

The Sabbath Watchman

2020

January – March



*“... Behold, I make all
things new...”*

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Introduction

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Already has the new year been ushered in; yet before we greet its coming, we pause to ask, What has been the history of the year that with its burden of records has now passed into eternity? The admonition of the apostle comes down the lines to every one of us, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." God forbid that at this important hour we should be so engrossed with other matters as to give no time to serious, candid, critical self-examination! Let things of minor consequence be put in the background, and let us now bring to the front the things which concern our eternal interests....

No one of us can in our own strength represent the character of Christ; but if Jesus lives in the heart, the spirit dwelling in Him will be revealed in us; all our lack will be supplied. Who will seek at the beginning of this new year to obtain a new and genuine experience in the things of God? Make your wrongs right as far as possible. Confess your errors and sins one to another. Let all bitterness and wrath and malice be put away; let patience, long-suffering, kindness, and love become a part of your very being; then whatsoever things are pure and lovely and of good report will mature in your experience....

What fruit have we borne during the year that is now past? What has been our influence upon others? Whom have we gathered to the fold of Christ? The eyes of the world are upon us. Are we living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men? Do we follow the example of Jesus in self-denial, in meekness, in humility, in forbearance, in cross-bearing, in devotion? Will the world be compelled to acknowledge us to be the servants of Christ? ...

Shall we not in this new year seek to correct the errors of the past? It behooves us individually to cultivate the grace of Christ, to be meek and lowly of heart, to be firm, unwavering, steadfast in the truth; for thus only can we advance in holiness, and be made fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. Let us begin the year with an entire renunciation of self; let us pray for clear discernment, that we may understand our Saviour's claims upon us, and that we may always and everywhere be witnesses for Christ (The Signs of the Times, January 4, 1883).

Lift up Jesus, you that teach the people. Lift Him up in exhortations, in sermons, in songs, in prayer. Let all your efforts be directed to pointing souls, confused, bewildered, and lost, to "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Bid them look and live (The Review and Herald, April 12, 1892).

Ellen G. White.

Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said [a]to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

Revelation 21:5

The Sabbath Watchman

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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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New Year's Message for 2020

By Tzvetan Petkov

*“Rejoice in the Lord always:
and again I say, Rejoice.”* Philippians 4:4

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,
dear friends:

The Lord created our world and gave the moon and the sun for the calculation of time. To God, time is relative. “... One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8), because the Lord is eternal with no beginning and no end. However, in our sinful world, time matters. We are subject to change, and our time is counted.

One year has 365 days according to the solar Julian Calendar. The Jewish lunar calendar has a different distribution of the days in the months but comes to the same conclusion of 365.25 days in a 19-year cycle. In his prayer, Moses said, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” Psalm 90:12. Counting our days will make us aware of our limitations and able to treasure time.

Do you treasure your time? What are you going to do with the days of this new year 2020? In the story of “The Grasshopper and the Ants,” one of Aesop’s Fables, the grasshopper spent the summer making music while the ants were gathering food for the winter. When summer ended and the cold weather arrived, there was no more food to be found, so the grasshopper asked the ants for food. They answered, “What did you do all summer?” and refused to help him.

To be happy, we need self-realization, development, and a feeling of progress. Spiritually and physically, our progress depends on the use of time and opportunities. The parable of the ten virgins makes it clear that time needs to be used for preparation. The midnight cry will not prepare the believers to meet Jesus; it

will only announce His coming. How may I be one of the wise virgins? How may I rejoice all the days of the year and have bread in store for the day of need?

Be close to Christ

Living each day with Christ is the wisest decision one can make. The apostle says in Romans 8:31: “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” Invite Jesus every day to accompany you in your decisions, travel, and work. Let Him be your best Friend, and share with Him your problems, fears, and joys. Learn to talk to Him in prayer and listen to His voice. Read the Bible every day, and write down your thoughts. Think about the holy Scriptures when you drive, walk, or work.

Once at the bank, the lady who was serving me was waiting for something to be printed. She looked at me and said, “Pastor, let us use the time. I was reading the Bible this morning, and I don’t understand something. Will you be so kind to explain it while the printer finishes?” So, we had a short Bible study, and I was impressed with how close this Baptist member was to her Bible.

By reading the word, we may
be filled with the Holy Spirit and
be strengthened. Let us commit
ourselves to having worship and
reading a chapter in the Bible
every day.

Did you know that, if you do this, you will read the whole Bible in one year? In His forgiveness we have joy, freedom, and constant growth. The Lord loves us.

Share the good news

To be happy is not just a momentary feeling or joyful emotion but, according to the apostle, a constant condition. “Rejoice in the Lord always: ...” Philippians 4:4. This is possible only if our joy does not depend on circumstances but is part of our daily experience. To be with Jesus contributes to this exceptional miracle described in the letter to the Romans. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28. To see God’s loving hand in every small or big event in life is an impressive experience. The smile will never fade from our faces.

However, if we rejoice daily, we will be filled with a burning desire to share this joy with others. How can we make people happy and share with them the joy of our hearts? Let us look around us and see if there is someone who needs the message of Jesus—a neighbor, colleague, or relative; the list may go on and on. Let us share our experiences with them. Remember how you became a believer. Share it with others. There is nothing more exciting than your own experience. If others do not respond according to your expectations, do not be discouraged. Remember the above Bible verse, and the time will come when you will see amazing results.

I received my first Bible when I was a student at the university. The brother who gave it to me intended to invite me to church but without success. One day he told me, “I don’t believe that you will ever come to the faith.”

But two years later, I met this brother again; and, to his surprise, I grabbed him and said to him, “Now take me to church.” He himself was no longer a member of the church, but he took me to the Wednesday prayer meeting. I will never forget how God filled my heart with joy.

Make friends

In the July 11, 2017, issue of Psychology Today are the results of a study at Harvard University related to the importance of friendship. The results were impressive. The immune system was shown to be stronger in those who had friends. They overcame illness more easily and in a shorter time than did those who were alone. Finally, the report showed that the health of those who had no friends was similar to those who smoke ten cigarettes a day. —<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-couch/201706/study-reveals-key-happiness-leaves-question-unanswered>

Why is having friends so important? We can share our burdens with them. We can communicate our experience in faith and help and be helped by them. To make friends, one needs to be friendly. The relationships among human beings act as a mirror. When we smile at someone, he will smile back. If we are angry with someone, he will be angry with us. If we wish to have friends, we need to be patient, give attention and respect to others, smile and be friendly, be helpful and forgiving, and not be judgmental but have tolerance for differences among us.

Jesus once told His disciples, “... How long shall I suffer you?” (Matthew 17:17) which means that it was not easy for the Son of God to live in human circumstances and to see people’s lack of faith, evil tendencies, and everything else that the fallen sinful nature includes. Among the

disciples were those with greedy plans for supremacy, a traitor who was ready to betray his Master for money, and desires for high positions. However, Jesus did not abandon His friends. On the contrary, He laid down His life for them, forgave their sins, paid the penalty for their sin, and loved them deeply.

Having Jesus as your Friend will make you able to be a friend to others. Making other people happy through your friendship will enrich you and fill you with joy and happiness.

Having Jesus as your Friend will make you able to be a friend to others. Making other people happy through your friendship will enrich you and fill you with joy and happiness.

Do good

Salvation is a free gift received through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. His righteousness covers the believers so they appear before the Father represented by the perfect merits of Jesus. It is not possible to purchase salvation, and man’s best deeds cannot match the holiness and the high price that Jesus paid for his salvation. However, by doing good to others, we are representing Christ in a good light before the world. The new heart that Christ plants in the newborn Christian burns with joy in doing good to others.

But there is more. Doing good to others is contagious and inspires them to want to do good as well. The battle against evil is fought by overcoming through doing good. Romans 12:21. Faith without works is dead, according to the apostle James, which means that living faith will inspire and motivate the practice of good works. Doing good things for others is not a way to purchase salvation or to be proud of our own merits before the heavenly throne; rather, genuine goodness flows naturally from the converted heart so that, as the Lord describes it, it is as if the right hand

does not know what the left hand is doing. Thus, through the miracle-working power of Jesus, goodness becomes part of us and of our daily lives, to the point where the mind does not even think about the fact that one is doing good. Therefore, when the believer is reminded, “For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: Naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me” (Matthew 25:35, 36), the answer is, “When did I do this?”

As instruments in the hand of God, we need to ask ourselves the question every day: “What would Jesus do in my place? How would He handle this situation?” We may be very interested in and have knowledge of prophecy, but how is this knowledge reflected in our daily lives? We may be well acquainted with the theology and the systematic plan of salvation, but how can we demonstrate to our neighbors that we are a converted Christian? We may hold an office in the church, but how well do we demonstrate godliness in our families and our close circle of relatives? The Bible answers these questions. “... By their fruits ye shall know them.” “Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?” Matthew 7:20; James 3:10, 11.

By doing good in us, the Spirit of God will increase His presence in our hearts. The gifts of the Spirit are given to bless others and will expand and increase in our hearts if we make efforts to serve others. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus gave God as an example of One who does only good, and He mentioned that His love is reflected in the good works that He does for everyone—those who are good and those who are not in this evil world. Do you want to fill all of the days of this new year with good, useful, joyful activities? Follow Christ. Do good to everyone who comes your way, and joy will never depart from your heart. You will be free and blessed indeed.

We wish you a blessed new year 2020! May you experience joy and spiritual growth in this year. ■



The battle against evil is to overcome it by doing good.



Christian Pacifism

By Antonino Di Franca

“Repay no one evil for evil”

Romans 12:17

The world is in a spiral of violence. On the streets, in schools, in public places, and even in one's own home a person cannot be sure that he can live without being threatened. Men, women, the elderly, young people, and children are all at risk.

How is it possible for a person to protect himself? How should one deal with injustice, oppression, threats, and violence? If one is offended or mistreated by someone, are thoughts and feelings of “getting even” appropriate? And in case of serious results or injury, is it permissible pay back in like manner the one who has done wickedly? In other words, even if it is in self-defense, is it right before God for the believer to “do justice” with his own hands? In today's world, where wickedness is steadily increasing, it is not uncommon for a child of God to find himself in such circumstances. What should be done, then, if we, a relative, a friend, or our family is faced with such a situation?

There are a number of answers to this question—often humanly logical, but not always acceptable before God. Everyone agrees with the general idea that injustice must be dealt with, but how? The most common response is: “You have to do something to stop it, with force if necessary.” And who should do this? “The government, with the support of all of the country's citizens,” is the usual answer. Many people believe that the citizenry includes believers. The Bible is used to justify this way of thinking by quoting certain laws and Old Testament examples. Believe it or not, such ideas have been around for years among Seventh-day Adventists.

One argument is that force at the public or personal level, be it the death penalty, self-defense, national defense, or something similar—directly or indirectly, voluntarily or involuntarily—to a certain degree includes violence. “Since that was how it was in the Old Testament era, why,” they ask, “should it not be possible in the New?”

An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth

When someone has suffered an assault of some kind and has reacted physically, the justification is generally, “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.” That is, the person got what he deserved. Saying this goes back to a standard that is part of the law given by Moses, known as the law of Talion; it is based on the concept of making the offender suffer damage equal to that which he inflicted. “And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.” Exodus 21:23-25. This is quoted frequently, especially if the wrongdoer is punished with extreme severity and must pay for the damage and injustice that he brought about.

Contrary to what one might think, at the time when this law was given, its purpose was not to give an individual carte blanche to commit murder or whatever (as long as he would pay for his deed), but rather to be a deterrent to inflicting injury on someone else, knowing that severe consequences would certainly follow.

Indeed, if one would have to suffer the same pain that he caused someone else, he would think twice before staining his hands with an act of violence. So, this law was given, not as an authorization but—just the opposite—as a brake to injustice and violence.

It is to be understood that above the law was given to protect man's life, for centuries before the Lord had told Noah concerning the shedding of blood: “And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man.” Genesis 9:5, 6.

The same is understood when reading Leviticus 24:17, 21: “And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death.” “And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it: and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death.” The norm of the law an eye for an eye was applied not only to problems of physical injuries, but also in the case of financial injury: “And he that killeth a beast shall make it good; beast for beast.” Leviticus 24:18. This means that the perpetrator had to pay the equivalent, sometimes something more, and sometimes even double, but not excessive.

A limit was placed on restitution payments. Indeed, some people think that the person who did wrong should be made to pay triple, quadruple, or even ten or twenty times more for what he has done; or, in the fury of resentment, demand is made for unlimited repayment. Think of

what Jacob's sons did not only to the one who violated their sister but to the whole city. Genesis 34. Since such excesses can reside in man's sinful tendencies in demanding restitution for offenses and damages suffered, we realize the fairness of this principle.

Furthermore, we should be clear that this was a legal statute given to a people who were under civil authority and was for the guidance of the judges who were responsible for issuing and applying sentences for wrongdoing. This might come under the jurisdiction of a local or national court, such as the Sanhedrin, but it was exclusively the country's authorities who had such power. Furthermore, in some cases, a blood avenger was empowered to carry out the sentence after a judgment was pronounced; but that does not mean that such a thing is applicable today. Are Christians today invested with judicial authority and authorized by the Lord to sit in judgment and issue sentences of innocence or guilt, life or death? Is it not solely the authorities who carry such a responsibility? God does not call people to be responsible to enforce civil law.

"An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" is therefore not personal authorization to retaliate against a culprit, life for life, violence for violence, and wound for wound, but a principle entrusted to the authorities who watch over the wellbeing of society; they are responsible to punish the wrongdoer.

In the Christian era, the magistrate is "a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." The "governors" "are sent by Him [the Lord] for the punishment of evildoers." Romans 13:4; 1 Peter 2:13, 14. Ancient Israel was a church and a state, and the functions of both were carried out. Spiritual Israel is not a state; it is exclusively a body under God and cannot apply standards or exercise authority that do not belong to it. The church cannot assume rights and carry out prerogatives that are entrusted to secular governments.

The death penalty

The same reasoning is applicable to the death penalty. In ancient Israel, certain transgressions were punished with the death penalty. These included premeditated murder, cursing or killing one's parents, kidnapping, idolatry, illicit relationships, adultery, fornication, the evocation of spirits, and more. See Exodus 21, 22; Leviticus 18:29, 30; Deuteronomy 22:13-30; 1 Samuel 28:3, 9. Just because such punishments were inflicted in ancient Israel is no justification for their being applied today. Adventist believers have never taught or practiced such things. Can God's remnant people today apply or even support the carrying out of the death penalty? Can the church issue and carry out a death sentence? If it could, it would be not be a Christian church but a court! And what about a Christian in the New Testament era? If he could do such a thing, then it would mean that he would be a magistrate or a judge.

While there is a great deal of confusion and apostasy in the Seventh-day Adventist Church regarding the issues of weapons and war, to our knowledge, no Adventist believes that the church has the authority to sentence someone to death and carry out the execution. It is uniformly believed and taught that the punishment of criminals is the prerogative of the state. This is what God's word affirms for the New Testament church. Romans 13:3, 4; 1 Peter 2:13, 14. So, supposing that the same principles that were valid for ancient Israel should apply to the church today means ignoring the order that currently exists, confusing things, and reversing the roles established by God.

"Thou shalt not kill"

When the Lord gave His moral law in Mount Sinai, He gave the sixth commandment and wrote it with His own finger on the tables of stone. This divine, universal code establishes respect for human life and dignity, upholding life as sacred and untouchable. Genesis 9:5, 6. Therefore, not only manslaughter or murder, but also every action that goes against human life or results in reducing its value, either directly or indirectly, is a violation of the sixth commandment. God is the one who gives life, and only He, not men, is authorized to decide when to give it and when to take it. Property given in a transaction can be withdrawn only by its owner, no one else. However, mankind has in many different ways deviated from and abused this holy principle. Men have tried in every possible way to diminish the sacred order. In fact, there are Adventists who believe and maintain that the commandment is not an absolute prohibition, but relative, limited to the personal sphere.

Thus, exceptions are introduced, according to which killing in self-defense is not a sin, nor is killing in time of war. The commandment is understood by such people to mean, "Do not kill under personal circumstances," or "You can kill someone in self-defense," or even, "You can kill if the government requires it."



The root of evil

As early as 1915, some Adventist leaders did not consider killing in time of war to be murder: "From what has been said here, we have demonstrated that the Bible above all teaches that participation in war is not a violation of the sixth commandment; and, second, that fighting on the Sabbath is not a violation of the fourth commandment." –J. Wintzen, *Der Christ und der Krieg* (The Christian and War), p. 18. Under this influence, hundreds of Adventist believers in Europe took up arms and headed to the war front. But the evil spread beyond European Adventist leaders. Its deep roots reached America, to the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. That is why, in 1920, five years after the tragic decision was made by Adventist leaders in Europe to participate as combatants in World War I, the General Conference President, in the presence of four other members of the General Conference, who were from Europe, told the brethren of the Reform Movement at the meeting in Friedensau, Germany, that killing in time of war was allowed and that the commandments had to be read and understood with some freedom:

"What would you have said about Moses if, after the law had been given from Sinai, he had commanded you a few days later to kill the king of Bashan and all the men, women, and children?

Would you have accused him of murder? But God commanded him to transgress the sixth commandment. You see that there are many things to be found in the interpretation of the commandments, and we must have liberty to read and understand the commandments and not to be bound to the way some small body may interpret them." –A.G. Daniells, *Protokoll, Hamburg, 1920, Religious Liberty Publishing Assn., 2016, Denver, CO, p. 49.*

It is not difficult to imagine the results of such positions. That it is why, in World War I and others, transgression occurred and Adventists continue to take wrong steps today. The foundation of this is a misconception of the meaning and scope of the all of the commandments, but in this case the sixth, and this is the situation at the highest level of the Seventh-day Adventist

General Conference. In the church that should be the repository of God's commandments and the light of the world, a breach has been made in that law, not only in the sixth commandment but also in the fourth. And similar statements have been published openly, not just in many places in time of war or under pressure and a threat of death, but also in peacetime and without any pressure from the state. In different locations around the world, the same ideas are presented to the people in the church as well as to the people of the world. Following are two examples. The following statements appeared in official organs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church: "There have been very good men through the long years who have never viewed the sixth commandment as forbidding, under all conditions, the taking of human life.... In some instances, killing a man is not breaking God's law." –Francis D. Nichol, "From the Editor's Mailbag," *Review and Herald*, February 28, 1963, p. 14.

The same position is found in the Adventist Review:

"The sixth commandment says, 'Thou shalt not kill,' yet people are killed by various means: legal execution, war, suicide, murder, and euthanasia. Are all killings a breaking of this commandment? ...

"The sixth commandment, then, is a prohibition of murder, not a prohibition, for example, of killing insects or animals, nor, for that matter, a prohibition against capital punishment, or, necessarily, even killing in war." –Donald F. Neufeld, "Bible Questions Answered," *Adventist Review*, March 2, 1978, p. 6.

Similar ideas are expressed by those who support them and preached to believers in different countries, even here in Italy. An article published recently contains similar ideas. What are the consequences? Generally what is not prohibited is allowed. A street with no prohibition to entry is legally accessible; a space without a parking prohibition may be used for this purpose. Therefore, using the above examples, it is being taught publicly that homicide under war conditions is not a crime, which thus

makes the taking of human life possible. And then, if killing is allowed, what about the so-called position of "noncombatant"? Is this not all unreasonable and fearfully alarming?

Do not add, and do not take away

In the experiences of life, there are many different situations, but the Lord gave one single commandment concerning life. Why? Because the Biblical principle is always the same. How is that possible? The examples are both individual and collective, both simple and complex; but one single principle applies to everyone. It is succinct, with just four words: "Thou shalt not kill." Human laws generally contain many clauses and many exceptions, but not the divine law.

Regardless of the circumstances or reasons, the commandment remains the same: "Thou shalt not kill." The fact that the commandment does not provide exceptions means that no one is authorized to make any. If a person attempts to do so, he is removing something arbitrarily and adding something else. Exceptions are, in effect, a breach of the law. Its scope is diminished, and some other behavior is added. This is what it means to remove or add something to God's command.

Christians against Christians

Christians participating in war means not only that they are against unbelievers; but also believers are set against others believers, even against those in the same church. While one group prays for its army, the opposing group prays for the one that it supports; one group asks for victory in battle, while the opposing group does the same. Both groups are Christian, but each pleads for its own cause and assets. Then they both fight to defeat each other. Who is right in this matter? Who deserves to be heard by God? If both sides are Christian and both are trying to spill the blood of their neighbors and fight against each other, no one deserves to be heard! They are both opposed to God's will! Thus, God does not allow the Christian to kill in war; violence strengthens no one's faith in Christ.

But, someone may say, the army defends certain rights. Yes, that is what is

claimed. And the opposing army defends certain principles as well. Or, one army wants to defend its territory, while the other fights for supposed ideals and convictions. Perhaps an army wants to assert its authority, and the other wants to defend the faith. Meanwhile, this mass of people is considered “brothers.” Opposing sides pray to God, saying, “Father,” while everyone, in the name of God, advances to annihilate the other side! They think this is service for the Lord! While they are armed and engaged in the fight and one tries to defeat the other, they all invoke the words: “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” Matthew 6:12. —*Gewalt und Gewaltlosigkeit (Violence and Non-violence)*, pp. 192, 193.

Let us examine a typical example. A few hours earlier, everyone was gathered in prayer, and then the order moves them to fury—soldiers against soldiers, living beings throwing themselves against other living beings; believers launching themselves against believers; brothers of one country firing weapons against brothers from another country; and possibly Adventists from various countries fighting each other, wielding weapons against other Adventists and falling on the battlefield.

This is what it means to participate in war! This is what it means to teach that the sixth commandment does not prohibit participation in war. This is what it means to make exceptions to the divine command. These are the terrible consequences of teaching that the commandment does not prohibit killing in war!

No, brothers, this cannot be the meaning of the divine commandment. The Scriptures teach that all of the commandments—including the sixth—are summarized in this: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” Romans 13:9. And one who loves his neighbor cannot kill him!

The Christian’s principle has always been that it is better to be persecuted than to persecute; better to suffer violence than to inflict it; better to die than to kill; better to be a martyr than to commit homicide; and death is better than to sin.

Take the sword of the Spirit

“The Christian cannot carry the sword of the state in one hand and the sword of the Spirit in the other; this can only be done by a fallen church, one that no longer upholds the principles of the kingdom of God in the heart but bows to the power of the state. No, the Christian, without carnal weapons, adheres to the principle to ‘earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.’ Jude 3. Because he obeys the sixth of God’s commandments, he cannot kill his fellow human beings but acts according to the command of Jesus, putting the sword in the scabbard and saying: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’ Acts 5:29. The unarmed Christian chooses to die for the gospel and receive eternal life, rather than act against the will of God and thus lose eternal life.” —*Christlicher Hausfreund (Christian House Friend)*, September 23, 1915.

The Scriptures are consistent in teaching that the heavenly principle is that of non-violence and non-resistance. James refers to the oppression suffered by the poor; and, referring to their rich oppressors, he declares: “Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.” James 5:6. This is what a true Christian does. Inspired by the gospel, he will rise higher than others, honoring the God of heaven.

In the words of the apostle Peter, “Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.” 1 Peter 3:9. It is not easy to love and bless one’s enemies, but it is possible through the infilling of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, therefore, help each of us thus to understand, accept, and practice this Christian principle in our lives of faith. ■

Time to Watch & Pray

"But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers." 1 Peter 4:7

By Henry Dering

The minute hand on God's great clock is rapidly approaching midnight. With unbelievable speed, the inhabitants of the earth are seeing their final destination. The prophetic timetable is announcing the end of the world. This means that soon Jesus Christ will return to the earth to save His children and destroy the wicked.

However, before His second coming, God in His great love sends warnings so that people may prepare for this, the greatest event of all time. One of these warnings is found in 1 Peter 4:7: "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."

A man traveling at night all alone on a rocky mountainside became exhausted and looked death in the face. The road behind him was too dangerous to retrace his steps in the darkness, and in front of him was a huge boulder that he did not dare to attempt to scale. The only thing that he could do was to wait until morning. His place of retirement was a steep, dangerous slope. Just one careless move might prove his destruction. He knew that he would have to be vigilant or he would slip and be hurled to his death in the abyss below.

In this night of sin, the Christian finds himself in a situation similar to that of the lonely traveler. He cannot go back but must wait patiently and remain alert until daybreak. Awareness of his precarious position motivates him to WATCH so that the enemy will not destroy him in his sleep. The danger of being deceived should be very real to us. The devil has many ways and methods whereby he attempts to lead God's children astray.

Before me is a religious newspaper printed by one of the many Adventist independent groups. It is filled with some incredible teachings. The publication uses the Spirit of prophecy to invite the readers to accept "new light." For instance, the exact day, month, and year are given when the judgment of the living is supposed to begin, as well as the time of Jesus' return. Does this not contradict the explicit teaching of the Bible? Remember Christ's statement: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only." "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." Matthew 24:36, 42. Because we do not know the exact time, God solemnly warns us to watch.

Excuses for not watching

There is a class of people about whom Christ spoke thus: "... If that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for Him,..." Matthew 24:48-50. "The evil servant says in his heart, 'My lord delayeth his coming.' He does not say that Christ will not come. He does not scoff at the idea of His second coming. But in his heart and by his actions and words he declares that the Lord's coming is delayed. He banishes from the minds of others the conviction that the Lord is coming quickly. His influence leads men to presumptuous, careless delay. They are confirmed in their

worldliness and stupor. Earthly passions, corrupt thoughts, take possession of the mind." —*Desire of Ages*, p. 635.

There are many Christians who have an intellectual knowledge of the Scriptures and even profess to believe in Christ's second coming, but they do not know God intimately. Therefore, they love the world, not Jesus, the Saviour. Perhaps they are even members of God's church and actively participate in the Sabbath school and missionary endeavors. Despite their superficial involvement in church activities, such worshippers may be saying, "Don't come back too soon, Jesus. I'm enjoying this world. I still want to finish my education, get married, and have some fun before I retire. Please, Lord, don't interrupt my plans for the future. I don't have the time to fully surrender to You. I have more important things to do right now than to watch and pray." This is the attitude of the self-centered, sin-loving person.

Consider these all-important words for our day: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." "... Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4. "Upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth, upon all who make this world their home, the day of God will come as a snare." —*Desire of Ages*, p. 635.

What not to watch

One of the easiest things for a person to do is to watch others while forgetting to watch himself. When we look at others' faults, weaknesses, and character imperfections, we compare ourselves with them and are very likely to lift ourselves up and become critical and judgmental. Here is an inspired statement about this: "Thus those who condemn or criticize others, proclaim themselves guilty, for they do the same things. In condemning others, they are passing sentence upon themselves, and God declares that this sentence is just. He accepts their own verdict against themselves." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 124.

What to watch

Since we are on the borders of the heavenly Canaan, our responsibility is to watch ourselves rather than our fellow believers in the church. We just cannot afford to be critical of others. Let us resolve to be more critical of ourselves and more tolerant of others. In the New International Version of the Bible we read: "Watch your life." 1 Timothy 4:16. This means that our spiritual lives need to be examined in the light of the ten commandments. We have certainly learned that one can take only his character to heaven. If that is so, then we need to put special emphasis on character development—*Christlikeness*. In the book *Early Writings*, p. 71, we are pointed to a high goal: "I saw that none could share the 'refreshing' unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action."

This solemn thought prompts us to look carefully at every aspect of our lives. Without a doubt, we need to watch the words that we speak so freely. If this were done, family and church squabbles would end; and heartaches, sadness, and misunderstanding would be things of the past. Let us watch, because "death and life are in the power of the tongue: ..." Proverbs 18:21.

Another area where our attention should be focused is our health. Man is very self-indulgent, eating and drinking for his own glory, thereby making his belly his god. The unsanctified appetite is idolized

and worshipped every day. Frequently the worshippers go to such extents as to become gluttonous. Gluttony is a perversion of the natural, God-given appetite. When a normal hunger is extended greedily into abnormality so that it harms the body and dulls the mind, it becomes sin.

Have you ever lost control of your appetite, overeating even nutritious food and then finding it hard to keep awake during the Sabbath services? Of course, gluttony is not only the sin of overeating. It can be the sin of drinking unhealthful things or of staying up late, losing needed sleep to satisfy ambition, pleasure, or greed. Gluttony can also be indulged in by married couples who have not used self-restraint and temperance in their relations with each other.

Christians, especially Adventists who are concerned about their health but have a problem living up to the light they have received, should watch and pray for divine help.

On the other hand, there are others who can master their craving for food but fail to watch their personal appearance. They are following the foolish, vain, ridiculous fashions of the world. Perhaps their showy, self-centered attire is a "cover-up" for their emptiness and lack of peace. Have you ever looked at yourself in a mirror and asked yourself, Is Jesus honored in the way I dress when I go to church, to the lake, or to work? Remember, He is observing us as the investigative judgment proceeds. Furthermore, He will soon appear in the clouds of heaven to clothe His people with immortality. But before this spectacular event takes place, we are urged by the signs of the times to devote our every effort to being ready to meet Him face to face. Every calamity, earthquake, war, misfortune, and crime is a knock on the door of this doomed planet to give us a warning.

In the first century, the Italian city of Pompeii was a thriving resort city of the Roman Empire. It was located approximately 6 miles south of Mount Vesuvius and covered an area of 160 acres. This city of wealth, pleasure, and immorality had a population of 20,000. On A.D. August 24, 79, life was going on as usual. Housewives prepared

breakfast for their families; their bread was in the oven, eggs were on the stove, men were on their way to work, children played in the streets, and the shops were open for business.

On that day, no one noticed anything different about the 4,000-foot mountain. But at 1:00 in the afternoon, the city was shaken by a violent earthquake, and Mount Vesuvius erupted with the sound of a thunderclap. The first explosion spewed lethal gas and ash out of the crater, and smoke rose high into the sky. The people were terrified, and thousands fled to the sea and kept going until they were out of danger.

But others did not consider the explosion to be very dangerous and remained behind. Many delayed leaving the doomed city.

Some stayed to bury their valuables, and others loaded their possessions onto small carts. Wheeling their overloaded carts, the people merged toward the narrow city gates, which created a huge traffic jam. At that moment, the angry mountain poured deadly gases, rock, and volcanic ash onto the city; and the terrified people perished. They were mostly the wealthy, who refused to abandon their precious homes and possessions in the hope that the danger would pass after the first explosion. Of the 20,000 inhabitants of Pompeii, 16,000–80 percent of the population died under 30 feet of volcanic debris, turning what was once a thriving city of pleasure and commerce into a vast burial ground.

What can be learned from this terrible tragedy? For one thing, our possessions should not hinder us as we travel to our place of refuge, the heavenly Jerusalem. We should not hold on to overloaded carts as we make preparations to meet Jesus.

The story is told of a woman in 1912 who would not separate from a piece of luggage when she was on board the sinking Titanic. As the luxury liner was about to go down, several appeals were made to the woman to jump into the remaining lifeboat, but she would have to leave her luggage behind. She refused the last invitation and perished in the icy waters of the Atlantic. She chose to die rather than give up her precious suitcase that contained money, gems, and other valuables. How tragic it is that to many people material things are more important than life itself, including eternal life. "He [Satan] will so arrange affairs as

to hedge up their way, entangle them with earthly treasures, cause them to carry a heavy, wearisome burden, that their hearts may be overcharged with the cares of this life and the day of trial may come upon them as a thief.” –*Great Controversy*, pp. 625, 626.

Another lesson we can draw from the history of the city of Pompeii is that, after the first explosion of Mount Vesuvius, many people delayed leaving the city. This delay cost them their lives. They were victims of the paralysis of procrastination—a spiritual disease that affects a person’s attitude and better judgment.

The Bible tells about a number of people who procrastinated. For example, Paul witnessed to the Roman governor Felix, “And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” Acts 24:25. Though deeply impressed, Felix abruptly ended the interview with those fateful words, “When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”

A similar case of the paralysis of procrastination is found in Acts 26:28. Paul appealed to a Roman official, King Agrippa, to embrace the truth of the gospel. The king’s reply was: “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” But “almost” means to be lost. He also procrastinated, and there is no record that either Felix or Agrippa ever turned to the Lord. Although they were convicted, they ended up rejecting the offer of salvation.

What happened to the city of Pompeii in Italy is an example and a shocking lesson for those who are the last generation to live on this earth. Mount Vesuvius erupted when the people were totally unprepared for the disaster. When the sudden violent explosions came, the people had no idea that they were in any danger from the volcano. For 16 years prior to the massive explosions, the inhabitants of the city saw the mountain puffing out smoke and vapor. It was a constant danger signal. This is very similar to what will happen right before Jesus returns. The wicked will see the warning in the signs of the times but will ignore them. They will continue to violate the ten commandments until the final explosion wipes out all civilization.

Jesus says to the members of His church: “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.” “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” Mark 13:32, 33; Matthew 24:44.

The sudden, completely unexpected destruction that came to Pompeii shows what it will be like at the end of the world. People will be carrying on life and business as usual. “Men are still eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying, and giving in marriage. Merchants are still buying and selling. Men are jostling one against another, contending for the highest place. Pleasure

lovers are still crowding to theaters, horse races, gambling hells....

“When the scorner, the rejecter of truth, has become presumptuous; when the routine of work in the various money-making lines is carried on without regard to principle; when the student is eagerly seeking knowledge of everything but his Bible, Christ comes as a thief.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 636, 635.

Before Jesus comes, the liquor stores, gambling casinos, theaters, and nightclubs will all be crowded with people. In millions of homes, the electronic media will be tuned in to the usual scenes of violence, immorality, and foolishness. It is at the end of the time of trouble that the wicked will be interrupted in their selfish plans. There will appear from outer space a small black cloud, about half the size of a man’s hand. It will come from the direction of the constellation Orion. People will be aroused, and then they will pray to the unstable mountains and rocks to “fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.” Revelation 6:16. They will see a cloud of angels accompanying the conquering Jesus. They will seek shelter, but it will be too late. By then, the opportunity to repent will have long passed. It is the day of the Lord when everyone will receive his just reward

Therefore, Jesus says to us, “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” Luke 21:36. ■

Signs of the Times

By Carlos Kozel

“And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” Matthew 24:3

What is happening at the present time is commanding the intense interest of everyone everywhere. Rulers and statesmen in high office are watching what is already happening in the world, and they fear what will come next. The world is already in a terrible crisis, so what will be in the future? Who will lift the veil that keeps people in the dark, despite the advancement of knowledge made in the twentieth century? Does anyone know what tomorrow will bring and how it will affect each person?

The limited reasoning powers of mortals have always striven to understand the works of the Eternal One. To the most learned and cultured, as well as to the foolish and ignorant, the Supreme One and His actions are mysterious, particularly within the human realm. Therefore, no one should doubt the word of God, for it explains the mysteries of every action and interaction. The existence of God, His character, and the truthfulness of His word are supported by abundant evidence that reaches the mind of every thinking individual.

The holy Bible presents the truth in such a simple, clear way that it fulfills men's needs and amazes and delights the minds of scholars, while showing the way of life to those who are not well educated. The sublime, infinite mysteries appeal to human reason and inspire veneration and faith in those who seriously search the source of truth.

The “Book of books” is the oldest, most extensive history that humanity possesses. That revelation came from the Creator of eternal truth (John 5:39), and the divine hand has preserved it in its

purity for all time. In that holy word, God lifts the veil so that man can see above and through all the fabric and interweaving of human interest, power, and affection, the hand of the All-Merciful, who calmly, patiently executes the counsel of His will. The history that the great “I Am” has written in His word tells us where we are in the course of time and what we can expect hereafter. It also reveals an exact picture of our days. The series of events that it presents reveals the final scenes of the earth's history—events that cast a shadow over every human endeavor, causing men's hearts to tremble with fear.

What we see shows that we are on the brink of solemn, earth-shaking events. Right before our eyes, prophecies connected to Christ's second coming are being fulfilled, urging mankind to cling all the more to the prophetic word, “whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.” 2 Peter 1:19.

This much-despised element of God's word, as in the days of Noah (Genesis 6), Abraham (Genesis 18:7), Daniel (Daniel 9), and the early Christians, penetrates the darkness that envelops humanity and dispels unbelief. Isaiah 60:1-12. We, too, will do well to pay attention to this great beacon so we are not taken as prisoners of the kingdom of darkness. “... What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?” Matthew 24:3. This question of His disciples led Jesus to list the events and situations that would be seen by the last generation and to proclaim what would precede the end of this earth's history of sin and its results.

The Lisbon earthquake

In fulfillment of the Saviour's powerful prophecy, the most frightening earthquake occurred in 1755. Although generally referred to as the Lisbon earthquake, its impact reached most of Europe, Africa, and America. It was felt in Greenland, in the Antilles, on the island of Madera, in Norway, in Sweden, in Great Britain, and in Ireland, covering at least 6.2 million square miles. Its shocks were almost as violent in Africa as in Europe. Much of Algiers was destroyed; and a short distance from Morocco, a town of eight to ten thousand people disappeared into the abyss. An enormous tsunami swept the coasts of Spain and Africa, submerging cities and causing great destruction.

Spain and Portugal took the brunt of the violence. In Cadiz, the wall of water reached nearly sixty feet. Some mountains, “being some of the largest in Portugal, were impetuously shaken, as it were from their very foundations; and some of them opened at their summits, which were split and rent in a wonderful manner, huge masses of them being thrown down into the subjacent valleys. Flames are related to have issued from these mountains, ...”

In Lisbon “A sound of thunder was heard underground, and immediately afterwards a violent shock threw down the greater part of that city. In the course of about six minutes, sixty thousand persons perished. The sea first retired and laid the bar dry; it then rolled in, rising fifty feet above its ordinary level....”

“The most extraordinary circumstance which occurred at Lisbon during the catastrophe, was the subsidence of a new

quay, built entirely of marble, at an immense expense. A great concourse of people had collected there for safety, as a spot where they might be beyond the reach of falling ruins; but suddenly the quay sank down with all the people



on it, and not one of the dead bodies ever floated to the surface.” –*Sir Charles Lyell, Principles of Geology, in The World’s Best Essays, from the Earliest Period to the Present Time*, by vol. 7, by David Josiah Brewer, p. 2695.

“‘The shock’ of the earthquake ‘was instantly followed by the fall of every church and convent, almost all the large public buildings, and more than one fourth of the houses. In about two hours after the shock, fires broke out in different quarters, and raged with such violence for the space of nearly three days, that the city was completely desolated. The earthquake happened on a holyday, when the churches and convents were full of people, very few of whom escaped.’ –*Encyclopedia Americana*, art. ‘Lisbon’ note (ed. 1831). ‘The terror of the people was beyond description. Nobody wept; it was beyond tears. They ran hither and thither, delirious with horror and astonishment, beating their faces and breasts, crying, ‘Misericordia! the world’s at an end!’ Mothers forgot their children, and ran about loaded with crucifixes. Unfortunately, many ran to the churches for protection; but in vain was the sacrament exposed; in vain did the poor creatures embrace the altars; images, priests, and people were buried in one common ruin.’ It has been estimated that ninety thousand persons lost their lives on that fatal day.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 305.

The Dark Day

Christ mentioned the signs in heaven and on earth, which Joel wrote about in chapter 2:30, 31–“blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke”—and told when they would come. “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the

earth mourn and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” Matthew 24:29, 30.

Christians were severely persecuted during the Dark Ages in 1773 by the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). The Saviour’s words of prophecy were fulfilled, and history records the signs that occurred in nature: “In the Saviour’s conversation with His disciples upon Olivet, after describing the long period of trial for the church—the 1260 years of papal persecution, concerning which He had promised that the tribulation should be shortened—He thus mentioned certain events to precede His coming, and fixed the time when the first of these should be witnessed: ‘In those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.’ Mark 13:24. The 1,260 days, or years, terminated in 1798. A quarter of a century earlier, persecution had almost wholly ceased. Following this persecution, according to the words of Christ, the sun was to be darkened. On the 19th of May, 1780, this prophecy was fulfilled.

“Almost, if not altogether alone, as the most mysterious and as yet unexplained phenomenon of its kind,... stands the dark day of May 19, 1780—a most unaccountable darkening of the whole visible heavens and

atmosphere in New England.’ –R.M. Devens, *Our First Century*, page 89....

“The intense darkness of the day was succeeded, an hour or two before evening, by a partially clear sky, and the sun appeared, though it was still obscured by the black, heavy mist. ‘After sundown, the clouds came again overhead, and it grew dark very fast.’ ‘Nor was the darkness of the night less uncommon and terrifying than that of the day; notwithstanding there was almost a full moon, no object

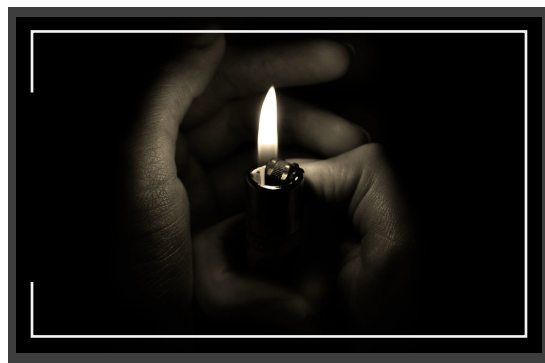
was discernible but by the help of some artificial light,...’ –*The Great Controversy*, pp. 305-307.

“The description of this event, as given by eyewitnesses, is but an echo of the words of the Lord, recorded by the prophet Joel, twenty-five hundred years previous to their fulfillment: ‘The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.’ Joel 2:31.

“Christ had bidden His people watch for the signs of His advent and rejoice as they should behold the tokens of their coming King.” –*The Great Controversy*, pp. 305-308.

“Dark Day, The, May 19, 1780, so called on account of a remarkable darkness on that day, extending over all New England. In some places, persons could not see to read common print in the open air for several hours together.... The true cause of this remarkable phenomenon is not known.” –*Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary, in Explanatory and Pronouncing Vocabulary*, art. *Dark Day* (*Bible Readings for the Home Circle*, p. 39).

Regarding Revelation 6:12, Dr. Joseph A. Seiss, in his work *The Apocalypse: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, p. 153, says the following: “On the 19th of May, 1780, a wonderfully dark day was experienced throughout the northeastern portion of this country. The witnesses of it have described it as supernatural and unaccountable. It was not an ordinary



eclipse, for the moon was nearly at the full. It was not owing to a clouded condition of the atmosphere, for the stars were visible. Yet it was so dark from

nine o’clock in the morning throughout the usual hours of sunshine, that work had to be suspended, houses had to be lit with candles, the beasts and fowls went to their rest as in the nighttime. And though the sun was visible, it had the appearance of being shorn of all its power of illumination.”

Regarding the inability of scientists to explain this phenomenon, the famous astronomer Herschel said: “The dark day in Northern America was one of those

wonderful phenomena of nature which will always be read with interest, but which philosophy is at a loss to explain." —*Ellet J. Waggoner, Prophetic Lights: Some of the Prominent Prophecies of the Old and New Testaments*, p. 124.

"The night succeeding that day (May 19, 1780) was of such pitchy darkness that in some instances horses could not be compelled to leave the stable when wanted for service." —*Stone's History of Beverly (Massachusetts)*

"The darkness of the night was supernatural as that of the previous day, from the fact, as stated by Dr. Adams, that 'the moon had fulfilled the day before.'" — *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*, p. 39.

Falling of the stars

"The stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." Matthew 24:29.

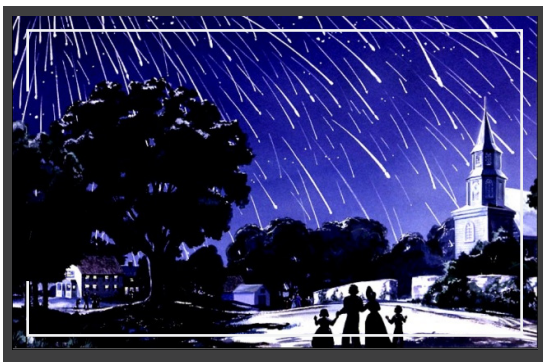
"In 1833, ... the last of the signs appeared which were promised by the Saviour as tokens of His second advent. Said Jesus: 'The stars shall fall from heaven.' Matthew 24:29.

And John in the Revelation declared, as he beheld in vision the scenes that should herald the day of God: 'The stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.' Revelation 6:13. This prophecy received a striking and impressive fulfillment in the great meteoric shower of November 13, 1833. That was the most extensive and wonderful display of falling stars which has ever been recorded; 'the whole firmament, over all the United States, being then, for hours, in fiery commotion! No celestial phenomenon has ever occurred in this country, since its first settlement, which was viewed with such intense admiration by one class in the community, or with so much dread and alarm by another.' 'Its sublimity and awful beauty still linger in many minds Never did rain fall much thicker than the meteors fell toward the earth; east, west, north, and south, it was the same. In a word, the whole heavens seemed in motion.... The display, as described in Professor Silliman's Journal, was seen all over North

America From two o'clock until broad daylight, the sky being perfectly serene and cloudless, an incessant play of dazzlingly brilliant luminosities was kept up in the whole heavens.' —*R.M. Devens, American Progress; or, The Great Events of the Greatest Century*, ch. 28, pars. 1-5 (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 332, 333).

This was the last of the signs of His coming about which Jesus said to His disciples: "... When ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Matthew 24:33.

"After these signs, John beheld, as the great event next impending, the heavens departing as a scroll, while the earth quaked, mountains and islands removed out of their places, and the wicked in terror sought to flee from the presence of the Son of man. Revelation 6:12-17." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 334.



The greatest meteoric shower occurred in North America in 1833, and in 1866 a similar phenomenon occurred in Europe as well, thus giving a warning to millions of people. All of

these phenomena were considered signs that God's great day was soon to come. Some said that the final judgment had come; others, that the end of the world was near. The celebrated astronomer and meteorologist, Professor Denison Olmstead, of Yale College, recorded that almost everywhere, as early as 11 p.m., the meteor shower began to attract the people's attention; their number and brightness increased until 4 a.m., at which time they began to decrease, disappearing completely in the daylight. The meteorites did not fly haphazardly in the heavens but seemed to come from a certain point next to the star "Gama (Leonid)," in the curvature of the "sickle." The shower spread over much of the land and was visible from a line located in the middle of the Atlantic, in the East, to the Pacific Ocean, in the West; and from the northern coast of South America to northern regions of the British, with the very same characteristics everywhere. It should be called a celestial phenomenon.

On the night of November 12, 13, 1832, shooting stars and balls of fire were

observed in Switzerland and France. Coming from the constellation "Alpha Leonis," 34,640 stars were seen in a single hour coming from a height and distance that showed them to be cosmic, non-terrestrial bodies.

J. Kelber's work *Viene el fin* contains 24 different phenomena occurring in Europe. A celestial event was described as taking place on November 25, 1833, that was visible everywhere. "It was believed to be masses of fire, falling like clouds from the sky." Horses reared in the streets, and many inhabitants of the place were terrified, some kneeling down to pray, while others were overcome by sudden illness. The brightness was so extraordinary that the eye could not bear to look at it. It was followed by several claps of thunder.

A number of books published in that era described various phenomena that were considered the fulfillment of prophecy. Professor Höpfner of the University of Leipzig wrote a Biblical contemplation called *Heavenly Signs* in 1831 and 1832. In addition, Jakob Warnelaut edited a book called *Vergleichungen der Zeichen unserer Zeit mit biblischen Weissagungen vom Antichrist* (Comparisons of the Signs of Our Time with Biblical Prophecies of the Antichrist). In his interpretation of Matthew 24, published in 1843, Silvestre Bliss says (retranslated): "Thus the great signs and frightening phenomena prophesied in the Holy Scriptures seem verified in connection with what the Saviour says would precede His coming. Just as the buds of the tree announce the coming of summer, so the Christians recognize in the fulfilling signs that 'the coming of Christ is near.' Matthew 24:32-34."

Actually, at the time of the end, as Daniel the prophet called the time of the last generation (Daniel 8:17), God touched the hearts of men through the powerful messages of numerous phenomena in nature.

After the revival and reformation that came about in the sixteenth century, formalism arose. The fear of God and living faith died. As in the days of Noah, "surfeiting and drunkenness" dominated society, along with the desire for pleasure. Luke 21:34-36. "... The day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" God therefore announced ahead of time that the great and terrible day of the Saviour's coming is near; only in this way can men know about and prepare for that magnificent event. Joel 2:11. ■



WORLD IN BRIEF

Missionary Work

Missionary work Guinea



Biblical formation in Guinea



Young people interested in Guinea



New Members



Baptism

Members of the Church



Ordination



Church Construction



Missionary work Mozambique



Missionary work Congo



Members of the Church in Kinshasa



Leadership of the Congo Church in Kinshasa

Missionary work *Togo*



Youth Group



Children's activity in Togo



Leadership



Baptism



New Members

Missionary work *Nigeria*



*We appreciate your prayers for the
missionary work in Africa, God bless you!*



The Sabbath

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