

The Sabbath Watchman

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Vol. 94, No. 3 - Beacon of hope, faith, and truth in a confused world

“For Thou wilt light my candle”

Psalm 18:28

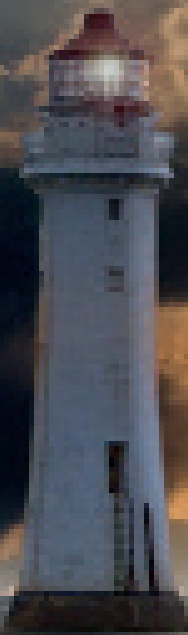
The One Hundred Forty-Four Thousand

Morality, extinct?

**A Couple's
Language of Love**

Nehemiah

World in Brief



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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.

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"For thou wilt light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness" Psalm 18:28.

God's Word is our light. It is Christ's message to His heritage, who have been bought with the price of His blood. It was written for our guidance, and if we make this Word our counselor, we shall never walk in strange paths. Our words, whether we are in the home or associating with those outside the home, will be kind, affectionate, and pure. If we study the Word and make it a part of our lives, we shall have a wholesome experience, which will always speak forth the truth. We shall search our hearts diligently, comparing our daily speech and tenor of life with the Word, that we may make no mistake. —*The Review and Herald*, March 22, 1906.

There are many in this age of the world who act as if they were at liberty to question the words of the Infinite, to review His decisions and statutes, endorsing, revising, reshaping, and annulling at their pleasure. We are never safe while we are guided by human opinions, but we are safe when we are guided by a "Thus saith the Lord." We cannot trust the salvation of our souls to any lower standard than the decisions of an infallible Judge.

Those who make God their guide and His Word their counselor, behold the lamp of life. God's living oracles guide their feet in straight paths. Those who are thus led do not dare to judge the Word of God, but ever hold that His Word judges them. They get their faith and religion from the Word of the living God. It is the guide and counselor that directs their path. The Word is indeed a light to their feet and a lamp to their path. They walk under the direction of the Father of light, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He whose tender mercies are over all His works makes the path of the just as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. —*The Review and Herald*, March 29, 1906.

Ellen G. White.

THE ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FOUR THOUSAND: A SYMBOLIC NUMBER?

by Antonino Di Franca

Firts part

THE 144,000 IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

Mentioned in two places

The Holy Scriptures mention “servants of God” who, before the final judgments fall on the earth, will be sealed. In the place where they are first mentioned (Revelation 7:4), they are presented as one hundred forty-four thousand people who are marked with the seal of God in their foreheads. In a second passage (Revelation 14:1-5), they are identified as redeemed from the earth and singing a special song which only they can learn. Different questions have been asked about this group of redeemed: In what time do they live? What identifies them? What are their characteristics? Another more frequent question is: Is this number, “one hundred forty-four thousand,” a literal or a symbolic number? Other questions have been asked concerning this group of redeemed, but in this study our attention is focused on only one question, the last one: Is the number one hundred forty-four thousand given in Revelation a real or a symbolic number?

Following are the two Biblical passages related to the one hundred forty-four thousand:

- “And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.” Revelation 7:1-4.
- “And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father’s name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers

harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.” Revelation 14:1-5.

Is there Biblical support for a symbolic interpretation?

If this number is symbolic, how many people would the number 144,000 represent? Analyzing the second passage, we note that the one hundred forty-four thousand are presented as redeemed from the earth, as people who have spoken no lies, as first fruits who are consecrated to the Lord, and as followers of the Lamb wherever He goes. In both passages, other elements are presented and definite terms are used to indicate them. There is no reference to anything symbolic. The Bible often uses types and symbols in prophecies, parables, and poetry; but in these passages this is not the case.

In Biblical prophecy, for example, the term “day” is sometimes used symbolically. When this is the case, the Bible provides an explanation to help the reader determine what it represents. Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 are two well-known examples of this, where the prophetic key of “a day for a year” is presented. In these two verses, the term “day” is clearly used in a symbolic way; and the Scriptures provide the clear equivalency, “year,” so that there need be no confusion. Now, if one real year is the equivalent of one prophetic day, and the figure “one hundred forty four thousand” were to be understood as symbolic, what is the equivalency of this number?

In the Scriptures, there is no hint of a corresponding number, and this should be sufficient to understand that the figure is not symbolic! Not only that! If “one hundred forty-four thousand” were symbolic and no corresponding figure is revealed, what would this number mean? Why would the Lord even give it? Would He reveal a number without supplying its meaning? Actually, He has revealed it—“one hundred forty-four thousand,” exactly as written.

A definite number

When in common conversation we speak about people in general terms without specifying how many there are, there is no concrete concept of their number, because no exact figure is given. But in this case the number is given: "And I heard the number of them ... an hundred and forty and four thousand." Revelation 7:4. So, the angel is not speaking of an unknown or indefinite number of people, but of a specific "number"; and a definite number always indicates a set number of people, whether large or small. Because the Scriptures mention a definite "number" (Revelation 7:4), we can hardly imagine that it uses such a well-defined concept to present something vague or unknown.

There are indefinite expressions used in the Bible to indicate many people. Two examples are "as the stars of the heaven" and "as the sand which is upon the sea shore" (Genesis 22:17), depicting a great number of people—innumerable and indefinite.

Other expression are: "thousands," sometimes even repeating the same word, such as "thousand thousands" (Daniel 7:10) or "ten thousands" (Deuteronomy 33:2, 17), to emphasize a huge number. In these cases, the figures are used but in a way that indicates an indefinite number. Not so in Revelation 7:4 and 14:1. The numbers are very definite—"one hundred forty-four thousand." This group is presented two times in the Bible, and both times the same definite terms and the same exact number are given.

A meaningful comparison

It is very significant that in Revelation 7, just a few verses further down, another group of redeemed is presented, but in completely different terms. No number is given to identify them. They are simply introduced as "a great multitude" so great that no man could number it. Revelation 7:9. The contrast is inescapable. It is obvious that this is an indefinite number, because "great multitude" is a general indication, nothing like the specific number in Verse 4. Comparing the two verses—4 and 9 of the same chapter—the reader can understand that these are two completely different groups. The first is a well-defined, specific number, while the second is a great, indefinite multitude.

"Great multitude" is an expression also found in Matthew 8:1, 18; 13:2; 14:14; Mark 4:1, and other verses. In all of these cases, we have no idea exactly how many people were present, because no exact number is given; it is indefinite. And it is the same in Revelation 7:9—but not in Revelation 7:4 and 14:1, where a very definite number is written.

One hundred forty-four thousand

The first passage records the number of those who would be sealed: "I heard the number of them which

were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand" (Revelation 7:4), without any indication that this number is symbolic. In the second passage, the sealed ones are seen with the Lamb on Mount Zion, and there is no indication that the number is not to be taken literally: "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads." Revelation 14:1. Here the one hundred forty-four thousand are seen as triumphant, and additional details about them follow in the subsequent verses; but there is no hint that this number is not literal. Therefore, the only conclusion one can draw is that human interpretation, not the Bible, is supposing that this number is symbolic.

We are not dealing with abstract symbols, indefinite numbers, or vague expressions here but with a concrete, precise number, "one hundred forty-four thousand." These people are sealed and numbered; they are real people who inherit eternal life, and so the number must be real and literal, as literal as if we would say that one hundred and forty-four thousand people live in a certain place, or that the members of a tribe are one hundred forty-four thousand, or that the people living in a certain region are one hundred forty-four thousand. There is no reason to think of symbolic numbers.

Among the billions living on the earth, these texts present a remnant, escaped people who are redeemed for eternal life. When the flood came on the earth in Noah's day, out of thousands and possibly millions of people, only a remnant was saved—"eight souls were saved by water" (1 Peter 3:20)—and everyone believes that there were exactly eight people, no more and no less. When Elijah believed that he alone remained as the one prophet faithful to the Lord, the answer come that it was not so: "Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." 1 King 19:18. Was this a figurative, symbolic number, representing millions, or was it an actual figure? There is no doubt that these figures were real, and so there is no doubt that one hundred and forty-four thousand is also a literal number.

The 144,000 in the Spirit of Prophecy

Up to this point we have considered the Biblical passages. We will also look at what the writings of Ellen G. White present. What will we note in making a comparison? Do we find elements that help us better to understand the subject? In the inspired statements, we never read that this special number is a symbolic or indefinite number. The one hundred forty-four thousand are always presented as a group of saved people, a well-identified group with special privileges. The number is never presented as symbolic or associated with a symbolic meaning. Following are some statements.

The 144,000 triumphed

Referring to the moment when Jesus will appear, the Spirit of prophecy makes different references to the condition of the believers. In this description, they are called “the righteous,” “the saints,” “all the saints,” “the 144,000.” No indication is given of a symbolic number: “I saw that the four angels would hold the four winds until Jesus’ work was done in the sanctuary, and then will come the seven last plagues. These plagues enraged the wicked against the righteous; they thought that we had brought the judgments of God upon them, and that if they could rid the earth of us, the plagues would then be stayed. A decree went forth to slay the saints, which caused them to cry day and night for deliverance. This was the time of Jacob’s trouble. Then all the saints cried out with anguish of spirit, and were delivered by the voice of God. The 144,000 triumphed. Their faces were lighted up with the glory of God.” —*Early Writings*, pp. 36, 37.

“The living saints, 144,000 in number”

In *Early Writings*, some visions are presented in which the 144,000 are mentioned. How are they presented—as real or as a symbolic number? The answer is: “the living saints, 144,000 in number.” “The living saints, 144,000 in number, knew and understood the voice, while the wicked thought it was thunder and an earthquake. When God spoke the time, He poured upon us the Holy Ghost, and our faces began to light up and shine with the glory of God, as Moses’ did when he came down from Mount Sinai.” —*Early Writings*, p. 14.

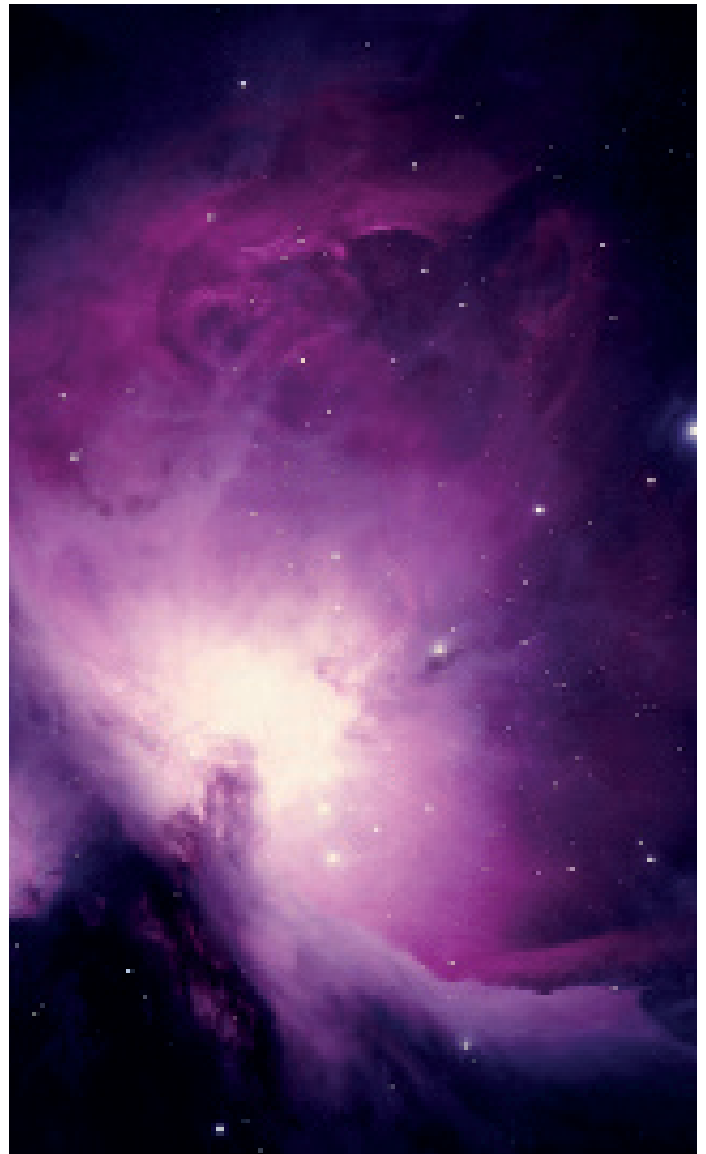
What do the words, “The living saints, 144,000 in number,” mean? They mean that the living saints were 144,000 in number—exactly 144,000, no more and no less. They were not 144,000 in symbol, but 144,000 in number; and this means that there were really 144,000 of them. Thus the Spirit of prophecy confirms that the number 144,000 is literal and not symbolic.

“The 144,000 were all sealed”

The next quotation gives additional details about these redeemed individuals. Is there any indication that the number of them is symbolic? No. Here is the quotation: “The 144,000 were all sealed and perfectly united. On their foreheads was written, God, New Jerusalem, and a glorious star containing Jesus’ new name. At our happy, holy state the wicked were enraged, and would rush violently up to lay hands on us to thrust us into prison, when we would stretch forth the hand in the name of the Lord, and they would fall helpless to the ground.” —*Early Writings*, p. 15.

The 144,000 shouted, “Alleluia!”

“Then Jesus’ silver trumpet sounded, as He descended on the cloud, wrapped in flames of fire. He gazed on the graves of the sleeping saints, then raised His eyes and hands to heaven, and cried, ‘Awake! awake! awake! ye that sleep in the dust, and arise.’ Then there was a mighty earthquake. The graves opened, and the dead came up clothed with immortality. The 144,000 shouted, ‘Alleluia!’ as they recognized their friends who had been torn from them by death, and in the same moment we were changed and caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.” —*Early Writings*, p. 16. Here the 144,000 are seen at the moment of the general resurrection of the just, as they recognize some of their friends who had been separated from them by death. Sister White could very well have written here that this group is to be seen as symbolic, but no such explanation is found.





by José Vicente Giner

Morality Extinct?

We do not need to be anthropologists, sociologists, or experts in human behavior to know that this world is suffering badly under wickedness, crime, and pollution. Societies are adrift without a map or compass. In fact, if a well-intentioned, enthusiastic defender of the goodness inherent in human beings wishes to find support for his ideas, he can look at statistics and reports available on the Internet or in the news. Finding such information is easy.

He can search the Internet for phrases such as “criminality in the world,” “criminality in” this or that “city,” “crime in the world,” “wars,” “violent deaths,” “pollution of the planet,” “diseases,” “hunger in the world,” or other variables. The results are amazing—and very terrible.

It may be argued that there have always been difficulties in the world and that this is normal. Yes, it is true that there has always been evil under the sun; but it is also true that evil has increased exponentially in our days. Furthermore, the fact that a bad situation has developed over time does not mean that it should be so.

Human solutions

Faced with this confirmation, the question is: Can the problems that beset humanity be solved? Man cannot solve every conflict and turn this world into a paradise, because a basic problem affects the human mind—man’s nature.

But there is something that can be done. If we take the Bible as the single authoritative book to explain the great questions of humanity, we will find that it corroborates what we are saying: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Genesis 6:5. According to this text, the antediluvians had a sinful, degenerate, corrupt nature that led them to do evil all the time. This is what caused God to destroy the world in the universal flood of Noah’s day to purify the earth. But afterward that same evil nature again drove the human race to the point where we are today.

Jesus prophesied that in the time of the end people would reach a level of degradation that was similar to that of the race before the flood was unleashed. Matthew 24:37-39. It does not take much imagination to see that this prophecy is being fulfilled in our time and that humanity has lost control of this world.

Consider drug trafficking, child and adult prostitution, child labor exploitation, crime, violence, depraved sexuality, suicide, and many other things. This does not mean that governments are not trying to combat these things. We are not saying this. But in spite of all the efforts that are put forth, the evils continue to expand. We cannot ignore the advances that science has made in various disciplines to try to solve disorders of human behavior, but it is obvious that little has been achieved. It would seem that morality, understood to be the behavior that an individual must adhere to to preserve social stability, is becoming extinct.

For example, according to El Universal, November 23, 2012, of every 100 women aged 15 and over who have had a partner or a husband, 47 have experienced situations of emotional, economic, physical, or sexual violence during their current or previous relationship. <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/885295.html>. Is something not very wrong with this?

A perfect moral code

The world is morally out of control, but what else can be done? As stated above, there is something that can be done to raise the human race from the mud of misery to the pure atmosphere of goodness, and that is the return to Biblical Christian morality.

I use the phrase “Biblical Christian morality,” because there always has been a false Christian morality, one that has led and still leads professed Christians to organize religious wars, crusades, holy inquisitions, etc., in the name of God. It is asserted that such things come from the gospel, but in reality they are the fruit of selfishness, of a false interpretation of Christ’s teachings.

The moral code of the Ten Commandments (when respected) is the only thing capable of restraining barbarism and bringing man into harmony with God’s will. The Lord Jesus exemplified this code by living according to its precepts and demonstrating that His morality was superior to that of any political or religious institution. He taught how the hardened heart of a human being can be changed.

In the first place, we must recognize that man’s nature is automatically sinful, that we tend to evil by nature: “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his

spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Jeremiah 13:23. That is why Jesus told Nicodemus, an influential ruler among the Jews, that if he wanted to enter God's kingdom he must be born again. John 3:5, 6.

To be born again means to have a complete change of nature and character. That transformation can occur only if one honestly recognizes his sinful nature. A patient cannot be made well if he does not recognize that he is sick. Isaiah illustrated the human condition with a sickening description: "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." Isaiah 1:6.

Then, one must go to the only One who can heal those soul wounds. We need to stop making detours, trying to find the water of life in the broken cisterns of human philosophy, atheism, worldliness, false religion, or weak humanity. Jesus Christ, the beloved Saviour, is the only One who can transform the character, bringing it into conformity with the morality of God's holy law. He alone can save to the uttermost. He is the Rock of ages where everyone can find refuge from the storm, the Bread of life to nourish his soul, the Honey that sweetens his existence, the Air that vivifies every fiber and muscle of his body, the Lamb of God who takes away his sin, the Advocate who washes away sin with His precious blood, the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and Omega, the All in all, the only breast where all human heads can find rest, as He says: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matthew 11:28, 29.

What a tender, encouraging invitation Jesus offers to all! Will we go to Him today? Notice that the Lord Jesus offers complete rest. He does not say that He will just remove all our problems or difficult circumstances. He gives complete rest—peace in the soul, liberation from the natural rebelliousness of our hearts, release from the natural enmity that we have against God, and a new attitude to guide our lives. This is true freedom! This is the only true morality!

The result of going to Christ, accepting Him as one's personal Saviour, is peace in the soul. But the verse in Matthew teaches that we must take Christ's yoke and learn from Him. What does this mean? Here is the third part—changing the human heart.

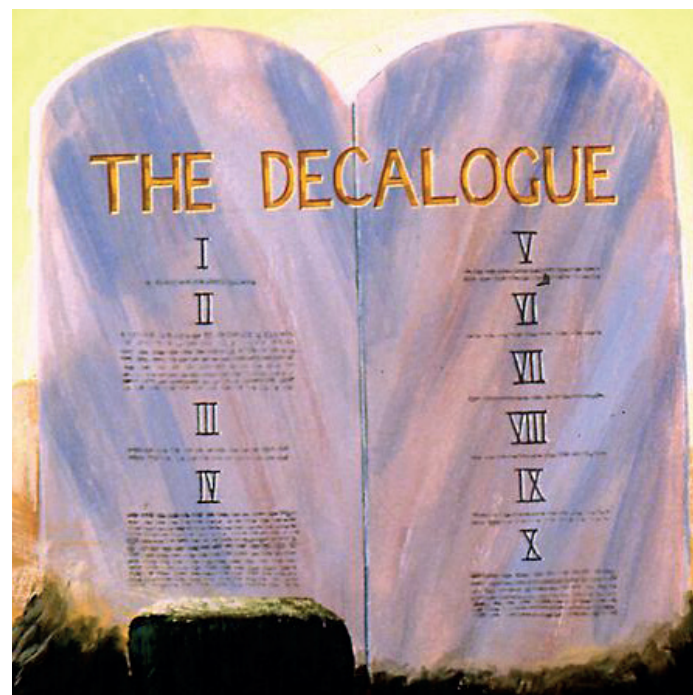
When we accept the fact that Jesus is our Saviour and died on the cross of Calvary to redeem us from sin, when we confess to Him every sin and ask for forgiveness, that is how we submit to Him; and then His yoke is placed upon us. We know that the yoke is the instrument placed on the heads of the oxen to keep them safe on the path, to connect one animal with the other. The yoke couples two things together. It is synonymous with work, discipline, submission, and service. Jeremiah 27:11. To remove

someone's yoke would be to emancipate him, to grant him freedom. Isaiah 58:6. Why, then, does the Lord Jesus say that we should carry His yoke? The rest that Christ offers implies a release from the yoke of sin and in turn submission to the new Lord. Before, the enemy ruled us, making our lives unhappy and bitter. It was a yoke of slavery; now Christ places His yoke of freedom upon us, which are the Ten Commandments. These are the limitations and restrictions that we submit to in order to walk on the narrow path of salvation, subjecting rebellion and selfishness to Christ, identifying ourselves fully with Him, and allowing His character to be in us.

This work is supernatural. We cannot do it, but it must be done. Obedience to the divine precepts of the Decalogue—something that we could not do before, since it is impossible for the carnal flesh—is now possible through Jesus Christ living in one's heart. He forgives our sins and gives the power to overcome them. How wonderful!

The apostle Paul recognized this when he wrote: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Philippians 4:13. The sacred writers used a similar phrase as a greeting and a closing: "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." 2 Peter 1:2.

Grace is the unmerited gift of God through which one is forgiven, accepted, and transformed by Him. Through His grace we are offered the forgiveness and power to overcome every sin, which implies the transformation of character. It is not through our obedience that we are entitled to enter heaven, for heaven has already been won for us by Christ's obedience; rather, genuine faith places us unfailingly on the side of loyalty to God: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of



His good pleasure.” Philippians 2:13. Simply put, the Lord does not just ask us to be obedient to His precepts but He also gives us His Holy Spirit so we can do this, for He knows that we cannot do it by ourselves. Now, through His acting in us, the transformation takes place: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God,...” 2 Corinthians 5:17, 18.

Now, we need to emphasize the fact that submission to God’s law of God is not something bad or degrading, or what some Christians call “legalism.” If we think about it, obeying the Ten Commandments by the grace of Christ implies loving God and our neighbor. Interesting! The first four precepts present our duty to love God, and the remaining six precepts show our duty to love our neighbor. That is why Paul wrote that “love is the fulfilling of the law.” Romans 13:10.

“When the sinner sees his Saviour dying upon the cross under the curse of sin in his stead, beholding His pardoning love, love awakes in his heart. The sinner loves Christ, because Christ has first loved him, and love is the fulfilling of the law. The repenting soul realizes that God ‘is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ The Spirit of God works in the believer’s soul, enabling him to advance from one line of obedience to another, reaching on from strength to greater strength,

from grace to grace in Jesus Christ.” –*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 374, 375.

This is Biblical morality! This is the path that stretches out in front of humanity. It would be good for everyone to reflect on Jesus’ invitation. Human efforts have not been and will not be effective in changing a person. The world is becoming more and more openly degraded, and there seems to be no solution; but we can reverse the equation. Instead of thinking about changing the world, let us change ourselves through the power of God that He offers to each person in Christ.

A human being who has been transformed and is full of love will be like a powerful light that illuminates everyone and everything around him. It will be a powerful influence for good, an instrument of salvation and life that will positively influence one’s spouse, children, and friends. A transformed human being will radiate Christ’s goodness, integrity, and rectitude in families, schools, universities, government institutions, and even on the street. It will affect the media, work, art, and science.

Jesus is undeniable proof. His quiet, simple, humble life, based on obedience to the moral code of the Ten Commandments, affected all of Palestine and spread throughout the world. “Learn of Me,” He still says. Will we do it? It is my desire and prayer that God will grant this grace and joy to you and me.





A Couple's Language of Love

by Raquel Orce Sotomayor

"And above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves." 1 Peter 4:8.

Archimedes said: "Give me a place to stand, and I will move the world." There is no doubt about this; the power of a lever—to which Archimedes was referring—is amazing. It consists, as physics teaches us, of a rigid bar placed on a fulcrum. On one side is the resistance, or what you want to move; and on the other side is the force. The "lever arm" is the distance between the point of support and the force, or between it and the resistance. These distances can be the same or unequal. When they are equal, we have "balance"—in this case, we can lift a weight. A requires a force A, equal to the resistance. However, if the arm corresponding to the force grows, that of the resistance becomes correspondingly less.

This is the principle on which the "lever" is based. One arm, that of the weight, is very short; and the force is very long. In such a manner, one can lift tons with grams. The very small weight of a gram is capable of lifting many tons if the lever arm is long enough where it is applied.¹ This principle of the lever is excellent for understanding the importance of love between the two members of a couple.

The book of Song of Solomon gives guidelines to be followed in this setting. Each section below contains the general principles for preserving, promoting, and expanding the good communication of a couple and, by extension, a family.

"... From the Christian standpoint, love is power. Intellectual and spiritual strength are involved in this principle. Pure love has special efficacy to do good, and can do nothing but good.... Truth and goodness are the properties of pure love."²

Admiration

"Behold, thou art fair, my love;... Behold, thou art fair, my beloved,...." Song of Solomon 1:15, 16.

The feeling of approval and admiration for a spouse's talents, the recognition of the virtues and reciprocal admiration of one person toward the other, expressed verbally and physically, as a result of a conviction of each one's excellence, is a fundamental element in a couple's

relationship. Not only does one confirm the love he feels by making such statements, but there is also a toning, stimulating, and beneficial effect on his spouse.

"Every couple who unite their life interest should seek to make the life of each as happy as possible. That which we prize we seek to preserve and make more valuable if we can. In the marriage contract men and women have made a trade, an investment for life, and they should do their utmost ... even more carefully than they did before their marriage, for now their destinies are united for life as husband and wife, and each is valued in exact proportion to the amount of painstaking effort put forth to retain and keep fresh the love so eagerly sought for and prized before marriage."³

"The sensory experience of the world in all its dimensions is the basis of all capacity to love, and it establishes the reference to the world. And when an adult looks at a child and says admiringly, 'Look how CUTE he is!' that sensory impression deepens even more. A common-looking flower, an evening sky, or a painting connects the child's being immediately to the surrounding world and arouses feelings of joy and respect, as well as of devotion and discovery of that which is beautiful; such feelings are full of relationship."⁴

The first steps in the development of the capacity to love are of great importance to the couple in the progress of their life together. The expressions of sincere, genuine admiration and exaltation of each other, not only the ties, but also the deep experience of mutual love, facilitate even higher levels of expression.

Belonging

"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth,... O my love,...." Song of Solomon 1:7, 9.

It is not enough to be a couple. It is necessary for the two people to combine interests, feelings, dreams, solidarity, trust, and loyalty within the social setting to make the other person the object of one's love, dedication, and partnership forever. This awareness strengthens a healthy sense of belonging to that person, making one better, not

to bring about a reciprocal feeling that the other person also belongs to us, but to establish security and happiness. The awareness of being involved as a participant in a life that is outside of one's own, like a project with a joint future, imparts great security on both sides, establishes a common environment of a four-footed walk on the same path, and spreads a fragrance of serene, intense, extensive, and increasing love.

"The consciousness of being appreciated is a wonderful stimulus and satisfaction. Sympathy and respect encourage the striving after excellence, and love itself increases as it stimulates to nobler aims."⁵

Joy

"... We will be glad and rejoice in thee,... more than wine:..." Song of Solomon 1:4.

Sharing, communicating, and socializing are vitally important in the language of love. The things done together by each partner's own choice make pleasant memories that connect and develop in the couple the desire to be united in everything. "God tests and proves us by the common occurrences of life. It is the little things which reveal the chapters of the heart. It is the little attentions, the numerous small incidents and simple courtesies of life, that make up the sum of life's happiness;..."⁶

"An additional step in education toward the capacity to love can be found when we exert a conscious effort for the rediscovery of the moments of joy, that joy that we can then radiate; this will promote the existential joy of the couple, and with it also their capacity to love. Looking at joy, we have there the power of love. Being full of joy is related to an experience of strength. It is something that radiates voluntarily from the human being and can even affect other people, so that they feel invigorated and strengthened. A basic posture of life with joy strengthens and nourishes the power of love."⁷

"Put Christ in everything you do. Then your life will be full of joy and gratitude.... Let us do our best, joyfully moving forward in the service of the Lord, with our hearts full of happiness."⁸

Closeness

"... Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth,..." Song of Solomon 1:3.

Attachment, the search for an encounter and the enjoyment of closeness, even in thoughts, is of great importance in a couple's interaction. The search, look, yearning, touch and sense of presence are all elements of emotional love. "Interest and understanding lead to the capacity of love, for if one feels understood, love is not far away. If I understand a person and know his limits and what his strengths are, I will stop demanding certain things, simply because I understand. Then, through

that understanding, love develops for the other person. Thus, the possibility opens up to use the knowledge acquired about the other person to love and come close to him."⁹

"Your companionship in the marriage relation should be close and tender, holy and elevated, breathing a spiritual power into your lives, that you may be everything to each other that God's word requires. When you reach the condition that the Lord desires you to reach, you will find heaven below and God in your life."¹⁰

"Remember, my dear brother and sister, that God is love and that by His grace you can succeed in making each other happy;..."¹¹

Reasoning

"... We will be glad and rejoice in thee,..." Song of Solomon 1:4.

The capacity for reflection and increase of affection, emotion, and feeling that bind the couple is essential in building a strong, consistent, lasting emotional relationship. In the experience of true love, the knowledge of the couple is of supreme importance. "Often it is our own attitude, the atmosphere that surrounds ourselves, which determines what will be revealed to us in another."¹²

The objectivity applied to knowledge in the relationship is part shared personal wealth. The certainty of knowledge and understanding of the other person's uniqueness and attributes brings about a confirmation of the union and trust that unfold in common love.

"Determine to be all that it is possible to be to each other. Continue the early attentions. In every way encourage each other in fighting the battles of life. Study to advance the happiness of each other. Let there be mutual love, mutual forbearance. Then marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be as it were the very beginning of love. The warmth of true friendship, the love that binds heart to heart, is a foretaste of the joys of heaven."¹³

Speaking

"Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold." "A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me;..." Song of Solomon 1:10, 13.



The verbal expression of the most tender, deep thoughts to each other is very uplifting and rewarding, for it stimulates, approaches, confirms, and strengthens the emotional bonds of the couple. "Love should be seen in the looks and manners, and heard in the tones of the voice."¹⁴

Spoken words are the result of previous thoughts that will be a blessing to the hearer as well as to the speaker. This raises the couple's relationship to a higher emotional bond, because words expressed as thoughts of the heart give an emotional experience to both members of the couple. "Let the light of heavenly grace irradiate your character, that there may be sunlight in the home. Let there be peace, pleasant words, and cheerful countenances."¹⁵

Expressing one's love verbally is a highly rewarding personal experience for the one who expresses the thoughts as well as for the one who hears them, ennobling and blessing both.

Beginning

"Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death;..." Song of Solomon 8:6.

Regardless of the circumstances, and despite these, love as the foundation of the couple's relationship develops as a motivating, growing action for good.

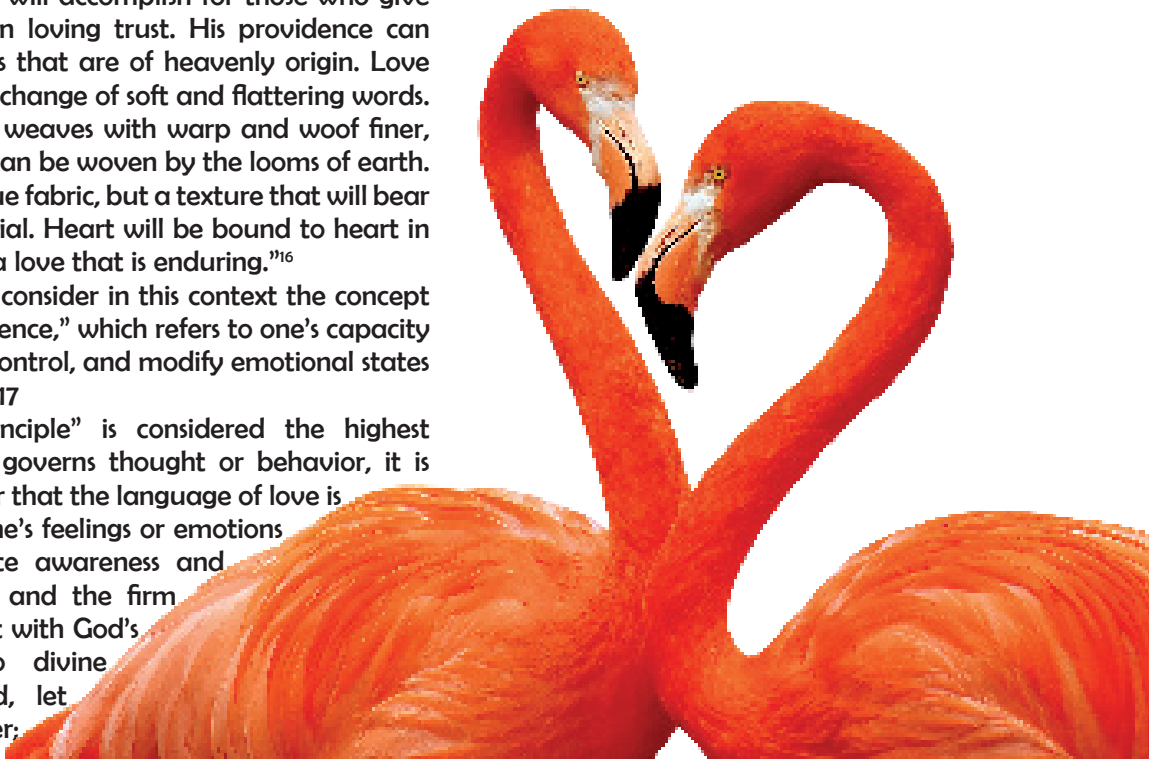
"Men and women can reach God's ideal for them if they will take Christ as their helper. What human wisdom cannot do, His grace will accomplish for those who give themselves to Him in loving trust. His providence can unite hearts in bonds that are of heavenly origin. Love will not be a mere exchange of soft and flattering words. The loom of heaven weaves with warp and woof finer, yet more firm, than can be woven by the looms of earth. The result is not a tissue fabric, but a texture that will bear wear and test and trial. Heart will be bound to heart in the golden bonds of a love that is enduring."¹⁶

It is interesting to consider in this context the concept of "emotional intelligence," which refers to one's capacity to feel, understand, control, and modify emotional states in oneself and others.¹⁷

If the term "principle" is considered the highest personal norm that governs thought or behavior, it is important to consider that the language of love is not dependent on one's feelings or emotions but on the complete awareness and knowledge of good and the firm decision to practice it with God's help. According to divine inspiration, "Beloved, let us love one another:

for love is of God. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us,..." 1 John 4:7-10. The originator of love is God, and its closeness and our desire make us participants in love. The ability to love another person is evidence of our relationship with the Lord, whose love is independent of circumstances, human acceptance, or the recognition of others, for it imparts love and generates love on principle.

- 1 <http://www.obracultural.org/anecdotas%20y%20reflexiones/la%20palanca.htm>
- 2 The Adventist Home, p. 195.
- 3 (Letter 27, November 22, 1872) In Heavenly Places, p. 206.
- 4 M. Gloeckler, Educación hacia la capacidad de amar (Education for the Ability to Love).
- 5 The Ministry of Healing, p. 361.
- 6 Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, p. 133.
- 7 Educación hacia la capacidad de amar (Education for the Ability to Love).
- 8 Australasian Union Record, November 15, 1903.
- 9 Educación hacia la capacidad de amar (Education for the Ability to Love).
- 10 The Adventist Home, p. 112.
- 11 Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 49.
- 12 The Ministry of Healing, p. 360.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, p. 417.
- 15 Review and Herald, September 15, 1891.
- 16 The Ministry of Healing, p. 362.
- 17 Dr. J.R. Olguin, Inteligencia Emocional.





by S. Gutknecht

Nehemiah

In studying the Holy Scriptures, we find a man named Nehemiah, who left a report about his important commission and its execution. Reading it, one immediately puts himself in his place, shares his worries, needs, and fears, and rejoices in his victories. The principles of divine leadership are evident in everything that he did. The lessons are fascinating, and they have been the foundation of my ministry. With the passage of time, as my responsibilities changed, Nehemiah remained my example. He was a man of action, not just words.

God called Abraham and his descendants to proclaim an eternal message. The people of Israel were to be the light of the world, to reveal the Creator in His wonderful love, grace, and divine power. Unfortunately, with the passage of time, the chosen people strayed so far from God that, instead of worshipping the living God, the Creator of the universe, they worshiped idols and sacrificed their children to Moloch. The kings of Israel made relationships with the heathen, adopted their customs and uses, and led the nation into deep apostasy, instead of seeking God and His prophets to guide and advise them. In fact, because they did not heed the warnings of the prophet Jeremiah, they were taken captive to Babylon, where they remained for seventy years. The holy city and the temple were destroyed, the people were taken captive, and the flourishing land, as it was at the time of Solomon, became a desert. But after seventy years, the people were released from captivity, as God had prophesied through the prophet Jeremiah.

“For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” Jeremiah 29:10, 11.

Nehemiah was a child of the captivity. Over the course of history, many Jews learned what it meant to be a minority. They also knew what it meant to succeed. This is how it was for Nehemiah, who occupied a high position as the cupbearer in the court of King Artaxerxes. This monarch was very influential in his time. Nehemiah, his cupbearer, or taster, had to taste the wine before personally presenting it to the king, for in that way the monarch was guaranteed that the wine had not been poisoned. Considering his position, we can see that Nehemiah was a man who had the king's confidence.

His responsibility was great, for the security of the powerful monarch and the stability of the kingdom depended on him. He certainly did not come to that position through the intercession of friends of influence. The basis for his holding such a position was, first, divine guidance and providence, and, secondly, his character, keen mind, common sense, initiative, and ability to avoid intrigue. His life depended on the proper execution of his duties, and therefore he had to be very exact, even in small details. These characteristics are visible in the book of Nehemiah.

Before offering wine to the king, the cupbearer had to be informed about its origin, supervise when it was brought to the

palace and deposited in the cellar, and document its course until the moment when it was served at the king's table. The employees of the royal kitchen had to follow his instructions without questioning. Indeed, Nehemiah was a person of great influence in the Persian court.

His book has to do with the reconstruction of the nation some five hundred years before the Babylonians sacked the southern kingdom and took its inhabitants captive. After that, when Babylon fell into the hands of Cyrus, the Persian king, he allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem. This happened in B.C. 538, and there is a report of it in chapter six of the book of Ezra. However, when Nehemiah learned about the great misery which had overtaken his people and the beloved city, he fasted, prayed, and cried. It was then that God intervened in his life and called him to do a great work with enormous responsibilities. He was to rebuild the city wall and bring about a reformation. In B.C. 445, Nehemiah went to Jerusalem to carry out the mission that God had given him.

Nehemiah was a man of prayer who believed and trusted God. You can only trust someone whom you know well. In such a case, you should know two things about that person: Can he and will he do what is expected of him? Nehemiah knew that God could and would. The great, powerful God can do everything, He will keep His promises, and He will be merciful to those who love Him. He also supports those who honor His name. Nehemiah did not doubt God's ability or faithfulness.

What made Nehemiah a strong leader was his ability to identify with others. There is a point that needs to be considered here regarding guilt. Nehemiah confessed the sins of others as if they were his own: “We have dealt very corruptly against Thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which Thou commandedst Thy servant Moses.” Nehemiah 1:7. Nehemiah's prayer contains something else: He identifies with his people, like a lawyer. He pleads with the Lord while being surrounded by a city full of guilt and acts as the inhabitants' intercessor. Nehemiah showed that the destiny of his people and the holy city was more important to him than himself.

A man of action

As soon as he received permission from the king to do so, he began preparing for his mission. He took great pains to be sure that there were sufficient resources to carry out every expectation and that the people would be safe on the journey. He planned every step of the work and divided it into different tasks. At this time, he does not reveal himself as the godly man who trusts in God but as a thorough administrator of the work. God is a God of order. All His creation is in perfect order. A God of order never inspires chaos through his Holy Spirit. Reading the book of Nehemiah, one can see that his sense of order was demonstrated in three ways:

- He analyzed every part of what needed to be accomplished before presenting it in prayer to God. Nehemiah 2:1-10.
- He planned in advance so as not to make mistakes. Nehemiah 2:11-16.
- He motivated the people before delegating portions of the work. Nehemiah 2:17, 18.

Overcoming discouragement

Discouragement is a human tendency, but Nehemiah gave evidence that it can be overcome. "Then said I unto them, Ye see how the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." Nehemiah 2:17.

Nehemiah was a leader who went ahead of the people, not one who pushed from behind. Not only did he identify with them, but he stood in front and invited them to follow. He presented the seriousness of the matter. It makes no sense to minimize the difficulties. Leaders who do not inform their collaborators about the problems that may arise in carrying out the plan are not only unwise but also immoral. The coworkers want and need to be informed. A leader who supplies complete information gains the trust of his fellowmen.

Winston Churchill was an example in this. When he was given power in a bankrupt England, he did not promise the people anything but blood, struggle, tears, and sweat. It was precisely because of this that the nation rallied to the cause as never before. A leader must have a sense of reality. Carrying responsibilities means approaching the people. Many do not readily follow a program, but they follow the leaders who inspire and motivate them.

The leader and administration

The leaders in God's cause know how to work, although work is not the most important thing for them, since they are to delegate it to others.

To begin the work in Jerusalem, Nehemiah divided the people into teams and made clear to each what its work was. All of the groups participated in the work. The person who has a position of responsibility must make the task clear and see that it is carried out properly. No leader can carry out everything all by himself; he has to be able to delegate responsibilities to others. This is more important than one's own ability or disposition.

Skills cannot replace selfless energy. If Nehemiah had not personally participated in the work, his organizational efficiency, his ability to maintain peace under difficult situations, his prayers, and everything else would have been in vain. Prayer can accomplish much, but it must be supported by action, without which no project can be completed. A person who does not work hard and is not willing to make sacrifices cannot be used by God.

For every leader, his opponents are his toughest test. Criticism and opposition have brought many leaders to the brink of despair. The incredible leadership talent that Nehemiah possessed was visible in the way he dealt with his opponents. As we know, from the beginning of his plan, even before he arrived in Jerusalem, he met opposition. This continued until the work was finally completed. Although there were deceit, threats, mockery, and contempt, Nehemiah did not allow any of these things to distract him from the mission that God had given him. This is where his leadership ability was especially seen.

Opposition from within

It is generally more difficult to face opposition from within than enmity and attacks that come from without. Opposition from within can be active or passive. Active opposition is usually apparent in public conflict, but passive opposition takes the form of intrigue. In the case of Nehemiah, the opposition from within was passive. The undercurrent of opposition became stronger and stronger until it inevitably became open controversy. The fifth chapter tells about this and how Nehemiah resolved the situation that had to do with money and the treatment of the people. Indeed, the issue of money in Christian circles is very delicate. If someone is accused of something in this area, the reputation of the entire church or organization can be destroyed. Chapter 5:1 says: "And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews."

How did Nehemiah react to this accusation? Could he avoid a public conflict? If so, how did it act? When a leader faces opposition, he must be honest, otherwise his hands are tied. Nehemiah is a wonderful example in this regard.

Greed-free, exemplary generosity

In chapter 5:14, all doubt about Nehemiah's integrity in money matters is dispelled. In fact, in his role as governor of Jerusalem, he even had an official, written commission to rebuild the wall. His first term of service lasted 12 years. Chapter 5:14. He was able to collect taxes to cover the expenses of his mission, including taking care of and feeding officials and guests, all of which naturally involved a significant outlay of funds. Nehemiah said: "But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people; but so did not I, because of the fear of God." Nehemiah 5:15.

The expenses were considerable. Nehemiah had about 150 employees. Just as parents take care of their children, so Nehemiah took care of the people. This was also the reason why he could deflect the accusations made against him. He was not attracted by riches or honor. For that reason, his enemies had no power over him. Through him, others became rich. When he arrived in Jerusalem, the price of land was relatively cheap. Through his administration and the successful completion of the city gates, the price of land increased rapidly. Nehemiah did not come to take, but to give. It is wonderful to read that, instead of using his servants to fulfill his personal desires, he took them to the wall and worked with them in the construction. He wrote simply: "Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work." Nehemiah 5:16.

Often love is stifled by the ambition for wealth. In rich countries, spiritual leaders all too often become rich because of their position. They are more wolves than sheep. Christian leadership should not lead to those who occupy high positions getting rich, but in the history of the church there is evidence that this was often the case. Nehemiah was exactly the opposite of this. He was an extraordinary example of courage, sacrifice, generosity, honesty, and earnest devotion to God and His people.



World in Brief

FIRST CONGRESS IN CAPE VERDE

“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.” Luke 15:7.

BAPTISM AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE NEW MEMBER OF THE I.M.S.



ISALDO ANDRADE MENDES, FIRST MEMBER OF CAPE VERDE FOR GOD.





MISSIONARY REPORT FROM FIJI

Greetings to our friends and brethren!

The Fijian brethren greet you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Friend. Together we share the blessed hope of the soon coming of the Lord and with great urgency seek to be prepared to meet Him when He comes.

We recently held our Field delegates' meetings and conference, and it was a great pleasure and blessing for us to have Pastor Anton Salavyov, Oceania Division President, back in the Fiji Islands, to conduct these important meetings and more so to share refreshing spiritual messages with the brethren.

The work in Fiji has been going on for some years now, with new church groups being established in many new places. It was in the area of one of these new church groups that we chose to hold the conference—about two hours' drive north of the main island of Viti Levu, nearer to the seaside.

On Friday, everyone gathered to open the Sabbath. The majority of our members live near the capital, while others live in villages or individual settlements, so on this occasion they travelled to the rural village site for the meeting.

The conference theme, "Choose you this day whom will you serve," challenged every participant to give a definite answer regarding his or her spiritual priorities. Brethren, we need to answer this question—to our own soul, to the brethren, and to God! We need to come clean. Whom are we serving? Unless we choose and give the right answer, we are serving something else in the place of God.

Our small local church was filled with the members and a few visitors. The blessing came in a series of PowerPoint Presentations given by Elder Salavyov, titled "Gold Refined Seven Times" and "The Root of All Evil." He emphasized how God repeats the same process of spiritual cleansing and growth in different periods of our experience and how we are fortunate to undergo the experience daily, so that we will be prepared for Christ's daily coming in our lives and then with amazing joy also greet Him at His second coming.

God expects no less than the seven times that the spiritual gold is refined in us now, as He has also required it of His children in the past. After the closing of the Sabbath, everyone dispersed with agreement that we had shared the true blessing of another Sabbath.

On Sunday morning, the program opened with the baptism in the ocean of two young sisters, Makereta and Litia. This was followed by their acceptance, the Lord's Supper service, and lunch. After that, we spent the rest of the afternoon in organizational meetings and ended with the ordination of church elders. Despite the length of time we took for these meetings, the Lord's presence was felt throughout, and the meetings ran smoothly to their conclusion.

We have a great responsibility in our region, both as individuals and also collectively as a church. Our numbers may be few, and perhaps alone we can do only a little; but we believe that, as we put all of our limited energies and capabilities into the Lord's hands, we can be sure of success.

We thank you for your prayers, thoughts, and support to the Fijian Field and all of the work in the Pacific region. We could not be successful in our efforts if it were not for your support, so we continue to plead for your help and are mindful of the ultimate course that Jesus has laid before us, to finish the work of preparing a people to meet Jesus at His coming.

May we continue to work together in the Lord is our wish and prayer. God bless you all.

Pastor Sanaila Ravia Kenivale



CANDIDATES FOR BAPTISM



SERVICE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH



BAPTISMS



CHURCH CHOIR



CHURCH CHILDREN



World in Brief



TEAMWORK IN VANUATU

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” Psalm 133:1.

Dear brethren and friends,

I wish to share with you the blessed experience I made during my last visit to Vanuatu. This was an experience that I will never forget.

This is the island country where I began my work in the Oceania Division. I will never forget my first visit with Brother Sanaila. God helped us, and Brother Tony William was the first fruit of our efforts. He was very missionary minded and had very serious interest in studying the Scriptures and joining the church. That is why, to my surprise, he came to Fiji when I visited the brethren there. After intense studies and some clarification, he made his decision to be baptized in the original Reform Movement. Then came time for our second trip to Port Vila, the capital city and economic center of Vanuatu. We met with him there, and he guided us to his home island of Epi. It was a very blessed, happy time when many souls accepted and followed the truth and joined the church. A few more trips to Vanuatu followed, and Brother Tony William helped us to get started with the work in Port Vila. He helped to make connections in the Solomon Islands as well.

Now, it grieves me greatly to have to inform you that Brother Tony William passed way about three months ago. After hearing the sad news, I did my best to find an opportunity to visit our brethren in Vanuatu. This time I had a plan with a different approach. I pleaded with the Lord for help, for I had many reasons for being concerned. My main concern was that, while being very fruitful, Brother Tony William preferred to work alone, not lead a team. That is why my primary effort now was to meet with the Field Committee and build a team.

It was wonderful to see that the brethren in the Field Committee were ready to work as a well-organized unit. They wanted to work as a team, as is according to our Lord's plan. We spent a happy, enjoyable time together and made plans in perfect harmony. We felt the presence of the Holy Spirit among us. May the Lord continue to give His abundant blessings to our faithful, humble brethren, who are now responsible for the Lord's work in Vanuatu.

We had a very blessed time with spiritual conversations and seminars. We spoke about the process of character transformation in which God changes our nature and mentality, giving us tests to gain experience under His guidance. It is very important for us to surrender ourselves to the Him, permit Him to transform our characters according to His divine will, and become as He is. Yes, we need to become like Jesus. Let us all have this great goal, having in mind that we must surrender to Him entirely!

God bless our brethren in Vanuatu. Please pray for them.

Anton Salavyov
Oceania Division President



WITH SOME CHILDREN



MEMBERSHIP GROUP



SOME OF THE MEMBERS



ACCEPTANCE AS A MEMBER

