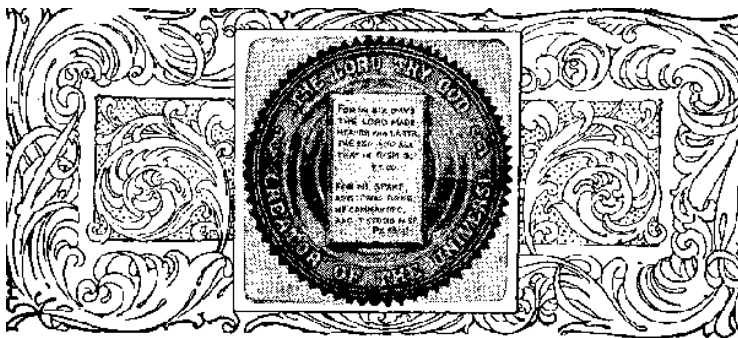


of the world.

In the issue of the contest, all Christendom will be divided into two great classes,—those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark. Although church and state will unite their power to compel “all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond,” to receive “the mark of the beast,”⁷⁵⁹ yet the people of God will not receive it. The prophet of Patmos beholds “them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God,” and singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.⁷⁶⁰

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26. A Work Of Reform.



⁷⁵⁹ Rev. 13:16.

⁷⁶⁰ Rev. 15:2, 3.

The work of Sabbath reform to be accomplished in the last days is foretold in the prophecy of Isaiah: "Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for My salvation is near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil." "The sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant; even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer."⁷⁶¹

These words apply in the Christian age, as shown by the context: "The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him."⁷⁶² Here is foreshadowed the gathering in of the Gentiles by the gospel. And upon those who then honor the Sabbath, a blessing is pronounced. Thus the obligation of the fourth commandment extends past the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, to the time when His servants should preach to all nations the message of glad tidings.

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The Lord commands by the same prophet, "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples."⁷⁶³ The seal of God's law is found in the fourth commandment. This only, of all the ten, brings to view both the name and the title of the Lawgiver. It declares Him to be the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and thus shows His claim to reverence and worship above all others. Aside from this precept, there is nothing in the decalogue to show by whose authority the law is given. When the Sabbath was changed by the papal power, the seal was taken from the law. The disciples of Jesus are called upon to restore it, by exalting the Sabbath of the fourth commandment to its rightful position

⁷⁶¹ Isa. 56:1, 2, 6, 7.

⁷⁶² Isa. 56:8.

⁷⁶³ Isa. 8:16, 20.

as the Creator's memorial and the sign of His authority.

“To the law and to the testimony.” While conflicting doctrines and theories abound, the law of God is the one unerring rule by which all opinions, doctrines, and theories are to be tested. Says the prophet, “If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”⁷⁶⁴

Again, the command is given, “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” It is not the wicked world, but those whom the Lord designates as “My people,” that are to be reproved for their transgressions. He declares further, “Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God.”⁷⁶⁵ Here is brought to view a class who think themselves righteous, and appear to manifest great interest in the service of God; but the stern and solemn rebuke of the Searcher of hearts proves them to be trampling upon the divine precepts.

The prophet thus points out the ordinance which has been forsaken: “Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.”⁷⁶⁶ This prophecy also applies in our time. The breach was made in the law of God when the Sabbath was changed by the Roman power. But the time has come for that divine institution to be restored. The breach is to be repaired, and the foundation of many generations to be raised up.

Hallowed by the Creator's rest and blessing, the Sabbath was

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁵ Isa. 58:1, 2.

⁷⁶⁶ Isa. 58:12, 13.

kept by Adam in his innocence in holy Eden; by Adam, fallen yet repentant, when he was driven from his happy estate. It was kept by all the patriarchs, from Abel to righteous Noah, to Abraham, to Jacob. When the chosen people were in bondage in Egypt, many, in the midst of prevailing idolatry, lost their knowledge of God's law; but when the Lord delivered Israel, He proclaimed His law in awful grandeur to the assembled multitude, that they might know His will, and fear and obey Him forever.

From that day to the present, the knowledge of God's law has been preserved in the earth, and the Sabbath of the fourth commandment has been kept. Though the "man of sin" succeeded in trampling under foot God's holy day, yet even in the period of his supremacy there were, hidden in secret places, faithful souls who paid it honor. Since the Reformation, there have been some in every generation to maintain its observance. Though often in the midst of reproach and persecution, a constant testimony has been borne to the perpetuity of the law of God, and the sacred obligation of the creation Sabbath.

These truths, as presented in Revelation 14 in connection with the "everlasting gospel," will distinguish the church of Christ at the time of His appearing. For as the result of the threefold message it is announced, "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." And this message is the last to be given before the coming of the Lord. Immediately following its proclamation, the Son of man is seen by the prophet, coming in glory to reap the harvest of the earth.

Those who received the light concerning the sanctuary and the immutability of the law of God, were filled with joy and wonder, as they saw the beauty and harmony of the system of truth that opened to their understanding. They desired that the light which appeared to them so precious might be imparted to all Christians; and they could not but believe that it would be joyfully accepted. But truths that would place them at variance with the world were not welcome to many who claimed to be followers of Christ.

Obedience to the fourth commandment required a sacrifice from which the majority drew back.

As the claims of the Sabbath were presented, many reasoned from the worldling's standpoint. Said they: "We have always kept Sunday, our fathers kept it, and many good and pious men have died happy while keeping it. If they were right, so are we. The keeping of this new Sabbath would throw us out of harmony with the world, and we would have no influence over them. What can a little company keeping the seventh day hope to accomplish against all the world who are keeping Sunday?" It was by similar arguments that the Jews endeavored to justify their rejection of Christ. Their fathers had been accepted of God in presenting the sacrificial offerings, and why could not the children find salvation in pursuing the same course? So, in the time of Luther, papists reasoned that true Christians had died in the Catholic faith, and therefore that religion was sufficient for salvation. Such reasoning would prove an effectual barrier to all advancement in religious faith or practice.

Many urged that Sunday-keeping had been an established doctrine and a wide-spread custom of the church for many centuries. [455] Against this argument it was shown that the Sabbath and its observance were more ancient and widespread, even as old as the world itself, and bearing the sanction both of angels and of God. When the foundations of the earth were laid, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy, then was laid the foundation of the Sabbath.⁷⁶⁷ Well may this institution demand our reverence: it was ordained by no human authority, and rests upon no human traditions; it was established by the Ancient of days, and commanded by His eternal word.

As the attention of the people was called to the subject of Sabbath reform, popular ministers perverted the word of God, placing such interpretations upon its testimony as would best

⁷⁶⁷ Job 38:6, 7; Gen. 2:1-3.

quiet inquiring minds. And those who did not search the Scriptures for themselves were content to accept conclusions that were in accordance with their desires. By argument, sophistry, the traditions of the Fathers, and the authority of the church, many endeavored to overthrow the truth. Its advocates were driven to their Bibles to defend the validity of the fourth commandment. Humble men, armed with the Word of truth alone, withstood the attacks of men of learning, who, with surprise and anger, found their eloquent sophistry powerless against the simple, straightforward reasoning of men who were versed in the Scriptures rather than in the subtleties of the schools.

In the absence of Bible testimony in their favor, many with unwearying persistence urged,—forgetting how the same reasoning had been employed against Christ and His apostles,—“Why do not our great men understand this Sabbath question? But few believe as you do. It cannot be that you are right, and that all the men of learning in the world are wrong.”

To refute such arguments it was needful only to cite the teachings of the Scriptures and the history of the Lord's dealings with His people in all ages. God works through those who hear and obey His voice, those who will, if need be, speak unpalatable truths, those who do not fear to reprove popular sins. The reason why He does not oftener choose men of learning and high position to lead out in reform movements, is that they trust to their creeds, theories, and theological systems, and feel no need to be taught of God. Only those who have a personal connection with the Source of wisdom are able to understand or explain the Scriptures. Men who have little of the learning of the schools are sometimes called to declare the truth, not because they are unlearned, but because they are not too self-sufficient to be taught of God. They learn in the school of Christ, and their humility and obedience make them great. In committing to them a knowledge of His truth, God confers upon them an honor, in comparison with which earthly honor and human greatness sink

into insignificance.

The majority of Adventists rejected the truths concerning the sanctuary and the law of God, and many also renounced their faith in the Advent Movement, and adopted unsound and conflicting views of the prophecies which applied to that work. Some were led into the error of repeatedly fixing upon a definite time for the coming of Christ. The light which was now shining on the subject of the sanctuary would have shown them that no prophetic period extends to the second advent; that the exact time of this event is not foretold. But, turning from the light, they continued to set time after time for the Lord to come, and as often they were disappointed.

When the Thessalonian church received erroneous views concerning the coming of Christ, the apostle Paul counseled them to test their hopes and anticipations carefully by the word of God. He cited them to prophecies revealing the events to take place before Christ should come, and showed that they had no ground to expect Him in their day. "Let no man deceive you by any means,"⁷⁶⁸ are his words of warning. Should they indulge expectations that were not sanctioned by the Scriptures, they would be led to a mistaken course of action; disappointment would expose them to the derision of unbelievers, and they would be in danger of yielding to discouragement, and would be tempted to doubt the truths essential for their salvation. The apostle's admonition to the Thessalonians contains an important lesson for those who live in the last days. Many Adventists have felt that unless they could fix their faith upon a definite time for the Lord's coming, they could not be zealous and diligent in the work of preparation. But as their hopes are again and again excited, only to be destroyed, their faith receives such a shock that it becomes well-nigh impossible for them to be impressed by the great truths of prophecy. [457]

⁷⁶⁸ 2 Thess. 2:3.

The preaching of a definite time for the judgment, in the giving of the first message, was ordered of God. The computation of the prophetic periods on which that message was based, placing the close of the 2300 days in the autumn of 1844, stands without impeachment. The repeated efforts to find new dates for the beginning and close of the prophetic periods, and the unsound reasoning necessary to sustain these positions, not only lead minds away from the present truth, but throw contempt upon all efforts to explain the prophecies. The more frequently a definite time is set for the second advent, and the more widely it is taught, the better it suits the purposes of Satan. After the time has passed, he excites ridicule and contempt of its advocates, and thus casts reproach upon the great Advent Movement of 1843 and 1844. Those who persist in this error will at last fix upon a date too far in the future for the coming of Christ. Thus they will be led to rest in a false security, and many will not be undeceived until it is too late.

The history of ancient Israel is a striking illustration of the past experience of the Adventist body. God led His people in the Advent Movement, even as He led the children of Israel from Egypt. In the great disappointment their faith was tested as was that of the Hebrews at the Red Sea. Had they still trusted to the guiding hand that had been with them in their past experience, they would have seen of the salvation of God. If all who had labored unitedly in the work in 1844, had received the third angel's message and proclaimed it in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts. A flood of light would have been shed upon the world. Years ago the inhabitants of the earth would have been warned, the closing work completed, and Christ would have come for the redemption of His people.

It was not the will of God that Israel should wander forty years in the wilderness; He desired to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there, a holy, happy people.

But “they could not enter in because of unbelief.”⁷⁶⁹ Because of their backsliding and apostasy, they perished in the desert, and others were raised up to enter the promised land. In like manner, it was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be so long delayed, and His people should remain so many years in this world of sin and sorrow. But unbelief separated them from God. As they refused to do the work which He had appointed them, others were raised up to proclaim the message. In mercy to the world, Jesus delays His coming, that sinners may have an opportunity to hear the warning, and find in Him a shelter before the wrath of God shall be poured out.

Now, as in former ages, the presentation of a truth that re-proves the sins and errors of the times, will excite opposition. “Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d.”⁷⁷⁰ As men see that they cannot maintain their position by the Scriptures, many determine to maintain it at all hazards, and with a malicious spirit they assail the character and motives of those who stand in defense of unpopular truth. It is the same policy which has been pursued in all ages. Elijah was declared to be a troubler in Israel, Jeremiah a traitor, Paul a polluter of the temple. From that day to this, those who would be loyal to truth have been denounced as seditious, heretical, or schismatic. Multitudes who are too unbelieving to accept the sure word of prophecy, will receive with unquestioning credulity an accusation against those who dare to reprove fashionable sins. This spirit will increase more and more. And the Bible plainly teaches that a time is approaching when the laws of the state will so conflict with the law of God that whosoever would obey all the divine precepts must brave reproach and punishment as an evil-doer. [459]

In view of this, what is the duty of the messenger of truth? Shall he conclude that the truth ought not to be presented, since

⁷⁶⁹ Heb. 3:19.

⁷⁷⁰ John 3:20.

often its only effect is to arouse men to evade or resist its claims? No; he has no more reason for withholding the testimony of God's word, because it excites opposition, than had earlier reformers. The confession of faith made by saints and martyrs was recorded for the benefit of succeeding generations. Those living examples of holiness and steadfast integrity have come down to inspire courage in those who are now called to stand as witnesses for God. They received grace and truth, not for themselves alone, but that, through them, the knowledge of God might enlighten the earth. Has God given light to His servants in this generation? Then they should let it shine forth to the world.

Anciently the Lord declared to one who spoke in His name, "The house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto Me." Nevertheless He said, "Thou shalt speak My words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear."⁷⁷¹ To the servant of God at this time is the command addressed, "Lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."

So far as his opportunities extend, every one who has received the light of truth is under the same solemn and fearful responsibility as was the prophet of Israel, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying: "Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at My mouth, and warn them from Me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."⁷⁷²

The great obstacle both to the acceptance and to the promulgation of truth, is the fact that it involves inconvenience and

⁷⁷¹ Eze. 3:7; 2:7.

⁷⁷² Eze. 33:7-9.