humble and meek and lowly.[76]

I feel very sorry for [Elder Olsen]. I cannot feel in union with him, as I formerly did. He did not use aright the testimonies given me for him. He gave wrong impressions by selecting portions of the testimonies and making strong use of them, passing over the reproofs given to him and to others. I cannot place confidence in him. He has oppressed his brethren by bringing in elements to work against those whom God was using to do His work. Will not God judge for these things? I hope that something will take place that will give me stronger faith than I now have in Battle Creek and the working of the cause of God in the institutions there. But as yet, I am in trouble of mind, sending over reproving messages for them. First one thing and then another works to hinder, and not to purify, the work.[77]

---

73. E.G. White, Letter to the Men who occupy Responsible Positions in the Work, July 1, 1896; Letter 4, 1896
74. E.G. White, Letter to O.A. Olsen, December 1, 1896; Letter 127, 1896
75. Here, again, we see the "bane" of the church, the "exalting of the men placed in positions of trust." See Footnote 36.
76. E.G. White, Letter to W.C. White, March 15, 1897; Letter 181, 1897
77. E.G. White, Letter to Brother and Sister E.J. Waggoner, August 26, 1898; Letter 77, 1898

A couple details about this next letter may need a little clarification. For one thing, to avoid any confusion about who was president of what, it's important to know that the General Conference Association is a separate legal body, and not the same as what we normally call the "General Conference." At the General Conference session of 1897 (February 19–March 8) there had been a changing of the guard. Elder George Irwin was chosen to serve as General Conference president, and I.H. Evans (until then the president of the Michigan Conference) was asked to serve as president of the General Conference Association and a member of the General Conference Committee. In writing to Elder Evans, Ellen White goes back more than six years in the story, I presume in an effort to help the newly elected church officer understand the situation he'd been voted into.

> I wish now to speak in regard to matters of communication sent to Battle Creek. Before I left America.... I had a large package of matter written for the men who were carrying responsibilities in the Review office.
>
> I entrusted them to Elder Olsen and told him to make no delay, but to read these communications to the responsible men in the Review and Herald office. He promised me he would do so; therefore, I supposed he had done it, yet no response came to me.
>
> After some months I wrote again directly to A.R. Henry, speaking to him plainly, but I got no response to that letter. Then I wrote again, sending a copy of the second letter to A.R. Henry in the package of letters to Elder Olsen. Then I wrote to Elder Olsen, but while I was expecting to hear from him in regard to the communications I had entrusted to him, and which he was to read to those assembled in councils and board meetings, light came to me from the Lord that Elder Olsen had neglected the trust given him, and had failed in doing his duty to read the things that I had given him to the ones who must have them. A letter came to me that he had not placed these matters before them but that he had been wanting a favorable opportunity.
>
> I then wrote to Brother Tait, always giving directions to use very carefully these matters. I knew that the brethren in the faith, the presidents in the conferences, should have the light that God had given me, and this is the history of the matter. I have carried a heavy burden. The receiving of no response to my letters from A.R. Henry led me to suppose that it made no difference upon him whatever. I might write, but if he would take no heed I must let others know the dangers that were threatening the cause of God at the head of the work in America. The only thing that I now regret is that I did not, as I have done in the past, get out a testimony especially for our own people, that they might not be left in darkness in regard to the movements in Battle Creek—the perverting of principles which would disconnect God from those who were handling sacred things. This burden was upon me day and night.
>
> I have done that which I believed was my duty to do under the circumstances, only I regret that in the place of entrusting the light given me with a few men in Battle Creek, I did not issue testimonies which would have come before the leading men throughout our conferences. I supposed that the men at the heart of the work, when receiving the warnings and cautions given, would in a careful manner use these more private matters to enlighten our people and guard them. I did not suppose that those who claimed to believe the testimonies would lay them away, and make no use of them to prevent a condition of things that was imperiling the cause of God.

> I had presented before me the dangers of Elder Olsen and wrote to him personally in regard to them, and I thought he would take heed to the light given. He was the president of the General Conference, and, as A.R. Henry made no response to several letters sent to him, I saw no other way to do than to address the letters to the president of the General Conference. But as he went directly contrary to the cautions and warnings given him, I was left to try some other way to get the light before the people and place the communications in other hands in order to prevent what has come, for the Lord has withdrawn His favor from those who followed their own wisdom and relied upon the wisdom of men who were not worked by the Holy Spirit of God, but by a power that was from the inspiration of the devil, that the means coming from the people should be so handled that the Lord could not give success to the cause entrusted to their hands.
>
> I have communications which I have had no courage to send. There were so few consecrated to God to do His will that whatever I should send would be perverted, misinterpreted, misstated, and misunderstood. There were those who would use these communications to counteract the influence of anything that I should say to them that did not coincide with the methods, plans, and principles which the Lord set before them, and which, if they heeded, they would cut away from the things which they were seeking to inaugurate; but I had sent line upon line, warning upon warning, that seemed not to be heeded in the least.
>
> Letters came from some of the brethren, stating that the leading men were expressing that they did not believe the testimonies. Who these leading men were was not stated, the names were not given, but I knew who they were and that this was no false report.
>
> The question may arise, Why did you not get out a testimony as you have done in the past? For the very reason that it would be an exposure of corruptions at the very heart of the work that I was not willing should appear, to be used by our enemies.
>
> Now when I see that the very men are inspired by Satan to express themselves, and make the most of this state of things, and expose this course of action to our enemies, it is a revelation of how much such ones have respected the sacred work of God.... The Lord would have had all such men separated from His work long years ago, for their connection with the work was to act a Judas and betray the work when the inspiration of Satan came upon them.[78]

At that General Conference session of 1897, Elder Olsen had been asked to serve as president of "the European Conference." (That's in quotes because it wasn't really a well defined entity at the time.) In 1901 he was appointed "Mission Leader" of the work in England, were he served until 1905. During that time, he made some mistakes similar in nature to those which had marred his work as General Conference president, and received letters from Ellen White similar to those we've already seen. This account of our history might easily have been far less complete in regard to Elder Olsen, but all that has been recounted here will serve to emphasize what comes next. And that is, Ellen White didn't give up on the guy! She didn't write him off or consign him to hell. Instead, she worked with

78. E.G. White, Letter to Brother Evans, November 21, 1897; Letter 51, 1897

him. She provided correction and even rebuke, but since Olsen never rose up in clear rebellion (as did A.R. Henry and Harmon Lindsay, by way of contrast) she regarded his past experience and even his mistakes as something of an asset.

Olsen knew a thing or two about his weaknesses, and he was willing to acknowledge them and repent (unlike the others). That didn't mean that Olsen never messed up again, but it did mean he was that much further along the process than some other guy who still imagined he had his act all together!

And so this flawed human being (somewhat like many others, in that regard) was still entrusted with the work of the Lord. In 1905 Ellen White supported his call to the presidency of the Australasian Union Conference where he worked for four years. After that he spent six years as leader of the Foreign Department of the General Conference.

Was he a perfect leader by then? Maybe... but if I had to guess, I'd go with "No." And it's important that we not focus so much on the reproofs he received that we lose sight of the man's rehabilitation.

For our purposes here, all those details can simply remain as history. There is no need to try to turn them into some sort of specific prophecy for the future. What we do need to recognize is that "there are good things to come to the people of God in a way that we had not discerned and that there will be resistance from the very ones we least expected to engage in such a work." The details of the past illustrate how high that prediction might reach within God's church, and similarly show that a couple of men as unlikely as a former army sergeant (A.T. Jones) and a medical doctor (E.J. Waggoner) could bring unexpected spiritual blessing.

The topic of this booklet, however, is the Church's circumstances at the end of time. Given that the devil has had considerable success with this particular sort of thing in the past, it comes as no surprise that he would try it again when the stakes are at their highest. Hence this specific warning set in the time frame of the loud cry:

> There will be those among us who will always want to control the work of God, to dictate even what movements shall be made when the work goes forward under the direction of the angel who joins the third angel in the message to be given to the world. God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands. The workers will be surprised by the simple means that He will use to bring about and perfect His work of righteousness. Those who are accounted good workers will need to draw nigh to God, they will need the divine touch. They will need to drink more deeply and continuously at the fountain of living water, in order that they may discern God's work at every point. Workers may make mistakes, but you should give them a chance to correct their errors, give them an opportunity to learn caution, by leaving the work in their hands.[79]

79. *Testimonies to Ministers*, 299

It seems far more likely that efforts to "control the work of God" will come from leaders rather than from followers. Similarly—though I would judge it to be slightly less exclusively so—it seems like the "simple means" God will use to "perfect His work in righteousness" will probably come from somewhere in the lower echelons of Church membership. But the idea that "workers may make mistakes" is certainly applicable to all who profess to serve the Lord. I wouldn't want to be seen as making excuses for apostasy, but if there is anything to learn from history, surely it is that human beings are prone to messing things up.

And that's exactly why that last sentence of the quotation is so important! "You should give them a chance to correct their errors, give them an opportunity to learn caution, by leaving the work in their hands." We may tell ourselves that we are "calling sin by its right name," or "exalting the standard," or "preaching the straight testimony," but if we lose all sense of compassion, all willingness to work with the erring, we are ourselves "messing things up."

It is the devil who advocates for a "merciless justice…, a counterfeit of justice, abhorrent to God."[80] And, at the risk of popping a few self-confident and self-righteous bubbles, we can easily find the example to end all examples of this long-suffering approach on God's part:

> God in His great mercy bore long with Lucifer. He was not immediately degraded from his exalted station when he first indulged the spirit of discontent, nor even when he began to present his false claims before the loyal angels. Long was he retained in heaven. Again and again he was offered pardon on condition of repentance and submission. Such efforts as only infinite love and wisdom could devise were made to convince him of his error.… Though he had forsaken his position as covering cherub, yet if he had been willing to return to God, acknowledging the Creator's wisdom, and satisfied to fill the place appointed him in God's great plan, he would have been reinstated in his office.[81]

We will certainly never see another case so significant as that of the first great rebel, but whether we be concerned with the conduct of a Church administrator "over" us, or with an uncooperative worker or member "under" us, if we fail to employ "such efforts as only infinite love and wisdom" can present for our use, we reflect more of Satan's "merciless justice" than God's "great mercy."

No, it won't always be successful. God Himself couldn't persuade Lucifer to repent, and there is a time to confront error. But it is fraught with opportunity for self-interest to masquerade as righteousness, and especially so near the end of time.

> I wish to say some things in reference to the revival at Healdsburg.…
>
> I believe the work at Healdsburg to be genuine. I believe there were the deep movings of the Spirit of God. I believe unconsecrated, unconverted ones urged themselves to the front. The enemy always works through those of unbalanced minds and im-

80. E.G. White, Letter to Brother and Sister C.H. Jones, July 4, 1892; Letter 16a, 1892

81. *Great Controversy*, 495

perfect characters. I do not believe that Elder E.P. Daniels moved wisely in all things, and it would be a new chapter in the experience of workers if there were not a mistake made in some things. Has not God presented before you the defects and want of wisdom in your ways and in your management? If Elder Daniels erred in some things, who of you dared to tell him to preach no more? Who of you dared to stop the work because in your finite judgment everything did not appear to meet your ideas? Every time I think of this matter, I am so pained I try to put it out of my mind at once....

I wish to say I am not in harmony with your treatment of this matter. That there were fanatical ones who pressed into that work I would not deny. But if you move in the future as you have done in this matter, you may be assured of one thing, you will condemn the work of the latter rain when it shall come. For you will see at that time far greater evidences of fanaticism.[82]

13. Unsafe Leaders Revealed

Just when you began to think that all the news is bad, here's one that's good! Well, okay, so it's good in a bit of a backhanded sort of way, but good nonetheless. This prediction comes in a number of different wordings, but let me try to say it as simply as I can: Near the end of time, lies and liars will *all* be exposed.

I think that's fantastic news. Bad for the liars, true enough, but it's only because *they* weren't true enough. They're liars. Here are a few of the ways Ellen White put it:

We have said to you, again and again, that God would sift His people; the chaff will be separated from the wheat. The tares are already binding in bundles to burn. There is to be, as we near the end, a revealing of true character. Those who have not the truth in the heart will reveal this, because they will not be sanctified through the truth. They have tacked the truth onto their carnal, unsanctified, unholy characters, and have not brought it into their lives and woven it into their characters. Circumstances will occur that will reveal in unholy works the thoughts and the actions of this unholy class.[83]

Before the great trouble shall come upon the world such as has never been since there was a nation, those who have faltered and who would ignorantly lead in unsafe paths will reveal this before the real vital test, the last proving, comes, so that whatsoever they may say will not be regarded as voicing the True Shepherd.... We have no time to lose in walking through clouds of doubt and uncertainty because of uncertain voices.[84]

A condition of things has been brought about that, unless God in mercy shall interpose, will work disaster to His cause.... For reasons that you [A.R. Henry and Harmon Lindsay, whom we've met previously] can give, God is not moving upon the hearts of His people to supply the treasury....

The Lord Himself will turn and overturn, and set things in order. He has the responsibility of His own work, and He has not entrusted the management of His people to unsanctified human hands....

82. E.G. White, Letter to J.H. Waggoner, J.N. Loughborough, A.T. Jones, E.J. Waggoner, April 1886; Letter 76, 1886
83. E.G. White, Letter to Brethren and Sisters in California, April 13, 1887; Letter 92, 1887
84. E.G. White, Letter to S.N. Haskell, August 22, 1892; Letter 13, 1892

> The time is near when God by His providence will make manifest what principles have been cherished by the men connected with the management of His work. Unless these men are converted, they will be separated from the work.[85]

For the record, this revelation of dishonesty and evil is not confined to the Adventist Church. Unsurprisingly, there's corruption enough for the whole world to have its share, and God promises to reveal that as well.

> The record of dishonesty and conniving and vileness that has resulted from the investigation into the cases of men holding official positions, and which has been opened before all through the courts, should certainly open blind eyes and lead us to inquire, Whom can we trust? Where can we find men of honor? As these evils are being revealed, even the worldling can see that corruption is filling the earth as it did in the time of Noah, and for which God had then to destroy the world by a flood. But instead of calling these men to repentance, the revelations are turning the office holders one against another, and they are exposing to the world every species of crime in the lives of judges and jurors and senators alike. Satan is at work to corrupt with his deceiving policies the rulers and the people. This work will be carried on from city to city until the guilt of the whole world will be manifest, and it will be plainly seen why God permits His judgments to fall on the earth. They will come because of the pride of heart, the falsehood, the dishonesty, the profanity that is manifest. The Lord will come out of His place to punish the earth for her iniquity; the earth shall disclose her blood and shall no more cover her slain.
>
> God has designed that these revelations should be made, that those who read the accounts of them may understand that men's sins have reached unto heaven, and that the time is surely near when God will blot out iniquity from the earth. May the Lord help me at this time of awful judgments to make my calling and election sure, to put on the wedding garment, that when He comes I may be found without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.[86]

> Great and worldly men are seeking after riches, many of them obtaining their wealth through fraudulent speculations. The Lord is permitting these men to expose one another in their evil deeds and bring their crimes to light.[87]

> Men in high places are giving evidence that their thoughts are evil continually. Many are seeking after riches, and scruple not to add to their wealth through fraudulent transactions. The Lord is permitting these men to expose one another in their evil deeds. Some of their iniquitous practices are being laid open before the world, that thinking men who still have a desire in their hearts to be honest and just with their fellow men, may understand why God is beginning to send His judgments on the earth.[88]

This next statement is a particularly interesting combination of two concerns we have highlighted here. See if you can spot them:

> A great crisis is coming upon us. If men still yield to men, as they have been doing for the last fifteen years, they will lose their own souls, and their example will lead others astray. God's soldiers must put on the whole armor of God. We are not re-

85. E.G. White, "Personal Appeal," May 30, 1895; Manuscript, 1896
86. E.G. White, Letter to J.E. and Emma White, March 10, 1907; Letter 90, 1907
87. E.G. White, "What is Higher Education?" January 19, 1909; Manuscript 1. 1909
88. *Review and Herald*, March 31, 1910

quired to put on human armor, but to gird ourselves with God's strength. If we keep God's glory ever in view, our eyes will be anointed with the heavenly eyesalve; we will be able to look deeper, and see afar off what the world is. As we discern its dishonesty, its craftiness, its selfish eye service, its pretense, and its boasting, its want of fair honest dealing in the ordinary intercourse of life, and its grasping covetousness, we can take our stand, by precept and example, to represent Christ, and convert souls from the world by our sound principles, our firm integrity, our hatred of all dissembling, and our holy boldness in acknowledging Christ.

Do not let the world convert you. Hold fast your profession of faith, maintaining your religious principles firmly but not stubbornly refusing light. Your religion cannot be in any other man's keeping. Honor the cross of Christ, and the cross will honor you. Let every man stand in God, not to be bought, not to be sold, but to reveal a Christian fortitude. Serve no man through fear of what that man can do to you that is disagreeable. Christians you cannot be if you depend on any other man's conscience. Christ died to give men moral independence, freedom to exercise their God-given ability. His servants are to be circumscribed by no man or council of men unless they have decided evidence that the men or council of men are worked by the Holy Spirit.[89]

As far as "the world" is concerned, the idea that one group of corrupt "movers and shakers" might expose the corruption of an opposing group... well, that just sounds like a daily occurrence now, doesn't it? Though the mechanism may be different within the confines of God's people, this, too, will come.

That "mechanism" of exposure, the nuts-n-bolts process of revelation, is not something that we should bring over untouched from the world. As true as it is that there will be divisions and distinctions between the majority of tares and the minority of wheat within the church membership, the true followers of Christ never descend to the level of the devil's tactics. It is not always necessary that every wrong act be publicized. Why? Because the process of apostasy includes a self-revealing element.

The work that Judas did will be done in our day. There are those who for their own good have been reproved by the Lord, but who have not believed the messages sent them, and have interpreted them as it suited their inclinations, putting their own construction on the testimonies of the Spirit of God. So many times have they done this that they have reached the place where they misapply and misappropriate every message of mercy and grace sent them. The Lord understands. He bears long with them, even as He bore with Judas. But unless they change, the time will come when for effect they will say anything that comes into their minds, making false statements.

God's servants are to proclaim the message for this time just as it is, in its true meaning. And God would have them bear and forbear with those who are working against Him, until He shall say, "Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone."[90]

People who go around saying "anything that comes into their mind, making false statements" are going to create their own credibility crisis.[91] Until then, it

89. E.G. White, Letter to The Men who occupy Responsible Positions in the Work, July 1, 1896; Letter 4, 1896

90. E.G. White, "Lessons From the Life of Judas," September 14, 1903; Manuscript 106, 1903

91. This is the approach God took with Lucifer, so it's not surprising that He would have us use it as well.

may be best to "cover a multitude of sins," but there is never a time to justify or normalize disobedience.

It's likely to be a complicated and tricky balance. What to do? When? How? These are questions which God would have decided on the basis of love, rather than revenge or even self-defense. His guidance will be needed.

> If your sin is between you and God, you need not give publicity to it, but confess it to God. Often poor, weak mortals act very unadvisedly in the matter of confessing their sins to human beings.[92]

> It has been the disagreeable work assigned me to reprove private sins. Were I, in order to prevent suspicions and jealousy, to give a full explanation of my course, and make public that which should be kept private, I should sin against God and wrong the individuals. I have to keep private reproofs of private wrongs to myself, locked in my own breast. Let others judge as they may, I will never betray the confidence reposed in me by the erring and repentant, or reveal to others that which should only be brought before the ones that are guilty.[93]

Just as Jesus is the only One qualified to be the judge of all the earth, it seems likely that He is the only one who can tell His people when and to what degree of specificity the exposing of sin should go. Timing is vital, for although evil must be exposed, the work of warning must come first. Both "leaders" and "followers" must be given opportunity to choose righteousness before corruption is fully exposed. This is the pattern Jesus followed, and just as surely it is the pattern we must follow.

It should be no surprise, then, that the devil will do all he can to prevent any warning message from spreading through the ranks of the Church. This, too, is an arena in which leaders will be tempted, and those who prove unfaithful will —eventually—find that vengeance comes to those who obstruct God's work:

> In the very courts of the temple, scenes will be enacted that few realize. God's people will be proved and tested, and He may discern "between him that serveth God, and him that serveth Him not."
>
> Vengeance will be executed against those who sit in the gate, deciding what the people should have and what they should not have. These take away the key of knowledge. They refuse to enter in themselves, and those that would enter they hinder. These bear not the seal of the living God. All who now occupy responsible positions should be solemnly and terribly afraid lest in this time they shall be found as unfaithful stewards.[94]

"Satan had disguised himself in a cloak of falsehood, and for a time it was impossible to tear off the covering, so that the hideous deformity of his character could be seen. He must be left to reveal himself in his cruel, artful, wicked works." *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, 319

"Satan could not be presented to the universe at once in his real character. His crooked course must be allowed to continue until he should reveal himself as an accuser, a deceiver, a liar, and a murderer." E.G. White, Letter to Brother and Sister C.H. Jones, July 4, 1892; Letter 16a, 1892

92. E.G. White, Letter to Sister J.E. Daigneau, June 11, 1905; Letter 159, 1905
93. *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 584
94. E.G. White, "Christian Integrity in the Ministry," 1886; Manuscript 15, 1886

This is no minor issue, and it can't be casually brushed aside. That which seems "workable" today, will one day be anything but. If Christ's manner of working in His earthly ministry is the pattern, we can expect a sudden shift of focus. As the time of mercy closes for those who have been the "blind leaders," their dishonesty and hypocrisy are exposed in a last effort to save the "blind followers" before they all end up in the ditch. We see this in Christ's "presentation style," which He consciously chose to change just as time was running out for His chosen people:

> In the parables which Christ had spoken, it was His purpose both to warn the rulers and to instruct the people who were willing to be taught. But there was need to speak yet more plainly. Through their reverence for tradition and their blind faith in a corrupt priesthood, the people were enslaved. These chains Christ must break. The character of the priests, rulers, and Pharisees must be more fully exposed.[95]

Taken seriously, the issue is a "disagreeable work" from which most of us have been largely excused. But there is a time and place when those who would lead others astray will all be revealed as such. This is before the close of probation, since the point is to clear others' minds of the confusion that would prevent them from making an intelligent, informed choice.

We just read from the chapter "Woes on the Pharisees" in *The Desire of Ages*. In it, Ellen White portrays Christ as fearless and bold, while exercising what we might consider "literary restraint." His denunciation of the abuses of the Pharisees didn't come as "hot scoops" laying out the details of specific transgressions by individual leaders. He could have done that, of course, as the scribes and Pharisees who had dragged before Him the "woman caught in adultery" well knew. But He didn't. Instead, He spoke clearly of practices that were known to all. "Corban" wasn't a secret! It was straight out of the temple's working policy!

When Jesus said, "They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi,'"[96] He was stating the obvious. Truth be told, there were many of His hearers who had never been called "Rabbi," but would have dearly loved to be so honored!

> The people had come to think that happiness consisted in the possession of the things of this world, and that fame and the honor of men were much to be coveted. It was very pleasing to be called "Rabbi," and to be extolled as wise and religious, having their virtues paraded before the public. This was regarded as the crown of happiness.

"The people" had largely accepted this heresy, which is why, months earlier...

> in the presence of that vast throng, Jesus declared that earthly gain and honor were all the reward such persons would ever receive. He spoke with certainty, and a convincing power attended His words. The people were silenced, and a feeling of fear

95. *Desire of Ages*, 611
96. Matthew 23:6–7

crept over them. They looked at one another doubtfully. Who of them would be saved if this Man's teachings were true?[97]

When, just days before His death, Jesus cried out "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"[98] He was simply making a more direct application of what He had been teaching all along. In fact, He was mostly calling attention to well-known facts. The problem was that the practices of the scribes and Pharisees—creating burdens for others to carry, inflating their own reputations and social standing, devouring widows' houses, corrupting new converts, making up fine points of "obligation" to God (mostly for others), turning stewardship into "performance art," and honoring the prophets while ignoring their messages—all of that had become normalized. People accepted it! "That's just the way things are."

And then Jesus came along and had the nerve to say "with certainty" what everyone already knew in their hearts—this was all wrong!

The revelation of sins will be unpleasant,[99] but the clarity of truth and the resulting unity of God's workers is certainly something to look forward to at the end of time.

> There is now need of unity; and there will be unity. Those who have greatly hindered the cause of God, and have caused heavy burdens to rest upon their fellow laborers, because they have lost their bearings, will either humble their proud hearts, and be converted, or they will be moved out of the way![100]

14. A Scattered Church

One of the less commonly contemplated aspects of the Adventist eschatological picture is the scattering of believers. We don't give a lot of thought to this, but it will surely be a major element of life at that time. If the history of the New Testament Church is any guide, this diaspora will be because we didn't take the word "Go" as seriously as Jesus meant it!

> The day of Pentecost came, great additions were made to the church. In one day five thousand were converted. The disciples began to think that they had a work to do in Jerusalem, in shielding the members of the church from the snares of the enemy. They did not realize that strength to resist temptation is best gained by active service. They did not educate the new church members to become workers together with God in carrying the gospel to those who had not heard it. Instead, they were in dan-

97. *Desire of Ages*, 305
98. Matthew 23:14
99. "Christ Himself did not suppress one word of truth, but He spoke it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact, and thoughtful, kind attention in His intercourse with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He fearlessly denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity, but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes. He wept over Jerusalem, the city He loved, that refused to receive Him, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. They rejected Him, the Saviour, but He regarded them with pitying tenderness, and sorrow so deep that it broke His heart." *Desire of Ages*, 353
100. *Review and Herald*, November 5, 1903

ger of being satisfied with what had been accomplished. To scatter His representatives abroad, where they could work for others, the Lord permitted persecution to come upon His church. Stephen and several others died for their faith; then the members of the church were scattered; and the gospel was proclaimed with power "in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."[101]

God's servants, having a message from Him, are to be scattered abroad through all countries and in all cities, that they may be true witnesses for the Lord, showing to the world, which is broken up by discord and strife, variance and hatred, that there is a people who believe in Christ and who live out His Word, revealing Bible sanctification and bearing the credentials which show that God has sent His Son into the world, that the world through Him might be saved, and receive life through faith in Christ.[102]

God cannot display the knowledge of His will and the wonders of His grace among the unbelieving world unless He has witnesses scattered all over the earth. It is His plan that those who are partakers of this great salvation through Jesus Christ should be His missionaries.... The people must be warned to prepare for the coming judgment.[103]

The work is fast closing up, and on every side wickedness is increasing. We have but a short time in which to work. Why do not those to whom God has committed great light move out into new places? They will have to do this, whether they wish to or not; for God will scatter them into many places.[104]

These workers[105] may have to meet with opposition from those who cling to the idea of centralization; but this should not hinder them from going out as pioneers. Do you think that in these last days, when the world is growing worse and worse, we shall be allowed to colonize? No; we shall be scattered. It should be the purpose of the teachers in our schools to train workers to go into new places to teach others. The Spirit of God will be with those who do this work.[106]

The time is soon coming when God's people, because of persecution, will be scattered in many countries. Those who have received an all-round education will have a great ad-

101. *Review and Herald*, November 11, 1902
102. E.G. White, Letter to E.E. Franke, October 31, 1901; Letter 157, 1901
103. *Testimonies*, vol. 2, 631
104. E.G. White, Letter to A.G. Daniells, June 28, 901; Letter 61, 1901
105. The "workers" mentioned here are "Brethren Sutherland and Magan," the two most prominent leaders of the newly established "Madison School."
106. E.G. White, "The Berrien Springs School," June 30, 1904; Manuscript 66, 1904

There's a bit of irony here. The title of the manuscript might lead you to believe that it would be about Emmanuel Missionary College, aka the Berrien Springs School, now known—in honor of, and contrary to the wishes of, John Nevins Andrews, the Adventist Church's first official foreign missionary—as Andrews University. But the Berrien Springs School is only mentioned in the first four sentences. After that, the letter is all about Madison.

As to J.N. Andrews—About six months before his death, Elder Andrews wrote to Elder Uriah Smith, then the editor of the *Review and Herald,* the official Church paper: "It will fall your lot to mention my death in the *Review.* I beg you to make the simplest and briefest statement possible and I solemnly charge you to avoid every word of eulogy....

"I make this request because I fear that your kind regard for me will constrain you to say that which I do not merit, and that which ought not to be said." J.N. Andrews, Letter to Uriah Smith, April 24, 1883; centerforadventistresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Andrews-Spicer-Exhibit-5-4_J_N_Andrews_to_U_Smith_April_24_1883_large.jpg

vantage wherever they are. The Lord reveals divine wisdom in thus leading His people to train all their faculties and capabilities for the work of disseminating truth.[107]

The Lord desires the workers in our publishing houses to become very proficient; for they will be taken to distant countries. Many who think they will never be moved from their homes will be moved away unexpectedly; and unless they have improved their opportunities to obtain an education, they cannot stand upon the eminence that Christ desires them to stand upon....

Because we are now settled here, we seem to think that we shall never be moved. But there will come a time when there will be a great scattering—a scattering that we do not now dream of, and it will be brought about in unexpected ways. Some of you will be taken away to remote regions, but God will have a work for you there.[108]

That which we truly cannot dream of, does not leave us much to say about it. But that doesn't mean we haven't been told how to deal with the root problem.

Among the people of God there is to be no colonizing. The word of the Lord to them is, "Thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left." They are to make plants in all places. Everywhere the truth for this time is to be proclaimed. Those into whose hearts the light has shone are to remember that they are God's workmen, His witnesses. To serve and honor Him is to be their science. They are to call upon others to keep His commandments, and live. Obedience to the law of God is the question that is to test the world.[109]

15. An Older Church

There has been much talk about the graying of Adventism, at least in North America. The church-going demographic is aging, which is a delicate way of saying that the attrition rate among late teens and young adults is horrendous. It's tempting to weigh in on the topic, but it's really not within the scope of our coverage at the moment. Other regions of the world face their own, slightly different, challenges. But this membership retention disaster is not the focus here.

One aspect of understanding the end-time church is recognizing—and mentally preparing—for one of the many great changes coming. This may not play out the same in every location, but the prediction provides no grounds for making exceptions. It does, however, offer hope and courage.

Sounds traumatic.

---

107. E.G. White, "The Value of an All-round Education," January 6, 1908; Manuscript 57, 1908
Ellen White's mention of an "all round education" is a hat tip to the program offered by the Nashville agricultural and Normal Institute. Don't feel bad if that name doesn't ring any bells. Perhaps you've only heard the more common name for the place: Madison College. In fact, the two sentences just before the part I quoted read: "It would have been pleasing to God if, while the Madison school has been doing its work, other such schools had been established in different parts of the Southern field. There is plenty of land lying waste in the South that might have been improved as the land about the Madison school has been improved."
108. E.G. White, "The Work in Mountain View," September 19, 1906; Manuscript 73, 1906
109. E.G. White, Letter to Physicians and Nurses, November 12, 1903; Letter 263, 1903

It will be. In a nutshell, many children will die. Who will this be? What's the age-range? I don't know that. Here's what I do know:

> Time is short, the perils of the last days are upon us, and the little children will be largely swept off before this.[110]

> I have been shown that most of the rising generation will be swept off by death prior to the time of trouble. Some will live, but most children of believing and unbelieving parents will be spared the day of trial for God's people.[111]

> Ere long we are to be brought into strait and trying places, and the many children brought into the world will in mercy be taken away before the time of trouble comes.[112]

The Lord's mercy is real, and that offers comfort, but the real cure for the trauma takes in a longer perspective:

> Remember the prophecy, "Thus saith the Lord; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted.... Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to thine own border."
>
> This promise is yours. You may be comforted and trust in the Lord. The Lord has often instructed me that many little ones are to be laid away before the time of trouble. We shall see our children again. We shall meet them and know them in the heavenly courts. Put your trust in the Lord, and be not afraid.[113]

The "rising generation" are not the only ones who will mercifully be excused from the trying final scenes of earth's history. Again, there are more questions than answers, but God has the answers, and we need not fret.

> He knows our heart, for He reads every secret of the soul. He knows whether or not those for whom petitions are offered would be able to endure the trial and test that would come upon them if they lived. He knows the end from the beginning. Many will be laid away to sleep before the fiery ordeal of the time of trouble shall come upon our world. This is another reason why we should say after our earnest petition; "Nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done." Luke 22:42. Such a petition will never be registered in heaven as a faithless prayer.[114]

Of course, not every child is going to die!

> The time is not far distant when young women and maidens, girls and boys who are very babies in years, will voice the third angel's message, because older ones have not voiced the message of Christ to John. Those who were wrapped up in their own peculiar desire for to be honored and glorified will have lost their opportunity to sit beside Christ on His throne as overcomers by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.

---

110. E.G. White, Letter to Brother and Sister Van Horn, 1876; Letter 48, 1876
111. E.G. White, Letter to Brother and Sister Van Horn, 1878; Letter 51a, 1878
112. E.G. White, "The Temple of God Must be Holy," October 30, 1899; Manuscript 152, 1899
113. E.G. White, Letter to Sister A.H. Robinson, November 27, 1899; Letter 196, 1899
114. *Counsels on Health*, 375

The young girls and boys will become inspired and their ministering angels will be their protection. They are God's little prophets, from eight to fifteen and twenty years of age. Every person of age was given a chance to tell the people they were to obey God rather than man.[115]

The lips of children will be opened to proclaim the mysteries that have been hidden from the minds of men.[116]

16. A Renewed Church

It's far too easy to shift into an "Adventism versus All Else" mentality. Sure, there's evil enough out there to understand that "friendship with the world is enmity with God," but if we lose sight of God's work on the hearts of all—and the fact that many are responding as best they know how—we are in danger of closing ourselves off much as the Jews did long ago.

But God is fair. More than fair. He's actually *merciful,* and who of us doesn't have reason to be thankful for that? It's just that we find it so natural to claim God's mercy for ourselves, without extending it to others. All of which may be setting us up for some big surprises.

Until the truth is made plain from the Scriptures, those who have accepted error for truth are not condemned by the Lord for not returning to Him.[117]

Many souls will come from other denominational churches and at the eleventh hour will obey all the truth, because they have not set themselves in array against heaven's light, but lived up to all the light they had, while those who have had great light, large privileges and opportunities and have failed to live in the light and walk in the light, will drop out by the way. Their light will shine less and less until their lamps will go out, for the want of the oil of grace in their vessels with their lamps.[118]

The accessions to the truth will be of a rapidity which will surprise the church. God's name alone will be glorified. Finite man will wonder and adore.[119]

There are many souls to come out of the ranks of the world, out of the churches—even the Catholic church—whose zeal will far exceed that of those who have stood in rank and file to proclaim the truth heretofore. For this reason the eleventh hour laborers will receive their penny. These will see the battle coming and will give the trumpet a certain sound. When the crisis is upon us, when the season of calamity shall come, they will come to the front, gird themselves with the whole armor of God, and exalt His law, adhere to the faith of Jesus, and maintain the cause of religious liberty which Reformers defended with toil and for which they sacrificed their lives.[120]

I speak not my own words when I say that God's Spirit will pass by those who have had their day of test and opportunity, but who have not distinguished the voice

115. E.G. White, "Diary: November-December, 1895," November 25, 1895; Manuscript 61b, 1895
116. *Review and Herald*, August 17, 1897
117. E.G. White, "Make Ready a People Prepared for the Lord," November 3, 1901; Manuscript 112, 1901
118. E.G. White, Letter to J.S. Washburn, September 18, 1890Letter 36, 1890
119. E.G. White, Letter to O.A. Olsen, December 18, 1890; Letter 43a, 1890
120. E.G. White, "Experience Following the Minneapolis Conference," June 6–30, 1889; Manuscript 30, 1889

of God or appreciated the movings of His Spirit. Then thousands in the eleventh hour will see and acknowledge the truth.... These conversions to truth will be made with a rapidity that will surprise the church, and God's name alone will be glorified[121]

At the eleventh hour, when the work grows harder and the people are more hardened, there will be a variety of talent brought in. These workers will prove faithful and receive their penny. Sacrificing men will step into the places made vacant by those who would not be fitted for a place in the heavenly temple.[122]

Okay, so the idea of "eleventh hour workers" seems like a nice addition. We can use a little help. But can you imagine the challenge if one of "those people" came to the truth we know... and brought truth with him that we didn't know? I haven't found that exact idea in the Spirit of Prophecy, but given how often we are told that there is new truth yet to be discovered, I'm very hesitant to rule it out!

Mysteries which have been hidden for ages are to be revealed in these last days to humble people, who lean upon the arm of infinite power. Truth will be opened to the humble seeker, whose life is hid with Christ in God....

Coming events, of a solemn character, are opening before us, and God would not have any one of us think that in these last days there is no more that we need to know. This is a continual snare of Satan. He would not have us meet coming events without that special preparation which is essential to guide us through every difficulty. He would have all not stumbling their way along in ignorance, making self-conceit, self-esteem, self-confidence, take the place of true knowledge.[123]

Many who are now the bitterest opponents of truth are acting up to their honest convictions of duty, but they will yet see the truth and become its warm advocates. Those who now treat them with ridicule, who manifest a harsh spirit toward them, will fall under temptation and bring reproach upon the cause of God and cause the loss of souls through their indiscretion. Many who go into the field at the call made at the eleventh hour will, through the grace of Christ, so present the truth that they will be accounted first.[124]

There are diligent students of the Word of prophecy in all parts of the world, who are obtaining light and still greater light from searching the Scriptures. This is true of all nations, of all tribes, and all peoples. These will come from the grossest error, and will take the place of those who have had opportunities and privileges and have not prized them....

But God will not be left without witness. The one-hour laborers will be brought in at the eleventh hour, and will consecrate their ability and all their entrusted means to advance the work. These will receive the reward for their faithfulness, because they are true to principle and shun not their duty to declare the whole counsel of God. When those who have had abundance of light throw off the restraint which the Word of God imposes, and make void His law, others will come in to fill their place, and take their crown....

121. E.G. White, Letter to O.A. Olsen, December 15, 1890; Letter 43, 1890
122. E.G. White, Letter to S. McCullagh, April 8, 1897; Letter 98a, 1897
123. E.G. White, "Christian Integrity in the Ministry," 1886; Manuscript 15, 1886
124. E.G. White, Letter to A.T. Jones, May 1895; Letter 36, 1895

There will be men who have had very meager opportunities, who have walked in ways of error because they knew not any other or better way, to whom beams of light will come....

Even those supposed to be heathen will choose the side of Christ, while those who become offended, as did the disciples, will go away and walk no more with Him. And others will come in and occupy the place they have left vacant.[125]

The coming in of the "eleventh hour workers" seems like it should be cause for great rejoicing by all current church members. Strangely, though, we often find that the Spirit of Prophecy points to a marked distinction between those coming into the truth, and those still wed to an increasingly dead formalism which may once have passed for true faith, but does so no longer.

Many who are standing aloof from the Seventh-day Adventists are living more in accordance with the light they have received than are many Seventh-day Adventists. This may seem strange to you, but strange things will have to be demonstrated to show the foolishness of the wisdom of those who judge others who have not seen the light.[126]

Intensity is taking possession of every earthly element; and as a people who have had great light and wonderful knowledge, many of them are represented by the five sleeping virgins with their lamps, but no oil in their vessels; cold, senseless, with a feeble, waning piety. While a new life is being diffused and is springing up from beneath and taking fast hold of all Satan's agencies, preparatory to the last great conflict and struggle, a new light and life and power is descending from on high, and taking possession of God's people who are not dead, as many now are, in trespasses and sins. The people who will now see what is soon to come upon us by what is being transacted before us, will no longer trust in human inventions, and will feel that the Holy Spirit must be recognized, received, presented before the people, that they may contend for the glory of God, and work everywhere in the byways and highways of life, for the saving of the souls of their fellow men. [127]

At the eleventh hour the Lord will gather a company out of the world, to serve Him. There will be a converted ministry. Those who have had privileges and opportunities to become intelligent in regard to the truth, and yet who continue to counterwork the work God would have accomplished, will be purged out, for God accepts the service of no man whose interest is divided. He accepts the whole heart, or none.[128]

Men and women will leave their vocations to proclaim the message of the gospel. Multitudes are to be gathered into the fold. Many who have known the truth have corrupted their way before God and departed from the faith. The broken ranks will be filled up by those represented by Christ as coming in at the eleventh hour. There are many with whom the Spirit of God is striving. The time of God's destructive judgments is the time of mercy for those who have no opportunity to learn what is truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; His hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter. Large numbers will be admitted who in these last days hear the truth for the first time.[129]

125. E.G. White, Letter to Philip Wessels, March 8, 1897; Letter 123, 1897
126. E.G. White, Letter to A.T. Jones, April 18, 1900; Letter 59, 1900
127. E.G. White, "The Crisis Imminent," February 18, 1892; Manuscript 27, 1892
128. E.G. White, "The Danger of Rejecting Light," May 19, 1898; Manuscript 64, 1898
129. E.G. White, Letter to Brother and Sister G.B. Starr, June 3, 1903; Letter 103, 1903

And, finally, as a special categorical mention, we have these notes which give hope for many of the "genetic" children of Israel:

> The work for the Jews, as outlined in the eleventh chapter of Romans, is a work that is to be treated with special wisdom. It is a work that must not be ignored. The wisdom of God must come to our people. In all wisdom and righteousness we must clear the King's highway. The Jews are to be given every opportunity of coming to the light.[130]
>
> There will be many converted from among the Jews, and these converts will aid in preparing the way of the Lord and making straight in the desert a highway for our God. Converted Jews are to have an important part to act in the great preparations to be made in the future to receive Christ, our Prince. A nation shall be born in a day. How? By men whom God has appointed being converted to the truth.[131]
>
> There is a mighty work to be done in our world. The Lord has declared that the Gentiles shall be gathered in, and not the Gentiles only, but the Jews. There are among the Jews many who will be converted, and we shall see the salvation of God going forth as a lamp that burneth.
>
> There are Jews everywhere, and to them the light of present truth is to be brought, that they may have an opportunity to accept it. There are among the Jews many who will come to the light and who will proclaim the immutability of the law of God with wonderful power. The Lord God will work. He will do wonderful things in righteousness.[132]

17. What's the Endgame?[133]

It's common to think of a war ending with winners and losers. But when it comes to the great controversy, we already know the end of the story, so seldom think of it quite the way we might otherwise. Perhaps we should not be so quick to grab easy answers.

We have convenient terminology all prepared for us in this discussion, with a clear distinction between the "church militant" and the "church triumphant." As a general rule, Ellen White's comments fit neatly into that pattern, with the obvious distinction being timing. "Militant" is what we are now, and "triumphant" is the enviable condition when we get our act all together.

> The members of the church militant who have proved faithful will become the church triumphant.[134]
>
> We wish we had heaven here below, but we have not. The church militant is not the church triumphant. The church militant must wrestle and toil. She must strive against

130. E.G. White, Letter to A.G. Daniells, October 5, 1910; Letter 96, 1910
131. E.G. White, "Building the Waste Places," May 1905; Manuscript 75, 1905
132. E.G. White, "Our Duty Toward the Jews," May 29, 1905; Manuscript 74, 1905
133. As a simple matter of courtesy to the reader, I should point out that the topics dealt with thus far have all been more or less stand-alone considerations. The remaining sections are different. The subject matter in these sections is more inter-related and cumulative, since they combine to introduce a more complex and less familiar set of issues. They are, nonetheless, all matters that I believe will characterize the final days of God's church.
134. *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 29, 1893

temptations and fight severe battles, because Satan is not dead. His agencies are much more active in his work than are the agencies of God in the work of their Leader.[135]

The church militant is not the church triumphant. Unless the people of God wage a valiant warfare against every species of sin, they will never pass through the portals of the holy city. And we shall have no second trial. Now is the accepted time, the time in which we are to obtain the education which will enable us to live in the heavenly courts. The whole heavenly universe is looking with the deepest interest to see who in this primary school is practicing the lessons of Christ.[136]

You may have noted the qualifier when I said that *as a general rule* Ellen White's comments fit into that pattern. They usually do... but sometimes they don't.

Angels of heaven will ascend and descend the ladder of shining brightness, co-operating with human workers. The members of the church triumphant—the church in heaven—will be permitted to draw near to the members of the church militant, to aid them in their necessity.[137]

Now there's a surprise! The church triumphant already exists! We're never going to be "charter members" at the establishment of a new church plant. The church is there, just waiting for us to apply as members in good standing from our current congregation. I suspect that "good standing" issue is where the need to "wage a valiant warfare against every species of sin" detail into play.

But this issue of "triumph," of winning a war as big as the universe, is also as small as two individuals. Remember, the full title of the book is *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan.* These two *know each other!* They have since the day Lucifer was created, and I'm willing to guess that—beyond whatever formal relationship existed by virtue of their official roles in the government of heaven—they spent a lot of time as friends. They know which fruit the other likes best; they know each other's favorite hymns; favorite animals; favorite musical instruments. They remember the stories they shared back and forth. They remember years and years and years of good times.

But now they also remember when and how they became enemies.

Satan is Christ's personal enemy.[138]

Satan called his agents and set them in array against Christ. He himself conducted the warfare. He declared that if Christ tried to limit his power, he would set in motion against Him the whole artillery of evil.[139]

---

135. E.G. White, "Talk: The Work in England," April 19, 1901; Manuscript 81a, 1901
136. E.G. White, "Care to be Shown in the Establishment of Sanitariums," September 23, 1901; Manuscript 93, 1901
137. *The Southern Work*, September 8, 1903. Do note that the two em dashes (those long horizontal lines, so called because they are traditionally the width of a capital "M") are setting off a non-restrictive appositive. That just means that "the church in heaven" is another way of saying the same thing as "the church triumphant."
138. *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 302
139. E.G. White, "Satan the Instigator of Evil," June 29, 1889; Manuscript 31, 1889

> Well, Satan has lost none of his shrewdness. He is set to do all the injury to Christ, whom he considers as his rival, that he possibly can.[140]

> The wilderness temptation which Christ endured was a personal conflict with the wicked one who had shown himself to be the author of sin. Satan was once a covering cherub in the heavenly courts, the angel next in power to Christ Himself.[141]

> As Christ passed through the test of the second Adam.... Satan could see through His humanity the glory and purity of the Holy One with whom he had been associated in the heavenly courts. As he looked upon Christ, there rose before his mind a picture of what he himself was then. At that time he had beauty and holiness. Self-exaltation led him to strive for a place above Christ. But he had failed. Could he not now carry out his design upon the enfeebled humanity of Christ?[142]

These two primary antagonists of the great controversy have been battling it out for a long time now, longer than necessary, it appears, thanks to the poor performance of the human members of Christ's army. After six thousand years or so of any "normal war," we might think it unlikely that hostilities should still be on-going, but they are, and casualties continue to mount. And so it is fitting that we "keep the faith," looking forward confidently to the successful completion of the campaign.

Such faith is needed. Surely we can never expect to be counted among the victors if we abandon our belief in eventual victory. But—without in the least seeking to weaken that faith—allow me to ask a question: What if God's people fail Him?

Put more bluntly, What if Satan were to win?

"Preposterous!" you say, and indeed the very idea is unsettling... but wars tend to be unsettling. And if Satan's defeat were as obviously inevitable as we might wish it to be, wouldn't he have done what any sensible king would do?

> What king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.[143]

We know the final outcome of this war, and Satan knows it, too, but sin has unbalanced his mind to the point that he acts like he didn't get the memo! A diagnosis of "schizophrenia" comes to mind here.

> Satan knows that his power and his usurped authority will be forever at an end and, while he can, he will make the most decided efforts to gain the supremacy.[144]

"Not a chance! He lost that war two thousand years ago!"

There's truth to that, but the idea of Satanic supremacy deserves a closer look before we write it off. That might seem foolish, but apparently Ellen White didn't think the idea was off limits.

---

140. E.G. White, Letter to Sister Brown, August 7, 1893; Letter 2, 1893
141. E.G. White, "Victory Over Temptation," October 31, 1899; Manuscript 153, 1899
142. E.G. White, Letter to W.K. Kellogg, January 25, 1900; Letter 7, 1900
143. Luke 14:31–32
144. E.G. White, "Diary: October and November 1890," November 4, 1890; Manuscript 44, 1890

> We have a work to do, every one of us, and time is short. We have but a little time now! And we want that Satan shall not take the victory of the whole world. He is at work—the devil and the fallen angels. You remember that.[145]
>
> Should all the inhabitants of this little world refuse obedience to God, He would not be left without glory. He could sweep every mortal from the face of the earth in a moment, and create a new race to people it and glorify His name. God is not dependent on man for honor. He could marshal the starry hosts of heaven, the millions of worlds above, to raise a song of honor and praise and glory to His name.[146]
>
> God has a controversy with the inhabitants of this world. Satan has come to them disguised as an angel of light, and under his direction the majority of Christians bow at idolatrous shrines, and worship an unknown god.... How vain will be the resistance of humanity against God! By His infinite power He called the earth into existence. With a word He could depopulate it, and return it to its original state, and with a word raise up a new race of beings.[147]
>
> The throne of Justice must be eternally and forever made secure, even tho the race be wiped out, and another creation populate the earth. By the sacrifice Christ was about to make, all doubts would be forever settled, and the human race would be saved if they would return to their allegiance.[148]

None of those statements say we are going to fail. There's really no reason to think that "all the inhabitants of this little world" will ultimately "refuse obedience to God." But it's never smart to overlook a conditional "if" like the one at the end of that last quotation.

It's clearly much more comfortable focusing on Christ's very real victory over the devil, but if Satan lost the whole war at the cross, why is his chosen government ("sin") still the norm here on earth? Why does God let people (even the ever popular but unbiblical "good people"[149]) suffer and die? Without a very good reason for that, it stretches "God is love" well past the credible stage of political sloganeering.[150]

Think of it like this: "suffering makes time expensive." And that bill lands on heaven's doorstep. If God *can't* end sin and suffering, we can well question His omnipotence. If He doesn't *want* to end sin and suffering, or if maybe He's just been really busy for the last couple millennia, the claim that He is loving falls flat. Surprisingly, perhaps, Ellen White actually portrays Him as unconcerned... but not in a bad way.

> Christ can look on the misery of the world without a shade of sorrow for having created man. In the human heart He sees more than sin, more than misery. In His infinite wisdom and love He sees man's possibilities, the height to which he may attain. He

145. E.G. White, "Talk to the Students at Loma Linda," April 5, 1910; Manuscript 79a, 1910
146. *Review and Herald*, March 1, 1881
147. *Signs of the Times*, April 7, 1898
148. *Signs of the Times*, July 12, 1899
149. Matthew 19:17, Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19
150. This "How could an all powerful, loving God allow sin?" question has been a favorite of the atheists for centuries. As it turns out, Adventists are the only ones on earth with a good answer to it.

knows that, even though human beings have abused their mercies and destroyed their God-given dignity, yet the Creator is to be glorified in their redemption.[151]

This statement is curious from a number of angles. Most jarring, perhaps, is the idea that the thing that makes "the misery of the world" all okay is glory for God. Understood as the world understands such things, that's about as selfish as you can get! That's the sort of accusation that has tarnished dozens—hundreds? maybe thousands?—of political leaders' careers. "What a splendid little war that was! My 'legacy' is secured. Sure, a hundred thousand infantry died in the mud, but we'll send their families a nice medal and a flag, and they'll get over it."

God isn't like that. The glory of God, of course, is His unselfish character; it is His glory to be a blessing to all His creatures, so we can deflect that concern fairly easily. But still, *what's the blessing?* How can two thousand years of murder, theft, adultery, dishonesty, starvation, molestation, and degradation (plus whatever else I missed)... how can all that possibly be a blessing?

The answer is right there in the statement: God sees the redemption of man, and the realization of "man's possibilities," as valuable enough to outweigh two thousand years of pain.

18. Caught Up in the Mess

As odd as it may sound to say that human beings are that pivotal in the great controversy, we find support for it in a statement nearly identical to the one we saw in reference 144. Pretend this is an English Comp assignment, and you're supposed to do a "comparison and contrast" analysis of that statement and this next one. What do you see?

> Satan knows that his usurped authority will soon be forever at an end. His last opportunity to gain control of the world is now before him, and he will make most decided efforts to accomplish the destruction of the inhabitants of the earth.[152]

Satan *knows* that his ship is sinking, but—stealing a line from history—he "*has not yet begun to fight!*" Call it bravery; call it stupidity; it is what it is.

> Satan is working vigilantly; he is determined to battle till the last for supremacy.[153]
>
> Because of frequent triumphs, Satan is becoming more bold and defiant in his rebellion against God.[154]
>
> In the hosts of evil there is jarring and discord, but they are all firm allies in fighting against heaven. Their one aim is to disparage God, and their great numbers lead them to entertain the hope that they will be able to dethrone Omnipotence.[155]

151. *Testimonies*, vol. 7, 269
152. *Testimonies to Ministers*, 464
153. E.G. White, "Our Work at This Time," January 1, 1897; Manuscript 6, 1897
154. E.G. White, Letter to J.E. White, November 16, 1903; Letter 250, 1903
155. *Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 2, 6

So there's that insane determination to do what he should *know* he can't do, but he gets alarmingly close!

> Satan, in co-operation with his angels and with evil men, will put forth every effort to gain the victory, and will appear to succeed.[156]

That doesn't sound right! How could Satan ever end up looking that good? Well, probably in much the same way as he did when he started his rebellion:

> How shall the universe know that Lucifer is not a safe and just leader? To their eyes he appears right. They cannot see, as God sees, beneath the outward covering.[157]

Praise the Lord for faith over appearances! (That's the only thing that saved two-thirds of the angels.) But back to our comparison and contrast analysis. What's more interesting to us is the parallelism in the two statements between the "most decided efforts to gain the supremacy," and the "most decided efforts to accomplish the destruction of the inhabitants of the earth."

There's a connection there, and it's stronger and more logical than it may first sound. For Satan, gaining the supremacy depends on destroying the inhabitants of the earth. Let's track through that idea, starting with this:

> Satan... hates mankind because they are the workmanship of God. He opposed the creation of man.[158]

This "opposition" was *before* earth was created.[159] It is one of Satan's original accusations. For whatever made-up "reasons," he "opposed the creation of man."

"Don't do it, God! It's a bad idea!"

That's actually an extremely loaded thing to say! No matter how you dress it up, it means "God got this wrong. His plans are not always the best." The unavoidable ramification is that you really can't trust God's decision making. You're better off taking care of yourself. In other words, "Give self-serving autonomy a chance."

Satan's advocacy of autonomy was no doubt presented under some more appealing title, like "personal responsibility," or "noble independence," but at its base it came down to disobeying God when it looked like He wasn't doing what Lucifer wanted done. We can see this more clearly by backing up and looking at *why* Lucifer "hates mankind." The evidence points to a fear that this new order of beings, despite being *created* "a little lower than the angels," would eventually pass him up. Notice:

> God has made man capable of constant progress in mental and moral worth. No other creature of His hand is capable of such advancement.[160]

---

156. E.G. White, "Triumphant Through Christ," Undated; Manuscript 24, 1891
157. E.G. White, Letter to Brother and Sister C.H. Jones, July 4, 1892; Letter 16a, 1892
158. E.G. White, "Diary: January 1890," January 26, 1890; Manuscript 38, 1890
159. This is an example of English "usage," the craziest of the rules which govern our speech and writing. "Opposition" almost always comes *before* something is done. The same attitude *afterward* would be called "criticism."
160. *Signs of the Times*, January 30, 1901

No other creature that God has made is capable of such improvement, such refinement, such nobility as man.... Man cannot conceive what he may be and what he may become. Through the grace of Christ he is capable of constant mental progress.[161]

Those who in the strength of Christ overcome the great enemy of God and man, will occupy a position in the heavenly courts above angels who have never fallen.[162]

The work of redemption involved consequences of which it is difficult for man to have any conception. There was to be imparted to the human being striving for conformity to the divine image an outlay of heaven's treasures, an excellency of power, which would place him higher than the angels who had not fallen.[163]

It's worth noting as well that this increased "social status" was not some weird backhanded benefit that came as a result of experiencing sin. Nothing good comes from sin.[164] This "higher than" status was the *original plan.*

Through the imparted life of Christ, man has been given opportunity to win back again the lost gift of life, and to stand in his original position before God, a partaker of the divine nature.[165]

Satan in his efforts to deceive and tempt our race had thought to frustrate the divine plan in man's creation; but Christ now asks that this plan be carried into effect as if man had never fallen. He asks for His people not only pardon and justification, full and complete, but a share in His glory and a seat upon His throne.[166]

So here we are, the human race, all tangled up in this foundational argument of the great controversy. Unavoidably, we've become the central piece of evidence as to who is right, God or Lucifer.

But the devil is not dead. He is more active than ever before. Why? Because he is determined to obtain the victory over the human family.[167]

He is at work with intense activity to corrupt or sweep from the earth the upholders of piety, and success will attend the workings of Satan unless we arise in the strength of God and resist him.[168]

Since his fall, [Satan] has been the great adversary of God and man, and has shown a masterly activity in trying to defeat our Saviour's efforts in our behalf. He thinks that because so many readily yield to his temptations and believe his lies, he may yet gain some advantage over Christ, who left the royal courts of Heaven that

161. E.G. White, Letter to Brother Covert and those who hold responsible positions in the Indiana Conference, September 27, 1887; Letter 26d, 1887
162. *General Conference Bulletin*, April 1, 1899
163. *General Conference Bulletin*, October 1, 1899
164. One *possible* exception: "It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken." *Desire of Ages*, 25
But do note that this "more closely united" condition is because Jesus came down, rather than because sin lifted us up.
165. *Signs of the Times*, June 17, 1897
166. *Great Controversy*, 483
167. E.G. White, "Thoughts on Revelation 22," May 22, 1907; Manuscript 188, 1907
168. E.G. White, Letter to Brethren and Sisters in California, April 13, 1887; Letter 92, 1887

He might defeat this wily foe on his own battle-field, and open a way whereby man might escape from his cruel power.[169]

In one sense, it's a simple matter of credibility. God says human beings are a blessing to the universe; Satan says they are a bad thing, a poorly designed product from square one.

He desires to thwart the divine plan for man's redemption, to cast dishonor upon God, by defacing and defiling His handiwork; he would cause grief in heaven and fill the earth with woe and desolation. And he points to all this evil as the result of God's work in creating man.[170]

Satan had declared that the sin of Adam revealed that human beings could not keep the law of God, and he sought to carry the universe with him in this belief. Satan's words appeared to be true, but Christ came to unmask the deceiver....

Christ came to the earth, taking humanity and standing as man's representative, to show in the controversy with Satan that he was a liar, and that man, as God created him, connected with the Father and the Son, could obey every requirement of God.[171]

That little specification—*"as God created him"*—is vitally important. Ellen White elaborates, explaining that the essential component is that man be "connected with the Father and the Son."[172] The devil understands this quite well, of course, so he's naturally focused on severing that connection:

This union of Christ with the soul is the union which Satan is ever seeking to disturb, and through yielding to his temptations, the soul that once was united to Christ may become assimilated to the world.... The applause of men is the food that is relished by the perverted appetite of the Christless soul. Infatuated by a Satanic ambition to have the supremacy, professed followers of Christ are led on from one delusion to another until eternity is lost out of their reckoning.[173]

Once that connection is lost, it's all downhill.

Satan is seeking to imbue every soul that is not connected with Jesus Christ by his own spirit, and every soul who refuses to connect with Jesus Christ will be brought into connection with the enemy of Christ.[174]

Unless man has a vital connection with God, he will pervert every blessing he receives, and employ every gracious gift as a weapon against the bountiful bestower. It is only as human beings receive Christ, that God can bless them.[175]

Those who have no vital connection with God are swayed this way and that, ever grasping the opinions of learned men[176] who sit in judgment upon God and His works

169. *Signs of the Times*, May 8, 1884
170. *Great Controversy*, 506
171. E.G. White, "Christ's Mission to Earth," December 9, 1897; Manuscript 143, 1897
172. For the grammarians, this is another appositive, this time set off with commas.
173. *Review and Herald*, December 4, 1894
174. *Youth's Instructor*, July 12, 1894
175. *Youth's Instructor*, July 13, 1899
176. Yet another version of the "bane" of the church. Sadly, the fear of being "accounted fools" is enough to show the weakness of the allegiance that some profess to God.

> and ways. Weak, finite minds weigh God's Word with men's balances. The wisdom of these so-called great men is foolishness with God. They are blinded by the god of this world. Those only who are willing to be accounted fools in the eyes of these very worldly-wise men will have the wisdom which is divine. God will not dwell with those who reject His truth, for all who disregard truth, disregard its Author.[177]
>
> We should bear in mind that Satan, in his deceptive style, is seeking to overcome every soul. He flatters himself that he meets with such success, that his armies are so great and the armies of Christ so few, that he will stand victor.[178]

Long story short, the devil is still playing to win, and the Achilles heel of God's whole case is sinful human beings. That's *us,* so naturally *we* are Satan's primary target. Not just because he hates us (which of course he does), but because keeping us disconnected from God is his one hope of victory.

All of which sets up a classic head-scratcher dilemma in regard to the relationship between divine foreknowledge and the free will of all the intelligent beings God created. If God says "X" is going to happen, does that strip away the free will of all those who don't want "X" to happen?

Specifically, God says His people will one day develop such a solid connection[179] with Him that they will be prepared to "resist all the allurements of evil."[180] Satan says that's impossible. He *used* to claim that it was impossible for *any* human being to keep God's law, but then—

> Christ came to vindicate the sacred claims of the law. He came to live a life of obedience to its requirements and thus prove the falsity of the charge made by Satan that it is impossible for man to keep the law of God. As a man He met temptation and overcame in the strength given Him from God.... His life testifies that it is possible for us also to obey the law of God.[181]

That last sentence is the sticking point, the last thread on which Satan's rebellion (not to mention his continued existence) hangs. The problem is simple: Christ's life "testifies" one thing, but observable reality doesn't do much to support it. We might talk about Enoch and Elijah, maybe Moses (a slightly different case), but there's not a lot more evidence that Jesus is right on this one.

And there's one more important detail: those people God says are going to "resist all the allurements of evil," they are all certified, genuinely participatory sinners. And that's one thing Jesus never was. There's been a lot of debate over the human nature

177. E.G. White, "God in Nature," 1882; Manuscript 4, 1882

178. E.G. White, "A Call to Work the Cities," January 1910; Manuscript 62, 1910

179. What does "connection" mean here? I wouldn't want to pretend we can have an exact definition of this idea any more than of human nature. The obvious general meaning is enough, but I would venture the opinion that Ellen White's favorite formulation to describe it is "Faith which works by love and purifies the soul." That's not a direct quote from the Bible, it's Ellen White's own effort to describe a vitally important reality. It shows up over a thousand times in her writings, so I think it's fair to say that she liked the phrasing.

180. *Great Controversy*, 528

181. *Testimonies*, vol. 8, 207

of Christ, precisely because of this point. How different was He from what I am? How similar was He? Can people like me actually live like He lived?

And so we have debated the fine points of "human nature" as a stand-in argument for the need and possibility of obedience.[182] The difficulty with this is the lack of any authoritative definition of "human nature." Is it genetic? Is it epigenetic? Is it physical at all? Or is it mental? Perhaps it belongs in a separate, non-physical, non-mental category, something more "spiritual"? Does "human nature" depend in any way upon some body organ? Is it the prefrontal cortex? Did Phineas Gage cease to be human after that tamping rod blasted through his skull? What about the estimated 60,000+ patients who were subjected to the once-popular surgical lobotomy? Did they still have a human nature?

None of this uncertainty discredits the general use of the term,[183] but I doubt the Lord considers us informed enough on the matter to be slicing and dicing the topic the way it has sometimes been. Basing one's acceptance or rejection of the need for obedience to divine law on that particular debate seems risky.

Fortunately, we have lots of Bible verses that address this matter clearly. We've got "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."[184] We've got "present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight,"[185] and "keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless,"[186] and "that we should be holy and without blame before Him."[187] And there are more verses, and hundreds of examples of the same idea in the Spirit of Prophecy. Despite the eloquence of learned theologians who deny the plain intent of all the above, the teaching is clear.

All that's missing is the evidence.

Not the theological evidence. The *actual* evidence. The people who resist all the allurements of evil. That's what's lacking. And that's exactly the way Satan wants to keep it. His life depends on it, so it's safe to say he's strongly motivated.

---

182. It's worth noting that this argument became prominent within Adventism only when we were baited into it by the theological concerns of the self-appointed Evangelical "review committee" of Donald Barnhouse and Walter Martin. It was their questions which led to the publication of *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* in 1957. Prior to that, the only Adventists who troubled themselves with the issue were a relatively few theologians who were proactively anxious to mollify our critics. I have a long chapter on this in my book *Hindsight*.
183. We use undefined terms all the time and it works perfectly well, until someone seeks to impose a specific meaning on our terms. If I say, "The sky is really blue today," no one would be concerned. But the moment we try to define "really blue" with a cyanometer (it's a real thing, look it up) we've got the makings of a big argument.
184. Ephesians 5:27
185. Colossians 1:22
186. Jude 1:24
187. Ephesians 1:4

Faced with an intelligent and motivated enemy, it becomes imperative to understand his tactics... especially when they look ridiculous.

19. Sorting Out the Ridiculous

Many people find a focus on the devil distasteful. That's understandable. But wars are by nature distasteful, and sometimes you just have to man-up and do what you need to do. Of course, the devil doesn't want a bit of it.

> There is nothing that the great deceiver fears so much as that we shall become acquainted with his devices.[188]
>
> There is the greatest necessity for us to know something of the working of the powers of darkness and of the iniquity that abounds, that we may feel the importance of rising up to the emergency.[189]
>
> The evils which have existed in all ages will continue to exist till the close of probation. We need to understand the cause of these evils, and the modes of Satan's attacks, that we may be able to resist them.[190]
>
> The resources of the enemy are various, and we must not move like blind men or be ignorant of Satan's devices.[191]
>
> We need wisdom and a better knowledge of Satan's devices, that he may not, right before our eyes, accomplish the ruin of precious souls.[192]
>
> If we could always remember that Satan comes to us in disguise, his motives concealed, and he himself clad in garments of light, we would be on our guard, and would not fall a prey to his devices.... We should study the nature, character, and extent of this spiritual wickedness in high places, lest we become the dupes of the powers of darkness.[193]
>
> Those who do not realize their danger because they do not watch, will pay, with the loss of their souls, the penalty of their presumption and their willful ignorance of Satan's devices.[194]

Well, that sounds serious! Still, let's agree that there are limits. We don't need to spend every waking moment obsessing over the devil and his schemes. But to ignore his clearly identified policy positions is just reckless. And yet, he has been all but completely successful in slipping his most foundational claims right past us. Why? How? Because we don't understand them, and they sound silly.

> Satan.... declared that the principles of God's government make forgiveness impossible.[195]
>
> He claimed that it was impossible that forgiveness should be granted to the sinner.[196]

188. *Great Controversy*, 516
189. E.G. White, "Sermon: Morning Talk," October 22, 1894; Manuscript 42, 1894
190. E.G. White, Letter to Brother and Sister Garmire, August 12, 1890; Letter 12, 1890
191. E.G. White, "Counsel to Church Members in Switzerland," 1886; Manuscript 37, 1886
192. E.G. White, Letter to D.T. Bourdeau, 1887; Letter 39, 1887
193. *Signs of the Times*, August 5, 1886
194. *Review and Herald*, April 25, 1907
195. *Desire of Ages*, 37
196. *Patriarchs and Prophets, 69*

> Satan declared that there is no forgiveness with God.... He says to the sinner, You are lost.[197]
>
> Lucifer had declared God's law to be of such a character that its penalty could not be remitted, and therefore every transgressor must be forever debarred from the Creator's favor. He had claimed that the sinful race were placed beyond redemption.[198]

For decades this perplexed me. What a stupid thing to say! How could one person ever tell someone else that it was impossible for him to forgive someone? If God wanted to be kind, how could Lucifer object?

> In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that..., should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned.... If God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice.... God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner.[199]
>
> Lucifer had declared that if the law of God was changeless, and its penalty could not be remitted, every transgressor must be forever debarred from the Creator's favor. He had claimed that the sinful race were placed beyond redemption.[200]
>
> Satan commenced his work as an accuser in heaven. This has been his work ever since the fall, and it will be his work in a special sense as we approach nearer to the close of time.... He would urge justice without mercy. Repentance he does not allow. The penalty, he argues, can never be remitted, and God be just.[201]

And it wasn't some weird clerical error. Look at those books—they're the most "standard" of Ellen White's standard works. And then toss in the same idea in the Church's flagship periodical publication. It looked like Ellen White really meant what she wrote... but how could it be? Was she confused or was Satan really an ignoramus?

As you might have guessed, it turns out the answer is "neither." Inspiration still "works," and Satan is more shrewd than I ever imagined. Let me explain.

This denial of forgiveness was a strategic move. It came as the culmination of what Lucifer thought was an unanswerable two-pronged attack.

First, he said God needed to change His law.[202]

God said His law couldn't be changed.[203]

Lucifer said, "Your law is arbitrary: it is what it is just because You said that's what it was going to be."[204]

---

197. *Review and Herald*, January 19, 1911
198. *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, 323
199. *Desire of Ages*, 761
200. *Great Controversy*, 502
201. *Review and Herald*, September 22, 1896
202. "Satan had sought to prove that God was unjust, that His law was faulty, and that the good of the universe required it to be changed." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 69
203. "In the controversy it was to be shown whether the divine statutes were defective and subject to change, or perfect and immutable." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 69
204. "In heaven he complained against the law of God, declaring it unnecessary and arbitrary." *Review and Herald*, April 25, 1893

God said, "No, My law is not arbitrary."

And that's when Lucifer followed up his left jab of "arbitrary" with a right hook for what he thought would be a KO in the first round: "God, if You can't change your law, then You can't forgive anyone!"

Now, it may seem a bit odd for the one who invented sin to be gloating over the idea that forgiveness was impossible. But it gets even stranger:

> Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice.[205]

It looks crazy, but successful strategies often work because everyone is too confused to see what's actually happening. This time, though, it backfired:

> It was his plea that every sin should meet its punishment. If God remitted the punishment, he said, He was not a God of truth or justice. Satan will meet the judgment which he said God should exercise.[206]

Lucifer's scheme didn't fool God. And fortunately, the Spirit of Prophecy breaks it down for us to understand, too. Lucifer thought he had God skewered on the horns of a dilemma, but pulling a "fast one" on Omniscience is a lot harder than he thought. Let's go with an illustration:

Suppose you're driving down a beautiful, well-maintained, perfectly straight road in the middle of nowhere. Not another car in sight. Life is good... but then you pass a speed limit sign with such a low number that it looks like it belongs on a dead end cul-de-sac in a residential section of town. It's the kind of speed limit that makes it possible to stop on a dime when a seven-year-old chases his ball into the street without looking. What's it doing *here?*

For the sake of my illustration, let's pretend that you decide not to worry about that sign, and you just keep rolling along on the straight and level at three times the posted limit. No traffic, and no police, anywhere nearby.

Are you going to jail? Is your car going to be confiscated? How much are you going to be fined? Simple answers: Nope, nope, and nada.

Okay, let's change the story. You're driving way over the limit, and get pulled over by a police officer. But he's a reasonable guy, so he says, "Yeah, I get it with that speed limit sign. It's an odd one, so I'm just going to give you a warning."

All good, all legal. The kind of thing you might think of as common sense.

"Lucifer... brought against God's government the charge of being arbitrary, and made God responsible for all moral deficiencies." E.G. White, "The Moral Law," February 1, 1896; Manuscript 79, 1896

"Satan... declared the divine law to be arbitrary, detrimental to the interests of the heavenly universe, and in need of change." E.G. White, "God's Justice," January 6, 1902; Manuscript 1, 1902

Not surprisingly, he used the same argument with Eve in the Garden of Eden. "Satan came to Eve as an angel of light, and persuaded her that this particular prohibition was of arbitrary authority." E.G. White, "Christ Our Strength," 1893; Manuscript 104, 1893

205. *Desire of Ages*, 761

206. E.G. White, "Our Substitute and Surety," October 7, 1897; Manuscript 111, 1897

But let's change the story again. Same road, same conditions, but this time you go zipping past a sign that doesn't have any numbers or letters at all. Nothing but a bright yellow background and big, bold, black right-angled arrow. Fifteen seconds later, you come barreling into the corner about three times as fast as you should....

But there aren't any police officers around to give you a ticket, so everything is going to be fine, right?

Wrong. You're up against physics now, and it's not a good match. Your car goes flying off the corner, a couple of boulders in the ditch mangle your undercarriage into mush, the brush shreds your paint job, and when you hit something solid, you fly through the windshield and bleed out about half your blood.

The point here is that the first sign is totally arbitrary. The same guy who thought it was a good idea in the first place could have said, "You know, that's kind of low... let's raise that a bunch and put up a new sign."

In other words, arbitrary laws come from some authority's decision and they are easy to change. The same authority just has to change his mind.

The idea of not getting in trouble because there aren't any police around: that's because arbitrary laws always require external enforcement. Someone has to *do something* to punish you.

And the nice cop who made it a warning: Arbitrary laws are easy-peasy to forgive. And it's perfectly legal for him to do so. Same thing with a judge. He just bangs his gavel and says "Case dismissed!"

Now then, about that second story.... The law this time didn't come from city hall. It didn't come from parliament, congress, or the king. They didn't make it; they can't change it. All they can do is describe it—which is exactly what that sign with the arrow was all about.

The fact that there wasn't a police officer standing there to watch as your car came into the corner made not a whiff of difference, because this kind of law—a non-arbitrary law—doesn't need any help enforcing its penalty.

And to inject a little humor into a bad situation, just imagine a cop showing up after the accident. He comes walking up to where you're lying on the ground and says, "Wow! Looks like you're having a bad day! You hit that corner way too fast, ruined your undercarriage and paint job, flew through the windshield and lost about half your blood. But you know what? I'm just going to make it a warning this time, so it's all okay."

Memo: That's not how forgiveness works with non-arbitrary laws. Kind thoughts and happy little announcements aren't going to work here. Somebody needs to *do something!* And they better be quick and it better look a lot like an ambulance and a fully staffed ER suite.

Now, back to Lucifer. *"God if Your law is arbitrary, You can change it; You can forgive anyone who messes up. It's easy.*

"But You say it can't be changed, and You say it's not arbitrary. Maybe so, but that means You're lying when You say forgiveness is possible.

"So which is it? And why did You lie to us?"

It was a clever trap. But not clever enough, because Satan never had a clue how real forgiveness actually works! We'll get to that explanation in a moment, but let's take a look at his motivation first.

> [Satan laid his] plans to wrest from God the noble Adam and his companion Eve. If he could, in any way, beguile them to disobedience, God would make some provision whereby they might be pardoned, and then himself and all the fallen angels would be in a fair way to share with them of God's mercy.[207]

> He reasoned that if God pardoned sinful man whom He had created, He would also pardon and receive into favor him and his angels. But he was disappointed.[208]

He was right... up to a point. His bet that God loved Adam and Eve enough to do something to save them was more spectacularly correct than he could ever have imagined. But it's like the devil could never wrap his mind around anything but a totally arbitrary kind of forgiveness. He was still thinking that God could, and would, change His law! Without doing that, how could He forgive sinners? And if He changed the law for one batch of sinners, how could He refuse to forgive someone who had actually been right all along about changing the law?

Since this is the most fundamental of all the claims he made against God, this is probably one we should understand lest we "pay with the loss of our souls."

20. Sozo

There is an important detail in the New Testament that will go a long way toward making sense of Lucifer's confusion. We find it in the following verses:

> Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has *made you well*.' And the woman was *made well* from that hour.[209]

> Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has *made you well*.' And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.[210]

> [Jesus] said to [the one thankful leper], "Arise, go your way. Your faith has *made you well*."[211]

> She will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will *save* His people from their sins.[212]

207. *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, 29–30
208. *Review and Herald*, February 24, 1874
209. Matthew 9:22
210. Mark 10:52
211. Luke 17:19
212. Matthew 1:21

> Those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has *saved* you. Go in peace."[213]
>
> For by grace you have been *saved* through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.[214]

The italicized words are the important part here, because they are all translations of the same Greek word. That's *sozo* (**σώζω**), and the point to catch is that physical healing and spiritual salvation are the same word. Why? Because the process in both cases works on the same principle. That's what Lucifer never figured out, and it makes a huge difference in our understanding of forgiveness, because *sozo* is what you need to do when a non-arbitrary law has been broken.

The guy is already all cut up and bleeding, so there's no real need to walk up and kick him in the head. And nobody is going to accuse you of being "soft on crime" if you don't. The law he broke has already inflicted its own penalty. But just telling him it's all going to be okay isn't any help. You need to get him on life support! It may take weeks, months, or years, but if he sticks with the prescribed therapy, the prognosis is complete recovery.

Umm... that sort of makes sense with a car wreck.... But what has that got to do with salvation? Are you sure you're not mixing apples and oranges?

Positive. But asking for more than human opinion is always a good thing when it comes to determining truth. So let's consider a couple possible alternatives that would point in a different direction.

Maybe using sozo *for both healing and salvation is just a coincidence. You might be making too much out of nothing.*

Fair question, but it doesn't look that way:

> The Holy Spirit never has and never will in the future divorce the medical missionary work from the gospel ministry. They cannot be divorced. Bound up with Jesus Christ, the ministry of the Word and the healing of the sick are one.[215]
>
> When Christ returned to the Father, He bade the disciples continue the work He had begun. They were given power to heal "all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." By healing in His name the diseases of the body, they would testify to His power for the healing of the soul. Through ministry such as Christ had performed, they were to carry to all nations the gospel of His grace.[216]
>
> The medical missionary work is not to be separated from the work of the ministry. This is and will continue to be the temptation.[217]
>
> Christ's ministers must stand in an altogether different position. They must be evangelists; they must be medical missionaries. They must take hold of the work in-

213. Luke 7:49–50
214. Ephesians 2:8
215. E.G. White, "Come Out and Be Separate," November 1905; Manuscript 21, 1906
216. *Review and Herald*, June 6, 1912
217. E.G. White, "Words of Instruction to Responsible Men," July 30, 1899; Manuscript 105, 1899

> telligently. But it is of no use for them to think that they can do this while they drop the work which God has said should be connected with the gospel. If they drop out the medical missionary work, they need not think that they can carry forward their work successfully, for they have only half the necessary facilities.[218]
>
> Those who labor in our conferences as ministers should become acquainted with the work of ministering to the sick. No minister should be proud that he is ignorant where he should be wise.[219]
>
> I do not distinguish between the medical and the gospel—the gospel is a medical work. The gospel is the work of not only presenting the great truths which must be received in order to become sanctified through the truth, but it must embrace all that Christ embraced in ministering. It is ministering to the sick; it is ministering in the gospel.[220]

Okay, point made: medical missionary work is actually an essential element of gospel work. And a good ratchet wrench is an essential part of auto mechanics, but that doesn't mean the wrench is some sort of template or philosophical blueprint for the mechanic. It's just a tool.

That's a big step! Recognizing the value of medical missionary work as a tool is important. Sadly, finding even that much is a pleasant surprise. But it's more than just a tool. Consider this well known quotation:

> I wish to tell you that soon there will be no work done in ministerial lines but medical missionary work. The work of a minister is to minister.[221]

If medical missionary work is just a tool, there's a time coming when your poor auto mechanic is going to be left trying to use a ratchet wrench as a screwdriver... and a jack, and a hammer, and a pry bar, and a paint gun, and....

But when we shift perspective and see *sozo* as healing and salvation all wrapped up together, that quotation isn't a picture of tools lost, it's a picture of the first time we actually get the gospel done right! Well, likely since the days of the apostles, anyway.[222] Or, maybe since the Waldenses.[223]

The secret that made those groups successful was simply doing what Jesus did.

---

218. *Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, 1741
219. E.G. White, "Diary," April 19, 1901; Manuscript 33, 1901
220. E.G. White, "Remarks at California Conference Committee," November 13, 1906; Manuscript 132, 1906
221. E.G. White, "Give the Medical Missionary Work Its Place," April 11, 1901; Manuscript 150, 1901
222. "The modern hospital concept had its origin in the early Christian communities and... their compassion and long term care for suffering was fundamentally different from anything known before. Neither the pagan temples nor the mystery religions created a caring community like that of early Christianity.

    "In time even those Roman emperors who had instituted persecution of the Christians commented favourably on their unstinting assistance to all victims of the epidemics (probably mostly smallpox) which ravaged the Roman empire during the 2nd, 3rd and 4th centuries. Christian health ministration was also continued in spite of patients' poor prognosis for cure—situations in which patients would probably have been abandoned by Hippocratic doctors." Retief, F., & Cilliers, L. (2012). The Influence of Christianity On Graeco-Roman Medicine Up to the Renaissance. Akroterion, 46. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.7445/46-0-120 (D66)
223. "Each one of those Barbes, besides the knowledge and practice of the ministry, had the knowledge of some trade, and especially medicine and surgery for which they were skillful and well considered." Pierre Cilles, Ecclesiastic History of the Reformed Churches, Gathered in some of the Piedmont Valleys, 23

> The Saviour made each work of healing an occasion for implanting divine principles in the mind and soul. This was the purpose of His work. He imparted earthly blessings, that He might incline the hearts of men to receive the gospel of His grace.[224]

This is more than "a tool." This is the only way Jesus could do His job, so why should it be surprising that we ought to follow His example? And, may I point out, "example" and "template" are very closely related in terms of function.

> Jesus could not express in words to the understanding of man the love of the Father; He could only say, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." But He did express the love of God in His actions.[225]

> The world needs today what it needed nineteen hundred years ago—a revelation of Christ.[226]

The obvious challenge with this is that Christ isn't here to reveal Himself. He left that job for us, so—

> What the world needs today is the light of Christ's example reflected from the lives of Christlike men and women.[227]

> God designs to manifest through [His people] the principles of His kingdom. Through them the attributes of God are to be unfolded, and the truths of His Word, in all their glory and excellence, will be made to appear more vivid....
>
> A great work is to be done in setting before men the saving truths of the gospel. To present these truths is the work of the third angel's message....
>
> But the glory of this light, which is the very glory of the character of Christ, can never be expressed in words. Human language is inadequate to reveal it. It must be made manifest in the life.[228]

> Christ, the great Medical Missionary, is our example.... He healed the sick and preached the gospel. In His service, healing and teaching were linked closely together. Today they are not to be separated.[229]

This sounds sensible... and a little odd, at the same time. Medical missionary work is clearly important, but it's still easy to see it as an evangelistic tool, a way to interest people in the gospel, just a bit of bait to get them to come to an evangelistic series. More dignified, but functionally the same as the raffles used by other groups. It's not that easy to see it as "the gospel" in its own right.

"The greatest part [of the Waldensian students] gave themselves to the study and practise of Physick, and Chirurgery; and herein they excelled..., thereby rendering themselves most able and skilfull Physicians both of soul and body." Samuel Morland, The History of the Evangelical Churches of the Valleys of Piedmont, 183 (1658)

"They had much experience in medicine and surgery, and... possessed amazing secrets, wonderful in their simplicity." Hieronimo Miolo, Brief History of the Valdesian Affairs (1587)

224. *Ministry of Healing*, 20
225. *Signs of the Times*, November 28, 1892
226. *Ministry of Healing*, 143
227. *Testimonies*, vol. 9, 135
228. E.G. White, "A Perfect Ministry; Its Purpose," March 5, 1900; Manuscript 19, 1900
229. *General Conference Bulletin*, June 3, 1909

There's a reason for this: We know that "the gospel" is the means of attaining "at-one-ment" with God. It's His provision for solving the problem that came from sinning, from breaking God's law. So naturally our understanding of God's law is going to dictate what needs to be done to solve the problem.

Surprisingly, that's an area where we've got a few things to learn!

21. Shall There Be Light?

Before we can entertain the idea of a different perspective on "the gospel," and "the atonement," we need to clarify our understanding of the law.

Seriously? Adventists need a refresher on the law?! How much "hills of Gilboa" do we really need?

Well, none of that, actually. But you might be surprised to know that of all the areas where Ellen White encouraged us to expect "new light," the most frequently mentioned is "the law." I know... that seems a little basic, but the closest competition for that honor is "the gospel." It's almost like we need to go back and look at a few lesson plans from Christianity 101.

> Said my guide, "There is much light yet to shine forth from the law of God and the gospel of righteousness. This message, understood in its true character, and proclaimed in the Spirit, will lighten the earth with its glory."[230]
>
> The downtrodden law of God is to be exalted before the people;... light from heaven will reveal to them wondrous things out of God's law. Great truths that have long been obscured by superstition and false doctrine will blaze forth from the illuminated pages of the Sacred Word.[231]
>
> We have only glimmering light in regard to the exceeding breadth of the law of God.... Many who claim to be teachers of the truth have no conception of what they are handling when they are presenting the law to the people, because they have not studied it; they have not put their mental powers to the task of understanding its significance.[232]

"Glimmering" is not a high score. It is not "much light" shining forth. This obscured view of the law makes it likely that we are dealing with the lingering effects of "superstition and false doctrine," and given that our concepts of the law haven't changed notably since the 1890s, it all raises many questions.

> The Lord... would anoint the blind eyes, that they may discover the holy character of God in His law, and understand the love of Christ, which is indeed gold tried in the fire. There are old, yet new truths still to be added to the treasures of our knowledge. We do not understand or exercise faith as we should.... We are not called to worship and serve God by the use of the means employed in former years. God requires higher service now than ever before.[233]

230. E.G. White, "A Call to a Deeper Study of the Word," November 1, 1888; Manuscript 15, 1888
231. *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 388
232. *Review and Herald*, February 4, 1890
233. *Review and Herald*, February 25, 1890

> The principles of God's law are contained in the two precepts, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." When we realize this, there will be a searching after truth, a deep conviction of the far-reaching claims of God's law.[234]
>
> Oh, that I had language to present these lofty themes! I lay down my pen in sorrow that my words are so feeble to deal with grand and awful truth; as I contemplate, I seem to shrink into nothingness before its vast significance. The themes connected with the law and the gospel seem too great for such a weak, ignorant mortal as I to handle. From time to time I venture in the simplest language to present that which has been revealed to me concerning the plan of salvation, but again and again I mourn that my expression falls so far short of the glory of the truth as it is in Jesus.
>
> My brethren, be not satisfied with a superficial knowledge of truth, with a surface view of the law of God. Dig deep in the Scriptures of truth.... Your researches have not been deep enough. You need the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to aid you to search into the truth with reverence and awe, bringing your mind to the task with intense desire, that will not be quenched until you see wondrous things out of the law. Dig deep into the mine of truth, and be not satisfied until you have a more perfect comprehension as to what constitutes the strength of the law of God. You need to search and search, and to weep and fast and pray, in order that you may have revealed unto you such a view of the law of God that you will be fitted to go forth and watch for souls as they that must give an account.[235]

When "the messenger of the Lord" can't explain the law and the gospel, you know there's some depth there. Her admonition to "dig deep" implies the possibility—even the need—of learning something new. The challenge, of course, is that "new light" needs to be tested, and anyone who has a hard time being questioned will likely want to "count the cost" before making any claims. And yet, the encouragement to expect "new light" continues.

> You may have seen something in regard to the righteousness of Christ, but there is truth yet to be seen clearly, and that should be estimated by you as precious as rare jewels. You will see the law of God and interpret it to the people in an entirely different light from what you have done in the past, for the law of God will be seen by you as revealing a God of mercy and righteousness. The atonement, made by the stupendous sacrifice of Jesus Christ, will be seen by you in an altogether different light.[236]

As a simple thought exercise, what percentage would you say the word "altogether" might represent? And that is said about both the law and the atonement. Those are big ticket items in the world of theology!

So far we've only looked at those two topics; let's toss another into the mix:

> The Lord is ready to... open new lines of thought in regard to the great plan of redemption.[237]

234. *Review and Herald*, August 9, 1898
235. *Signs of the Times*, October 2, 1893
236. *Signs of the Times*, November 13, 1893
237. E.G. White, Letter to J.H. Kellogg, April 15, 1892; Letter 18, 1892

> Up to this time the Bible truths connected with the great plan of redemption are but feebly understood. The truth will be continually unfolding, expanding, and developing, for it is divine, like its Author.[238]

> I could give you subjects that would put to the stretch your thoughts and mind, and yet there is a great deal more. The great plan of redemption is not half comprehended. If we could only understand the plan of salvation, we would be the happiest people upon the face of the earth.[239]

The plan of redemption? Feebly understood? Not half comprehended? She makes it sound like "new trains of thought" are overdue!

Of course, the law, the atonement, and the plan of redemption are closely inter-related. You can't expect to learn anything new about any one of them without it having an impact on your view of the others. It's just that it's been about 130 years since she wrote all that, and you'd be hard pressed to find a single example of that actually happening. Is it time, now?

> There are periods which are turning points in the history of nations and of the church. In the providence of God, when these different crises arrive, the light for that time is given. If it is received, there is spiritual progress; if it is rejected, spiritual declension and shipwreck follow.[240]

If ever there was a clearly delineated "turning point" in the history of the church, it's the end of time. Is that now? Opinions will vary, no doubt, but to the degree that you answer "Yes" to that question, you really need to consider the following.

22. Do you want to be made well?

Jesus once asked that question. The man to whom He spoke responded with the perfectly factual observation that he had no one to help him do the only thing he knew to do. Jesus didn't give the procedural challenge a bit of notice. Instead, He told the man, "Rise, take up your bed and walk."[241]

It occurs to me that the same question could be addressed to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Such an inquiry would, I suspect, elicit a variety of responses, ranging from the denial of any illness, to a despairing lament that a cure seemed impossible, to the simple action of standing up and walking away with a figurative bedroll on one's shoulder.

In her account of the healing of the cripple by the pool of Bethesda in *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen White includes a thought provoking comment:

---

238. E.G. White, "Counsels to Ministers: The Need of a True Concept of Righteousness by Faith," September 13, 1889; Manuscript 27, 1889
239. E.G. White, "Sermon: Having Our Conversation in Heaven," July 24, 1886; Manuscript 9, 1886
240. *Bible Echo*, August 26, 1895
241. John 5:6–8

> Jesus had given him no assurance of divine help. The man might have stopped to doubt, and lost his one chance of healing. But he believed Christ's word, and in acting upon it he received strength.[242]

The time is coming when a similar experience will come to all who profess loyalty to God. It probably will not come with great fanfare, and it may be no more explicit than were Jesus' words to the cripple, but divine help is clearly planned for God's people at the end of time.

> Mysteries which have been hidden for ages are to be revealed in these last days to humble people, who lean upon the arm of infinite power....
>
> The Spirit and power of the coming One will be imparted in large measure to those who are preparing to stand in the day of God, who are hastening the second advent of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To these faithful ones Christ gives special communications. He talks with them as He talked with His disciples before leaving them....
>
> He would have them see that it was an evidence of His love for Him to lift the veil of the future, and make them the depositaries of knowledge concerning events to come....
>
> Coming events, of a solemn character, are opening before us, and God would not have any one of us think that in these last days there is no more that we need to know. This is a continual snare of Satan. He would not have us meet coming events without that special preparation which is essential to guide us through every difficulty.[243]

> I stated that... there was to be special light for God's people as they neared the closing scenes of this earth's history. Another angel was to come from heaven with a message, and the whole earth was to be lightened with His glory. It would be impossible for us to state just how this additional light would come. It might come in a very unexpected manner, in a way that would not agree with the ideas that many have conceived. It is not at all untimely or contrary to the ways and works of God to send light to His people in unexpected ways.[244]

If "special light" is to be expected at the end of time, and if there is "much light to shine forth from the law," then at least some of what God would have us learn will likely paint the law in an "entirely different light." Lucifer, of course, has been painting the law as arbitrary since he began his failed coup in the heavenly courts. Isn't there a good chance God would want to settle that argument sometime soon? How could He do that?

> In the character of God's people a living testimony will be borne that will contradict the fallacy of Satan, who has declared that the law of Jehovah is arbitrary, and holds its subjects under a cruel bondage.[245]

Really? That's something He's looking for us to do?

Yes, really. Refuting Lucifer's last argument against God is a big deal, actually. And—obviously, given the nature of the accusation—this evidence needs to be produced in an entirely non-arbitrary way.

---

242. *Desire of Ages*, 203
243. E.G. White, "Christian Integrity in the Ministry," 1886; Manuscript 15, 1886
244. E.G. White, Letter to R.A. Underwood, January 18, 1889; Letter 22, 1889
245. *Review and Herald*, August 13, 1895

Which means...?

Well, it means *sozo*. It means healing. It means "at-one-ment" without the help of a Chicago lawyer.

> The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us, but in our hearts and characters.[246]

Notice the wording! *Remedy. Cure. Restoration. Health.* This is the final result of those experiments Jesus has been overseeing from His office in the New Jerusalem University Medical Center!

> The Lord Jesus is making experiments on human hearts through the exhibition of His mercy and abundant grace. He is effecting transformations so amazing that Satan with all his triumphant boasting, with all his confederacy of evil united against God and the laws of His government, stands viewing them as a fortress impregnable to his sophistries and delusions. They are to him an incomprehensible mystery. The angels of God, seraphim and cherubim, the powers commissioned to co-operate with human agencies, look on with astonishment and joy, that fallen men, once children of wrath, are through the training of Christ developing characters after the divine similitude, to be sons and daughters of God, to act an important part in the occupations and pleasures of heaven.[247]

This is *sozo*. Spiritual salvation worked out in harmony with the thoroughly non-arbitrary law of God. Not a law that is what it is because He said that's what it was going to be. A law that simply describes right and wrong, a law designed to preserve life and righteousness.

> The law of God is the foundation of His government, and is exactly what is needed to preserve life and righteousness.[248]

"Exactly what is needed." Like a sign that tells you how to stay out of the ditch. Anything else, and you'll end up with dead sinners. That's what makes God's law perfect... anyone who follows it, stays alive!

> In God's law, men are restricted only in those things which, if indulged, would prove their eternal ruin.[249]

But why does God condemn sinners to "eternal ruin"? Why can't He be a bit more reasonable? Couldn't He just tweak that system a bit?

So said Lucifer... a long time ago and ever since.

But, no, God's law isn't arbitrary; it isn't changeable. Not because God is stubborn and refuses to change it, but because even He can't make murder and theft and dishonesty and unfaithfulness produce anything good. Even less help-

246. E.G. White, Letter to Sister, 1906; Letter 406, 1906
247. *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, February 27, 1893
248. *Signs of the Times*, February 26, 1894
249. E.G. White, "Perseverance in the Work of God," May 4, 1903; Manuscript 40, 1903

ful? Disrespect for the only One who has the wisdom, power, and love to successfully run the universe. None of that can preserve life and righteousness.

So God made a law—a simple law with only two basic commandments. And even when He spelled it out for the dullest scholars in the universe (that would be us[250]), He didn't say "You have to do this, and this, and this." He just said "Don't do the stuff that destroys life and righteousness."

> Right and wrong are not based upon God's moral government; God's moral government is based upon a distinction between right and wrong. The erroneous view which many have of this subject causes them to rebel against God's law of government as arbitrary.[251]

When we understand that, when we see the law of God "in an entirely different light" from what we have in the past, when we see that it is based on the simple necessities of what will keep us alive (that's the "distinction between right and wrong"), we will see it "as revealing a God of mercy and righteousness." Merciful because He warned us before we hit the corner. Merciful because He planned—in advance—for the possibility that we might go flying off the road. Merciful because He never hesitated to undertake our rehabilitation, despite the trouble it caused Him. Merciful because He saw we needed anesthesia to even begin the process of healing. Merciful because....

Hold it... what's that about anesthesia?

Yes. Anesthesia. What else could we call it?

> The heaviest burden that we bear is the burden of sin. If we were left to bear this burden, it would crush us.[252]

> The penalty of transgressing the law has fallen upon our Substitute and Surety, and for a time has been suspended, so that the guilty do not feel its weight; but the object of this suspension is not to teach us that its claims are over, its exactions set aside, but to attract us to holiness, to obedience. Nothing is changed except the manner of bringing men to obey the law. Obey its claims we must.[253]

> The love which Christ diffuses through the whole being.... frees the soul from the guilt and sorrow, the anxiety and care, that crush the life forces. With it come serenity and composure.[254]

Where we tend to get confused is in thinking that the anesthesia is the cure! The pain's gone; that's good. But magic bullets are a hoax. Real healing comes

250. "The law of Jehovah, dating back to creation, was... more explicitly stated to man after the fall, and worded to meet the case of fallen intelligences. This was necessary in consequence of the minds of men being blinded by transgression." *Review and Herald*, May 6, 1875

251. E.G. White, "The Moral Law," February 1, 1896; Manuscript 79, 1896. This statement is such an understated rendition of such a massive truth, that you probably need to read it over a few times to try and catch the idea. No, it's not a "chicken or the egg" question. Note the result of getting it wrong!

252. *Desire of Ages*, 328

253. *Signs of the Times*, August 13, 1894

254. *Ministry of Healing*, 115

through natural processes, things like "pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power—these are the true remedies."[255]

> God's remedies are the simple agencies of nature that will not tax or debilitate the system through their powerful properties. Pure air and water, cleanliness, a proper diet, purity of life, and a firm trust in God are remedies for the want of which thousands are dying; yet these remedies are going out of date because their skillful use requires work that the people do not appreciate. Fresh air, exercise, pure water, and clean, sweet premises are within the reach of all with but little expense, but drugs are expensive, both in the outlay of means and in the effect produced upon the system.[256]

> The same law obtains in the spiritual as in the natural world.[257]

> In the spiritual as in the natural world, obedience to the laws of God is the condition of fruit bearing.[258]

> By the natural world God teaches the principles of His working in the spiritual kingdom. He who becomes a student of God's work in nature will soon learn the most precious lessons in regard to the spiritual kingdom[259]

The crushing load of guilt produces despair and destroys faith. When Adam and Eve fled from God, it was the natural result of guilt.

> While the soul is filled with fear and terror, the mind cannot see the tender compassion of Christ.[260]

> When human agents yield to temptation, and give themselves up to obey the will of Satan, they are indeed naked. Deprived of the divine covering of light and innocence, they are afraid to meet their God.... for the natural influence of a wrong action upon the soul is to separate it from communion with God. We can only think of God with a consciousness that we are unclean, and this makes us coward.[261]

> Sin is the only nakedness, the only degradation, the only dishonor, that we can know; it is the only thing that will make us afraid to meet God.[262]

This is the time for acute care. The patients are about to die! And so God tells them of a Savior to come, officiates as the Priest at the first animal sacrifice, and kindles the hope of divine acceptance.

> Understanding the law in connection with Christ, receiving Him by faith as his substitute and surety, man sees himself as a prisoner of hope.[263]

But the devil almost never settles for one deception at a time. Despair is deadly, but unconcern will work as well.

---

255. *Ministry of Healing*, 127
256. *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 443
257. *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 92
258. *Christ's Object Lessons*, 305
259. E.G. White, "Seed-Sowing," March 9, 1898; Manuscript 34, 1898
260. E.G. White, Letter to J.A. Burden, April 12, 1905; Letter 115, 1905
261. E.G. White, Letter to Peter Wessels, June 26, 1896; Letter 106, 1896
262. *Review and Herald*, January 26, 1897
263. E.G. White, "The Truth As It Is In Jesus," June 21, 1897; Manuscript 58, 1897

> When the theory, artfully formed by Satan, that the law of Jehovah is not binding upon the human family, is adopted and taught, man's terrible ruin is eclipsed to his senses, so that he cannot discern it.... The extent of our ruin can only be discerned in the light of the law of God exhibited in the cross of Calvary.[264]

Confronted with multiple threats, Jesus crafted a response that would block every wicked arrow aimed at His erring children. First, He dulled our pain[265] with the revelation of a love that could forgive the guilty (as our Substitute), so we could live to fight another day. More than that, He showed us how to fight our way back to health (as our Surety).

> In His closing hours, while hanging on the cross, He experienced to the fullest extent what man must experience when striving against sin.[266]

> Now we, Christ's purchased possession, must become soldiers of His cross, and conquer in our own behalf, on our own account, through the power and wisdom given us from above. The influence of the cross of Calvary is to vanquish every earthly and spiritual evil power; and we need to know the plan of the battle, that we may work in harmony with Christ.[267]

The plan of the battle... well, yes, as a member of the army, it would be great to have some idea what the plan is! While it has been present in Scripture for millennia, this, too, is a part of that "special light for God's people as they near the closing scenes of this earth's history."[268] We can see it hidden in plain sight in one of Ellen White's favorite descriptions of Jesus— our Substitute and Surety.

In the available body of her writing, this exact phrase appears 450 times (including repetition in later compilations). Often, when you see Ellen White saying something over and over, it's a Bible verse she's quoting. But not this time. This is her wording, her effort to describe something important. So what does it mean?

There's not much question on "substitute," but we need to look at "surety." This is one of those words that has multiple shades of meaning, but they are split into two directions. The 1828 *Webster's Dictionary* lays out the first broad meaning with words like "certainty," "indubitableness," "security," "safety," "stability," "evidence," and "confirmation." This is the "no doubt about it" department.

The second category is a far less confident, but committed to fixing things up. So we find wording like "security against loss or damage," and "one who enters into a bond or recognizance to answer for another's appearance in court, or for

264. E.G. White, "The Truth As It Is In Jesus," June 21, 1897; Manuscript 58, 1897

265. In a way he never understood, we might almost agree with Karl Marx: "Religion is the opium of the people." No, this is not an endorsement of anything Marx ever stood for, especially not his well-documented involvement in the occult. This may be a case of the devil mocking the work of God at a deeper level than we have generally understood.

266. *Youth's Instructor*, July 20, 1899. This statement will catch many by surprise. Don't get distracted now; we'll come back to it.

267. *Review and Herald*, September 29, 1891

268. See Footnote 244.

his payment of a debt or for the performance of some act, and who, in case of the principal debtor's failure, is compellable to pay the debt or damages."

The first idea is, "You can count on it. Done deal." But the second idea is more like, "We think this will work out okay, but don't worry; if it all goes sideways, we'll cover your losses." If this second idea is what Ellen White was after when she said "Substitute and Surety," the two terms are similar, almost a pairing of synonyms. If she had the first meaning in mind, it's more like a nut and bolt combo; totally different, but they work together to get the job done.

So what did Ellen White mean when she used "surety"? See if you can figure it out:

> "God with us" is the surety of our deliverance from sin, the assurance of our power to obey the law of heaven.[269]
>
> The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God.[270]
>
> Jesus is our Surety and Mediator, and has placed at our command every resource, that we may have a perfect character.[271]
>
> The Redeemer of the world in the wilderness of temptation fought the battle upon the point of appetite in our behalf. As our surety He overcame, thus making it possible for man to overcome in his name.[272]
>
> Before man was created the provision was made that if man failed to bear the test, Jesus would become his sacrifice and surety, that through faith in him, man might be reconciled to God.... Christ died on Calvary that man might have power to overcome his natural tendencies to sin.[273]
>
> Christ became man's representative and surety, thus demonstrating to heavenly intelligences, to unfallen worlds, and to the human race, that, through cooperation with divine agencies, humanity could be pure and holy. By partaking of the divine nature they could meet the demand of a perfect and holy law[274]
>
> Christ came to our world as man's surety, preparing the way for him to gain the victory by giving him moral power.[275]
>
> He came to be their Surety, to overcome in their behalf, to live for them a sinless life, that through His power they might obtain the victory over evil.[276]
>
> Jesus is our Surety and Mediator, and has placed at our command every resource, that we may have a perfect character.[277]

269. *Desire of Ages*, 24
270. *Testimonies to Ministers*, 91
271. *In Heavenly Places*, 18
272. *Review and Herald*, April 19, 1887
273. *Review and Herald*, February 23, 1892
274. *Signs of the Times*, June 18, 1894
275. *Signs of the Times*, May 27, 1897
276. *Signs of the Times*, June 17, 1903
277. *Youth's Instructor*, September 22, 1892

> Christ ventured a great deal when He came here to stand... as our surety, as our substitute, that He would overcome in our behalf, that we might be overcomers in His strength and by His merits.[278]

Her point seems clear enough, but just to nail it down:

> Man must overcome as Christ overcame. And then, through the victory that it is his privilege to gain by the all-powerful name of Jesus, he may become an heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ. This could not be the case if Christ alone did all the overcoming. Man must do his part; he must be victor on his own account, through the strength and grace that Christ gives him.[279]

These issues, too, though still somewhat indistinct in many minds, are central to the church's final days on earth.[280]

23. It's Foundational

A few pages back (Footnote 266, to be precise), we looked at one of the more surprising Ellen White quotations. It's one of those where she comes right out and says something unexpected, but once you read it, you start to go, "She was kind of hinting at that here, and here, and here, and here. How come I never connected the dots?"

For a refresher, the statement reads: "In His closing hours, while hanging on the cross, He experienced to the fullest extent what man must experience when striving against sin."[281] This is talking about Jesus, of course, but it's not what we were expecting to hear. We all thought it was going to say, "He experienced to the fullest extent what man must experience at the second death."

The funny thing though, is that she *never* said that. Not once. In fact, the closest she comes to saying Jesus died the second death is this statement:

> Christ felt much as sinners will feel when the vials of God's wrath shall be poured out upon them. Black despair, like the pall of death, will gather about their guilty souls, and then they will realize to the fullest extent the sinfulness of sin.[282]

What strikes me as fascinating is that both experiences count as the "fullest extent" of... two *very* different things! This is all getting confusing.

Well, it *would* be confusing if we were still looking at the atonement as an arbitrary arrangement, "a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned."[283] But by

278. E.G. White, "Sermon: The Great Sacrifice Made for Us," July 24, 1891; Manuscript 8, 1891
279. *Testimonies*, vol. 4, 32
280. Not to turn this into an advertisement, but those wishing a more complete examination of these issues may be interested in my book, *Diasozo! The Ministry of Controversy and the Great Healing*. It may be found on Amazon.
281. *Youth's Instructor*, July 20, 1899. This statement will catch many by surprise. Don't get distracted now; we'll come back to it.
282. *Testimonies*, vol. 2, 210
283. See Footnote 246.

this time in earth's history, we should be past that. It was a clever accusation, but Lucifer's last ditch argument should be getting overrun soon, and we ought to know the plan of the battle by now. After all, Jesus laid it out for us.

> Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.[284]

Two men, two foundations, two houses, two storms, two outcomes. Simple lesson, right? Don't be like the foolish man; build on the rock. End of story.

Not really. It's deep, so let me run down that list of elements one more time:

Two men, two foundations, two houses, one storm, two outcomes.

You caught it, right? One storm. The same storm. Exactly the same words to describe the winds hitting both houses. Luke does the same thing:

> Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.[285]

This time it's the water, but it "beat vehemently" against both houses. It's the same test; all that's different are the two foundations. The wise and the foolish face the same test. That's the non-arbitrary way. No favoritism allowed. And since Jesus knew it was coming for us, He showed us the foundation that would pass the test.

> Christ bowed His head and died, but He held fast His faith and His submission to God.[286]
>
> On the cross mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other. Jesus had testified that God is true. Faith demands no more.[287]

At the same time, He showed the universe that God's government was not arbitrary.

> The Captain of our salvation was perfected through suffering. His soul was made an offering for sin. It was necessary for the awful darkness to gather about His soul because of the withdrawal of the Father's love and favor, for He was standing in the sinner's place, and this darkness every sinner must experience.[288]

Notice it says "every sinner." Not just the wicked, not just those who are finally lost for all eternity. Every sinner. The storm is coming; many houses will fall, some houses will stand. Jesus showed us what it takes to stand.

---

284. Matthew 7:24–27
285. Luke 6:47–49
286. *Desire of Ages*, 761
287. E.G. White, "Diary," November 4, 1898; Manuscript 176, 1899
288. E.G. White, "Words of Instruction from the Apostle Paul," July 13, 1899; Manuscript 93, 1899

24. Game Over

Of all the traits, circumstances, situations, and conditions of the church at the end of time, the most consequential will be the just claim to the title, Church Triumphant. This is what Jesus has been working toward for a very long time.

The day will come (unless we utterly fail Him) when those who follow the Lord will be healed. But how do we get *there?* We should understand the plan.

We should always begin with the little things. "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much."[289] So just start with what you know.

Here's another great option that strikes right at the heart of the problem:

> All sin is selfishness. Satan's first sin was selfishness. He sought to grasp power, to exalt self. A species of insanity led him to seek to supersede God....
>
> God desires everyone to understand the hateful character of selfishness and to co-operate with Him in guarding His human family against its terrible, deceptive power. The first result of the entrance of sin into the world was the birth of principles of selfishness. The design of the gospel is, by means of remedial missionary work, to confront this evil of selfishness and destroy its destructive power by establishing enterprises of benevolence.[290]

So start an "enterprise of benevolence"! See how many people you can help, and remember that the "remedial" part is for you! Help in simple ways. Being a "medical missionary" doesn't require a college degree, but if you happen to have some medical training—Congratulations! You've got ten talents!—make sure to be a "missionary" as well, because that's what the people need most.

And when you share the gospel with them, remember the basics, because Satan has a counterfeit all ready to confuse them:

> Satan can present a counterfeit so closely resembling the truth that it deceives those who are willing to be deceived, who desire to shun the self-denial and sacrifice demanded by the truth.[291]

That's the heart of the issue, really. That "first sin was selfishness," and Satan has been trying to sell the idea ever since. It's nonsense, of course, and God has more than countered his claims with literal blank-check promises like this:

> God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.[292]

That promise usually won't cover things like yachts and vacation homes, but if you're helping others, you can take it to the bank.

---

289. Luke 16:10
290. E.G. White, Letter to Brethren and Sisters of the Iowa Conference, November 6, 1901; Letter 165, 1901
291. *Great Controversy*, 528
292. 2 Corinthians 9:8

Oddly enough, the devil will provide most of what you need from there on out. How? By helpfully providing temptations… which Jesus turns into exercise equipment, much to Satan's disgust.

> The followers of Christ know little of the plots which Satan and his hosts are forming against them. But He who sitteth in the heavens will overrule all these devices for the accomplishment of His deep designs. The Lord permits His people to be subjected to the fiery ordeal of temptation, not because He takes pleasure in their distress and affliction, but because this process is essential to their final victory. He could not, consistently with His own glory, shield them from temptation; for the very object of the trial is to prepare them to resist all the allurements of evil.[293]

Let's use a little parable: Imagine you're working out on a bench press, lying on your back with a bar of weights above. Satan wants to load the bar with 250 pounds, but Jesus says, "No more than 200." Satan screams in rage, and Jesus says, "The Lord rebuke you."

If you use all the strength Jesus knows you have, you can lower the bar till it touches your chest and then raise it back to the stand. If you don't use all your strength, you could be in trouble. If the bar comes down on your neck, it will likely kill you. Fatal airway collapse, carotid artery compression, and severe spinal trauma are the main options. If it misses your neck, but rolls down your chest, it can mash internal organs or blow out an artery. To prevent all that, you have a "spotter" standing nearby.

When you fail, the spotter saves your life, so let's make him an obvious symbol of Christ. When He saves you, it's called "mercy." But when you use all the strength He knows you have, you can meet the challenge and get a little stronger every time.

The devil comes along again and wants to load 250 pounds of temptation on the bar, but Jesus says, "No more than 205." Satan screams in rage, and Jesus says, "The Lord rebuke you."

The process continues with Satan supplying the weights, while Jesus coaches and spots. Sometimes the result calls for mercy, sometimes the result is strength. How much of each is important, but the goal is what we saw in that last quotation: "The Lord permits His people to be subjected to the fiery ordeal of temptation, not because He takes pleasure in their distress and affliction, but because this process is essential to their final victory."

It's the final victory that matters most. Each one along the way is cause for rejoicing, but the end goal is that "final victory."

But here's the odd part: "He could not, consistently with His own glory, shield them from temptation; for the very object of the trial is to prepare them to resist all the allurements of evil."

What? He's not going to shield them?

Not at the end. He can't; not "consistently with His own glory."

293. *Great Controversy*, 528

Does that mean He breaks His promise to us?

No, it means the devil ran out of weights. God's people are able to "resist all the allurements of evil" so there's no danger of being tempted too strongly. Without resorting to either tricky lawyers or imaginary magic, Jesus has used the cold, hard, non-arbitrary reality of the "fiery ordeal" to strengthen the faith of His people. They've "made it a habit to trust in God."[294] This is the single most important characteristic of God's church at the end of time.

> Nothing in the world is so dear to God as His church. Nothing is guarded by Him with such jealous care. The Lord has paid the ransom to save and redeem His heritage, and He is not willing that anything should separate them from Him, where He cannot protect them and prosper them for His own name's glory. He permits them to be sorely tried in the fiery furnace to separate from them and burn the dross. But His eye is upon them every moment, that as they are being purified they may not be consumed.[295]

We may bask in the warm glow of that assurance for a moment, and rightly so. But in time our minds will always be drawn back to a single fact: We aren't there yet. Though the world around us seems more eschatological in more ways than at any time in memory... we aren't there. Not yet.

And so I close with a statement we've seen already, but one I can't help believing is appropriate and applicable to our day.

> There are periods which are turning points in the history of nations and of the church. In the providence of God, when these different crises arrive, the light for that time is given. If it is received, there is spiritual progress; if it is rejected, spiritual declension and shipwreck follow.[296]



294. See Footnote 57.
295. E.G. White, Letter to J.E. and Emma White, May 4, 1900; Letter 68, 1900
296. *Bible Echo*, August 26, 1895

Of course it's unwritten.
Of course it's a mystery.

It hasn't happened yet. So while we each have the chance to help determine what this closing chapter of God's church will look like, none of us know the details. But there's already a surprising amount of information about the Seventh-day Adventist Church at the end of time, that has been laid out for us in the Spirit of Prophecy, and it's well worth the effort to look ahead.



Dave Fiedler has bucked logs, farmed carrots, tomato seed, and hay, run a print shop, designed and milled dental crowns, been an editor, classroom teacher (elementary to college), boys' dean, school principal, vegan restaurant manager, and written five "real" books. (Plus a few little ones like this... hardly big enough to count.)

At heart, he's something of a social-systems analyst, and the most fascinating social-system of all is the government of heaven and its remote operations here on earth. He believes making sense out of that is an obviously good move for the work of the gospel. For him, it's what makes getting out of bed worth the trouble.

Currently, he lives in "Beautiful British Columbia" with his wife, Clarissa.