



# The Sabbath Watchman

January-February 2015

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# A Personal Invitation



The picture on the front of the U.S. 100-dollar bill is that of Benjamin Franklin. While he was never President of the country, he stands out still today as one of its most influential founders. As the country's most famous publisher, it was he who said: "If you want to be remembered forever, either do things worth writing about or write things worth reading."

Historians tell us that the Hyksos ruled Egypt as a foreign power for about four hundred years. Immanuel Velikovsky suggested that they were the Amalekites, but little proof of that exists because they left no written records. All we know about the Hyksos is what others said about them, and that isn't much. They must not have wanted to be remembered.

Jesus is remembered mostly for what He did, not for what He wrote, although He did write the Ten Commandments on stone; and, the sins of men in the dust. Psalm 103:12; John 8:8. While He never personally wrote a book, more books have been written about Him than any other man who ever lived, and more of Him is still to be told.

The official organ of His people in this Reform Movement for continuing to chronicle His story is *The Sabbath Watchman*. At the last General Conference Session, it was resolved that it should continue to be published and shared around the world. This means that its publication is the work of all whom Jesus is using and is to be used by all with whom Jesus is working.

If you look to your right, you will see what is "in this issue." As you read the articles, be blessed. If you like what you read, please subscribe to the magazine and share it with others. Watch for upcoming articles and news of what God is doing in His vineyard and how Providence is bringing souls to the cross of Jesus. There will be reports, stories and pictures of baptisms, ordinations, seminars, Good Samaritan work, health fairs, canvassing experiences, and activities that encourage the soul, along with spiritual articles, inspirational experiences, and insights into what is happening in the religious world as they relate to Jesus' soon coming. You will also be informed of upcoming events and new products as they become available, including historical studies, health information, PowerPoint presentations, recordings, new publications, etc.

The Saviour is inspiring men and women, young and old, at this special time in earth's history. Rumblings in the political arena and the religious world show that He will return soon. More about those things and what religious leaders are planning will be found in upcoming issues. Now the church is calling all men to "fear God," "worship Him," "and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come." Revelation 14:7. And as He impresses you, write down and submit to [publishing@sda1844.org](mailto:publishing@sda1844.org) articles for *The Sabbath Watchman*. We want to receive and publish a broad spectrum of ideas from many different minds who have received inspiration from Heaven's infinity!

May God's grace be with you and yours as we all do everything we can to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 61:4: "And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations."

A handwritten signature in blue ink, likely belonging to the General Conference Missionary Ministry Leader.

General Conference Missionary Ministry Leader  
(Canvassing, Evangelism, Multimedia, Publishing)

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We want to receive and publish a broad spectrum of ideas from many different minds.

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# The Sabbath Watchman

Vol. 90, No. 1

**Beacon of hope, faith, and truth in a confused world.**

We believe:

- The all-wise, loving God created all things in the universe by His Son, Jesus Christ; He is its Owner and Sustainer.
- He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh.
- The Holy Spirit, Jesus' representative on earth, convicts of sin, guides into truth, and, when abiding in man, overcomes all unrighteousness.
- The Bible is the record of God's dealings with mankind and the standard of all doctrine; the Ten Commandments are the transcript of His character and the foundation of all enduring reform.
- His people, in harmony with God's Word and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, call all men everywhere to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus.
- Bible prophecy reveals that earth's history will soon close with the visible return of Jesus Christ as King to claim all who have accepted Him as the world's only Redeemer and their Lord.

THE SABBATH WATCHMAN is the official publication of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Reform Movement, International Missionary Society, General Conference, 625 West Avenue, Cedartown, GA 30125. Phone 770-748-0077 / Fax 770-748-0095 / Email [info@sda1844.org](mailto:info@sda1844.org) / Website [www.sda1844.org](http://www.sda1844.org).

Published six times per year by the General Conference Publishing Department. Printed and distributed by Religious Liberty Publishing Assn. Mail or email subscription orders to 9999 East Mississippi Avenue, Denver, CO 80247 / [info@sda1888.org](mailto:info@sda1888.org). Annual rate (U.S. funds only): U.S.A.—\$30; Foreign—\$45. Phone 916-765-3389 / Website [www.sda1888.org](http://www.sda1888.org).

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# Waiting for the True New Beginning

By Idel Suarez, Jr.

## *Another Roman New Year*

**O**n January 1, 2015, the old year slipped away and the clock of a new year began ticking. In reality, nature reminds us every year that the year does not end until the end of February, and the New Year starts with springtime in March. It is then that the birds make their nests, the caterpillars turn into butterflies, and the trees display new bouquets of flowers. Even the abbreviations of the months in the western world remind us that there has been a change in the numbering of the months. September is considered the 9<sup>th</sup> month, but the prefix “sept” means “seven.” Likewise, October’s prefix, “oct,” means “eight;” November’s prefix, “nov,” means “nine;” and December’s prefix, “dec,” means ten. Hence, January and February would be the eleventh and twelfth months of the year.

Some have commented that Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus both wanted to immortalize their names, so they took the seventh and eighth months of the year and named them after themselves—July and August. Both wanted to have 31 days in their month, so February lost two days.

## *The last day and the new beginning*

Yet the real New Year is still to come. The Scriptures mention that when Jesus comes all things will change for our planet, its biosphere, and the human race. When He returns, He will make all things truly new. “And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.” Revelation 21:5, 6.

Then, like Paul, we, too, can say as we anticipate this new year, “for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” Romans 13:11.

In New York City, people gather at Time’s Square and watch a digital ball fall down a large screen to ring in the New Year at midnight. New Year’s hats, whistles, drinks, laughter, and good wishes are exchanged.

But now we must ask, How will the earth welcome the Lord Jesus when He comes? John, who wrote about the new heavens and the new earth, told what conditions would be like when He returns. “Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which

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*"Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end."*  
Revelation 21:5, 6.

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pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." Revelation 1:7, 8.

The world will lament and cry when the new dawn comes with Christ's second coming! Everyone will see the true beginning of the new age and the end of the old world order. They will look upon the Alpha and the Omega—the First and the Last of all creation—the Creator. They will see the One who was pierced so all would have the opportunity for a new beginning.

### *The Beginning and the End—aleph and tau*

"They shall look upon Me *whom* they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for His only Son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." Zechariah 12:10. Jewish rabbis debate over the word "whom" and over the phrase "whom they have pierced" in this text. Who is the "whom" who was "pierced" and for whom all shall "mourn" or lament with "bitterness"? Who is this "firstborn"?

The original Hebrew word in Zechariah 12:10 has only two letters, translated as "whom." Those two letters are the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet—*aleph* and *tau*. If the word were to be transliterated, it would be "az" in English or "alpha omega" in Greek. And who is the alpha and the omega, like the first and last letters of the alphabet, but Jesus Christ our Lord?

Zechariah brings home the thought and belief that each person is responsible for the death of Christ on Calvary. We have all pierced Him; but, like the thief on the cross, we too can plead with Jesus, "Remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Matthew 23:42. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Corinthians 15:22.

Through the prophet Zechariah, God foretold that Christ, the Messiah, would be sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:13) and be pierced on Calvary (Zechariah 12:10), would rise from the dead with eternal "wounds" in His "hands" (Zechariah 13:6) and return at His third coming with "all His saints" (Zechariah 14:5) to stand on the "Mount of Olives." Zechariah 14:4.

Some in Adventism today believe that prophecy has failed, that Jesus' standing on the Mount

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Each person is responsible for the death of Christ on Calvary.

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of Olives at His third coming is a fallacy, and that the Spirit of prophecy is the result of mere “thought inspiration.” Is this really so?

### *A New Year's resolution*

When the New Year comes, it is a custom in America to make New Year's resolutions. People resolve to lose weight, save more money, pay off debts, get married, take their dream vacation, make peace with their neighbors and relatives, etc. It is a time to reflect and consider a new path. We also wish to make a New Year's resolution at the General Conference concerning *The Sabbath Watchman*.

In the coming months, through articles in *The Sabbath Watchman*, through regional symposiums planned in Asia, America, Europe, and Africa, this Reform Movement will reawaken the topic of the “Spirit of prophecy.” The prophecies of the Old Testament will be reviewed and studied again in the light of their fulfillment in the life of Jesus the Messiah. The prophecies of Jesus will be reexamined, the apostolic foretelling will be investigated, and it will be seen how the heavenly plans are being fulfilled in our day. And last, but not least, prophecies and statements found in the writings of Ellen G. White will be analyzed as to their trustworthiness and validity.

### *The silent period—a tarrying time before the New Year*

The intertestamental period between the last prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) and John the Baptist was also a silent period. No major or minor prophets appeared in the holy land. No additional inspired scriptures were added to the Hebrew canon. There was a silence of 400 years.

Jewish scholars consider the time between the earliest writings in Hebrew, found among the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Qumran caves, and the Aleppo Codex, a Torah Scroll dating to the tenth century, as the silent period. There are no major complete Hebrew copies of the Old Testament between those two bookends. Scribes did copy the Scriptures faithfully during that time, but

those copies have apparently been lost. There was a 900-year period of silence.

Likewise, since the death of Ellen G. White on July 16, 1915, nearly 100 years ago, there has been a silent period of inspiration in Adventism. No other true messengers or prophets have come on the scene. It has become, as Jesus predicted, “a tarrying time” when the ten virgins all slumber. “While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.” Matthew 25:5, 6.

We are all, like the virgins, waiting for Jesus to come from the wedding and claim His bride, the church. We have all fallen asleep. He seems to have tarried in His return to earth, and we seem to be slumbering amid the affairs of this world. Just as the New Year is ushered in at midnight and the celebration begins, so it will be when Christ returns. And, as in the parable half of the virgins lamented and wailed because they had no oil to light their lamps, so today many are lamenting and will mourn because they have no spiritual eye salve to understand the word of God and the Spirit of prophecy. They receive no light from their earthen lamps, because they lack the unction of the Spirit of God.

A new silent period—a tarrying time—has come upon the world. Some seem to have a definite expectation of a new beginning, while the majority seem to slumber in unbelief, ignorance, and indifference.

Martin Luther asserted that there were only two days on his calendar—today and that day. Today is the day to repent, believe, and obey in preparation for that day. That day is the second coming of Jesus. May this New Year bring us all closer to Him. May the silence inspire us to learn from the past. May the tarrying time encourage us to share the gospel with others before it is forever too late to do so.

May the Lord extend His mercy and grace to everyone who loves Him. As did the faithful Bereans, let us study the prophecies regarding the Messiah's three comings as well as the lesser light of the Spirit of prophecy writings as we usher in the New Year. Let this be the Year of the Gift of Prophecy. **SW**

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# Religious Revivals

## Part 2

EXHORTATION

**A**re we hoping to see the whole church revived? That time will never come. There are persons in the church who are not converted, and who will not unite in earnest, prevailing prayer. We must enter upon the work individually. We must pray more, and talk less. —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 122 (1887).

### What will accompany the work of revival?

A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. We must have the holy unction from God, the baptism of His Spirit. This is the only efficient agent in the promulgation of sacred truth. It is the Spirit of God that quickens the lifeless faculties of the soul to appreciate heavenly things, and attracts the affections toward God and the truth. What we need, what we cannot do without, is the power of the Holy Spirit to work with our efforts. All pampering of self must be at an end. There is a weakness of intellect, a lack of religious fervor, in those who want to lean upon others, to be petted, waited on, and propped up. There must be an earnest longing, a soul hunger, for the presence of the Lord. Make Him your support, your front guard and your rearward. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." He

who has endowed the human mind with all its powers, will so mould these capabilities that there will be no extremes; all will act harmoniously. —*Home Missionary*, November 1, 1890.

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. We are repeating the history of that people. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 160.

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." Philippians 1:9.

The Lord presents before His finite creatures no impossibilities. Our Heavenly Father claims not at our hands that which we cannot perform. He desires His people to labor earnestly to carry out His purpose for them. They are to pray for power, expect power, and receive power, that they may grow up into the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.

Not all the members of the church are cultivating personal piety; therefore they do not understand their personal responsibility. They do not realize that it is their privilege and duty to reach the high standard of Christian per-

By Ellen G. White

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They are to pray for power, expect power, and receive power, that they may grow up into the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.

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fection. God is not well pleased when all the burden-bearing is done by a few members of the church, whose physical and spiritual powers are taxed to the utmost of their ability in their effort to counteract the influence of the worldly minded, halting, doubting ones. If those so lacking in piety and earnestness would seek to learn the lessons contained in God's Word, and would feel it their duty to practice these lessons, there would be more power in the church. Every member would seek to improve his talents. The light would not be hidden under a bushel, but placed on a candlestick, and its clear, steady rays would shine forth to dispel the darkness.

We are in great need of the pure, lifegiving atmosphere that nurtures and invigorates the spiritual life. We need greater earnestness. The solemn message given us to give to the world is to be proclaimed with greater fervency, even with an intensity that will impress unbelievers, leading them to see that the Most High is working with us, that He is the source of our efficiency and strength.

We are not accomplishing one third of what God desires us to accomplish, because careless, ease-loving church members shirk responsibilities, leaving them to be borne by a few willing ones. But God has not appointed a few to do all the praying, all the watching, all the believing, all the warning and entreating, while the majority look on, taking no part in the great work.

Many who claim to be children of God are only a burden to the church. God has given them capabilities which, if properly used, would enable them to be a great help in His work. He expects them to be co-laborers with Christ. Their inexcusable indolence is causing them to be recorded in the books of heaven as unfaithful servants. The "well-done" will be spoken to those only who are earnest, faithful workers.

Shall this state of indifference continue from year to year? Are we looking forward to the latter rain, confidently hoping for a better day, when the church shall be endued with power from on high, and thus fitted for work? The latter rain will never refresh and invigorate the indolent, who do not use the powers God has given them. Is Christ always to be disappointed in the beings He has redeemed at an infinite cost?

The power of a higher, purer, nobler life is our great need. God's people are to be filled with holy joy, that its radiance may shine forth from them, brightening the pathway of others. What power, what peace, what joy, the soul may have that is united with Christ. The divine splendor is revealed to those who commune with Him who is the source of power.

### Receiving to give—bear fruit

We know little of the peace and happiness and joy of heaven. We need more efficiency. We need to receive from Christ the water of life, that it may be in us a well of water, refreshing all who come within the sphere of our influence.

It is not spiritual laziness that will bring us near to God, but Christian devotion, personal piety, intelligent advancement in the knowledge of Christ. We shall be filled with the fruits of righteousness. There is a higher standard for us to reach. The world has too much of our thought, and the kingdom of heaven too little.

God has given us talents to be used in the upbuilding of His kingdom. Are we betraying this solemn trust? Do we ask ourselves the question, How am I using the talents my Lord has given me? Have you given to earthly things strength of purpose, tact, and skill, and to God only a feeble, diseased service? Will He accept this at your hand? Shall the eternal be made secondary to the temporal?

Are we doing our appointed work? Are we showing forth in our lives the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light? Is Christ dwelling in our hearts? Are we not falling far short in our duty? If we are doers of the word, and not hearers only, we shall be whole-hearted in our efforts to make His name a praise in the earth.

Christ tells us to pray with unshaken faith, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." These words will surely be fulfilled. Work to the utmost of your ability to answer this prayer. You will then feel so weighty a responsibility resting upon you that you will put away from you all selfishness, all sloth, all indifference. You will rid yourselves of all that

Satan could take advantage of in his efforts to defeat Christ's prayer.

We have no time to listen to the suggestions of the foe. At our baptism we pledged ourselves to break all connection with Satan and his agencies, and to put heart and mind and soul into the work of extending the kingdom of God. All heaven is working for this object. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are pledged to cooperate with sanctified human instrumentalities. If we are true to our vow, there is opened to us a door of communication with heaven—a door that no human hand or satanic agency can close.

We are to despair at nothing in the line of progression. Moral and spiritual perfection, through the grace and power of Christ, is promised to all who believe. At every step we are to ask for the help of Christ. He is the model we are to follow in character building. He calls for deeds, not words, saying, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you"—this is to be our rule of life. Christ is the source of light, the fountain of life. He brings us to His word, and from the tree of life presents to us leaves for the healing of the nations. It is His purpose that human beings, purified and sanctified, shall be His helping hand. He leads us to the throne of God, and gives us a prayer to offer to Him. When we live this prayer, we are brought into close contact with Christ; at every step we touch His living power. In our behalf He sets in operation the all-powerful agencies of heaven.

My brother, my sister, are you carrying a burden for the unsaved? Do you know what it means to be a Christian? Not ministers only, are to know what saith the Lord. All are permitted to enter the door opened by the sacrifice of Christ. Not ministers only, but all who take their stand under the blood-stained banner of Prince Emmanuel, are to work for the Master, presenting to the sin-sick the wonderful gospel remedy.

Is your faith practical? Are you doing what the Bible tells you to do? Are you using all your powers in an effort to bring the lost sheep back

to the fold? There are thousands upon thousands in ignorance who might be warned. Pray as you have never prayed before for the power of Christ. Pray for the inspiration of His Spirit, that you may be filled with a desire to save those who are perishing. Let the prayer ascend to heaven, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us; that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations." —*Review and Herald*, May 17, 1906.

### *Spectator religion—no greater mistake*

Many suppose that the missionary spirit, the qualification for missionary work, is a special gift or endowment bestowed upon the ministers and a few members of the church and that all others are to be mere spectators. Never was there a greater mistake. Every true Christian will possess a missionary spirit, for to be a Christian is to be Christlike. No man liveth to himself, and "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Everyone who has tasted of the powers of the world to come, whether he be young or old, learned or unlearned, will be stirred with the spirit which actuated Christ. The very first impulse of the renewed heart is to bring others also to the Saviour. Those who do not possess this desire give evidence that they have lost their first love; they should closely examine their own hearts in the light of God's word, and earnestly seek a fresh baptism of the Spirit of Christ; they should pray for a deeper comprehension of that wondrous love which Jesus manifested for us in leaving the realms of glory and coming to a fallen world to save the perishing....

Those who seek to lessen the interest of any ... in the missionary work in any of its branches, are not working together with God, but are working under another captain, whose aim is to weaken and destroy. Your usefulness ... requires that you be straightforward in all your dealings; that you be humble, holy, and undefiled. There should be less proud self-seeking, less self-importance. When the members of the church are clothed with humility, when they put from them self-esteem and self-seeking, when they

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Everyone who has tasted of the powers of the world to come, whether he be young or old, learned or unlearned, will be stirred with the spirit which actuated Christ.

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seek constantly to do God's will, then they will work together in harmony. God's Spirit is one....

Our churches are not receiving the kind of training that will lead them to walk in all humility of mind, to put away all pride of external display, and to labor for the inward adorning. The efficiency of the church is precisely what the zeal, purity, self-denial, and intelligent labor of the ministers make it. An active missionary spirit should characterize its individual members. They must have deeper piety, stronger faith, and broader views. They must make more thorough work in personal effort. What we need is a living religion. A single individual of enlarged conceptions of duty, whose soul is in communion with God and who is full of zeal for Christ, will exert a powerful influence for good. He drinks at no low, turbid, polluted stream, but from the pure, high waters at the fountainhead; and he can communicate a new spirit and power to the church. As the pressure from without increases, God would have His church vitalized by the sacred, solemn truths they believe. The Holy Spirit from heaven, working with the sons and daughters of God, will surmount obstacles and hold the vantage ground against the enemy. God has great victories in reserve for His truth-loving, commandment-keeping people. The fields are already whitening for the harvest. We have light, and rich, glorious endowments from heaven in the truth made ready to our hands; but men and women have not been educated and disciplined to work in the fast-ripening harvest fields. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 385, 386, 479, 581.

### *Earnest work brings God's grace*

It is when we are engaged in earnest work, working according to our several abilities, that God manifests Himself to us, and gives us grace for grace. A working church in travail for souls, will be a praying church, a believing church, and a receiving church. A church whose members are found upon their knees before God, supplicating His mercy, seeking Him daily, is a church that is feeding upon the bread of life, and drinking of the waters of life.

The promise, "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He will give it you," will be verified to them.

Christlike activity pursued with persevering zeal will bring large returns. There will be an enlarged experience in love, and the human agents will have elevated views as to what God would do through them as they stand at their post of duty. Then will the church arise and shine, realizing that the glory of the Lord has risen upon her, and that darkness is receding.

Missionary success will be proportionate to whole-hearted, thoroughly consecrated effort. Every departure from true missionary effort, every failure to cherish the missionary spirit, has reacted upon the church, and there has been a decline of spirituality. But every earnest effort that has been made in missionary lines, has brought spiritual health to the church, and has not only increased the membership of the church, but has increased its holy zeal and gladness. —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 205, 206.

### *When God will pour out His Spirit*

The great outpouring of the Spirit of God, which lightens the whole earth with His glory, will not come until we have an enlightened people, that know by experience what it means to be laborers together with God. When we have entire, whole-hearted consecration to the service of Christ, God will recognize the fact by an outpouring of His Spirit without measure; but this will not be while the largest portion of the church are not laborers together with God. —(*Review and Herald*, July 21, 1896) *Christian Service*, p. 253.

But how few of us regard the salvation of sinners in the light in which it is viewed by the heavenly universe—as a plan devised from eternity in the mind of God! How few of us are heart to heart with the Redeemer in this solemn, closing work! There is scarcely a tithe of the compassion that there should be for souls unsaved. There are so many to be warned, and yet how few sympathize with God sufficiently to be anything or nothing if only they can see souls won to Christ! —*Gospel Workers*, p. 116 (1915). **SW**

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The Holy Spirit  
from heaven,  
working with  
the sons and  
daughters of God,  
will surmount  
obstacles and  
hold the vantage  
ground against  
the enemy. God  
has great victories  
in reserve for  
His truth-loving,  
commandment-  
keeping people.

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# FREEDOM

*“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:32.*

This is one of the verses that attracted me to the Biblical faith, because I like freedom; after all, I grew up in a country where there was little freedom. It is interesting that when Jesus said these words, the Jewish people were offended and immediately retorted, “We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?” John 8:33.

Jesus needed to repeat this principle in verse 36: “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” Actually, any other freedom is only apparent freedom. Real, pure freedom comes exclusively from Jesus Christ. Longing for this freedom, many, many people have separated themselves from impure, unclean things.

“After a long and severe conflict, the faithful few decided to dissolve all union with the apostate church if she still refused to free herself from falsehood and idolatry. They saw that separation was an absolute necessity if they would obey the word of God. They dared not tolerate errors fatal to their own souls, and set an example which would imperil the faith of their children and children’s children.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 45.

Through separation from error, the children of God obtained freedom. In fact, that freedom demanded that they be separated from error. Notice the three main points here.

(1) Separation took place amid tremendous conflict. (2) The believers could not stay where they were, because the word of God and His law in essence demanded a change. (3) They had to take such action, because what they did, good or bad, would have consequences for their children and their children’s children and would also influence their friends and posterity.

Interestingly, when the Christian Jews had to separate from their roots, or when the Christian Gentiles had to separate from paganism, it was not enough for them to leave the synagogue or the organization they had been in. They had to separate from all of the traditions and customs that they were used to. Every one of us has a lot of traditions that we have adopted. Very possibly this is the case for me more than for all who read this article.

I remember my grandmother. She was very much in touch with tradition, and she taught us all kinds of big and little things that she said we needed to do every single day—for our good. It was similar in Old Testament times. Remember when Jacob was managing the flocks of Laban, his father-in-law. He wanted to produce cattle and goats with spots, because the two men had an agreement that all of the animals with spots would be Jacob’s and all of those without spots would be Laban’s.

## EDIFICATION

*By Tzvetan Petkov*



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The apostles also struggled a lot with the traditions and customs with which they were surrounded.

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There are many traditions that seem to have some good meaning, but in reality they enslave people.

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Now, the Spirit of prophecy says that Jacob studied the laws of genetics, and he figured out how to produce more cattle with spots. But he also believed the traditions of that area, so he took green branches, cut the bark with a knife so it looked like spots, and put it in the animals' drinking water, believing the folklore of the area that this would make the animals give birth to spotted offspring. This is just one example of how a tradition affected the life of the people. But the apostles also struggled a lot with the traditions and customs with which they were surrounded.

When they heard the teachings of Christ, which touched many areas of their lives, they needed to make huge changes in their ways of thinking and doing. Imagine, for one, what it meant when Jesus taught that women and men are equal. That was a revolutionary idea. Even in the synagogue men and women sat in separate rooms. Jesus taught that servants and masters are equal. This was an incredible teaching, and the Christians were persecuted a lot for supporting such ideas.

"While they had been with Him, the disciples had often been perplexed by the teaching of the priests and Pharisees, but they had brought their perplexities to Jesus. He had set before them the truths of Scripture in contrast with tradition. Thus He had strengthened their confidence in God's word, and in a great measure had set them free from their fear of the rabbis and their bondage to tradition." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 349.

Indeed, traditions can be a burden and even become slavery. Why? Because traditions are frequently connected to superstition. What does that mean? Well, supposedly if you do a certain thing in a particular way, you will have good luck; but if you do it in a different way, you will have bad luck. And this type of slavery under which people suffer is really terrible still today.

In the time of the apostles, there were some Christians who asserted that if a male was not circumcised as Moses prescribed, he could not be saved. You would lose your salvation. And this became very serious, because it had Scriptural support. This issue necessitated the first general conference at which the leaders gathered in Jerusalem and made a decision. But this was

not the only tradition that affected the lives of the apostles. The Jews held to many traditions at that time. Some were based on historical events. Others were borrowed from other nations. And this was not something unique just at that time; a huge collection of customs permeates every society and has continued down through the entire history of humanity.

I would sometimes ask my grandmother why I had to keep this or that tradition. She would always reply that it was because there was a good teaching behind it. Here is an example: If you put on your underclothes inside out, the tradition is that the whole day will be upside down for you. You will have no success in anything you try to do. If you have your socks on the wrong feet, there will be no good luck for you that day. I asked my grandmother, "How do you know which sock is the left and which is the right? They both look the same!" Well, it is interesting that my grandmother created different socks for the right and left feet when she knitted them. This is just a little example of what many people believe. When I began attending school, my grandmother threw water in front of my feet so I would have good luck; and I had to be careful to be sure a black cat did not cross my path. Well, that superstition is pretty international.

There are many traditions that seem to have some good meaning, but in reality they enslave people. In fact, those who pay a lot of attention to these kinds of traditions turn into real slaves. They are constantly on the outlook for especially trivialities—the colors of their clothes, the way they wear their clothes, how people look at them, and how people do not look at them. It is really, really terrible.

I remember the first time my wife visited Bulgaria with me. We went to see a fairly distant Orthodox relative of mine; and when she looked at my wife, she said, "Oh, ugly, ugly child!" Why did she say that? There is a tradition that if you see a beautiful child, you should never say, "Oh, what a beautiful child," because that would attract the attention of the evil spirits and something bad could happen to the child.

People are enslaved by such traditions. But the Lord says, "If you know the truth, if you

know Jesus Christ, He will make you free.” Through Jesus we are free indeed, because we are not saved by works! The apostle Paul preached this over and over again. We are saved by grace. Forget about all the big and small things. Forget even about the ceremonial law of the Old Testament. None of these things will save you. If you are circumcised as a religious imperative, you need to keep the rest of the law as well. Many people struggle with this concept.

But customs and traditions do not come just from superstitions. Often countries set up their own customs. For example, the country I come from celebrates a day of liberation. And because historically it was subjugated and enslaved a number of times, it has many days of liberation. History has changed because of the political system, so the result is that liberation from a fascist government has turned into slavery under a communist government. So what are we celebrating? This is all just an exchange of slave masters.

Some say that conditions were much better under the Germans than under the Russians, so the day of celebration is frequently connected with a lie. Along these lines, in 1990, some school boards in the United States came to the conclusion that there should be no more Christmas decorations and celebrations in public schools, because the boards contended that the separation of church and state had to be upheld. But when they did that, some parents rose up in protest and took the school boards to court for depriving the children of Christmas. What the court decided was pretty interesting. It ruled that Christmas is not a Christian feast and has nothing to do with religion; furthermore, what is not appropriate to do at Christmas is to read or mention anything that is in the Bible, for Christmas has nothing to do with the Bible and the Bible has nothing to do with Christmas. That was the interesting decision of a worldly court. But perhaps some will ask, How can they be so sure? Maybe we don't know exactly when Christ was born, but it is still good to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

An article was published in 1984 in a Buffalo, Ohio, newspaper about the origin of Christmas. It said that the earliest report of the celebration

of Christmas was from the second century after Christ's birth. It is considered that the first Christmas celebration was actually a reaction to the Roman celebration marking the winter solstice—the return of the sun and honor for the planet Saturn as the god of the harvest. This is a terrible pagan feast.

In A.D. 529, Christmas became an official holiday because the emperor Justinian wrote an order that it had to be a feast. So, since that time it has been celebrated as a Catholic feast. The word itself is a combination of “Christ” and “mass.” And the mass is a purely Catholic celebration that has nothing to do with the birth of Christ or even with primitive Christianity. So, it is quite interesting that a public court would conclude and rule, Don't mix the Bible and Christmas, because it has nothing to do with it. And don't confuse the kids. Sometimes the stones speak out.

We turn to a testimony that speaks about the importance of the pure gospel at the end of time. “The gospel is now opposed on every side. Never was the confederacy of evil stronger than at the present time. Spirits of evil are combining with human agencies to war against the commandments of God. Tradition and falsehood are exalted above the Scriptures; reason and science above revelation; human talent above the teaching of the Spirit; forms and ceremonies above the vital power of godliness. Grievous sins have separated the people from God. Infidelity is fast becoming fashionable.” —*Gospel Workers*, p. 149.

This testimony is already dated—more than a hundred years old—because today evil has not become ALMOST fashionable; it is fashionable. It is incredible how much power evil has to distract people from the pure truth. And just as other traditions are related to superstition, Christmas is also related to superstitious beliefs. I remember the Christmas cake we had in my house when I was a child. My father would spin a big cake around in the middle of a large round table, because things were hidden in the cake. Everyone would begin eating the cake wherever it stopped in front of him. One person might find a small branch of a tree, and that meant he would have good luck in some area or other in the coming year. Someone else would find

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Jesus gives the  
fresh air of freedom,  
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begins now.

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something else, and he was supposed to have good luck in some other thing the next year, and so it would go around the room.

In England, a famous author wrote a now-famous Christmas story about a Jew who was not buying gifts for Christmas because he was so stingy, and he went to hell because of that. But that was actually just shown him in a dream; and when he woke up, he bought presents for the whole city. The message of the story? If you don't celebrate Christmas, you will go to hell. There are many similar festive connections in this world.

One thing is clear: There is a formula, a principle, behind all these celebrations, especially if God's name is attached to them.

The occasion is very attractive, because it is a wonderful thing, a celebration. No one has to go to work; there will be special food, and maybe there will also be some music. Oh, that will make it wonderful! It carries God's name, so it has a good purpose.

There is just one thing missing: It doesn't come from God. The Lord has not told anyone to participate in such celebrations. They are not in the Scriptures. But once such a custom takes hold, it becomes a tradition.

In my house, we have our own traditions. We have worship every morning; and after we pray, we have a family hug. It is my tradition. I don't know if you do this, but we do it; and this tradition is established. When someone is missing, it is just not the same.

Everything we do has an influence on our children, and that influence will be passed down

to the children of our children. That's why *The Great Controversy* says, "The faithful few decided ... that separation was an absolute necessity if they would" enjoy the freedom which Christ had granted them. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Galatians 5:1.

In the same way that the emperor Justinian issued the law establishing Christmas, two hundred years earlier the emperor Constantine had issued a law establishing Sunday worship. So you see, there is not much difference between the two. And if one thing is not a big deal to celebrate, why should the other not be considered the same way? Of course, the Sunday law is a direct violation of one of the Ten Commandments.

In the light of all this, let us consider purity, because the purity of the gospel is its power. "This confidence in themselves and their own regulations, with its attendant prejudice against all other nations, caused them to resist the Spirit of God, and separated them still farther from His favor." —*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 195.

If we connect to Jesus Christ, if we are dedicated to Him, He will make us free, and we will feel sorry for people who are bound by so many things. Jesus gives the fresh air of freedom, the indescribable joy of salvation in the heavenly kingdom. That heavenly kingdom begins now. It encompasses freedom from sin and the power of salvation through Jesus. May the Lord help us to keep Him before us every single day and to be free indeed. **SW**



**"Make the Bible the man of your counsel. Your acquaintance with it will grow rapidly if you keep your mind free from the rubbish of the world. The more the Bible is studied, the deeper will be your knowledge of God. The truths of His word will be written in your soul, making an ineffaceable impression." —*Counsels on Health*, p. 371.**

# Promise of the Spirit

*"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come." Acts 2:17-20.*

That Peter understood this promise to cover the Lord's working to the end of time is set forth in these words: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2:38, 39. Then as long as the Lord calls people to His service, so long is the promise of the Holy Spirit extended to them.

Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." 1 Corinthians 12:7. The man-

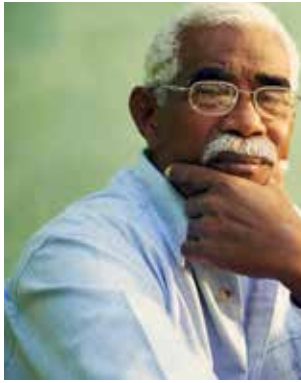
ifestation of the Spirit must refer to its manner of working. The Spirit may and does come to the sinner in his sins, as a reprover; but after he yields to the Lord, and it leads the mind to the blessed assurance of God's promises, it is an approver. Ephesians 1:13. Then it is that "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." Romans 8:26.

Men, in their fallen state, are infirm, "being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Ephesians 4:18. "Alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works." Colossians 1:21. There "are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." 2 Peter 1:4. After yielding to God and becoming partakers of the divine nature, we are recognized as "the sons of God," being "led by the Spirit of God." Romans 8:14. That Spirit dwelling in us quickens (gives life—even the life of God—to) our mortal bodies. Romans 8:11. It then "beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," and seals us as His. Romans 8:16; 2 Corinthians 1:22. Then the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:4.

*By John N.  
Loughborough*

*From The Prophetic Gift  
in the Gospel Church*

That Spirit dwelling in us quickens (gives life—even the life of God—to) our mortal bodies.



## *The temple of the Spirit*

The church of Christ on earth is really a place prepared for the indwelling of the Spirit. The apostle says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Corinthians 3:16. To the individual members of the church He says, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" 1 Corinthians 6:19. Again, "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them." 2 Corinthians 6:16. And once more, "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Ephesians 2:21, 22. Standing thus, we are "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." Ephesians 3:16. "Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." Colossians 1:11. Thus we may labor, "striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily." Colossians 1:29.

## *Manifestation of the Spirit*

In Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians he thus speaks of the work of the Spirit, saying: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." 1 Corinthians 12:7-11. Those manifestations are all by one and the selfsame Spirit. How unlike the communications of spiritualism, which are from a variety of spirits, many of them being lying spirits!

## *The Spirit of prophecy*

Paul proceeds in his discourse by comparing the church with the human body, representing

the gifts of the Spirit as members of the body, the eyes, ears, hands, etc., saying: "Now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him.... And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way." 1 Corinthians 12:18-31. We here read of the Lord's setting these gifts "in the church;" do we read elsewhere of His setting them out of the church?

## *Charity, or love*

The more excellent way is not to have a church without the gifts of the Spirit; it is a more excellent way than simply to "covet" gifts. That "more excellent way" is fully set forth in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, in the apostle's discourse on charity—fervent love to God, and to our fellowmen. Instead of simply coveting some particular gift for ourselves, it is better to seek entire consecration to the Lord—to have His love in our hearts—to "follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy." 1 Corinthians 14:1. However, this discourse on charity does not dispense with the gifts of the Spirit. We read: "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." 1 Corinthians 13:8-10. By this it is understood that the gift of prophecy may be manifest, as it may please the Lord, until the perfect state shall come. In that state, when the Lord is seen face to face, prophecy will no more be needed. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." 1 Corinthians 13:12. **SW**

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Instead of simply coveting some particular gift for ourselves, it is better to seek entire consecration to the Lord—to have His love in our hearts.

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# Let Jesus Be Your Harbor Pilot

By Manuela Di Franca

In 2013 I spent my summer vacation on Sardinia, an Italian island in the Mediterranean Sea. First we drove to the port of Genoa, and from there we took the night ferry to the port of Olbia. Instead of spending the night in a cabin, we preferred sleeping on deck. While I was lying there wrapped up in my sleeping bag, I looked up at the starry night and listened to the sound of the waves and the strong breeze. My thoughts went back to Jesus on the Sea of Galilee.

He had lain down in the back of the boat, on the low bench where the steersman sometimes took rest. He must have been exhausted! So much was demanded of Jesus, it is not surprising that, when He eventually got a moment to rest, He would fall into a very deep sleep. The disciples were sailing happily across the lake when a storm whipped up out of nowhere. They were scared for their lives. They thought they were about to sink. And, in the midst of all the problems, Jesus was asleep in the back of the boat. Once He was aroused and got up and spoke to the wind, it died down. A great calm came upon the waters.

There are times in our lives when we feel at the mercy of the storm, when we feel as if our lives are as chaotic as the buffeting ocean. It might be a financial crisis, an illness, the loss of a beloved person. And although we pray and pray and pray, it is as if Jesus is asleep. It seems that He doesn't hear, no matter how loud we cry.

Back to my trip: The next morning, I woke up early and saw a wonderful sunrise. From far away I was able to see our destination, the green coastline and the harbor of Olbia. All of a sudden, I noticed a little boat coming from the harbor in our direction, and I was curious about what was going to happen. The little craft came as close as possible to our ferry, and I saw a man grab a rope ladder and climb up. I found out

that this was the harbor pilot. He is a boat pilot with specialized knowledge of the harbor. His work consists of directing large ships safely into a port by staying in special deep water channels that are between shallower flats. Without his services there would be a real risk of a ship's running aground, with damage to the ship itself as well as danger to the personnel, passengers, and cargo. The harbor pilot is on call around the clock, every day.

This made me think how Jesus also wants to be our harbor pilot. He is very familiar with the currents and shallow banks of our lives and knows the best way to travel safely. "He understands every circumstance of our life. He sees and knows how we are situated. He is acquainted with all our sorrows and griefs. He knows us each by name, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; for He has been tempted in all points like as we are, and knows how to succor those who are tempted. Jesus is our helper, and He will have a care for all those who trust in Him." —*Review and Herald*, August 25, 1885.

He doesn't want anyone to run aground on the shore like the cruise ship *Costa Concordia* did in January 2012 when it was brought too close to the rocks of an island. His promise in Isaiah 43:1, 2, *New International Version*, is still valid for each of us today: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you." When we fully trust Him, he will guide our ship safely into port. "They were glad when it [the storm] grew calm, and He guided them to their desired haven." Psalm 107:30, *NIV*.

In your life, Jesus wants to be the harbor pilot who helps you bring your ship to your heavenly destination. **SW**

Steer the ship of my  
life, Lord, to Your quiet  
harbor, where I can be  
safe from the storms  
of sin and conflict.  
Show me the course  
I should take. Renew  
in me the gift of  
discernment, so that  
I can see the right  
direction in which I  
should go. And give  
me the strength and  
the courage to choose  
the right course, even  
when the sea is rough  
and the waves are  
high, knowing that  
through enduring  
hardship and danger  
in Your name we  
shall find comfort and  
peace. —*Saint Basil of  
Caesarea* (ca. 330-  
379).

# John: from Boanerges to Disciple of Love

By Jose V. Giner

As we begin a new year, the first question that comes to mind is: Has my character changed, or am I the same as always? Tough question, and difficult to answer. Why is it difficult? Because we human beings are usually not fair and objective when it comes to judging ourselves. We tend to overestimate ourselves—which is what we normally do—or underestimate ourselves, as also often happens. What to do, then? Seek God so He will examine our hearts and show us what our true condition is, as the Bible teaches us. Psalm 139:23, 24. Only when God guides us by His Holy Spirit can we understand what our spiritual condition is.

But whether we have progressed, stagnated, or regressed in our life of faith, it is clear that we must not lose sight of one thing: We are called continually to put forth effort to have our characters transformed by God. We still have the opportunity to seek God and be molded by Him until our hard hearts are broken and surrendered to His divine love. So, we have a golden opportunity in this new year to achieve this. Let us not center our thoughts on what we did not do, on our failures, on our unfulfilled promises, or on our frustrations and defeats; rather, let us look to Christ and allow Him to continue His work as the divine goldsmith in our hearts. If we give Him every possibility to do this, He has promised His Spirit to carry out this work that it is not possible for one to do alone.

Yes, dear reader, the gospel of Jesus Christ has power to transform lives. 1 Corinthians 1:18. Undoubtedly, this is the most important challenge of human existence. Unfortunately the world focuses all its efforts on goals that have little or nothing to do with the pursuit of a Christ-like character. Jesus assured His disciples, and with them all of us who may receive that power,

“Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” Acts 1:8. The Greek word for “power” in this text is *dunamis*, meaning “ability” or “strength.” The term “dynamite” comes from *dunamis*, designating an extremely explosive force capable of making a mountain disappear and change the topography of the land.

The only power capable of transforming a human life is God, who works through His Spirit in the heart of the individual, making him a new creature. 2 Corinthians 5:17. This was the experience of Paul, **the persecutor of Christians**, who was persecuted by his former Jewish brethren because of the change that took place in his heart. It was also the experience of John. When he met Christ, his character left much to be desired. Jesus did not choose this young man because he was ideal for the work that would be given him but because the Saviour wanted to transform his heart to do that work. So it is with us. God draws us to Him not by virtue of our capabilities and fitness but in spite of our shortcomings, because He loves us.

## John met Jesus

John was a Galilean by birth, the son of Zebedee and Salome. Mark 15:40. He had a brother named James. Matthew 4:21. Zebedee and his two sons were fishermen. They were used to pushing out into the sea and thus earning their livelihood. John had accepted the good news of the gospel through the preaching of John the Baptist. John 1:35-40. When Jesus began His public ministry, John and Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, were the first disciples to accept Him as the Messiah. John followed Christ permanently when He began His ministry in Galilee. Jesus called him directly, along with his brother James, Peter, and Andrew. Luke 5:1-11.

Jesus wants everyone to meet Him; He wants to have a personal relationship with each of us and will do everything possible to bring this about. No one should remain in the darkness of error and ignorance, not enjoying the love of God, not experiencing divinity working in the human soul. Jesus, the divine Craftsman, wants to take us to His workbench and accomplish a complete work of transformation that He can

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The gospel of Jesus Christ has power to transform lives.

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and desires to do, depending on our decision. Will we let Him do it?

A few months after that first meeting, John became one of the twelve disciples who made up the group of Christ's apostles. Matthew 10:22. From then on, he followed Christ wherever He went and immersed himself in the work of learning from the divine Master, to the point where he became part of the small group of Christ's closest friends, along with Peter and James. It was a great privilege for John to receive from the divine Master the divine water welling up to eternal life. John 4:14. For more than three years, he walked with Christ and witnessed His life and work.

We, like John, may also join the school of Jesus. It is true that John was able to know the Master personally; but we may know Him through the sacred pages of the Bible, through prayer, and through the study of His created works. We can receive directly from His hand the water that quenches our thirst. Do we want that?

### John and his character defects

John was not always the disciple of love, as we already said. When he met Christ and decided to follow Him, the Master called him, along with James, "Boanerges," meaning "son of thunder." Mark 3:17. John had a character that was very **impulsive** and **aggressive**; he was **critical**, **selfish**, **suspicious**, "**quick to resent slight and injury**." —*The Sanctified Life*, p. 54.

He argued heatedly with the other disciples about which of them would be the greatest or most important (Luke 9:46), which means that he also had feelings of grandeur and had put self on a pedestal.

He was **exclusive**. On one occasion, he reproved some who were working independently, that is, who didn't officially belong to the group of Christ's followers (Luke 9:49), which shows that he also had the Jewish thinking that God can only work with one class of people, to the exclusion of the rest.

He was **aggressive**, as evidenced by the passage in the gospels which told about Jesus and His disciples' visit to a Samaritan village to preach the gospel. When its inhabitants rejected Christ, John had the "bright" idea of

calling down fire from heaven to consume those people. Luke 9:52-56. Tremendous, John! He was a **rough, violent** man and needed a special power that would transform his life. That power, that force—*dunamis*—was in Christ, who wanted to transform him and the rest of His disciples.

Are we like John? Maybe proud? Do we tend to criticize others? Do we easily feel hurt by others? Are we aggressive, violent, and impulsive? ¿Libertine and selfish? No matter what we are, what matters is what Jesus can do for each of us. He has the power to transform lives. Will we let Him do that?

### John and his transformation

The transformation John experienced did not take place overnight; it was a process. He voluntarily entered the school of Christ, as did the other disciples. What happens in this school is known as **sanctification**. Jesus was the **Teacher**; **and they, the students**. What Christ imparts has such depth that it can transform the students' lives, and His methods are unparalleled, for any student can graduate from the school with the best grades. Do we want to be students in Jesus' school?

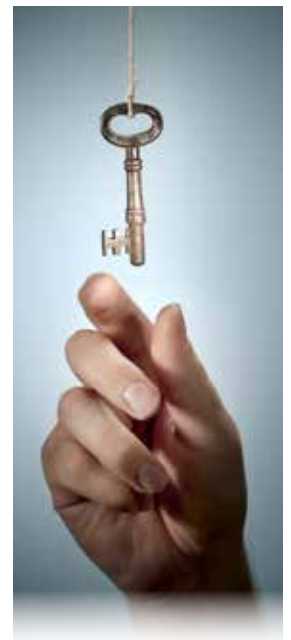
However, a **student's attitude** is the main thing. While the instructor is speaking, some spend class time staring at the ceiling or thinking about the moon. They can spend years and learn nothing. Others, however, can absorb all kinds of material in a short time and know as much or more than the professor. There are **three basic conditions** for learning in the school of Christ and receiving the *dunamis* of the Spirit, and John knew and applied them to his life. Let us look at these three conditions or requirements, based on the Bible and Spirit of prophecy:

**First requirement: Be ready to see one's own errors.** "Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults." Psalm 19:12. "Those who were ready to see their own defects ... had ample opportunity." —*The Sanctified Life*, p. 59. This is the first requirement—to acknowledge our sins. Proverbs 28:13. The natural heart cannot do this, but it is possible for the heart that is guided by the Spirit of God. When we see our sinful condition, the tremendous defects of our

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There are **three basic conditions** for learning in the school of Christ and receiving the *dunamis* of the Spirit.

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characters, we have taken the first step toward the transformation of character, because only he who knows he is sick seeks a remedy for healing.

**Second requirement: Have a keen desire to improve one's character.** "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." Psalm 42:1. "Those who were ... anxious to improve in character, had ample opportunity." —*The Sanctified Life*, p. 59. It is useless to acknowledge one's guilt and defects without taking the second step. Satan knows that he is living in rebellion, but he decided to continue in perpetual enmity against God. If we see our faults, let us ask the Lord to give us the desire to change, to truly repent, to be different, and to conform our characters to the image of the sweet Jesus. Philippians 2:13. Although Satan puts in our hearts the desire to sin, Jesus places in our minds the desire to live in holiness.

**Third requirement: Take advantage of every lesson that Christ teaches.** "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Psalm 119:11. "John treasured every lesson and constantly sought to bring his life into harmony with the Divine Pattern." —*The Sanctified Life*, p. 59. The third step involves conversion—living differently, rejecting evil, and taking one's experiences, both good and bad, and using them to grow in grace. Everything that happens to us is a lesson in the school of Christ. Experiences can be sweet or as bitter as gall, but they all contribute to our good if we learn from them. Peter denied his Master, even though he had said that he would not. Instead of sinking into depression and despair, he decided to repent and follow the beloved Jesus again, but with a different attitude. Part of genuine repentance is the change of one's life.

### John and his testimony

By drinking from his beloved Master's fountain of wisdom, John obtained the highest education, and his character was transformed. We only have to read his letters to prove this. 1 John 4:4-11. From Boanerges he was converted into the beloved disciple, or the disciple of love. John 21:20. When Christ was arrested, John followed Him to the palace of the high priest and did not

mind being recognized as a follower who was considered seditious, in contrast to Peter, who tried to hide and wanted to go unnoticed. John stood by the cross, and Jesus entrusted to him the care of His mother. John 18:15; 19:26. When he heard that Christ's tomb was empty early Sunday morning, John ran to the tomb to verify the report and arrived before Peter. John 20:1-10. John saw the risen Christ and also saw Him ascend into the heavens with the promise to return. After the ascension, John and the other ten disciples remained in the upper room in Jerusalem, continuing in prayer together. Acts 1:13, 14. They received the *dunamis*—power—of the Holy Spirit in the early rain (Acts 2:1-4), which enabled them to preach the gospel with great power.

### Conclusion

John experienced a genuine transformation. He devoted his life to studying Christ. He understood that character is the work of a lifetime, that we can have everything, but if we fail to imitate Christ, we will be the most miserable people and all that we possess will do us no good.

John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos for the purpose of silencing his voice, but there God revealed to him the world's most beautiful book—The Revelation of Jesus Christ. John was placed in a cauldron of boiling oil, but still he did not deny his Master and miraculously emerged unscathed from the test. He clung to Christ as one who clings to a rescuer at sea and achieved the victory.

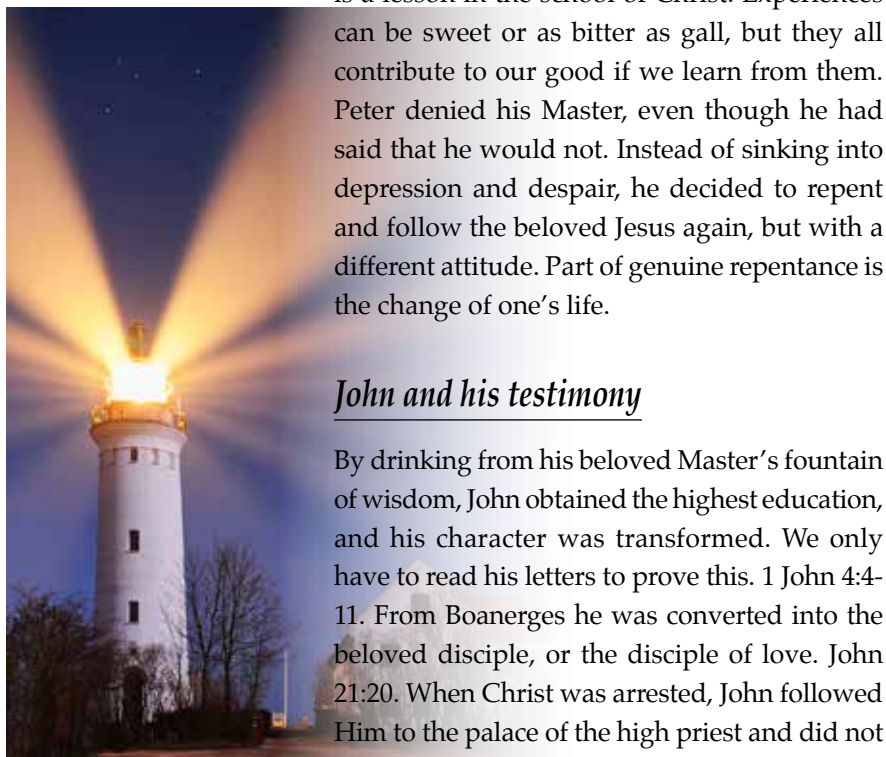
Are we able to recognize God even in the worst circumstances of our lives? Can we, in difficult times, hear His voice and value what He has always done for us? John's life was a sweet fragrance and still today testifies of the power of the gospel.

Do we want to be transformed in this new year, like John, from Boanerges to disciples of love? Do we want our imperfections to be consumed by Christ on the altar of self-denial? Do we really want to be a new creature? May the Lord help us to imitate John in his faithfulness and example, and to be able to reflect the image of Jesus in our lives as John reflected Him, being transformed from Boanerges into disciples of love. God bless you. **SW**

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Experiences can be sweet or as bitter as gall, but they all contribute to our good if we learn from them.

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# Keep Your Body Warm

## (not hot!)



**T**he people who live the longest eat less and try to keep their bodies warm. Keeping warm means to stay healthy.

When one speaks of a dead body, he says it is cold. This helps us understand that disease and the aging process are a result of the body getting cold. Actually, cancer, stroke, Alzheimer's disease, and many other diseases that affect women are related to the body being cold.

Seventy percent of our bodies is water, so circulation of the blood is very important. Pain appears in any area that does not have good circulation. There is one of our organs where cancer never occurs. Do you know which one it is? It's the heart, because of its heat.

We often say that our feet are cold even in the summer. Our stomach is frequently cold. Because of the food we eat and our modern environment, the temperature of our body tends to be on the low side. There are air conditioners everywhere—in the office, in the car, in the stores, and at home. Sometimes we carry an extra jacket or sweater just to keep from feeling cold. Doctors and scientists say that a rise of 1

degree Centigrade causes the immune system to become five times stronger.

On the other hand, when one's body temperature goes down, the immune system weakens. When compared with just fifty years ago, the average person's temperature has dropped by 0.8 to 1 degree Centigrade. Some attribute an increase in disease to this. Therefore, when we warm up our bodies, we improve our circulation and help prevent disease.

### How can you warm up?

- Drink warm water and tea instead of cold water
- Warm the lower part of your body in the bath or shower
- Exercise
- Eat foods that keep your body warm, such as honey combined with ginger, as well as onions, black beans, and pumpkins (which some people refer to as "longevity" foods)

May God help us all to take very good care of our bodies so we can truly be God's soldiers. **SW**

*By Sunny Kang*

Staying warm and maintaining our body temperature helps our bodies defend against invasion of wind, cold, or viruses, because viruses thrive and replicate faster when our body temperature drops. When the body's temperature goes down even one degree, it is more vulnerable to developing a full-blown illness. If our temperature drops even further, it will cause us to shiver, and our teeth will chatter. When that happens, it is almost a guarantee that we're going to get sick, especially when combined with exposure to other elements, such as wind, rain, or snow. This makes sense when you look at one of the body's primary mechanisms for fighting off a virus—fever. Raising the body temperature even one degree helps it stop or slow the replication of a virus and simultaneously improves the function of our white blood cells. —See <http://www.kidsloveacupuncture.com>.



*In June 2013, the building housing the Ghana Field headquarters and Gilead Adventist Missionary Institute (GAMI) was dedicated with the assistance of Pastor Larry Watts, representing the General Conference*

## News from GAMI

Dear brothers and sisters around the world,

Greetings to you all with the message about the Waldensian missionaries: “The Vaudois ministers were trained as missionaries, everyone who expected to enter the ministry being required first to gain an experience as an evangelist. Each was to serve three years in some mission field before taking charge of a church at home. This service, requiring at the outset self-denial and sacrifice, was a fitting introduction to the pastor’s life in those times that tried men’s souls. The youth who received ordination to the sacred office saw before them, not the prospect of earthly wealth and glory, but a life of toil and danger, and possibly a martyr’s fate. The missionaries went out two and two, as Jesus sent forth His disciples. With every young man was usually associated a man of age and experience, the youth being under the guidance of his com-

panion, who was held responsible for his training, and whose instruction he was required to heed. These co-laborers were not always together, but often met for prayer and counsel, thus strengthening each other in the faith.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 70, 71.

In view of the approaching climax of the great controversy between the Prince of Peace and His agents on one side and the prince of darkness and his agents on the other side, the church of God has a great duty to train competent warriors as did our Master, who went

“... up into a mountain, and call-eth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him. And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach.” Mark 3:13, 14.”

My sincere thanks goes to our heavenly Father for beginning the same training work in West Africa. The newly purchased Ghana Field headquarters office was dedicated for the service of the Lord by the General Conference Publishing Department Leader, Pastor Larry Watts, in June 2013. That same year, the missionary school was registered in Ghana, West Africa, under the name “Gilead Adventist Missionary Institute.” With much support from the African Division and the General Conference Missionary Ministry, the school was officially opened by the African Division Secretary, Pastor Sevith Moyo, on June 16, 2014, with two students from Nigeria.

There were a total of nine students in the first class, and they came from eight West African



*This building in Accra, Ghana, West Africa, houses the Ghana Field headquarters and GAMI; it has lodging rooms for up to ten people, a kitchen, bathrooms, and showers*

countries—Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mali, Cameroon, Benin, Togo, and Ghana. These students graduated on December 14, 2014, with a certificate and title of Holistic Health Counselor. We are now taking

role in the achievement of this program by purchasing the school facilities through the Special Sabbath School Offering for West Africa, sponsoring all the nine students, teaching some of the subjects

involvement and follow-up. May God bless the Ghana Field for hosting and showing kindness to the angels of the Lord. For the sustainability of this great and holy program, we

needs the Spirit of prophecy books, health books, and other related educational materials. I would like to appeal to every field to sponsor at least one missionary student every year. Dear brethren around the world, kindly keep in touch with us at the school by means of the following contact information:

Email: [gilead@sda1844.org](mailto:gilead@sda1844.org)

Phones: +233 263-312-428  
+233 302-334-113  
+233 542-089-398

P.O. Box OD 1088, Odorkor Accra, Ghana

School bank account information:

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Gilead Adventist Missionary Institute

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0073074484306001

Swift code: ECOCGHAC

Bank Name:  
ECOBANK Ghana Limited.

Your fellow servant in the Lord's vineyard,

*Pastor Lencha Tekle  
GAMI Director/  
Ghana Field Leader*



*Nine students from eight West African countries were in the first class of GAMI*

applications for students for the second class, which will begin April 1, 2015.

Although the Reform Movement is represented in most of the West African countries, the work still needs to be firmly established. To do this, training in the teachings of Jesus Christ is essential for the brothers and sisters who have received the divine call to the work of saving souls. The rest of the West African countries need to be reached while there is still time. Furthermore, the countries in North Africa can also be reached from West Africa. Thus, we have a very great work to do to speed up the fulfillment of the hope of the church of all ages.

I would like to extend my appreciation to the General Conference for playing a major

through Internet directly from the General Conference, and more. I would also like to thank the African Division for their

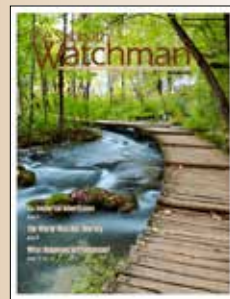
need your prayers, visits, communication, and financial support. We need sponsors for the students. The school



*Graduation day for the first class of GAMI was December 14, 2014*

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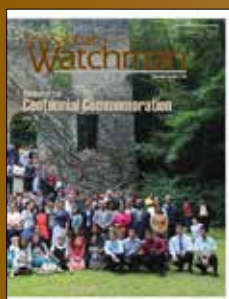
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