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The Sabbath Watchman

July-August 2017

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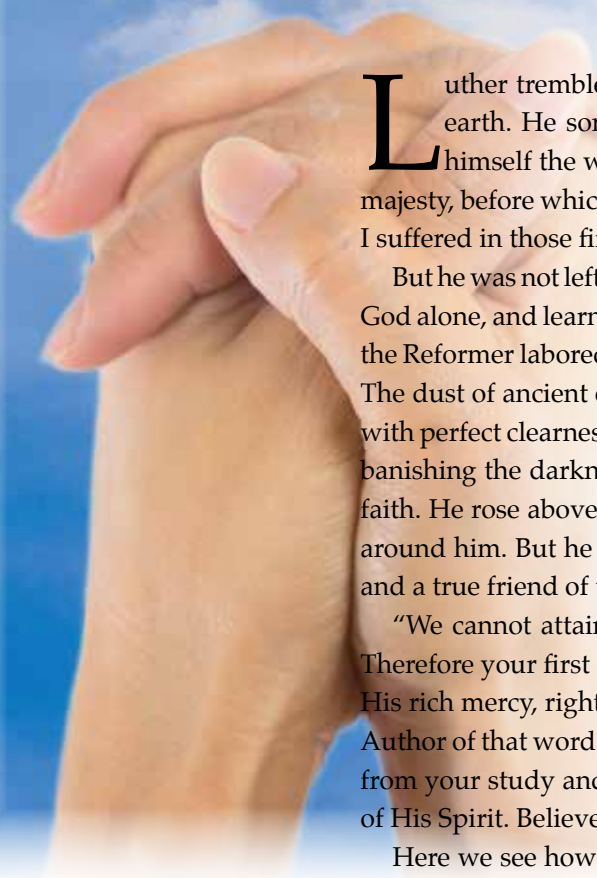
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Purer, Holier Faith



Luther trembled as he looked upon himself, one man opposed to the mightiest powers of earth. He sometimes doubted whether he had indeed been led of God to array against himself the whole authority of the church. "Who was I," he writes, "to oppose the pope's majesty, before which the kings of the earth and the whole world tremble? No one can know what I suffered in those first two years, and in what dejection and despair I was often plunged."

But he was not left to become utterly disheartened. When human support failed him, he looked to God alone, and learned that he could lean in perfect safety upon that all-powerful arm. Steadfastly the Reformer labored to clear away the rubbish beneath which true faith had been buried for ages. The dust of ancient errors sometimes obscured his own vision, so that he could not see the truth with perfect clearness; but as he pressed resolutely on, rays of light flashed forth from God's word, banishing the darkness of superstition, and filling his soul with the brightness of a purer, holier faith. He rose above despondency; his courage and hope revived. Erelong friends began to rally around him. But he did not forget the Source of his strength. To Spalatin, the elector's chaplain, and a true friend of the Reformation, Luther wrote:

"We cannot attain to the understanding of Scripture either by study or strength of intellect. Therefore your first duty must be to begin with prayer. Entreat the Lord to deign to grant you, in His rich mercy, rightly to understand His word. There is no other interpreter of the word but the Author of that word Himself. Even as He has said, 'They shall be all taught of God.' Hope nothing from your study and strength of intellect; but simply put your trust in God, and in the guidance of His Spirit. Believe one who has made trial of this matter."

Here we see how Luther came in possession of the truth that waked up the Reformation. It is men of humility and prayer that become mighty men in the Scriptures. They search the word of truth as for hidden treasures. And as they read and pray, and pray and read, they become living channels of light and truth. Here is a lesson of vital importance to those who feel that God has called them to present to others the solemn truths for this time. These truths will stir the enmity of Satan and of men who love the fables that he has devised. In the conflict with the powers of hell, there is need of something more than intellect and human wisdom....

There was a present truth—a truth at that time of special importance—in the days of Christ, of Paul, of Luther; there is a present truth for the church today. But truth is no more desired by the men of today than it was by the Jews in the time of Christ, or by papists in the days of Luther. Therefore Satan, working now with tenfold greater power, succeeds as of old in blinding the eyes of men and darkening their understanding.

As those who now labor in the cause of reform experience conflicts and trials, as they find their path hedged in by difficulties, and obstructed by the rubbish of error, let them remember that they are traveling the same road that prophets, apostles, and reformers of every age have traveled before them. Christ Himself trod a more thorny path than any of His followers. They may comfort themselves with the thought that they are in good company. One mightier than Satan is their Leader, and He will give them strength to be steadfast in the faith, and will bring them off victorious. —*Signs of the Times*, June 21, 1883.

Ellen G. White.

In the conflict with the powers of hell, there is need of something more than intellect and human wisdom.

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 / Website 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. Annual rate (U.S. funds only): U.S.A.-\$30; Foreign-\$45. Phone 916-765-3389 / Website www.sda1888.org.

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Faith on the Earth

*"... When the Son of man
cometh, shall He find faith
on the earth?" Luke 18:8.*

By Judicael Mutapayi Luboya

Although we do not
know the day and
hour of His coming,
we know that He
will definitely come.

A strange question, indeed. It makes me wonder, Why would our Lord, the God of all the earth, the Omniscient God, ask such a question? He knows the answer, of course. But why was He asking His disciples this question? It would have been difficult for them to give Him an answer; but in the time in which we live, the answer is clear. But not so fast. We need to think of the implications of our answer. I believe that the Lord has given us good answers in His Holy Word.

Let us divide the question into two parts: (1) "When the Son of man cometh," and (2) "Shall He find faith on the earth?"

"When the Son of man cometh,..."

Every Adventist understands that this question concerns the second coming of our long-awaited Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—the blessed hope. Although we do not know the day and hour of

His coming, we know that He will definitely come.

Sitting with their Lord on the Mount of Olives, the disciples asked the Lord Jesus privately, "Tell us,... what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Matthew 24:3. The Lord gave the disciples a list of the signs that would precede His coming. When we read just Matthew 24, we see that all those signs have been fulfilled or are now being fulfilled in front of our eyes. Listening to or reading the news, we hear of murders, robberies, abominations, etc. We see and hear of earthquakes and tsunamis every year. There are wars and rumors of war. "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Matthew 24:12. This is what we see happening every day.

The apostle Paul added more predictions concerning what would be going on in the last days in the social and religious worlds, and especially in Christendom, and we see all of

those things today as well. False christs, false prophets, and false teachers are everywhere. Spiritualism and Satanism are practiced by nominal Christians and are taught in schools and newspapers, as well as on television and the Internet. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." 2 Timothy 3:1-5. We see these things every day, too!

All the signs that we see assure us that Jesus' coming is very near and that this world is ripe for destruction. Even within the remnant church of Christ we see the shaking happening. While new souls accept the present truth, others are shaken out by the truth. It saddens us to see our former brethren, with whom we shared communion and fellowship, leave the ranks of God's remnant people. But we do not need to be discouraged. We must hold fast so we do not fall. The Bible warns God's children in the last days, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Corinthians 10:12.

Looking at all these happenings, the question of Christ in Luke 18:8 could imply that true faith would be almost extinct. He even says in Mark 13:22 that "false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect." We are the elect of God. Christ says that false christs and false prophets want to seduce the elect, if possible. Let us take heed, lest we fall.

Although our Lord may tarry, He will surely come. Habakkuk 2:3 says: "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." But why does the Lord tarry? 2 Peter 3:9 says that our Lord "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." He will not tarry for very long. At any moment, He will "finish

the work, and cut it short in righteousness:..." Romans 9:28. He is surely coming, but what will He find?

"Shall He find faith on the earth?"

In spite of the wickedness around us, our Lord is longsuffering toward us. Shall He find faith?

What is this faith? "... Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." And "without faith it is impossible to please" God. Hebrews 11:1, 6. But "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17.

In Luke 18:1-8, Jesus tells the parable of a widow who is seeking justice from an unjust judge who would not avenge her of her adversaries; but the widow kept coming back to the judge for help until he finally granted her request. Before the parable, in the first verse of the chapter, the Scriptures say: "And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." The context of the parable of the importunate widow is perseverance, or patience in prayer. Even though the judge was unjust, the widow knew that he could grant her request. She did not give up until her desire was fulfilled. Then the verses following verse 8 tell another parable about two worshipers who went to pray. One was a Pharisee, a self-righteous man who believed that he deserved God's blessings because of his good works. But the second man, a tax collector, went home justified because he acknowledged his unworthiness.

To receive God's blessings, we need to exercise both saving faith and living faith. "A nominal faith in Christ, which accepts Him merely as the Saviour of the world, can never bring healing to the soul. The faith that is unto salvation is not a mere intellectual assent to the truth. He who waits for entire knowledge before he will exercise faith, cannot receive blessing from God.

To receive God's blessings, we need to exercise both saving faith and living faith.





It is not enough to believe about Christ; we must believe in Him. The only faith that will benefit us is that which embraces Him as a personal Saviour, which appropriates His merits to ourselves. Many hold faith as an opinion. Saving faith is a transaction by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 347.

We persevere in prayer, because we believe His promises. Although the answer may tarry, it will surely come.

We should not pray as if prayer was just a duty that we need to do now and then, or as part of our daily routine. Our prayers do not change God. He knows what we will pray about, even before we open our mouths. But, like the study of God's word and witnessing, prayer is part of Heaven's blessings to prepare us for the homes above and for the new earth. We need to persevere as we pray, laying hold of the merits and grace of our Lord Jesus. Only through Christ's righteousness can our prayers reach God and our petitions be heard. This faith is in Christ and in His Father. Jesus said that without faith it is impossible to please God, "for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6. We persevere in prayer, because we believe His promises. Although the answer may tarry, it will surely come.

Perseverance, or patience, is one of the characteristics that God's people in the last days will have. "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12. The Greek word *upomonh* (hu-po-mone), translated "patience" in the *King James Version*, can

also mean "cheerful endurance." Using these words, the verse would be translated as "Here is the cheerful endurance of the saints...." The believers at the end of time will stand for the truth and suffer persecution for the truth's sake, and yet they will be cheerful, because they remember and believe the words of the Lord: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Matthew 5:10-12.

We must keep the "faith of Jesus" that honors God's commandments and is cheerful under persecution. "Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them." Psalm 119:165. They are dead to sin and live only by faith in Jesus Christ, who gave His life for them. Galatians 2:20. A dead man fears nothing, and nothing offends him. He does not have his own life, but it is hidden in One greater than himself and greater than the kings of earth. What can anyone do to such a one? Christ said about Himself, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." John 14:30. When we are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus, we live His life, we walk His walk, and we become like Him. This is what it means to have the faith of Jesus. And the prince of this world will find nothing in us to identify himself with. Oh! How I long to be like my Lord! I pray that you do as well!

Day by day, and year by year, evil is increasing. And it is also becoming more and more difficult to distinguish between one who serves God and one who does not. The faith that was once given to the saints is almost extinct, even among God's professed people. Christ's question sounds today with more emphasis than in the time of the disciples: "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"

We read in the Holy Scriptures and the Spirit of prophecy that when Christ comes there will be 144,000 living saints who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They have overcome the beast and his image. Persecuted and oppressed

for the truth's sake, they will continue to pray patiently and earnestly until their Lord avenges them. "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Matthew 24:13. We also read that the third angel is doing his sealing work. We live in the harvest time. And while the angel is busy doing his work, Satan and his agents are busy doing theirs also.

"A train of cars was shown me, going with the speed of lightning. The angel bade me look carefully. I fixed my eyes upon the train. It seemed that the whole world was on board, that there could not be one left. Said the angel, 'They are binding in bundles ready to burn.' Then he showed me the conductor, who appeared like a stately, fair person, whom all the passengers looked up to and revered. I was perplexed and asked my attending angel who it was. He said, 'It is Satan. He is the conductor in the form of an angel of light. He has taken the world captive. They are given over to strong delusions, to believe a lie, that they may be damned. This agent, the next highest in order to him, is the engineer, and other of his agents are employed in different offices as he may need them, and they are all going with lightning speed to perdition.'

"I asked the angel if there were none left. He bade me look in an opposite direction, and I saw a little company traveling a narrow pathway. All seemed to be firmly united, bound together by the truth, in bundles, or companies. Said the angel, 'The third angel is binding, or sealing, them in bundles for the heavenly garner.' This little company looked careworn, as if they had passed through severe trials and conflicts. And it appeared as if the sun had just risen from behind a cloud and shone upon their countenances, causing them to look triumphant, as if their victories were nearly won." *—Early Writings*, pp. 88, 89.

Do you want to belong to this little company? The time to belong is now. "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Romans 13:11. The 144,000 saints are being numbered. Now is the time to strive to be numbered with them. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall

the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" 1 Peter 4:17.

In Luke 18:7, 8, Jesus says: "And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" This is a promise that is followed by a question. Yes, God will faithfully and justly avenge those who persevere in prayer, who have the faith of Jesus that keeps the commandments of God, and who cheerfully endure trials and persecutions. Their reward is certain.

When the Son of man comes, He will surely find 144,000 living saints "sealed and perfectly united" (*Early Writings*, p.15), waiting patiently for Him. The real question now is: When the Son of man comes, will He find faith in you and me? Will we be among those who receive the reward? Will you and I be part of those to whom it will be declared, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"? Matthew 25:34.

Now is the time to practice faith. Now is the time to watch and pray. Not tomorrow. Today is the day. This minute is your time. "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Matthew 11:12. "Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand." *—Review and Herald*, March 9, 1905. For "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." Revelation 22:20, 21. **SW**

When the Son of man comes, will He find faith in you and me?





“Behold, the Bridegroom Cometh!”

By Masahiko Matsumoto

Translated from Japanese
by Makoto Matsumoto

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.” Ephesians 5:8.

Footsteps echoed through the darkness. Ten young women rubbed their sleepy eyes and jumped to their feet. It must be the bridegroom! They had waited for hours, wondering how long it would be until he arrived, and now he was coming! Hurriedly, the maidens snatched their hand-held oil lamps off the ground where they had been sleeping. Five of them noticed that their lamps were low on oil and their flames were barely flickering. Pulling out a reserve vessel that they had wisely brought along, they poured extra fuel into their lamps to keep the flames burning brightly. The other five, however, discovered that their lamps had gone completely out and they had no extra oil with which to fuel them.

“Quick!” they demanded of the first five, “Give us some oil!”

But the first five refused. “We won’t have enough for our own lamps if we share with you. Go and buy some for yourselves!”

After the foolish five had raced off into the night, the bridegroom arrived in all his splendor. The five wise maidens greeted him joyously by lighting his way with their newly-filled lamps, and the wedding festivities began.

This parable of Jesus holds many important symbols that are vital for our Christian life in these last days. To obtain a fuller understanding of the lesson God wants us to learn, we will examine several symbols individually and also compare the spiritual meanings of the two groups of virgins.

Light

Ephesians 5:8 describes children who are a “light in the Lord.” Are we really children of light? Or do we live under an illusion, considering ourselves as children of the light while continuing to live as we please? This is a serious question, because walking as “children of light” is impossible without the spiritual experience of being a “light in the Lord.”

This advice—“walk as children of light”—does not mean to walk while pretending to be children

Pulling out a reserve vessel that they had wisely brought along, they poured extra fuel into their lamps to keep the flames burning brightly.

of the light, but to actually be children of the light. "Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." John 12:35, 36.

There is deep meaning in Jesus' words, "While ye have light." He said, "Yet a little while is the light with you." This applies not only to the time when Jesus was on this earth, but also to the time in which we are living today. The light of God will soon be extinguished, and then darkness will reign on this earth. We should never assume that the light of God will always exist in this world. The time is coming soon when we will be unable to see His light, even if we want to. "For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." Isaiah 60:2, first part. As spiritual darkness covers the earth, only the true people of God will remain as scattered lights in a world blackened by sin. "But the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee." Isaiah 60:2, second part.

Fire

Very soon Jesus will return to this world. Before He does, however, the darkness of this world will grow deeper and deeper. What will remain to shine in the darkness? Even if there is a lamp or a candle, if it is not lit by fire, it is of no use. It is not the wick of the lamp or candle that dispels darkness, but the energy applied to it from an outside source that causes it to burn. Fire, the energy, must be applied to the wick, and the lamp will then burn brightly, using the available fuel. How can we shine as children of light?

Note that "Jesus did not bid the disciples, 'Strive to make your light shine;' He said, 'Let it shine.' If Christ is dwelling in the heart, it is impossible to conceal the light of His presence. If those who profess to be followers of Christ are not the light of the world, it is because the vital power has left them; if they have no light to give, it is because they have no connection with the Source of light." *—Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 41.

To give off light, we need to yield ourselves to Jesus and connect with Him, the source of light, just as the wick submits to the flame. We cannot give light by ourselves. If fire is set to the wick, there is no need for the wick to strive to make its light shine. To continue burning, the wick only needs to remain connected to the oil—the Holy Spirit. There are some people who do not experience joy in their Christian lives. Their countenances always seem dark, and they appear to be continually troubled. What is the reason for this? Such Christians have lost their connection to Jesus Christ, who is the Lightgiver.

Let your light shine

What is the purpose for letting our lights shine in the world? Jesus gave the parable of the lost coin as an explanation of this. "Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Luke 15:8-10.

This woman lit a candle to find her lost silver coin. Do you have any lost silver coins in your family? Are you shining a light for those lost souls? We can make our Christian life a joyful one by living for others. God's light is not given to us for our own self-satisfaction. We need to make good use of our talents for the Lord's work. There is no joy or satisfaction for one who serves self. If we hide the lamps of our lives, what will happen to the fire? It will immediately be gone. It would be foolish to do such a thing!

Some people try to give off light by their own ability. They speak Christian words and participate in Christian ceremonies or services, but none of it comes from their hearts. Their hearts are made of stone, because self has not been denied. The light they give is not from God but is, rather, a strange fire which can never honor the Lord. We need first to be children of the light in order to walk as children of the

There is no joy or satisfaction for one who serves self.



To shine in the
midst of darkness,
we need an
experience of being
light when we
have light.

light. After being born again of the Holy Spirit, we need to place ourselves under His holy fire every day. If we are not children of light, we are children of Satan.

Jesus prophesied that His people who live in the last days just before His second coming will face a special attack by Satan. He said, "While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." John 12:36. Satan strives desperately to extinguish the flame. He works through various temptations, which can be compared to the wind that can blow out a flame that is not carefully protected.

There is a deep meaning in these words. Soon darkness will cover every man and woman. To shine in the midst of darkness, we need an experience of being light when we have light. If we do this, our light will grow brighter and brighter and be able to shine even at the darkest time.

Ten virgins and the Advent Movement

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 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. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Matthew 25:1-13.

This well-known parable teaches us how to identify who the children of light are during the dark days just before Jesus returns. Even

though all the virgins were sleeping, Jesus said that five were "wise" in having brought extra oil with them, and then He concluded with the words, "Watch therefore." It is very dangerous for Christians to fall asleep spiritually. Jesus told this parable to His disciples while He was on earth, but the parable illustrates in a special way the spiritual condition of the Adventist people who live in the last days of this earth's history. The virgins symbolize a people who profess a pure faith.

Let us look at the parable in relation to the spiritual condition of Christians in the early Advent Movement. "The coming of Christ, as announced by the first angel's message, was understood to be represented by the coming of the bridegroom. The widespread reformation under the proclamation of His soon coming, answered to the going forth of the virgins. In this parable, as in that of Matthew 24, two classes are represented. All had taken their lamps, the Bible, and by its light had gone forth to meet the Bridegroom. But while 'they that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them,' 'the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.' The latter class had received the grace of God, the regenerating, enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, which renders His word a lamp to the feet and a light to the path. In the fear of God they had studied the Scriptures to learn the truth, and had earnestly sought for purity of heart and life. These had a personal experience, a faith in God and in His word, which could not be overthrown by disappointment and delay. Others 'took their lamps, and took no oil with them.' They had moved from impulse. Their fears had been excited by the solemn message, but they had depended upon the faith of their brethren, satisfied with the flickering light of good emotions, without a thorough understanding of the truth or a genuine work of grace in the heart. These had gone forth to meet the Lord, full of hope in the prospect of immediate reward; but they were not prepared for delay and disappointment. When trials came, their faith failed, and their lights burned dim." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 393.

Two groups

Two different groups existed when the first angel's message was proclaimed. Both of these two groups "had taken their lamps, the Bible, and by its light had gone forth to meet the Bridegroom." Let us compare these two groups.

The characteristics of the wise virgins who had brought extra oil were:

- They received the regenerating, enlightening power of the Holy Spirit.
- In the fear of God they studied the Scriptures to learn the truth and earnestly sought for purity of heart and life.
- They had a personal experience with Jesus Christ.
- They had faith in God and in His word.
- They were not overcome by disappointment and delay.

The characteristics of the foolish virgins whose lamps ran out of oil were:

- They moved from impulse instead of conviction.
- Their fears were excited by the solemn message, but they depended upon the faith of their brethren.
- They did not have a thorough understanding of the truth.
- They were satisfied with the flickering light of good emotions.
- They went forth to meet the Lord, full of hope in the prospect of immediate reward, without adequate reserve to last through a time of tarrying.

One group yielded to the work of the Holy Spirit and possessed a genuine experience with Jesus, while the other was impulsive and emotional and lacked a deep spiritual experience. Those with extra oil had studied and understood the Scriptures, and they also possessed faith after making their experience with Jesus, so they were not overthrown by disappointment when the bridegroom tarried. The foolish virgins, however, reacted very differently.

Different types of sleep

But then the question arises, If both groups fell asleep, why is just one called "wise"? The Spirit

of prophecy explains that these two groups did not sleep in the same way. "'While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.' By the tarrying of the bridegroom is represented the passing of the time when the Lord was expected, the disappointment, and the seeming delay. In this time of uncertainty, the interest of the superficial and halfhearted soon began to waver, and their efforts to relax; but those whose faith was based on a personal knowledge of the Bible had a rock beneath their feet, which the waves of disappointment could not wash away. 'They all slumbered and slept;' one class in unconcern and abandonment of their faith, the other class patiently waiting till clearer light should be given. Yet in the night of trial the latter seemed to lose, to some extent, their zeal and devotion. The halfhearted and superficial could no longer lean upon the faith of their brethren. Each must stand or fall for himself." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 394.

How did the foolish virgins sleep? Were not the wise virgins who had extra oil also disappointed? The wise virgins were just as disappointed as the foolish ones; however, the foolish virgins are described as "superficial and halfhearted." Their "interest ... soon began to waver." They slept in "unconcern and abandonment of their faith." The wise virgins "seemed to lose, to some extent, their zeal and devotion," but they "had a rock beneath their feet." And they were "patiently waiting till clearer light should be given." This was the spiritual condition of the virgins who had extra oil.

The early Adventists

What experience did these early Adventists make? "In the summer and autumn of 1844 the proclamation, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh,' was given. The two classes represented by the wise and foolish virgins were then developed—one class who looked with joy to the Lord's appearing, and who had been diligently preparing to meet Him; another class that, influenced by fear and acting from impulse, had been satisfied with a theory of the truth, but were destitute of the grace of God. In the parable, when the bridegroom came, 'they that were ready went

They were
"patiently waiting
till clearer light
should be given."





in with him to the marriage.’ The coming of the bridegroom, here brought to view, takes place before the marriage. The marriage represents the reception by Christ of His kingdom. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which is the capital and representative of the kingdom, is called ‘the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ Said the angel to John: ‘Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ ‘He carried me away in the spirit,’ says the prophet, ‘and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.’ Revelation 21:9, 10. Clearly, then, the bride represents the Holy City, and the virgins that go out to meet the bridegroom are a symbol of the church. In the Revelation the people of God are said to be the guests at the marriage supper. Revelation 19:9. If guests, they cannot be represented also as the bride.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 426, 427.

The foolish virgins are repeatedly described as being “influenced by fear and acting from impulse,... satisfied with a theory of the truth, but ... destitute of the grace of God.” A description of this same group can be seen in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13. “Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” Matthew 13:18-23.

The stony-ground hearers have the following characteristics:

- They receive the Word with readiness but fail to assimilate its principles.
- The influence of the Word is not abiding.

- The Spirit works upon man’s heart, according to his desire and consent, implanting in him a new nature; but the class represented by the foolish virgins is content with a superficial work.
- They do not really know God.
- They have not studied His character.
- They have not held communion with Him; therefore they do not know how to trust, look, and live.
- Their service to God degenerates into mere form and ceremony.

“‘They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.’ Ezekiel 33:31. The apostle Paul points out that this will be the special characteristic of those who live just before Christ’s second coming. He says, ‘In the last days perilous times shall come: for men shall be lovers of their own selves;... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.’ 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

“‘This is the class that in time of peril are found crying, Peace and safety. They lull their hearts into security, and dream not of danger. When startled from their lethargy, they discern their destitution, and entreat others to supply their lack;...” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 411.

Seven characteristics of stony-ground hearers are mentioned above. If you have even one of those characteristics, it means you are part of the stony-ground hearers and your spiritual condition is very precarious.

The virgins and the bride

What does the bride represent in the parable of ten virgins? She represents “the Holy City.”

Jesus said, “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.” Matthew 25:1. So, what do the virgins who come to meet the bridegroom represent? They symbolize the pure church that keeps the commandments of God.

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters,

The foolish virgins are repeatedly described as being “influenced by fear and acting from impulse,... satisfied with a theory of the truth, but ... destitute of the grace of God.”

and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." Revelation 19:6-9.

"If *guests*, they cannot be represented also as the *bride*." In this parable, who is the bridegroom, and who is the bride? The bridegroom is Christ, and the bride is the Holy City. And who are the guests? The guests are God's people, who are invited to Christ's marriage supper.

"In the parable it was those that had oil in their vessels with their lamps that went in to the marriage. Those who ... [1] with a knowledge of the truth from the Scriptures, had also the Spirit and grace of God, [2] and who, in the night of their bitter trial, had patiently waited, searching the Bible for clearer light—[3] these saw the truth concerning the sanctuary in heaven and the Saviour's change in ministration, [4] and by faith they followed Him in His work in the sanctuary above. [5] And all who through the testimony of the Scriptures accept the same truths, following Christ by faith as He enters in before God to perform the last work of mediation, and at its close to receive His kingdom—all these are represented as going in to the marriage." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 427.

Guests at the marriage supper

What are the characteristics of those who will have the privilege of attending the marriage supper? It is written clearly. Our spiritual condition determines our eligibility for entrance into the kingdom. Do foolish virgins and wise virgins still exist among us? Yes, they do; and therefore each of us must ask himself or herself, "Am I a foolish virgin or a wise virgin?" The characteristics of both groups are presented clearly. If we have any of the characteristics of the foolish virgins, we are in a very dangerous position.

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." Psalm 14:1. We must examine ourselves to see if we are denying God in our words, deeds, and life, and thereby testifying that there is no second coming of Christ. These foolish virgins existed among the early Adventists. They seemed to look forward to the second coming of Jesus; but when trials came, it was seen that the message they had really been proclaiming was, "There is no God."

All the people of God have to be more than wise virgins. We should never lose our zeal. Our hearts should always burn with holy fire. The Holy Spirit is needed, the Lord is needed, and faith and obedience are needed. Self has to always be put away. What is the mission that is given to us? To cry out, "Behold the bridegroom cometh!" Without zeal, without faith, without oil, joy, and experience, is this cry possible? Those who will receive the latter rain and join in the loud cry are those who are receiving the early rain now. Not only must we be constantly vigilant so our oil does not run out, but we must also constantly tend the flames in our lamps to keep them burning. We should never slumber, because while we are waiting, we are also watchmen with the responsibility to warn others.

"A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished." Proverbs 27:12. The wise will learn from the failures of the early Adventists and avoid the evil that came to them. In the time of danger, no one can make up for his lack of character. Do we want to be wise? If so, we have to learn from the experiences of the past. And we have to follow the example of those who overcame.

Do we want to be present at the marriage supper of the Lamb? If so, we must repent now, accept the counsel of the Holy Spirit, and carefully preserve the burning fire of the Scriptures—the character of Jesus Christ that shines out in love and service for others.

Only the wise virgins who accept the righteousness of Christ will attend the Lord's marriage supper. What a privilege that will be! Preparation for it is the work that is entrusted to us. May God help all of His people to advance faithfully in this work every day! **SW**

Only the wise virgins who accept the righteousness of Christ will attend the Lord's marriage supper.

The Early Church Fathers on Justification

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:8-10.

The message of salvation by grace through faith has had a part in every true revival in history. And that includes the time of the early church. In the writings of the early church are many references to the doctrine of justification by faith. Here is a cross section of excerpts by the early writers. There is much insight to be gleaned concerning the nature of justification and its Biblical content as expressed by the early church.

Long before Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Owen, or the Westminster Standards, even from the beginning of church history, the message of "justification by faith" was heralded. No wonder early church leaders emphasized it, for it comes from Eden, just as all truth that is in Jesus is eternal. Ephesians 4:21.

Clement of Rome (c. 35-99): "We, being called by His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified by ourselves, nor by our own wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or works which we have wrought in holiness of heart; but by that faith through which, from the beginning, Almighty God has justified all men; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." *—Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. I, *The Apostolic Fathers*, First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, Chapter 32. [Clement of Rome is listed by Irenaeus and Tertullian as the Bishop of Rome, holding office from A.D. 88 to his death in 99.]

Ignatius of Antioch: (c. 36-108?) "His cross, and His death, and His resur-

rection, and the faith which is through Him, are my unpolluted muniments [title deeds or other documents proving a person's title to land]; and in these, through your prayers, I am willing to be justified." *—Epistle to the Philadelphians.*

Clement of Rome: "We also, being called through God's will in Christ Jesus, are not justified through ourselves, neither through our own wisdom or understanding, or piety, or works which we have done in holiness or heart, but through faith." *—Epistle to the Corinthians.*

Polycarp (c. 69-155): "I know that through grace you are saved, not of works, but by the will of God, through Jesus Christ." *—The Epistle of Philippians.*

Justin Martyr (c.100-165): "Whoever are convinced and believe that what they are taught and told by us is the truth, and professes to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to beseech God in fasting for the remission of their former sins, while we pray and fast with them. Then they are led by us to a place where there is water, and they are reborn in the same kind of rebirth in which we ourselves were reborn: In the name of God, the Lord and Father of all, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they receive the washing of water. For Christ said, Unless you be reborn, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." *—First Apology*, 61:1417.

Justin Martyr; dialogue with Trypho (c. 155-165): "No longer by the blood of goats and of sheep, or by the ashes of a heifer ... are sins purged, but by faith, through the blood of Christ and His death, who died on this very account."

The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus (c. 200): "God gave His own Son the ransom for us..., for what, save His righteousness, could cover our sins? In whom was it possible that we, transgressors and ungodly as we were, could be justified, save in the Son of God alone?... O unexpected benefit, that the transgression of many should be hidden in one righteous Person and that the righteousness of One should justify many transgressors."

Marius Victorinus (born c. A.D. 280, converted around 356): "Every mystery which is enacted by our Lord Jesus Christ asks only for faith. The mystery was enacted at that time for our sake and aimed at our resurrection and liberation, should we have faith in the mystery of Christ and in Christ." *—Epistle to the Galatians*, 1.3.7. Mark J. Edwards, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, New Testament VI: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 39.

Didymus the Blind (c. 313-398): "It is undoubtedly true that the spirit is nobler than the body, but this does not mean that works can be put before faith, because a person is saved by grace, not by works, but by faith." *—Gerald Bray, ed., Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament*, Vol. XI, James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 34. See PG 39:1732, from his Commentary on James, 2:26b.

Hilary of Poitiers (c. 315-367), on Matthew 20:7: "Wages cannot be considered as a gift, because they are due to work, but God has given free grace to all men by the justification of faith." *—George Finch, A Sketch of the Romish Controversy* (London: G. Norman, 1831), p. 230.



Basil of Caesarea (c. 329-379): "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord, that Christ has been made by God for us righteousness, wisdom, justification, redemption. This is perfect and pure boasting in God, when one is not proud on account of his own righteousness but knows that he is indeed unworthy of the true righteousness and is (or has been) justified solely by faith in Christ." –Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, part 1, p. 505.



Chrysostom (c. 347-407): "What then is Paul saying? Not that God has forbidden works but that He has forbidden us to be justified by works. No one, Paul says, is justified by works, precisely in order that the grace and benevolence of God may become apparent." –Homily on Ephesians 4:2. Mark J. Edwards, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, New Testament VI: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 134.



Jerome (347-420), on Romans 10:3: "God justifies by faith alone." (*Deus ex sola fide justificat.*) –*Epistolam Ad Romanos*, Caput X, v. 3, PL 30:692D.



Chrysostom: "The patriarch Abraham himself before receiving circumcision had been declared righteous on the score of faith alone: before circumcision, the text says, 'Abraham believed God, and credit for it brought him to righteousness.'" –*Fathers of the Church*, vol. 82, Homilies on Genesis 18-45, 27.7 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1990), p. 167.



Augustine (354-430): "That eternal rest in which the true Sabbath is realized, and which is obtained only by faith, and by that righteousness whereby the daughter of the King is all glorious

within." –*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 1, Letter 36, 25.



Ambrosiaster (366-384?), on Romans 3:27: "Paul tells those who live under the law that they have no reason to boast basing themselves on the law and claiming to be of the race of Abraham, seeing that no one is justified before God except by faith." –Gerald Bray, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, New Testament VI: Romans (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 103.



Cyril of Alexandria (412-444): "Says the text, 'I am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins.' Isaiah 43:25. For we are justified by faith, not by works of the law, as Scripture says. Galatians 2:16. By faith in whom, then, are we justified? Is it not in Him who suffered death according to the flesh for our sake? Is it not in one Lord Jesus Christ?" –*Against Nestorius* in Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 165.



Fulgentius, bishop of Ruspe (c. 467-532), commenting on Ephesians 2:8: "The blessed Paul argues that we are saved by faith, which he declares to be not from us but a gift from God. Thus there cannot possibly be true salvation where there is no true faith, and, since this faith is divinely enabled, it is without doubt bestowed by His free generosity. Where there is true belief through true faith, true salvation certainly accompanies it. Anyone who departs from true faith will not possess the grace of true salvation." –On the Incarnation, 1. Mark J. Edwards, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, New Testament VI: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), pp. 133, 134.



Oecumenius (c. 510-580), on James 2:23: "Abraham is the image of someone who is justified by faith alone, since what he believed was credited to him as righteousness. But he is also approved because of his works, since he offered up his son Isaac on the altar. Of course he did not do this work by himself; in doing it, he remained firmly anchored in his faith, believing that through Isaac his seed would be multiplied until it was as numerous as the stars." –Gerald Bray, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*: New Testament, vol. XI, James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 33.



Bede (673-735), on Paul and James: "Although the apostle Paul preached that we are justified by faith without works, those who understand by this that it does not matter whether they live evil lives or do wicked and terrible things, as long as they believe in Christ, because salvation is through faith, have made a great mistake. James here expounds how Paul's words ought to be understood. This is why he uses the example of Abraham, whom Paul also used as an example of faith, to show that the patriarch also performed good works in the light of his faith. It is therefore wrong to interpret Paul in such a way as to suggest that it did not matter whether Abraham put his faith into practice or not. What Paul meant was that no one obtains the gift of justification on the basis of merits derived from works performed beforehand, because the gift of justification comes only from faith." –Gerald Bray, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, New Testament XI: James, 1-2, Peter, 1-3 John, Jude (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 31. **SW**

–<http://www.apuritansmind.com/justification/the-early-church-and-justification-compiled-by-dr-c-matthew-mcmahon/>

Prominent Magisterial Reformers and the Anabaptists



By Richard Eaton

Martin Luther focused on primarily dogmatic arguments, including the historical continuity of infant baptism within the church, as evidence of its validity.

To begin, we will define the term “Magisterial Reformer.” Wikipedia states: “The Magisterial Reformation argued for the interdependence of the church and secular authorities.” In other words, “The magistrate had a right to authority within the church, just as the church could rely on the authority of the magistrate to enforce discipline, suppress heresy, or maintain order.”¹

While Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Huldrych Zwingli held views that were significantly different from those of the Anabaptists, particularly in regard to the theological perspectives of baptism, the three Reformers had different approaches. Martin Luther focused on primarily dogmatic arguments, including the historical

continuity of infant baptism within the church, as evidence of its validity. Essentially, Luther believed that it was impossible for God to have permitted a universal error to permeate the church for an extended period of time, and on this basis infant baptism had to be correct.²

Jonathan D. Trigg (see end note 2) contends that due to the widely accepted concept that suggested a direct link between valid baptism and an authentic church, the Anabaptist presuppositions leading to the doctrine that infant baptism is a false baptism would have meant that there could have been no church for hundreds of years.³ In regard to Martin Luther’s argument for infant baptism based on historical continuity, various historians believe that Luther encountered less difficulty in defending infant baptism to the Anabaptists than did Zwingli and Calvin. The problem with Zwingli and Calvin was essentially that they sought to defend this rite on scriptural grounds,⁴ which was difficult. Texts used to defend the practice could provide an appearance of evidence for infant baptism only if they were interpreted in a certain fashion.

Calvin and Zwingli advocated for the continuation of infant baptism by offering a comparison between it and circumcision as practiced in the Old Testament. Calvin asserted that “baptism entails repentance, or the renewing of life, with the promise of the remission of our sins. Circumcision entails the same, no more, no less.”⁵ Zwingli similarly stated, in relation to circumcision, that “It was the sign among the ancients which baptism is for us.”⁶

Neither Zwingli’s nor Calvin’s line of appeal to a scriptural basis for infant baptism was convincing to the Anabaptists. In fact, such ideas ultimately caused the Anabaptists to question what parallel could realistically be drawn between infant baptism and circumcision and to clamor for a plain text in the New Testament that authorized infant baptism.⁷

There is no historical evidence that the argument presented by Luther, relating to the historical continuity of infant baptism, was any more convincing to the Anabaptists. Zwingli and Calvin’s stance on infant baptism was more critical of the Anabaptist perspective, and

understandably so. However, Wendel (see end note 4) observed that Calvin seemed to realize the weakness of his exegesis on this subject in seeking to defend on Biblical grounds an institution of a later date than the New Testament writings.⁸ Calvin and Zwingli's ideas of circumcision—attempting to justify infant baptism on Scriptural grounds—were very different from Luther's attempt to justify infant baptism primarily on grounds of historical church tradition.

Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli all had some similar ideas on whether infant faith was necessary to ensure the validity of infant baptism. Their argument was essentially that the validity of baptism is based not upon one's faith, but upon God's word. Luther asserted that "God establishes the sacrament (baptism) upon His word, and not upon our holiness, as the Anabaptists and Donatists do."⁹ Calvin contended something similar when he stated that, concerning the prerequisite of faith for baptism to be rightfully administered, the Anabaptists had raised a great tumult.¹⁰ Furthermore, in contrast to his early viewpoints in favor of infant baptism, Zwingli ultimately came to the conclusion that "whoever makes being a Christian to depend upon the manner or fact of baptism is falling into sacramentalism and legalism."¹¹

The general consensus among the three Magisterial Reformers thus was that the logical conclusion of basing baptism on the prerequisite of faith is an inherent overemphasis on one's own righteousness. This overemphasis upon one's own righteousness occurs simultaneously with placing less emphasis upon the power of God's word, manifested in the sacrament of baptism. It also becomes apparent that, based upon the presuppositions of the Magisterial Reformers in relation to faith's role in baptism, the logical conclusion of their argument is that one's faith preceding and during baptism is inconsequential, because forgiveness of sins will be granted regardless.

Despite the Magisterial Reformers' clear ideology surrounding the relationship of faith to baptism, they ultimately still chose to address the issue of an infant's capacity to experience faith. Their perspectives are divergent on this

issue, with Martin Luther asserting most firmly and authoritatively the idea that an infant possesses faith. Luther contends that an infant possesses faith on account of Biblical examples such as Christ's call for the children to come unto Him and John the Baptist's leap in the womb of his mother when Mary visited Elizabeth. Furthermore, Luther appealed to the divine word and work present in baptism, as well as his belief that the word will not return empty.¹²

It is strange that in other writings Luther vehemently confirmed the fact that infant baptism was valid, regardless of an infant's capacity to experience faith, even while affirming and expanding on the indications that infants do feel faith. Thus, on some level he recognized the relevance of faith in the experience of baptism. It would seem that he felt the need to incorporate faith into the infant baptismal experience in order to strengthen his argument.

Calvin was also of the opinion that infants were endowed with a faith of their own, and he actually argued that faith is an essential requirement for salvation and infants are not exempt from this requirement.¹³ This is a central point, because Calvin had accused the Anabaptists of "raising a great tumult" in advocating for the necessity of faith's role in baptism. However, it is apparent that in this respect Calvin's viewpoint on the role of faith in baptism was closer to the Anabaptist stance than he would likely care to admit. Although he did not explicitly state that faith necessarily precedes baptism, the close association between baptism and salvation suggests that his position necessitates the presence of faith in baptism, just as the Anabaptist position does. Therefore, given Calvin's favorable stance toward infant baptism, in combination with his belief in the integral role of faith, he was forced to support the idea of the infant's capacity to experience faith. This was necessary if Calvin was to present a justifiable argument free of contradiction. However, it is apparent that he was not entirely convinced on the infant's faith experience to the degree that Luther was, because after presenting the argument supporting the idea of infant faith, he felt the immediate need to assert the importance of baptizing infants on the basis of "obeying the



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will of God, who wished that they should be suffered to come unto Him.”¹⁴

In contrast to both Luther and Calvin, Zwingli did not admit any possibility of real faith in infants.¹⁵ By failing to present even a possibility of faith being present in infant baptism, Zwingli may have lost all chance of swaying the Anabaptists from their theological position on infant baptism. The Anabaptists viewed baptism as valid only when faith was associated with it, and Zwingli’s denial of the presence of faith in infant baptism ultimately ruled out any possibility of convincing the Anabaptists to accept the validity of infant baptism. Furthermore, by failing to even acknowledge the possibility of infant faith, Zwingli exposed himself to the charge that on theological grounds infant baptism was not inherently necessary.¹⁶ If infant baptism was no longer seen as essential on theological grounds, this had the potential to make the Magisterial Reformers vulnerable to assertions from Anabaptists that Zwingli and others put a disproportionate degree of emphasis on infant baptism.

Why were Luther and Zwingli particularly threatened by the Anabaptist rejection of infant baptism and the acceptance of adult baptism? In Zwingli’s case, he viewed adult re-baptism as primarily being utilized as a guise that the Anabaptists used to perpetrate “rebellious gatherings and insurrection against authorities.”¹⁷ Zwingli’s overarching ideas surrounding the importance of social order and civil obedience came to the fore in this instance. His dismissal of the Anabaptists’ choice to re-baptize as merely an excuse to foment rebellion was a denial of the importance of this doctrine in Anabaptist theology. However, historical sources indicate that Zwingli’s primary goal in making this assertion was not to minimize Anabaptist doctrine. Rather, he was genuinely concerned about many of the practices and beliefs of the Anabaptists, believing that many of their most cherished doctrines, including adult baptism, had the tendency to promote civil disobedience and revolutionary ideas.

Luther’s primary concern with the Anabaptist position on baptism was that he believed their perspective tended to promote baptism as

a temporary human work, rather than an everlasting covenant with God.¹⁸ Luther’s theological position was the primary reason he viewed the Anabaptist tendency to insist on faith’s role in baptism—and the necessity of living a pure life subsequent to baptism—as a significant threat. Luther tended to view all theological matters through the prism of God’s power and ability as contrasted with the complete unworthiness and inability of humans to do anything worthwhile based on their own initiative. Therefore, the Anabaptist perspective on faith’s role in baptism as being a necessity, thus making adult baptism a requirement, was a direct threat to Luther’s doctrine of the sufficiency of God’s grace. He believed that the significant emphasis the Anabaptists placed on faith’s role in baptism promoted work righteousness. Furthermore, Luther viewed the Anabaptist emphasis on living a pure life subsequent to baptism as a direct threat to the doctrine of justification by faith alone as a sufficient measure to attain eternal life.

Luther believed that the Anabaptist practice of adult baptism was also threatening, because he viewed it as potentially leading to the de-Christianization of society. He feared that the devil was deliberately attacking infant baptism as a means of giving adults an incentive to delay baptism “until they had their fling or until the hour of death.”¹⁹ Luther apparently viewed the removal of infant baptism as a direct threat to the “Christian” structure of European society, and he viewed adult baptism as a slippery slope that would inevitably lead to a lack of emphasis being placed on baptism and “being a Christian.”

John Calvin shared Luther’s view that postponing baptism until the moment of death was the foolish practice of those who believed this to be the most efficient way to attain plenary forgiveness for their whole life.²⁰ This is why Calvin insisted that a permanent value must be attached to baptism and that the Anabaptist view—that baptism may be a transient event dependent upon the individual’s ability to lead a “pure” life—was dangerous. Luther unequivocally shared Calvin’s view that adult baptism in conjunction with a lack of baptismal

permanence was a threat because of the human tendency to postpone baptism, de-emphasize baptism, and adhere to superstitions surrounding baptism.

How did the Magisterial Reformers believe the Anabaptists should ultimately be dealt with? Interestingly, when comparing the above three Magisterial Reformers, Luther was by far the most tolerant of the Anabaptist position, asserting that they should be banned, rather than burned or murdered. He said that the word of God should be the defense against them and they should be permitted to believe whatever they wished.²¹ This contrasted with Calvin and Zwingli's viewpoint, which was expressed in word and action—that killing Anabaptists was fully justified, and even necessary. Calvin went so far as to contend that Christian heretics, including Anabaptists, were more dangerous than Jews and Turks, because they possessed a greater potential to subtly corrupt the souls of fellow Christians. So, this was the basis for Calvin's view that killing Anabaptists and other Christian heretics had a higher priority than killing Jews and Turks.²²

The history on this topic contends that the similar patterns of persecution perpetrated by Calvin and Zwingli toward the Anabaptists came partly from their belief in predestination. Jean Rilliet (see end note 23) stated that those who believed in predestination considered themselves as the sole possessors of absolute truth and had a false idea that they held the future in their hands, which caused them to believe that violence against all who were outside absolute truth was justifiable.²³ Furthermore, Zwingli and Calvin viewed the Anabaptists as outcasts, which led the Reformers to believe that taking the life of an outcast was essentially inconsequential in the Lord's eyes.

Georgia Harkness states that, although there were other factors involved, the doctrine of predestination instilled in Calvin and Calvinists an inherent sense of duty and a complete inability to recognize any other point of view. They possessed an overriding belief that God's will had been revealed to them and that will had to be completely carried out in every respect.²⁴

Thus, despite the fact that multiple factors were involved, Calvin and Zwingli's persecuting spirit can in part be attributed to their strict adherence to the doctrine of predestination.

Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin uniformly regarded Anabaptist doctrine and viewpoints on a variety of matters to be heretical. However, the reasons for this were not always uniform. Their intolerant views of Anabaptist teachings came from the society in which they lived—a newly factionalized Christian world in which religion was the most polarizing influence in society. **SW**

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magisterial_Reformation; Saint-Clair, Geoffrey, *Reformation 101: Who's Who in the Reformation*.

² Trigg, Jonathan D. *Baptism in the Theology of Martin Luther*. E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1994, p. 101.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Wendel, Francois. *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*. Translated by Philip Mairet, Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1950, p. 232.

⁵ Calvin, John. *Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines*. Edited and translated by Benjamin Wirt Farley, Baker Book House Company, Grand Rapids, 1982, p. 49.

⁶ Zwingli, Huldrych. *Huldrych Zwingli Writings*, vol. 2: *In Search of True Religion: Reformation, Pastoral and Eucharistic Writings*. Translated by H. Wayne Pipkin, Pickwick Publications, Pennsylvania, 1984, p. 151.

⁷ Bullinger, Heinrich, and Zwingli, Huldrych. *The Library of Christian Classics*, vol. XXIV: *Zwingli and Bullinger*. Translated by Rev. G.W. Bromiley, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, p. 124.

⁸ Wendel, p. 328.

⁹ Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works*, vol. 38 (Word and Sacrament IV). Edited by Martin E. Lehmann and Helmut T. Lehmann, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1971, p. 27.

¹⁰ Greengrass, M. & Potter G.R. *John Calvin*. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1983, p. 37.

¹¹ Gottfried, Locher D. *Zwingli's Thought: New Perspectives*. E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1981, p. 219.

¹² Trigg, p. 104.

¹³ Wendel, p. 324.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Bullinger & Zwingli, p. 126.

¹⁶ Bullinger & Zwingli, p. 125.

¹⁷ Zwingli, p. 151.

¹⁸ Luther, Martin. *Selected Writings of Martin Luther, 1529-1546*. Edited by Theodore G. Tappert, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1967, p. 84.

¹⁹ Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 38, p. 97.

²⁰ Wendel, p. 320.


²¹ Loewen, Harry. *Luther and the Radicals: Another Look at Some Aspects of the Struggle Between Luther and the Radical Reformers*. Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, 1974, p. 73.

²² Harkness, Georgia. *John Calvin: The Man and His Ethics*. Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1931, p. 111.

²³ Rilliet, Jean. *Zwingli: Third Man of the Reformation*. Lutterworth Press, London, 1964, p. 147.

²⁴ Harkness, p. 113.





Burning the Magical Books

By Ellen G. White

Believing that the name of Jesus acted as a charm, they determined to cast out evil spirits by the same means which the apostle had employed.

In the days of the apostles, the city of Ephesus was famed for the worship of the goddess Diana and the practice of magic. The temple of Diana was considered, for its size and splendor, one of the wonders of the world. Its surpassing magnificence made it the pride of both the city and the nation. The idol itself was but an uncouth wooden image, on which were inscribed mystic characters and symbols. These were supposed to possess great power. When pronounced, they were said to accomplish wonders. When written, they were treasured as a potent charm to guard their possessor from robbers, from disease, and even from death. Numerous and costly books were written by the Ephesians to explain the meaning and use of these mysterious symbols.

In this city, the very stronghold of superstition and sorcery, the apostle Paul labored for several years. Here the power of God was mightily displayed through His servant. The sick were healed, and evil spirits were cast out.

The miracles wrought by Paul in the name of Jesus created great excitement in Ephesus. Among those who practiced magic arts were certain Jewish exorcists, who claimed to possess the same power exercised by Paul. Believing that the name of Jesus acted as a charm, they determined to cast out evil spirits by the same means which the apostle had employed.

An attempt was made by seven brothers, the sons of Sceva, a chief priest of the Jews. Finding a man who was possessed with an evil spirit, they addressed him, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." But the evil spirit

answered with scorn, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" and the man who was possessed attacked them with such violence that they fled out of the house, naked and wounded. Acts 19:13, 15.

The discomfiture and humiliation of those who had profaned the name of Jesus soon became known throughout Ephesus, by Jews and Gentiles. It furnished unmistakable proof of the sacredness of that name, and the peril which they incurred who should invoke it, while they had no faith in Christ's divine mission.

Many dared not breathe aloud the name, on which they had hitherto heaped reproach and blasphemy. A large number were convinced that Christ was all that Paul claimed him to be, and they determined to receive the gospel. These openly renounced the practice of sorcery and acknowledged their secret arts to be deceptive and Satanic. They brought together the manuals of enchantment, the costly books containing the mystic symbols of Diana, and the secrets of their art, and burned them in the presence of all the people. The sacrifice thus made was estimated at fifty thousand pieces of silver, equal to about ten thousand dollars [in 1882].

The conversion of these Ephesians was attended with the results that always follow genuine conversion. When convinced that their magical books were false and pernicious, they were unwilling to sell them and thus place temptation in the way of others. They promptly burned the records of divination, at a great personal sacrifice. The power of truth triumphed over men's prejudices, favorite pursuits, and love of money.

Those magical books contained rules and forms of communication with evil spirits. They were, in fact, the regulations of the worship of Satan, directions for soliciting his help and obtaining information from him. The system of magic or sorcery then extant was in reality the same as that which is now known as modern spiritualism. Many were deceived in Paul's day by this Satanic delusion, and many are deceived today by the same power. "Magical books" were not confined to the apostolic age, or to nations that are called heathen. The sorcerers of our time are taking advantage of the freedom of the press to spread abroad their baleful literature. Could all the productions of modern spiritualism be treated as were the magical books of the Ephesians, one of Satan's most successful avenues to destroy the souls of men would be cut off.

Witchcraft and sorcery are practiced in this Christian age and Christian nation, even more boldly than by the old-time magicians. Satan is finding access to thousands of minds by presenting himself under the guise of departed friends. The Scriptures of truth declare that "the dead know not anything." Ecclesiastes 9:5. Their thoughts, their love, their hatred, have perished. The dead do not hold communion with the living. But Satan—true to his early cunning, when in the form of a serpent he deceived the mother of our race—employs this device to gain control of the minds of men.

Paul warns his Corinthian brethren of the deceptive power of their great adversary. He declares, "I fear that by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." 2 Corinthians 11:3.

He writes to his son Timothy, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils." 1 Timothy 4:1.

In his second epistle to the Thessalonians, he warns them that the second advent of our Lord will be preceded by the working of Satan, "with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause, God shall send them strong

delusion, that they should believe a lie." 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11.

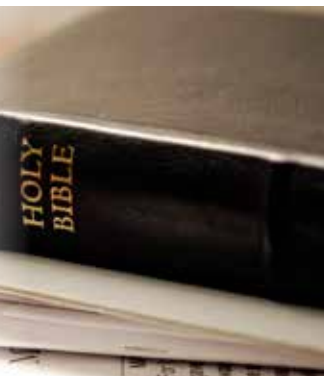
Because the children of men reject the plainest teachings of His word, and trample upon His law, God leaves them to choose that which they desire. They spurn the truth, and He permits them to believe a lie. They refuse to yield to the convictions of the Holy Spirit, and Satan, transforming himself into an angel of light, leads them captive at his will. If men were but conversant with the word of God, and obedient to its teachings, they could not be thus deceived; but they neglect the great detector of fraud, and the mind becomes confused and corrupted by the deceptive arts of men, and the secret power of the father of lies.

Men of intelligence are infatuated with Satanic sorcery as verily today as in the days of Paul. Thousands accept the opinion of the minister or obey the injunctions of the pope or priest, and neglect God's word and despise His truth. God would have His people learn their duty for themselves. The Bible declares His will to men, and it is as much our privilege and our duty to learn that will as it is that of ministers and popes and priests to learn it. What they can read from God's word, we can all read.

When the Ephesian converts burned their books on magic, they showed that they hated what they had once loved, and loved what they had once hated. The light of truth, shining into their minds, had convinced them of the unlawfulness of their arts, and had stirred their souls with abhorrence of their unholy deeds. Such a change is the best evidence of true conversion.

A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or to trace all the chain of circumstances in the process of conversion; yet this does not prove him to be unconverted. Said Christ to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit." John 3:8. Though the work of grace is silent and almost imperceptible, it may be fully as effective as when its operations are more apparent. But if the heart has been renewed by the Holy Spirit, the life will bear witness to the fact. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Matthew 7:20. Light and darkness are not more distinct than are the state

They showed that they hated what they had once loved, and loved what they had once hated.



If you indulge
in any practice
forbidden in God's
word, you have
yielded obedience
to Satan; you are his
servant.

of the converted and the unconverted. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are.

The world and the church have a right to expect such proof of true conversion as was given by the Ephesians—proof that a new moral taste has been created. You may not have practiced sorcery, you may not have tampered with spiritualism; but remember that “To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey.” Romans 6:16. If you indulge in any practice forbidden in God’s word, you have yielded obedience to Satan; you are his servant.

Every unconverted man is fascinated, bewildered, by the bewitching power of the great deceiver. Paul wrote to the Galatians, “Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?” Galatians 3:1. Every person who cherishes a known error, in faith or practice, is under the power of sorcery, and is practicing sorcery upon others. Satan employs him to mislead other souls.

If we would indeed become children of God, we must renounce at once and forever, every sinful indulgence. We must close every avenue through which Satan may gain control of our thoughts or our affections. Many persons manifest determined hatred of some sins denounced in the word of God, while they at the same time indulge their favorite sin. Not so did the Ephesian converts. Their particular sin was magic. By this means Satan held them in his power. They might have been earnest and vigilant to correct other evils, but had they spared this one sin, they would ere long have yielded their faith. But they laid the axe to the root of the tree; they renounced the hidden things of darkness and destroyed that which had led them into sin.

This incident was placed on record as an important lesson for every age. The Ephesians directed their efforts against the very sin of which they were guilty. Have the people of God in this age acted in like manner? There are many who manifest supreme devotion to their money, their business or their houses and lands. The ambitious man worships fame or honor as his idol. The covetous man fosters covetousness.

The sensualist is wedded to his lust. These love their cherished objects of pursuit more than they love God. They are idolaters.

Those who venture to cherish the sin which they love best, are tampering with Satan’s sorcery. The enchanting power of temptation has paralyzed conscience and blinded reason, so that they do not perceive their danger. The magical books have not been destroyed.

When the truth, presented to the understanding, exerts its sanctifying power upon the heart, the sins which were once cherished will be put away, that Jesus may occupy the soul temple. If covetousness has been indulged, it will be given up. If the love of the world has captivated the senses, a higher attraction will break its power. Deceit, falsehood, impurity, will be cleansed from the heart. He who maintains his allegiance to Christ, can render no service to Christ’s bitterest foe.

Many place themselves on the enchanted ground by frequenting scenes of amusement where fallen spirits congregate. Professing Christian, when you resort to the theater, remember that Satan is there, conducting the play as the master actor. He is there to excite passion and glorify vice. The very atmosphere is permeated with licentiousness. Satan presides, also, at the masquerade and the dance; he throws around the card table its bewitching power. Wherever an influence is exerted to cause men to forget their Creator, there Satan is at work, it matters not how innocent the guise under which he conceals his purpose.

Many who cannot be attracted by the allurements of pleasure, are ensnared by the teachings of “science falsely so-called.” These are led to extol human reason, above divine revelation; to exalt nature, and forget the God of nature. Is there no magic, no sorcery, going on around us?

The press is now sending out books in great numbers, that teach the ignorant and unsuspecting how they may serve Satan. There are works breathing the poison of skepticism and infidelity. There are treatises on money making that fill thousands of minds with fancies and follies, that fire thousands with an insane desire to amass wealth. There are fascinating volumes that portray with all the power of human eloquence the



lives of those who have made fame their god. And outnumbering all other productions of the press, like the swarms of locusts that darkened the whole land, comes the flood of novels and romances, to cultivate in the youth a love-sick sentimentalism, to teach them that courtship and marriage are the great object of their existence, and to unfit them for the practical duties of a useful life.

Satan is seeking by every means he can devise, to suggest doubts concerning the truth of God's word. Those who are naturally inclined to skepticism should, above all others, avoid everything that would strengthen this dangerous tendency. On the contrary, many read with avidity skeptical writings which exert such a deceptive, bewitching power that the reader seeks in vain to free the mind or purify the heart from the unholy spell. Evil angels, having once gained access, suggest doubts that human reasoning is powerless to remove. When God speaks to the soul, those who would be free will cut every tie that holds them under Satan's power. They will destroy that which so nearly proved their ruin, lest it prove the ruin of others.

Many a work is highly prized for its wealth and beauty of language, when these are but a fair garment to conceal principles that in their native deformity would shock the reader. Those principles have led the author step by step away from God, from hope, and Heaven. Will they not exert the same influence upon the reader? The course of the Ephesians was the only safe course for them; it is the only safe course for you. Destroy these agencies of Satan. Put beyond your reach that which has power to seduce you.

The authors of no small share of current literature are men who have lived in the atmosphere of vice, and who are slaves of passion. Poets of brilliant talents have perverted their powers to the service of Satan. Over all that is good, and pure, and noble, they have cast the darkness of their own base thoughts. They encourage dissipation and sanction vice.

The bewildering brilliancy, the deceptive pathos, of many a gifted author, are Satan's bait to allure and destroy the souls of men. Many who are in no danger from the productions of the gross and sensual are deceived by writers

who virtually clothe Satan in angel's garments and make him a benefactor of the race. Such works are legion.

Have the disciples of Christ burned the magical books? Have they made a decided change in their principles and habits of life? Have they separated themselves from the enchantments of the world? Those who, knowing their danger, will yet venture into places of worldly, demoralizing amusement, or who will poison the mind with the literary productions of the skeptic, or the sensualist, are guilty of presumption. God does not give His angels charge to keep those who choose to walk in forbidden paths.

When in the way of duty we are brought into trial, as was Daniel in the king's court, we may be assured that God will preserve us. But if, through stubbornness, hardihood, or bravado, we place ourselves under the power of temptation, we shall fall, sooner or later.

We are living at a time when Satan's power is great. "As a roaring lion," he "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8. Anon, he will quell his roar to the faintest whisper, that he may deceive the unsuspecting by his hellish arts. The glories of the world are presented in glowing colors to fascinate the senses, to beguile unstable souls. What have professed Christians done to close every avenue whereby Satan can approach them? Have they given proof of the work wrought in them by the Holy Spirit? Have they erected barriers, firm and strong, between their soul and every earthly idol?

The infidel, when converted, will abhor the books that led him to doubt the word of God. The dissolute man who has purified his soul by obedience to the truth, will not venture into the haunts of dissipation, from curiosity or habit. Neither will he permit his mind to dwell upon such scenes, portrayed in the pages of the sensualist. He will be awake to his danger, shunning temptation himself, and earnestly warning others of its bewitching power. Whatever the idol previously cherished, the converted man will not only resist evil, but will, so far as possible, place himself beyond the power of Satan. Again we would ask the followers of Christ, "Have you burned the magical books?" —*Signs of the Times*, May 18, 1882. **SW**

Whatever the idol previously cherished, the converted man will not only resist evil, but will, so far as possible, place himself beyond the power of Satan.





Believers in Curacao

Visit to Cuba

Cuba is a beautiful tropical country in the Caribbean Sea. It is the country of my birth, but my family left in 1968. It was a privilege to visit Cuba with my father and youngest daughter in early January and also to make connection with many relatives.

The work in Cuba started anew for the third time about nine years ago. Brother Carlos Kozel visited the island in the 1950s, and he gained one soul who remained faithful and led a friend to Christ. That friend had to wait for baptism until the late 1980s, when missionary work was renewed by Elder Raul Escobar. He baptized the man who had waited so patiently and started a church in Havana.

A third wave of evangelism began in 2008, when Elders Martin Lagunas and Pedro Ruiz were commissioned to seek for souls in Camaguey. Through contact with one of my aunts, the brethren were able to establish an outreach. From then on, the country has been visited

about every six months by various ministers who conduct services and provide guidance and encouragement.

There is good reason to extend help to the believers in Cuba, especially because the country is now more open to foreigners. I am grateful to my parents and other family members living in Cuba who have provided various forms of assistance. The church would benefit from PowerPoint presentations and digital materials, as well as seminars. I visited the University of Havana, where my mother went to school and several relatives served as professors. I was able to make contact with a professor in the school of pharmacy and nutrition and have since followed up by writing the dean a letter suggesting cooperation with the International Health Organization.

There are a lot of small private businesses in Havana, and I encouraged the church members to open a restaurant that can be a witness to the people of Cuba.

After we returned to the United States and I shared information with the brethren of the General Conference, additional encouragement was provided to the believers in Cuba about how to improve the management of the work, including having ministers and Bible workers change places. There are five full-time and four part-time workers in Cuba.

The people are open to the message. I prayed in my 95-year-old uncle's home, and everyone was deeply moved. In Havana, everyone I invited to come to a church meeting came. Cuba is primarily an atheistic society, but now there is new interest in the Bible. It is important to take advantage of this opportunity. May the Lord continue to bless His work in the Cuban Mission Field.

—Idel Suarez, Jr.

Outreach in Curacao

By God's grace, I was able to visit this island in late March to attend a conference, meet with

the Field Committee, help with the elections, see the remodeled headquarters, and encourage the missionary efforts. Up until 2014, the work in Curacao was under the Venezuelan Union, but now it is a Mission Field under the General Conference. The primary religion in this island of 158,000 people is Roman Catholicism, and there are some Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses. The believers number 48 in two churches.

Elder Teófilo Palacios and I visited an interested family, and I gave them a study on Daniel 2. The family was invited to the conference, and the mother and children attended every meeting that weekend. I spoke five times during the conference. New elections were held for the Mission Field, and difficulties were addressed and resolved through the moving of the Holy Spirit. The work is advancing, and the prospects are very good. God bless the believers in Curacao.

—Idel Suarez, Jr.

Conference in Australia

"Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 18:3.

The starting day of our conference was Friday morning, April 21, when everyone arrived safely at the Toongabbie church to fellowship with one another in uplifting the precious name of Jesus Christ our Lord and hear messages on the theme of "How to become a truly converted disciple of Jesus." We were blessed to be joined by members from Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia,

lia, Victoria, New South Wales' Mid North Coast, and New Zealand, as well as members and visitors from the Sydney area.

Preparing for Sabbath opening was very special, and many dear fellow believers and some visitors attended the service. The message was a call for daily conversion among God's people and understanding the importance of humility in becoming a true Christian.

"... Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." 1 Peter 5:5.

The Spirit of God was pleading through His word for everyone to grow in spiritual advancement and reflect the image of Christ in his daily life. After greeting one another following the evening service, the believers headed off to their places of rest. "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8.

The Sabbath services were another huge blessing, beginning with sharing and discussing the Sabbath School lesson in the morning, followed by the divine service and the young people's meeting in the after-

noon after a beautiful lunch. Brother Glendon Higgins shared a wonderful sermon about having a deeper conversion. "A consecrated Christian life is ever shedding light and comfort and peace." *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 667. Those who are in daily communion with Christ show meekness in their characters. Jesus has called us to live His life and to walk in His footsteps every day.

On Sunday, which was a nice warm, sunny day, all the brothers and sisters joined in witnessing the baptism of Brother Joseph Teariki, from Melbourne, at Lake Illawara in Wollongong. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Mark 16:16; John 3:5. Brother Joe shared a testimony about trusting wholly in the leading hand of God in his life. It was a wonderful service that was well attended by many members, visitors, and children.

To conclude the conference, Elder Anton Salavyov thanked

everyone for coming, bid all farewell, and wished every attendee a safe trip home. "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." 2 Corinthians 13:11.

—Paula Pendergast

Ethiopia Visit

At the end of last year, Elder Idel Suarez, Jr., traveled to Ethiopia to finalize the purchase of a facility to serve as the headquarters of the Ethiopian Mission Union. A small plot of land containing three buildings was obtained near the capital of Addis Ababa, using funds from two Special Sabbath School Offerings and additional funds. The main building is a two-bedroom, one-bath concrete-block residence, with a large living area that serves as the dining and living rooms but can be utilized as a meeting place. The remaining two structures are mud buildings. Securing the property through all necessary legal documentation was time consuming and difficult, but God be praised that it was accomplished.

Elder Arnolfo Cortez also visited this country from February 5 to March 6, 2017. The main purpose of his visit was to support a national youth conference, which was attended by approximately 400 people. There were visitors from many groups and churches, and this was a wonderful educational opportunity for the believers to mature in their experience.

This Mission Union is approximately ten years old and has approximately 2,000 members. The believers have encountered many trials from both inside and outside the church. They have

thus had many opportunities to learn and practice the principles of Scripture both in upholding the truth in love and in working for harmony in resolving issues of many kinds.

May God give His grace to His cause in Ethiopia.

Baptisms in Ghana

We thank God that He continues to add new souls to His church. We need your prayers very much in Ghana, and we know that the same is true for many other places in the world as more souls are won into the heavenly kingdom.

—Mohammed Inusah

Greetings from Guinea

May the peace of our Lord be with you all for your support in advancing the word of God around the world and particularly in Guinea. There are now three groups in this country. The group that I work with is in Yimbaya, where the church first began. It is currently composed of 9 individuals—2 baptized members, 3 who are ready to be baptized, and 4 children.

I was trained for four years by Brother Kamano how to preach the gospel and how to teach the Sabbath School Lessons. I have continued to work with this group by the grace and strength of the Lord.

Since we do not have any place for worship, the believers come to the house that I am renting on my own. We plan to find a place in the future where we will be able to meet.

Every month we have at least two meetings with Brother Kamano and Brother Chea to share information on how the



Baptism of three precious souls in Ghana



A wonderful baptism in Madagascar, performed by Elder Elijah Zwane

groups are growing spiritually. God bless you.

—Tonguino Tamba Koundou
Guinea Mission Field Secretary

News from Japan

The work in Okinawa, Japan, began in 2009 under Elders Dae Chun Kang and Masahiko Matsumoto, the Field Leader; his wife is Sister Mika Matsumoto, who is originally from South Korea. Okinawa is an island that is about 70 miles long and 7 miles wide, located 400 miles south of the rest of Japan, 400 miles from mainland China, and 300 miles north of Taiwan. The General Conference sends ministers from time to time to visit the believers and hold seminars to strengthen their faith.

A conference was planned in April of this year by Elder Matsumoto and coordinated by Elder Douglas Francis, the Asian Division Leader. I was asked to visit the believers, and Brother Makoto Matsumoto, son of Elder Matsumoto, helped me with this. The seminar began on Wednesday, April 19, 2017. It included health lectures and Bible studies on prophecy. That afternoon, two souls declared their loyalty to Jesus by being baptized.

During the seminar, I discussed the possibility of setting up a health center as well as registering the International Health Organization, since the church is not registered. A sister who is a nurse, Sister Yumi Chibana, expressed interest in such a center, because many interested people come to the church for health seminars and seek counsel concerning natural healing. She will inquire about the requirements for a non-profit organization operating in Japan.

There are also plans for pushing the work forward into mainland Japan and Taiwan. God bless the work in all these places.

—Roland Dela Paz
General Conference Health/
Medical Department Leader

Madagascar baptisms

Elder Elijah Zwane, with his wife and son, transferred to Madagascar in 2016 from Swaziland to support the work. In December 2016, February 2017, and May 2017, baptisms were held for 20 precious souls. Praise God for the believers and everything that is being done in Madagascar!

Floods in Peru

In mid-March, heavy rains from El Niño burst river banks, created mudslides, collapsed bridges, closed roads, and forced schools and businesses to close in wide sections of the west and north of the country. Even the capital city of Lima, where the desert climate means that rain is rare, there was heavy rain that flooded outlying neighborhoods.

Even before this disaster, the country suffered from storms and flooding caused by a warming of sea surface temperatures by 5-6 degrees off of Peru's northern coast.

It is estimated that 90 people died and 700,000 suffered injuries and losses in the disasters. Please see the accompanying picture. Financial assistance has been sent to Peru by the Good Samaritan and the General Conference. Contributions may be made to the Good Samaritan to provide help to those in need. Your prayers are appreciated as well.

New groups in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea

"Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly; but the proud He knoweth afar

off. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, Thou wilt revive me: Thou shalt stretch forth Thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me." Psalm 138:6, 7.

It is a joy to be able to share the missionary experiences we made in March and early April 2017 on a trip to the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea.

On our last visit to the Solomon Islands in the last quarter of 2016, we rejoiced at the faithfulness of Brother Joseph Tome, who was the first member in this country. Through God's grace and guidance and the brother's perseverance, in a short time, the message reached other people in the islands. It is a very encouraging sign for the future progress of the Lord's work in the Solomon Islands.

Meetings were organized for the end of March with Elder Anton Salavyov to plan how the missionary work could be extended. We met with at least 10 interested young people who attended the weekend meetings from Friday to Sunday. Although the time was too short to present a full course of studies, we felt the blessing of the Holy Spirit. We could see that the young people were impressed by the spiritual information. They eagerly participated and



Floods in Peru caused great damage and suffering

asked questions during the PowerPoint presentation studies. By the end of the weekend, they had made a commitment to follow the Lord and be baptized in the near future. During the breaks, we also enjoyed blessed spiritual conversations with our friends.

On Sunday morning, God blessed us with the baptism of Brother Joseph's wife. She had made the decision to become part of God's church and a true follower of Christ by making her covenant with Him. It was time to choose where to hold the baptism—in the ocean or in a river. Rivers in the Solomon Islands are home to crocodiles and bombs from World War II, while sharks swim freely in the ocean. Finally, trusting God, the wonderful, blessed baptism took place in the ocean. The Lord's Supper service was then held at Brother Joseph's home. I also want to thank Brother Joseph for his desire to advance the Lord's work in the Solomon Islands by building a church on his land.

After Elder Salavyov returned to Sydney to take care of his other commitments, I continued my missionary journey to Alotau, Papua New Guinea. This trip was exciting, because an entirely new region was now to be reached. With Brother Alipi Sakiusa, leader of the Alotau group, who had already organized the baptism of seven souls from Ferguson Island, we rejoiced at the prospect of extending the work to this new field. I reached Alotau on Tuesday morning, and arrangements were made immediately for our travel from Alotau to the southernmost tip, known as East Cape, to board a boat for a three-hour trip to the island.

Early Wednesday morning, we left Brother Alipi's place in

Hagita for Alotau; and after taking care of various matters, we left at about 2 p.m. for a 2-hour truck ride to the Cape. Our brethren on the island were also excited as they prepared for our arrival. At about 5 p.m., after loading our luggage on the 24-ft. fiberglass boat, we boarded and were soon on our way out to sea, heading for Ferguson Island. It was a little windy, with dark clouds, so I felt a little reluctant about going out to sea; but I knew that the Lord would be our protection.

After about an hour on the high seas, the unexpected happened: a boat similar to the one we were traveling in suddenly overtook us, seemingly out of nowhere. As we turned to look, we saw a machine gun, guns, knives, and a masked man shouting wildly at us to stop and jump overboard, leaving everything behind. I watched our five members and a four year old jump overboard into the dark blue waters. It all seemed like a dream, and I was having trouble processing in my mind the reality of what was happening. There we were—in the middle of the blue ocean, defenseless, having to jump into the water with guns pointed at our heads, not knowing what would happen in the next moment.

We swam away from the boat, trying at all cost not to provoke the sea pirates. Our minds were in turmoil, and of course we pleaded with God for help; but the reality was that death could be expected at any moment. Amazingly, the pirates left after about 10 minutes, leaving the boat completely stripped. Interestingly, the attackers threw my empty computer bag back into the boat. Meanwhile, Brother Alipi's old, broken phone got soaking wet with sea water when he jumped into the ocean.

After the pirates left, we all managed to get back in the boat, which now had no motor. Everyone was quite shaken and wet. God gave me the opportunity as His servant to gather everyone together to offer prayers of thanksgiving to the Lord. Brothers and sisters, it was solely through God's merciful providence that our lives were spared. Nothing could have saved us from that situation except His hand. In the words of Job after his painful

Anton Salavyov, for his untiring support and communication. The Union Secretary, Brother Robert Bowman, is thanked for his help in coordinating our rescue. Also, the members and friends of the Oceania region as well as the world at large are greatly appreciated for sharing their concern and prayers for our protection.

Our thanks go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Fiji government; the Fiji High Commission Office in Port Moresby; Vilitati



Elder Antonin Salavyov with believers in the Solomon Islands

experience, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee." Job 42:5. Brethren, I count it a blessing for me and the Alotau brethren to have gone through this experience; even though we lost everything we had with us—luggage, passports, books, laptops, etc.—we saw God at the end. When Brother Alipi took his phone and checked it, to his amazement, it was still working. His old, broken phone had all his contacts in it, and this enabled us to call for the help that we needed. Again. It was another of God's amazing miracles that the waterlogged phone still worked!

I now want to take this opportunity on behalf of the Alotau brethren, my family, and the Fiji Field to extend our deep gratitude to God for His protection and merciful providence. I also extend our gratitude to the Oceania Union President, Elder

Mataitini and Vilikesa Naivalucava; the Fijian Community in Port Moresby, and the church leaders who worked in accordance with their commitment in spiritual intervention. I believe that what happened on our first trip to Ferguson Island affected a broad spectrum of people in the world who have seen and are still seeing the power of true Christian love.

Furthermore, I believe that God has a large sheepfold and is calling His sheep; His voice is now sounding even louder. Plans are now underway for the next trip to Alotau in a few months, and there are people in Ferguson Island and Russell Island preparing to be baptized in Alotau. Let us pray that God will send more reapers as the fields are now ready for the harvest. God bless you all.

*—Sanaila Kenivale
Papua New Guinea and Fiji*



In the Master's Hands

“In His Word God compares Himself to a potter and His people to the clay. His work is to mold and fashion them after His own similitude. The lesson they are to learn is the lesson of submission. Self is not to be made prominent. If due attention is given to the divine instruction, if self is surrendered to the divine will, the hand of the Potter will produce a shapely vessel.

“The excellence of a genuine connection with Christ comes with obedience to the words, ‘Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me....’ The worker who has this experience has an intense longing to know the fullness of the love that passes knowledge. His capacity to enjoy the love of God constantly increases. Learning daily in the school of Christ he has a constantly increasing capacity to grasp the meaning of the sublime truths that are as far-reaching as eternity....

“He realizes that he is material with which God is working, and that he must be passive in the Master’s hands. Trials come to him, for unless tested by trial and disappointment he would never know his lack of wisdom and experience.

“If he seeks the Lord with humility and trust, every trial will work for his good. He may sometimes seem to fail, but his supposed failure to reach the place where he hoped to stand may be God’s way of bringing his advancement. He thinks that he has failed, but his supposed failure means a better knowledge of himself and a firmer trust in God.... He may make mistakes, but he learns not to repeat these mistakes. United with Christ, the True Vine, he is enabled to bear fruit to the glory of God....

“The Lord desires us to be meek and lowly and contrite, yet filled with the assurance that comes from a knowledge of the will of God. He ‘hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.... Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace....’ 2 Timothy 1:7-9.” —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 28.