

Old Paths

Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.
Jeremiah 6:16

The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.
Psalm 25:14



Prayer Requests

Pastor Pascual Flores recently ministered in Venezuela, and we ask that you join us in prayer that the fruit of his labors will continue to grow in his absence. Also, please remember to pray for the upcoming 59th General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia, and our outreach plans for it, and for God's blessing on the plans being laid for the West Virginia Camp Meeting.

In addition, recently we have begun to pray for different states of the United States each week. So far, we have prayed for those of you who receive *Old Paths*, as well as for all the residents, in the states of AL, AK, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, and for DC. During the month of March, we will be praying for FL for weeks one and two, GA and HI during week three, and ID and IL during week four. We entreat your combined prayers as we ask for God to pour out his blessing on these states, and may God richly bless you as you work for him this month.

Onycha Holt

*It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.
(Lamentations 3:22, 23)*

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The Seal of God and the Abominations of Ezekiel 8 (Part 2)

“The book of Ezekiel is deeply instructive” (*The Review and Herald*, February 25, 1896).

The following article is the second of a multi-part series on the seal of God and the abominations of Ezekiel 8. The first part of this series gave an introduction to the theme as well as discussed the first abomination of Ezekiel 8 — the image of jealousy. If you have not seen the first article, we highly recommend that you read it before proceeding. For those who have not seen the first article, we will now provide a short recap of the theme.

Adventism was raised up by God to prepare a people for the last work of warning the world against the mark of the beast and to vindicate the character of God and his law to the universe.

Both the book of Revelation and the book of Ezekiel speak about those who will receive the seal of God. These books clearly set in contradistinction those who receive the seal from those who receive the mark of the beast. In each book, the Sabbath is a testing truth and in Ezekiel we find that God’s people will be noted by their “lamentation and weeping, reproofs and warnings” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 210) because of the abominations of Ezekiel 8.

Ezekiel chapter 1 begins with “visions of God” (1:1) and climaxes in the vision of the four abominations of chapter 8 and the seal of God for the righteous and the slaughter of the wicked in chapter 9.

He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer’s inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer’s inkhorn by his side; And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house. (Ezekiel 9:1-6)

Clearly a work of judgment is occurring here and two classes are presented. Those who receive the mark of the beast are represented by those who are cut down in the slaughter, while those who receive the pure mark of truth will receive the seal of God. Those who receive the seal of God are those who “sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst of” Jerusalem.

In Ezekiel 8, God revealed to Ezekiel abominations that were occurring in Jerusalem. Chapters 8 and 9 of Ezekiel make up part of an enacted prophecy. God showed Ezekiel literal events occurring at that time in Jerusalem among God’s people which were prophetic of literal events that would happen among God’s people at the end of time.

The end-time setting is clearly laid out for the believer:

The prophet, looking down the ages, had this time presented before his vision.

Jesus is about to leave the mercy seat of the heavenly sanctuary. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 208, 207)

Especially in the closing work for the church, in the sealing time of the one hundred and forty-four thousand who are to stand without fault before the throne of God, will they feel most deeply the wrongs of God’s professed people. This is forcibly set forth by the prophet’s illustration of the last work under the figure of the men each having a slaughter weapon in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer’s inkhorn by his side. (*Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 266)

In the last days, the only people who will be sealed are those who “sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst” of Jerusalem. Here Jerusalem represents the church:

Mark this point with care: Those who receive the pure mark of truth, wrought in them by the power of the Holy Ghost, represented by a mark by the man in linen, are those “that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done” in the church. (*Ibid.*, p. 267)

Ezekiel 8 lists four abominations. The first abomination listed in verses 3 and 5 is what is called “the image of Jealousy.” Last month we saw this represented sun pillars (obelisks – steeples). The next abomination Ezekiel is shown (verses 10-12) consists of the idols of Israel, “creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about” (Ezekiel 8:10). In connection with this, Ezekiel is shown the leaders of Israel with censers and a thick cloud of smoke (v. 11). The third abomination is “women weeping for Tammuz” (Ezekiel 8:14), and the last abomination

is twenty-five men with their backs to the temple and facing east towards the sun, worshiping the sun (Ezekiel 8:16)!

God calls all of these things abominations. The Hebrew word translated abomination is *tow'ebah* and it means something disgusting or loath. Some examples, of things that God says are an abomination or *tow'ebah*, are homosexuality and other terrible perversions (Leviticus 18:22-26), idolatry (Deuteronomy 7:25), human sacrifice (Deuteronomy 12:31), and occult activities (Deuteronomy 18:9-14). Solomon gives a list of seven abominations in Proverbs 6:16-19. By the context of the usages of *tow'ebah*, we see that what is described by this word is not something that pleases God, but something that is very abhorring, foul, repulsive, nauseating, and disgusting to God. By calling the four things in Ezekiel 8 abominations (*tow'ebah*), God is making his attitude well-known concerning them.

The list of abominations that are given progresses from bad to worse. After each of the first three abominations, the prophet is told that he will now see “greater abominations” (Ezekiel 8:6, 13, 15).

Concerning the first abomination, Ezekiel was told: “Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary” (Ezekiel 8:6)? These abominations are so revolting to God that he is driven far away from his sanctuary because of them.

Creeping Things and Abominable Beasts

Now let us carefully begin to study the second abomination discussed in Ezekiel 8:6-12:

He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations. And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censor in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth. (Ezekiel 8:6-12)

After seeing the image of jealousy, God told Ezekiel, in verse 6, that he would see greater abominations. After seeing God's abhorrence to sun pillars as the image of jealousy, we might wonder if things could be much worse, but here we see that God does say that there are worse abominations, and, in

fact, he calls them “greater abominations.” After seeing the image of jealousy, God instructed Ezekiel to dig a hole in the wall. This hole is akin to a peephole or a small opening to look through. God then commanded Ezekiel, “Son of man, dig now in the wall.” After digging, Ezekiel found a door. Beyond the door, the prophet saw pictures portrayed upon the walls. These may have been carved into the walls or were simply paintings and drawings. These pictures were of all kinds of abominable things. Ezekiel says he beheld, “every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel” (v. 10).

God had told Ezekiel that what he would find would be “wicked abominations” (v. 9). The Hebrew word translated wicked is *ra*. As a noun, “*ra* often is set in contrast with *tôb* (good) as opposite poles of the moral spectrum. Sometimes *shalôm* (peace) is given as its opposite. The noun is further defined as being that condition or action which in his (God's) sight is unacceptable (Jer 52:2; Mal 2:17; cf. Neh 9:28). ... [The adjective] form of *ra* qualifies the nouns to which it is related, indicating the quality or the injurious activity of the noun” (*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p. 855).

The first place that *ra* is found in the Bible is in Genesis 2:9, 17 where it is used to describe “the tree of the knowledge of good (*tôb*) and evil (*ra*).” In Genesis 3:5, we find Satan encouraging Eve to eat of the fruit, for he told her: “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good (*tôb*) and evil (*ra*).”

Genesis 13:13 describes the men of Sodom as “wicked (*ra*) and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.”

An interesting usage of *ra* is in Psalm 27:5, “For in the time (*yom*) of trouble (*ra*) he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.” That which we often call a “time of trouble” could be translated “the day of evil” (Young's Literal).

We noted earlier the Biblical usage of the word *abomination* and how it expresses something that is disgusting to God. Now if we couple this with the word translated *wicked* or *evil*, which stands for all that is opposite of God and goodness, we can see that God is clearly stating his attitude concerning this issue.

Before we return to the study of the abomination itself, let us notice who is involved. Ezekiel says in verse 11 that he sees seventy men and Jaazaniah, the son of Shaphan. This individual is not described except to be called the son of Shaphan. It is open to interpretation who this Jaazaniah is, but perhaps a clue is that there is no other reference than that he is the son of Shaphan. This Shaphan might then be considered to be the scribe of Josiah (2 Kings 22:8, 9), thereby connecting Jaazaniah to the inside circle of Judah. If this is so, his presence shows the corruption reached to some of the highest levels. John Gill, in his commentary, noted Jaazaniah was “either the prince of the sanhedrin, or at least a

person of great note and esteem; and shows the corruption to be general, from the least to the greatest.” Interestingly, the name Jaazaniah means “Jehovah hears,” but in verse 12 we see that they say “The LORD seeth us not.”

Jaazaniah and the seventy have censers in their hands producing a thick cloud of incense. There is no evidence that these men were Levites or priests, yet they took it upon themselves to function as priests to their false gods and idols in the very temple of Yahweh. They might have thought that their thick cloud of incense, along with being behind the scenes (a closed door), prevented them from being seen, but God saw them, and, furthermore, he revealed them to others.

In Ezekiel 8:10 we see the idols of Israel portrayed upon the walls. “So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about.” The expression “every form” in the Hebrew means pattern or likeness.

As we read Ezekiel 8:12 carefully, we can see what was being worshipped. The Hebrew word translated “imagery” is *maskiyth*. This word means pictures and is so translated in Numbers 33:52: “Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures (*maskiyth*), and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places.” The RSV translates Ezekiel 8:12 as:

Then he said to me, “Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, every man in his room of pictures? For they say, ‘The LORD does not see us, the LORD has forsaken the land.’”

As we pause to understand this verse a little better, it should be noted that Ezekiel was shown Jaazaniah and the seventy of the ancient men in the temple, but the interpretation from God is that this also represents what “every man” is doing “in his room of pictures,” bringing the issue down to the individual level. In other words, it is not just something that is done in the temple but at each person’s room or home.

These images obviously were there for worship and were a violation of the second commandment. How do we violate the second commandment? Let us review this part of God’s law.

Thou shalt not *make* unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not *bow down* thyself to them, nor *serve* them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:4, 5)

The key to understanding how we violate the commandment is in the verbs. Notice the verbs “make” “bow

down,” and “serve.” The purpose of the commandment involved worship and representatives of God, which we are to not make, bow down to, or serve. Perhaps we should ask if this prohibition was designed for the production of any kind of image, under any circumstances, and the answer is no. God instructed Moses when, due to rebellion, the people were being bitten by poisonous serpents, to make a fiery serpent and set it upon a pole: and every one that was bitten, when he looked upon it would live (Numbers 21:8). Later, during the reign of Hezekiah, the children of Israel began to burn incense to this image and so Hezekiah had it destroyed (2 Kings 18:4). If the serpent had been made with the idea that it represented God it would have been wrong to have made it. But it was not as such nor was it designed to be worshiped. However, when it was venerated, it became wrong to keep it.

Though the children of Israel heard the divine voice when the Ten Commandments were given, they did not see any divine form.

And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: *ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice. And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire. (Deuteronomy 4:12-15)*

Twice, in both verses 12 and 15, Moses noted that Israel saw no similitude of God. Israel is then told why they saw no image of God:

Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth. (Deuteronomy 4:16-19).

While we can quickly see that God should never be represented by an animal, we also see that nothing representing God that had even the likeness of man was to be formed. Though man was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), to make a likeness of God using any creature is unacceptable. Inspiration says that making such images causes the maker of the image to become corrupt!

When Paul was speaking on Mars’ hill in Athens he told the people there:

I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. (Acts 17:22-25.)

God does not need to be worshiped with anything that is made with the hands of men whether that is a three-dimensional statue or a two-dimensional picture. In his epistle to the Romans, Paul explains how people who did not wish to glorify God as God changed his image into some visible form.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. (Romans 1:18-25)

Instead of allowing the things created to be an inspiration to these people's minds concerning that which is invisible, they began to represent God as "birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." Remember that Ezekiel saw "creeping things" (Ezekiel 8:10) upon the walls. But this was not all that man had done. He had also represented "the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man" (Romans 1:23). Then Paul goes on to say what resulted from such corruptions.

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient. (Romans 1:26-28)

These practices lead people into homosexuality and atheism. Is it any wonder that the world is so corrupted today when we realize that it is full of professed imagery and

pictures of God, Christ, and heavenly things. This practice corrupts man and, even worse, dishonors God. We have been told:

To make an image of God dishonors Him. No one should bring into service the power of imagination to worship that which belittles God in the mind and associates Him with common things. Those who worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth. They must exercise living faith. Their worship will then be controlled not by the imagination, but by genuine faith. (*Sermons and Talks*, bk. 2, pp. 184, 185)

No image created by finite mortal man can properly represent the infinite God that no man has ever saw. These false representations of God cannot elevate one's mind but only lower and limit our conceptions of God. Pictures and images of the divine lead to a glorification of his person and image. But Jesus said in John 6:63, "the flesh profiteth nothing," and it is also true that representations of the flesh profit nothing, as well.

God created us, and he knows how deeply we are affected by sin and understands our desire to condense him into a form we can see and understand. This may be in part because our minds are so limited and simply cannot comprehend the infinite and eternal. However, I believe it is mostly because we are simply more comfortable when we can reduce God to a more manageable form, such as a picture or a statue. Mankind has always attempted to bring God down to his level, to humanize him, because if God is just like us, it is reasonable to conclude that we are just like him. This is a very appealing idea and is, in fact, the same lie Satan told Eve in the Garden of Eden: "You shall be like God" (Genesis 3:5). This same lie is being told today in the new age movement and throughout Babylon.

In 1950, Elders Robert Wieland and Donald Short wrote in their original manuscript, *1888 Re-Examined*, the following insightful thoughts:

Portraits of Christ can plead no ... justification whatever, sentimental tales of sin-hardened sailors and others finding "Him" thereby notwithstanding. One of Baal's chief attractions is his beauty of person, and many artists have painted him. Others have painted a modern Tammuz, in an attempt to induce people to weep for him. "The Twelve Stations of the Cross" in Roman Catholic churches are an example of the use to which pictures can be put, whereby a false Christ motivates the histrionic emotions of the human heart, but leaves it in quite an unbroken spiritual condition, so far as genuine love for the true Christ is concerned.

A true representation of God or Christ depends not upon the representation of his person or image but upon his character. If it was necessary for us to know what God or Christ looked like, a description would be given in the Bible. While we know that God has an image like man in form and

shape, we have not been given any details. Neither did the Holy Spirit give inspiration to any of the apostles to write details concerning the incarnate appearance of Jesus. This was certainly to avoid encouraging us to make any image of Jesus. The apostles Matthew, Peter and John spent three years with Jesus, they would certainly have been able to describe him. Christ's brother James would have known well the physical features of Jesus, yet these New Testament writers offer us no details about the appearance of Jesus. The only details noted in the Bible are in Isaiah 53:2 where we read: "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." Interestingly, most of the "portraits" of Jesus portray him in a softened, false-romantic style as a handsome and charming young man.

"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God" (Deuteronomy 29:29) certainly is true, and one of the secret things to man, at this time, is the exact appearance of the divine.

Perhaps questions have arisen in your mind such as, I can see that making pictures of God might be wrong to worship, but what about for educational purposes? Also, even though there is no physical description of Jesus given in the New Testament, would not pictures of Jesus be helpful to teach the children and for use in worship? These are good questions and should be answered. Let us examine the last one first.

The principle behind the second command to not make, bow down to, nor serve even the true God via representations involves the principle of trying to represent the infinite with the finite and serving the creature rather than the Creator. If we believe that Jesus is divine (John 1:1) and that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9), then surely the principle must apply to him, even though he became incarnate. As to the first question concerning the use of imagery of the divine for instructional purposes, we find the following statement, referring to the antediluvians, helpful:

The men of that generation were not all, in the fullest acceptance of the term, idolaters. Many professed to be worshippers of God. They claimed that their idols were representations of the Deity, and that through them the people could obtain a clearer conception of the divine Being. This class were foremost in rejecting the preaching of Noah. As they endeavored to represent God by material objects, their minds were blinded to His majesty and power; they ceased to realize the holiness of His character, or the sacred, unchanging nature of His requirements. (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 96, 97)

The very ones who were foremost in rejecting the preaching of Noah were the class of people who claimed that they needed these representations of God for instructional purposes. In the appendix of the book *The Great Controversy*, we read the following:

"Images and pictures were first introduced into churches, not to be worshiped, but either in the place of books to give instruction to those who could not read, or to excite devotion in the minds of others. how far they ever answered such a purpose is doubtful; but, even granting that this was the case for a time, it soon ceased to be so, and it was found that pictures and images brought into churches darkened rather than enlightened the minds of the ignorant — degraded rather than exalted the devotion of the worshiper. So that, however they might have been intended to direct men's minds to god, they ended in turning them from him to the worship of created things."—J. Mendham, *The Seventh General Council, The Second Of nicæa*, introduction, pages iii-vi. (Quoted in the appendix of *The Great Controversy*, p. 680)

If we think that we need representations of deity, we can rest assured that God knows what our needs are and that God "can make pictures upon the mind's eye more beautiful and correct than can be made by the greatest artist who has ever presented to the world a representation of heavenly things" (*The Publishing Ministry*, p. 219).

God's word is filled with descriptive character images of Christ that capture our imaginations and thrill our souls when we study them. Jesus is the "light of the world" (John 1:4-5), the "bread of life" (John 6:32-33), and the living water that whosoever drinketh of "shall never thirst" (John 4:14). Furthermore, Jesus is our "merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for" our sins (Hebrews 2:17); "the good shepherd [who] giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11); the spotless Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8), "the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2); "the way, the truth, and the Life" (John 14:6); and the very "image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15).

Writing to the Galatians, Paul said: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you" (Galatians 3:1)? The Bible in Basic English translates this as: "O foolish Galatians. Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly *portrayed* among you as crucified?" The Phillips translation says: "O YOU dear idiots of Galatia, *who saw* Jesus Christ the crucified so plainly, who has been casting a spell over you?" It is clear that Paul was not portraying or showing Christ to the Galatians by the means of pictures, but rather through the preaching of the word. Beloved, how can we even consider reducing Jesus to a piece of paper and hanging him on the wall?

Ellen White expands our understanding of the prohibition against representations of the divine to also include heavenly things. An artist by the name of Sister Stewart wanted to make a representation of the New Jerusalem. Sister Stewart knew that Ellen White had seen the New Jerusalem in vision,

and so she asked Sister White to write a description of it to aid her in her artistic work. The response of Ellen White was clear and pointed:

You express a desire for me to describe things concerning the New Jerusalem. I positively decline to do anything of the kind. My powers would be inadequate to do this or even make an approach to it, and I advise you not to make any attempt to have a particular representation which will carry the impression that it is the representation of the New Jerusalem. The most eloquent representation of the New Jerusalem is but . . . [an] attempt to present it.

Anyone who is dealing with the future unseen world may best describe its untold glories by quoting the words of Paul, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). I feel that many approach sacred things as though their finite powers were capable of taking them in. . . .

There is so large a number that tread on holy ground with unsanctified feet that we are very cautious, even in statements that we present to them in regard to sacred and eternal things, because finite and common ideas become mixed with the holy and sacred. Man may try with his entrusted and cultivated powers to represent something of heaven and he will make a blunder of the whole thing.

Your power as an artist will, when stretched to its utmost capacity fall down faint and weary in seeking to take in the things of the unseen world, and yet there is an eternity beyond. With these statements you will excuse me from attempting to portray before you anything concerning the works of the great Master Artist.

Let the imaginations of the people be on the highest stretch to contemplate the glories of the New Jerusalem and yet they have but just entered upon the borders of the eternal weight of glory that shall be realized by the faithful overcomer. Put off thy shoes from off thy feet for the ground whereon thou standest is holy. This is the very best answer I can give to your question.— Letter 54, April 4, 1886, to Sister Stewart. (*This Day with God*, p. 103)

Thirteen years later (1899), Ellen White penned the following counsel:

The artist may do his best to represent the things his eyes have never seen, but his representations are so far beneath the reality that I am pained as I behold them. Neither God nor heaven nor Christ, who is the image of the Father, can be truly represented by the art of man. If the Lord had thought it advisable to represent Christ in this way, His person would have been described in the writings of the apostle. . . .

The Holy Spirit takes the most attractive excellencies of the One who is altogether lovely, and presents them in such a way as to engage the attention and receive the best

attention of the renewed heart. God designs that the Holy Spirit shall keep before the mind's eye scenes that will attract and absorb all there is of the newborn soul. We need not any external representations of the person of Christ. (*The Publishing Ministry*, pp. 219, 220)

That same year she also wrote: "Would not the mind have clearer, more perfect ideas of angels, of Christ, of all spiritual things, if no pictures were made to represent heavenly things" (*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 171)? The implied answer is, of course, that the mind would have a better conception of all heavenly things without physical representations.

In order to retain the people to himself and his kingdom, King Jeroboam set about to represent Yahweh to the people in a visible representation:

And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. (1 Kings 12:26-30)

Commenting upon this, Inspiration has told us:

In arranging this transfer, Jeroboam thought to appeal to the imagination of the Israelites by setting before them *some visible representation* to symbolize the presence of the invisible God. Accordingly he caused to be made two calves of gold, and these were placed within shrines at the appointed centers of worship. In this effort to represent the Deity, Jeroboam violated the plain command of Jehovah: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. . . . Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." Exodus 20:4, 5. (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 100)

While it is true that Jeroboam made a three-dimensional image, the principle that he violated was the making of "some visible representation to symbolize the presence of the invisible God." The number of dimensions in which this is done is not the issue. When we bring representations of the divine into our worship and life, we are sure to be corrupted and lose our purity, as the history records the early church lost her purity.

Most of the Christians at last consented to lower their standard, and a union was formed between Christianity and paganism. Although the worshipers of idols professed to be converted, and united with the church, they still clung to their idolatry, only changing the objects of their

worship to images of Jesus, and even of Mary and the saints. The foul leaven of idolatry, thus brought into the church, continued its baleful work. Unsound doctrines, superstitious rites, and idolatrous ceremonies were incorporated into her faith and worship. As the followers of Christ united with idolaters, the Christian religion became corrupted, and the church lost her purity and power. (*The Great Controversy*, p. 43)

Perhaps you did not know that at one time images were banned from the Catholic Church. The Council of Hieria was, at one time, viewed as ecumenical but was later rejected by the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. It was summoned by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine V in AD 754 in the palace of Hieria opposite Constantinople. The council supported the position of the emperors of this period who were iconoclastic. Another council, however, was called:

This council, called also the seventh general council, was held at Nice, in Asia, especially for the prestige that would accrue to it by the name of the second Council of Nice. It was held Sept. 24 to Oct. 23, A. D. 787. "The iconoclasts appeared, not as judges, but as criminals or penitents; the scene was decorated by the legates of Pope Adrian, and the Eastern patriarchs; the decrees were framed by the president, Tarasius, and ratified by the acclamations and subscriptions of three hundred and fifty bishops. They unanimously pronounced that the worship of images is agreeable to Scripture and reason, to the Fathers and councils of the Church."—Gibbon. (A. T. Jones, *Ecclesiastical Empires*, p. 243)

The closing words of the decree of the council are as follows:

"We are taught by the Lord, the apostles, and the prophets, that we ought to honor and praise before all, the holy God-bearer, who is exalted above all heavenly powers; further, the holy angels, the apostles, prophets, and martyrs, the holy doctors, and all saints, that we may avail ourselves of their intercession, which can make us acceptable to God if we walk virtuously. Moreover, we venerate also the image of the sacred and life-giving cross and the relics of the saints, and accept the sacred and venerable images, and greet and embrace them, according to the ancient tradition of the holy Catholic Church of God, namely, of our holy Fathers, who received these images, and ordered them to be set up in all churches everywhere. These are the representations of our Incarnate Saviour Jesus Christ, then of our inviolate Lady and quite holy God-bearer, and of the unembodied angels, who have appeared to the righteous in human form; also the pictures of the holy apostles, prophets, martyrs, etc., that we may be reminded by the representation of the original, and may be led to a certain participation in His holiness." (*Ibid.*, p. 244)

Even John Calvin said: "A true image of God is not to be found in all the world; and hence that His glory is defiled, and His truth corrupted by the lie, whenever He is set before our eyes in a visible form. ... Therefore, to devise any image of God, is in itself impious; because by this corruption His Majesty is adulterated, and He is figured to be other than He is" (*Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 4, "Harmony of the Law," Part II).

Perhaps you have heard that there was at one time a special picture of Jesus in Elmshaven, the last home of Ellen White. This picture was supposed to have been in her bedroom and was said to represent Jesus more accurately than any picture Ellen White had seen. What is the truth about this?

Firstly, at one time there was a picture of Jesus displayed in the bedroom of Ellen White, but this was many years after her death. Secondly, there is no statement from the pen of Ellen White testifying of a picture of Jesus that she approved. Thirdly, according to Grace Jacques, granddaughter of Ellen White, this picture that was supposed to have been endorsed by Ellen White is a falsely-contrived rumor. Grace Jacques gave testimony to the falsity of the allegation of a picture of Christ, stating:

No, she never said anything like that. It wasn't here [at Elmshaven] when grandmother was here. No. (Personal testimony recorded by Michael Hodges during a tour of Elmshaven on April 1, 1984)

Grace Jacques explained that the rumor of this allegedly true picture of Christ was traced to a neighbor who wanted to sell pictures of Christ. Grace Jacques also stated that this was not the only picture of Christ rumored that Ellen White had, but she stated that they were all false stories. Grace Jacques further declared that the picture placed in Elmshaven after the death of Sister White had become a source of fanaticism. One person, for example, claimed to have been healed by just viewing the picture. Grace Jacques testified that after counsel with her brother, Arthur White, she removed the infamous picture of Jesus and placed it in storage at Elmshaven.

Jesus said that to know God and to know his Son is eternal life (John 17:3). We should want to know God and Christ the best we can, and anything that spoils our understanding of them should be eliminated as soon as possible.

But how does this affect me, you might be asking. Please remember that historically we see that Satan brings his symbols in first and our acceptance of these matters prepares the way for further abominations. Our minds will be limited by the visual conceptions that we have obtained. We may all have pictures of Jesus, figurines of angels, or perhaps nativity scenes that, according to inspiration, should be removed.

Just as making idols led the Israelites away from the true worship of God, hanging a portrait of Jesus in our homes presents a continual temptation to reduce him to nothing more than the image in the picture. Even if we are not bowing

down and worshipping the picture, how can we not eventually equate him in our minds with this simple image? How can we look at it every day and not be tempted to see him as merely the figure in the picture?

The importance of this is seen in the 8th and 9th chapters of Ezekiel. In chapter 8 God calls this imagery a “wicked abomination.” Beloved, if God calls imagery of God, Christ, and heavenly things a “wicked abomination,” then it certainly is, and if we are in harmony and in tune with God, we will hate such abominations. Also we learned, as noted earlier, that only those who sigh and cry about these wicked things will receive the pure mark of truth, the seal of the living God. We are not talking about what was essential for all of our forefathers to know today, though I believe that they knew these things, but we are talking about what is essential if we are going to be a part of the 144,000, those who are sealed just before probation closes. Those who have a zeal for the honor and glory of God will not wish to be involved in anything that is disgusting to God. If you wish to be a part of the 144,000 you will have to put the honor of God first. You may not be making pictures of God, Jesus, or heavenly things, but do you have them around and even if not, if you fail to sigh and cry to those who are involved, you will not receive the seal of God. That is clear and plain. You may be considered a troubler of Israel, but so was Elijah. You may not receive the approval of the General Conference, but you may have the approbation of God. I realize that this message will not be palatable to some, but the Bible declares that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18 NKJV). I cannot and will not suppress the truth because it is unpopular. Now what will you do?

Allen Stump

WV Camp Meeting

Plans are underway for the next West Virginia camp meeting, to be held June 15-19, 2010. We hope you will arrange your schedule to join us, for we live in solemn and important times. Soon Jesus will come and our struggle with evil and with the principalities of this earth will be over but until that time, let us avail ourselves of every opportunity to meet with God’s people to exhort and strengthen one another.

We are arranging speakers from France, Italy, Netherlands Antilles, and Canada, as well as from the United States, some new, some old. We are praying for and expect a great blessing from God during camp meeting and hope and pray you will be able to worship and study with us. We are also planning a nature center for the young folks and a visit from the local Three River’s Avian Center, with their raptors, is being scheduled, as well as are outreach opportunities for the youth. ✍

God’s Way Against Spiritual Wickedness

As Seventh-day Adventists, God has blessed us with a most precious gift, the gift of a true messenger of God—Ellen G. White. Adventism has been raised up by God to faithfully continue the work of the reformers and to be a real lighthouse in the darkness of the world at the end of time. But this great movement toward God’s pure light finds its roots in a broader movement that started in the sixteenth century — Protestantism. I believe that most of us would agree that Martin Luther was a good representative of the great reformation that then occurred.

*Foremost among those who were called to lead the church from the darkness of popery into the light of a purer faith, stood Martin Luther. Zealous, ardent, and devoted, knowing no fear but the fear of God, and acknowledging no foundation for religious faith but the Holy Scriptures, Luther was the man for his time; through him God accomplished a great work for the reformation of the church and the enlightenment of the world. . . . God purposed to make him a builder in the great temple that was rising so slowly through the centuries. Hardship, privation, and severe discipline were the school in which Infinite Wisdom prepared Luther for the important mission of his life. (*The Great Controversy*, p. 120)*

Interestingly, the close of the fifteenth century witnessed the birth of another child destined to make history. The birth of Luther occurred in 1483. Only eight years after Luther’s birth, Ignatius of Loyola was born. Who could have known the future destiny of these two children? While one was destined to proclaim liberty to the enslaved, the other would forge new chains for the souls of men and bind them with cords of steel.

Luther was born of a humble family and for him a modest career would have been anticipated, but for Loyola, the descendant of Spanish grandees, who could have known his destiny? Anyone would have predicted a brilliant career in court and tented field. If he, indeed, has had his fame and his applause, his fame has not been the fame of an enlightener of mankind or of one who has advanced civil or religious liberty. How sad that the once chivalrous and knightly Loyola became the founder of an institution which has reduced the practice of deceit to a fine art and has taught its members how to conceal and practice evil under a semblance of virtue.

Very few are the men who dare to openly denounce the so-called “Society of Jesus” (Jesuits), and there are fewer remarkable events in the history of the Church of Rome than that of the suppression of the Jesuits. If ever Peter spoke from the chair of Peter, he spoke by the mouth of Pope Clement XIV when he issued the famous Bull dated July 21st, 1773,

continued on page 17

Our Magnificent Brains

If we were to consider the finest recent example of human brain activity, Albert Einstein might come to mind because of his superior ability to conceptualize physics problems. His theories revolutionized science and our understanding of the universe, but there was nothing unusual in the anatomical size of Einstein's brain. Within his brain, however, some interesting features were found, features which some scientists believe provided for his unusual mathematical and scientific abilities. The parietal lobes of his brain were 15% wider than probably yours and mine are, and they contained a rare pattern of grooves and ridges. In addition, a groove that normally slices through the parietal lobes was much smaller than average. The shallowness of this fissure allowed the brain cells to be packed more closely together, permitting a greater number of interconnections. Some believe (but it cannot be proven) that this anatomical anomaly permitted more cross-referencing of information and ideas, leading to his great leaps of insight. If this is true, then, without a similarly-structured brain, there is no hope for you or me to walk in the same realm of physics as Einstein did. There is hope for us, though, in a different way.

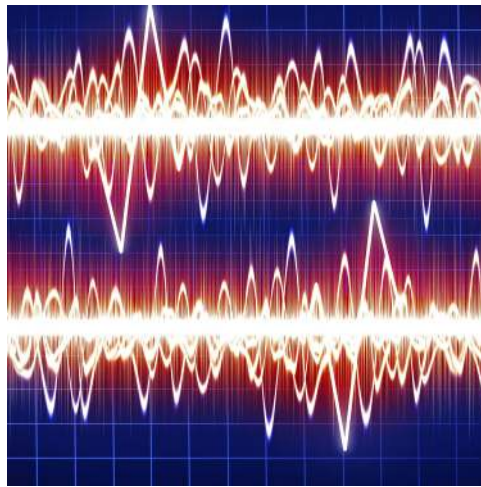
Religious behavior, like other human behavior, varies widely among individuals, and many researchers view the brain as the key to understanding this behavior. Barbara Bradley Hagerty, National Public Radio's religion correspondent, has written a book entitled *Fingerprints of God: In Search of the Science of Spirituality*. In it she explores the mystery of spirituality, a mystery so-called because she finds spirituality to be something that cannot be analyzed and conclusively proven across the board for everyone but is, instead, an experience unique to each individual. Her interviewees included Scott McDermott, a United Methodist minister with a PhD in New Testament theology, interviewed while he was attending a Pentecostal revival meeting; Andrew Newberg, a neuroscientist at the University of Pennsylvania who has been scanning the brains of religious people for years; Dr. Michael Baime also at the University of Pennsylvania who, in addition to his university duties, has been practicing meditation for decades; Dr. Richard Davidson, director of the Laboratory for Affective Neuroscience at the University of Wisconsin; Sheri Kaplan who has lived with HIV for fifteen years with absolutely no symptoms which she attributes to her faith; and people relating near-death and other supernatural experiences. Hagerty's final conclusion is that science can neither

prove nor disprove the existence of God. "The whole idea of God is that He is outside of time and space, outside of our capacity to measure." She also states that "you can look, for instance, at evidence researchers at Johns Hopkins University have found about serotonin receptors sparking mystical experiences and say that it's all brain chemistry. Or you can look at that and say that it's amazing that we are so intricately wired that we have a serotonin receptor that allows us to connect with the divine. It really is a matter of belief."

This relatively new field of study, called neurotheology, tries to bridge the gap between science and religion, but, as we noted last month, it cannot be done as things currently stand. We quoted Dr. Ariel Roth, former director of the Seventh-day Adventist Geoscience Research Institute, as saying, "If God exists, science will never find Him as long as it refuses to consider God as a part of reality," and "we don't yet see God being incorporated as a reality into scientific research papers and textbooks. Science is still adhering to a narrow mechanistic approach to reality" (*In Six Days*, p. 99).

You and I do not need to prove by science that God exists. Science cannot do this because of its inherent nature which

accepts only that which can be measured, quantified, and duplicated as true and real. These researchers are looking in the wrong places for proof of God. Just as intelligent design can only bring us face-to-face with a creator but not prove the existence of a creator, so the information gained from SPHECT (single-photon-emission-computed tomography), MRIs, EEGs, etc., regarding neural activity in the brain during meditation or prayer cannot prove whether the source of that activity begins in our brains (and is therefore self-induced) or begins through an entity/activity outside of and beyond our own mental abilities. In other words, no objective observer of the data can say what causes the process—man or God. There are believers on both sides of the fence. The information about religiosity obtained through medical testing can bring us to a point of decision concerning spirituality, but it does not prove there is, or is not, a higher power. It only presents us with data, and we then have to decide what to do with the information thus obtained. As Dr. Andrew Newberg stated: "Even if I do a brain scan of somebody who tells me that they've seen God, that scan only tells me what their brain was doing when they had that experience, and it doesn't tell me whether or not they actually did

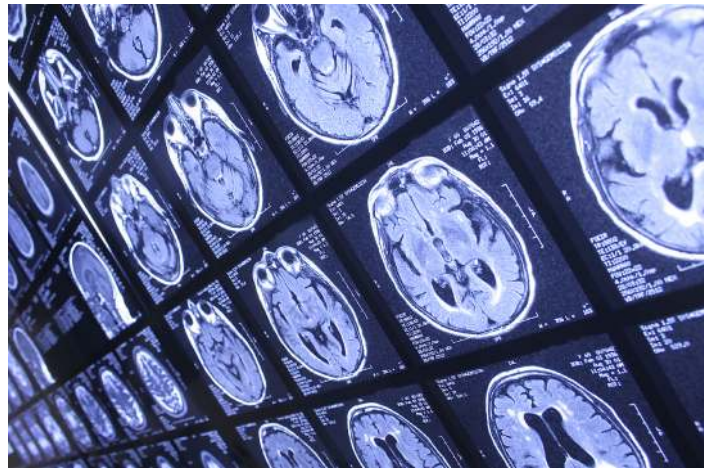


EEG showing the electric pulses of the brain

see God” (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=104132738>).

There are objective observers of the data who feel that spirituality is clearly demonstrated to be only a chemical process in the brain and that religiosity can be (but not necessarily always is) a pathological symptom of a brain gone awry. In an article entitled “The Serotonin System and Spiritual Experiences,” the authors claim “there is increasing support for the view” that individual differences in religious behavior “can be explained by biological and genetic factors.” They conclude, among other things, that serotonin and serotonin receptors are involved in “a sense of insight, spiritual awareness, mystical experiences, and religious ecstasy.” In other words, the serotonin system (as well as other neurotransmitter systems) of our brains controls the level and depth of our spiritual experiences. Now, the reason I bring this up is because you and I may, one day, be called before courts of law because of our refusal to abide by the laws requiring us to dishonor the seventh-day Sabbath and honor Sunday, and in these courts we may be faced with the seemingly compelling evidence that we are really not being faithful to *God* by keeping the seventh day holy, as we claim, but, instead, are experiencing simply a physiological occurrence that has a *sense* of spirituality that is caused by the serotonin processes of our brains. Other intelligent, logical people, we may be told, obey the laws of the land concerning Sunday worship because their brains produce different levels of serotonin and/or have different quantities of serotonin receptors which do not provide for that intense “spiritual experience” that prevents people like us from being law-abiding citizens. Of interest, the authors of this research paper also conclude that the neuro-transmitting processes of the brain, such as the serotonin system, can be pathological and result in psychiatric conditions, which we know is true (clinical depression is one of them) and that bipolar mania and schizophrenia can have delusions and hallucinations of a religious content, which is also true. We should be aware, though, that it is possible the label of psychiatric illness, based on this type of research, may be used against faithful Christians who refuse to disobey the precepts of God’s word.

Our loyalty and faithfulness to God, at all times and especially during the final crisis ahead of us, is not to be based on our experience or feelings that specialists could say result from the processes of the brain, feelings such as spiritual awareness and insight and feelings of mysticism and religious ecstasy. We must not surrender to the ease of feelings and experiences for the foundation of our faith, for they will fail us not only at some time in our own Christian walk but also if and when we are called before courts of law and other bodies of power, including church boards. We cannot testify before them that our behavior and our beliefs are a result of our sweet experience (or relationship) with God and what he has shown us, for it could easily be retorted that our experience is simply a *perceived* experience due to the serotonin



Pictures from a CT scan of the brain

activity in our brains. We have said before in *Old Paths*, and we say again, that we cannot base our theology, wholly or in part, upon our experience, for experience is known to be finicky with highs and lows, but also because, as we are now learning, spiritual feelings can be aroused by the neural activity of the brain. Our only spiritual rock of surety is God’s word; upon it we can safely lean.

We do not have to straddle the fence concerning the debate about whether spirituality is self-produced by the physiology of one’s brain or is an encounter with God. As Christians, we can know for sure, not based on our experience but based on the word of God. In Romans 12:3, we read that *every* man has been given a measure of faith: “God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” This is outside of and beyond anything that we can do for ourselves or that can be done by the biological processes of our brains. The receivers of this measure of faith include you and me, our children, other family members, and people like Jean-Paul Sartre, who claimed to be an atheist for most of his life. This verse tells us where the spirituality of every human being begins — it is not self-generated in one’s own brain by neurotransmitters. It is not self-generated through meditation, through yoga, or through any trance-like state, but it is given to each one as a gift from God. And this gift can be developed. This is why it is so important for young people to establish a devotional and prayer life early in their development and why older Christians need to continue in this habit. Dr. Richard Davidson, director of the Laboratory for Affective Neuroscience, explains it this way: “You can sculpt your brain the way you can sculpt your muscles if you went to the gym, absolutely. Our brains are continuously being sculpted whether we like it or not” (Taken from the National Public Radio transcript for “Prayer May Reshape Your Brain ... And Your Reality”). This is called neuroplasticity. Dr. Andrew Newberg states it this way: “As one does a particular practice or a particular task over and over, that becomes more and more written into the neural connections of the brain.” (*Ibid.*, storyId=104132738). In other words, the more you focus on

something, whether it be math, music, or the Bible, the more easily your brain accomplishes the task at hand.

This is not to say that some, or many, “supernatural” experiences cannot be self-induced. We know drugs, such as peyote and LSD, can do this. Electronic stimulation of the temporal lobe can cause one to hear snatches of music that can be interpreted as music from heavenly spheres or to see lights that are thought to be angels. Saying a mantra over and over can place one in a trance-like state, and deep meditation in which the stimuli of the external environment is tuned out is often described as resulting in *oneness* with the universe. This is not, however, true communication with the God of the universe. It is not a communication that grows from the measure of faith given to each one of us by God.

To understand this better, let us meet Sheri Kaplan who was diagnosed as HIV-positive fifteen years ago. Since her diagnosis, she has had no HIV or AIDS-related symptoms. None. She has been on no medication. She does not have the mutation gene that prevents the progression of HIV to AIDS. She has never had any opportunistic infections. Why? Sheri claims no formal religion. She does, however, pray and meditate every day, and she believes her faith is the reason that she is alive today. She says, “I have the power to control my mind, before it gets to a physical level or an emotional level” (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId+104351710>). This cannot be the working of God’s power.

Pam Reynolds had a leaking aneurysm on her brain stem and had corrective surgery in which the blood was drained from her brain after her body was chilled, the aneurysm was snipped, and then the blood pumped back, but during this daring procedure she reports being able to look down on the operating table, see the procedure, and hear the communications between nurses and doctors. During this experience she also communicated with her dead grandmother and dead uncle, who escorted her back to her body on the table. (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=104397005>.) This also cannot be the working of God’s Spirit.

Dr. Scott McDermott, a United Methodist minister, reports a vision in which he saw “fire dancing” on his eyelids and in which he felt God say, “You be the oil, and I’ll be the flame.” Then he began to feel waves of the spirit flow through his body. He has spent at least one to two hours a day in prayer, with up to four hours on Friday, for the past thirty-five years. During these sessions he feels peace and joy, often hears a voice, and receives visions (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=104132738> and <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=104310443>). Dr. McDermott believes we are wired for the supernatural and are meant to see a world beyond our five senses. Is this possibly the working of God’s Spirit?

And then there is Jean-Paul Sartre, winner of the 1964 Nobel Prize in literature. His writings have touched the minds of an untold number of people because of his clear and commanding use words to express his intellectual beliefs on being, freedom, consciousness, the solitude of choice, etc. He has been called the Picasso of literature, but in all his literature and philosophy man is upheld as the focal point, not God. Sartre was an avowed atheist who often repeated that man was responsible for his own errors, and he must mend his own ways; however, like the unconverted man who says “how to perform that which is good I find not” (Romans 7:18), he led an existence that was decidedly immoral and a contradiction to his own words. During the last few months of his life, Sartre spent much time with his close friend, Pierre Victor, and spoke to him thoughts that seemed to shatter what he had written during his lifetime, thoughts such as: “I do not feel that I am the product of chance, a speck of dust in the universe, but someone who was expected, prepared, prefigured. In short, a being whom only a Creator could put here; and this idea of a creating hand refers to God.” Unfortunately for the many people Sartre has influenced to live a life without God, he did not express, much less develop, this small measure of faith until the very end of his life, and, in part because of this, many will go to Christless graves.

Like Sartre, we do have an influence on each other, and we are responsible for that influence. Ellen White says:

God’s word is our standard; but how few follow it. And yet we are responsible for our influence. Many lose their interest in the truth of God, because they have taken unbelief into close connection with themselves. They breathe the atmosphere of doubt, of questioning, of infidelity; their faith is imperceptibly undermined, and finally destroyed. The influence of the world and of selfishness is carried about by many who profess to be following the Bible. They are like a cloud, chilling the atmosphere in which others move. The baleful influence of sin poisons the life of the soul, and our only safety is in separation from those who walk in its darkness.

Our religion will be of little worth to our fellow-men, if it is only theoretical, and not practical. We must be steadfast in the faith; we must not be movable. We have our work before us, which is to cause the light of truth, as revealed in the law of God, to shine in upon other minds, and lead them out of darkness. This work requires determined, persevering energy, and a fixed purpose to succeed.

“If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.” The greatest triumph given to us by the religion of Christ is control over ourselves. Our natural propensities must be controlled. Few realize what this is. They do not know their own weakness; and the natural sinfulness of the human heart often paralyzes their best endeavors. There must be a coming out from the world, and a nearness to God, if we would

be adopted into the family of Heaven as children of the great King. We must walk by faith. When we do the will of God, we shall know of the doctrine. Our feet will be planted on the rock of eternal truth, and we shall not be swept away by the doubt and skepticism of an unbelieving age. (*The Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1886)

And our influence is contagious: “In a just-published series of studies involving hundreds of volunteers, researchers have found that watching or even thinking about someone with good self-control makes others more likely to exert self-control. The researchers found that the opposite holds, too, so that people with bad self-control influence others negatively. The effect is so powerful, in fact, that seeing the name of someone with good or bad self-control flashing on a screen for just 10 milliseconds changed the behavior of volunteers” (http://www.brainmysteries.com/research/Self-control_is_contagious_study_finds.asp). Exhibiting self-control helps others to have self-control, and, likewise, the lack of self control has an influence on others to also have poor self-control. So, if you were the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and had the opportunity to speak to the largest Seventh-day Adventist congregation in North America, a congregation which includes many leaders, what would you advise them concerning their spiritual walk with God? How would you use your great influence? Here is how Dr. Paulsen used his influence just a few weeks ago:

Don't try to be perfect. You won't make it. I speak from experience. Just try to be faithful. (Taken from a sermon presented at the Loma Linda University Church on January 23, 2010)

Let us now return to Sheri Kaplan, Pam Reynolds, and Scott McDermott. If we were to have similar experiences, how would we determine if they were from God? The apostle John realized the early Christians were facing the same basic conundrum, though over a different issue (whether or not Jesus Christ was incarnated in the same flesh that you and I have), so he told them: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (1 John 4:1-3). So, we are to try the spirits to see if what is said is in compliance with the word of God. Again, it is the word of God that we are to stand firmly upon, not our experience.

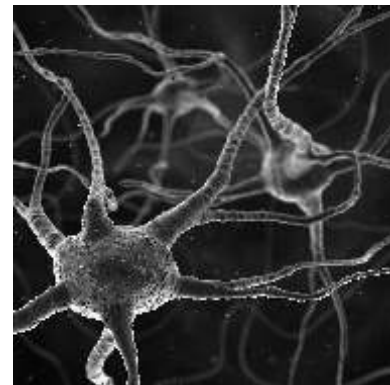
Even H. M. S. Richards did not seem to grasp the importance of *always* relying on the word of God for truth instead of on feelings, for in a Sabbath morning address to the North American Youth's Congress in 1947, he said: “Young people of this great congress, you do not need a great oration today.

If you did, I could not give it. My heart is too full and I do not have the ability. But, friends, I know that Jesus is alive today. I know that He gives victory. *I do not have to read it out of a book.* I know it firsthand. ... down deep in my heart, in my own experience, I have found out that Jesus stills knows

how to whisper forgiveness. He still knows how to give victory. He is still alive. Yes, He is the same yesterday, and, thank God, today, and forever. Christ forever” (*The Youth's Instructor*, October 21, 1947; all emphasis supplied unless otherwise stated)! Of course, our forgiveness is something we experience firsthand, but we *know* that we are forgiven not because we feel it deep down in our hearts but because the word of God tells us so. We cannot base our understanding of theological issues on the experience we feel, for the times ahead require a people who can and will stand for truth firmly and staunchly on the word of God alone.

We know from the Scriptures that Satan has the ability to deceive through so-called miracles. He did so before Moses and Aaron in the court of Pharaoh, and God warned against it during the time of Jeremiah: “For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 29:8, 9). Sister White also refers to the deceptiveness of Satan and tells us what his crowning act of deception will be:

As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Saviour's advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. Revelation 1:13-15. The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air: “Christ has come! Christ has come!” The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands and pronounces a blessing upon them, as Christ blessed His disciples when He was upon the earth. His voice is soft and subdued, yet full of melody. In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Saviour uttered; he heals the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have



Brain neurons

changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are blaspheming his name by refusing to listen to his angels sent to them with light and truth. This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion. Like the Samaritans who were deceived by Simon Magus, the multitudes, from the least to the greatest, give heed to these sorceries, saying: This is “the great power of God.” Acts 8:10.

But the people of God will not be misled. The teachings of this false christ are not in accordance with the Scriptures. His blessing is pronounced upon the worshipers of the beast and his image, the very class upon whom the Bible declares that God’s unmingled wrath shall be poured out.” (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 624, 625)

The people of God will not be misled at this fateful time because they will have tested the experience of the senses by the word of God. The spiritualistic manifestations we see today of near-death experiences, of Pentecostal emotionalism, and in new-age beliefs are actually just a widening progression of satanic spiritualism that is marching toward that great spiritualistic culmination in the impersonation of Christ.

And, furthermore, Satan is not permitted to counterfeit the manner of Christ’s advent. The Saviour has warned His people against deception upon this point, and has clearly foretold the manner of His second coming. “There shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. . . . Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth; behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Matthew 24:24-27, 31; 25:31; Revelation 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. This coming there is no possibility of counterfeiting. It will be universally known — witnessed by the whole world.

Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive. By the Bible testimony these will detect the deceiver in his disguise. To all the testing time will come. By the sifting of temptation the genuine Christian will be revealed. Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible and the Bible only? Satan will, if possible, prevent them from obtaining a preparation to stand in that day. He 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.” (*Ibid.*)

It is true we are not Sheri’s, Pam’s, or Scott’s judges, but we can know for ourselves the legitimacy of our own experiences, and we can know this based on the word of God and also by the effect our experience works in our lives. Sheri, Pam, and Scott’s experiences had life-changing effects on them, it is true. They are not the same people they once were, but having a life-changing effect is, of itself, not enough. It is important to understand what we are changed into by the experience and who is changing us. Are we more humble and submissive to the commandments of God? Are we choosing to deny self and bring honor and glory to God? Is the fruit of the Spirit seen continually in the little details of our daily lives? There is no question that Sheri, Pam, and Scott are convinced their experiences were and continue to be genuine and true, and we, as Christians, *are* to have an experience with the Lord, but we are to be lovers of our heavenly Father, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and their truth and not lovers of our experience, for when crunch time comes, we will not be able to stand upon our experience. We may feel forsaken of God at that time, as Jesus did on the cross. Our experience may be dark and foreboding. At such a time, and at all times, we can only stand upon the word of God and not upon our feelings or upon our experiences. We can know if our experience is legitimately a holy, sanctified experience if it passes the test of God’s word as it changes us into humble, meek children of our heavenly Father who are willing and happy to do all of God’s commands, even when it is not popular.

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” 2 Corinthians 5:17. Through the power of Christ, men and women have broken the chains of sinful habit. They have renounced selfishness. The profane have become reverent, the drunken sober, the profligate pure. *Souls that have borne the likeness of Satan have become transformed into the image of God. This change is in itself the miracle of miracles. A change wrought by the Word, it is one of the deepest mysteries of the Word. We cannot understand it; we can only believe, as declared by the Scriptures, it is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*

When the Spirit of God controls mind and heart, the converted soul breaks forth into a new song; for he realizes that in his experience the promise of God has been fulfilled, that his transgression has been forgiven, his sin covered. He has exercised repentance toward God for the violation of the divine law, and faith toward Christ, who died for man’s justification. “Being justified by faith,” he has “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:1.

But because this experience is his, the Christian is not therefore to fold his hands, content with that which has been accomplished for him. He who has determined to enter the spiritual kingdom will find that all the powers and passions of unregenerate nature, backed by the forces of the kingdom of darkness, are arrayed against him. Each

day he must renew his consecration, each day do battle with evil. Old habits, hereditary tendencies to wrong, will strive for the mastery, and against these he is to be ever on guard, striving in Christ's strength for victory.

"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth," Paul wrote to the Colossians; "in the which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. . . . Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." (*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 476, 477)

If our spiritual experience allows for our transformation into the image of God, then we know that we have the real thing. If it brings us into obedience to the word of God, we know that we have the real thing. Neurotransmitters cannot provide this behavioral change, though they can provide *feelings* of spirituality, but feelings will not accomplish a pervasive character change. Good intentions might work for awhile, but only the power of God is able to render a miracle in the form of the thoughtless changed into the caring, the violent changed into the tender-hearted, and the bitter-tongued changed into a bearer of words of love and forgiveness.

Standing upon God's word does not preclude a joyful experience with God. It does not deny happy feelings of contentment, peace, and spiritual grandness. There is a sweet loftiness about walking with God that nothing else renders. Fannie Crosby deftly wrote about such themes, and most likely we all have known these joys in our own lives, but we must remember that our faith is to be an intelligent faith, not one based upon feelings of joy, peace, or an awareness of spiritual heights, for these can be with us one day and gone the next. Our faith is to be founded upon the Book of the Ages (Romans 10:17), a book that has been a source of instruction and consolation to men and women for millennia, a book that is the great revealer of God and his plan for mankind. In this book each one comes face-to-face personally with the Creator of the universe and with the Saviour of mankind. Through this book one receives the peace that passeth understanding, and faith is instilled by its sure word of prophecy. We do not need to be able to understand neurotransmitters or physics to know the God of the universe. He has opened his heart to the simplest and to the most astute through the words he has given us in this great book, and by spending time in it we come to *know* the God of the universe.

A true story from Eric B. Hare illustrates simple faith based on *knowing* someone. "Auntie," who lived in the jungle of Burma, needed surgery but had never been to a city and

knew nothing about hospitals. Pastor Hare, known as "Thara" in this story, tells of her simple faith:

"Auntie, you must come to the city with me for an operation."

"Oh, Thara, how could I dare go to the city—the city. I've never been there before! I've only heard people tell about it."

"But I'll go with you."

"And will you stay with me while they operate?"

"Every minute."

"And you're sure it won't hurt?"

"You'll be asleep, Auntie, and won't know anything about it."

"But how will I go? I've never seen a boat, never seen a motorcar! And they say Daw-ta-kars (man-eaters) live in the city. O, Thara!"

"But I'll go with you, all the way."

"Oh, yes! That's right, I nearly forgot; and you will tell me what to do."

"Yes, I'll be with you on the boat and in the motorcar and right in the hospital!"

"Of course, there's nothing to fear," sighed Auntie. "I'll go."

"Yes, and keep thinking of the happy day when you'll come back!"

"But, Thara, how'll we eat during the journey? And how'll — They say —"

"Auntie, don't worry about anything. I'm attending to every want of the trip — food, water. You bring your bed. I'll have a nurse to take care of you."

"Oh, yes! Of course, I should have thought. You'll be there and attend to everything. But, Thara, I can't talk English, and what can I say when they ask me questions? O Thara, I'm —"

"But I'll be there. I can talk English, and Yin Ni the nurse can talk Burmese."

"Oh, yes! That's right, I must remember. You will be with me always, and I needn't worry over a single thing. If I can only remember that, I won't be frightened. All right, Thara, I'll be ready when you come in the morning."

Thus it was that the missionary gained this sick woman's confidence, allayed her every fear, and started off with her on the long journey to the city.

This poor woman could not comprehend God very well, but she could comprehend her Thara, and throughout the whole experience as he prayed with her and showed their utter dependence upon God to meet every necessity, her confidence grew. There was no trace of fear.

"Right into the hospital we went," said Missionary Hare. "She smiled at everything, and as she saw me making all the arrangements and doing all the talking, peace was written on her every feature. I visited her every afternoon, and after a few days' observation the doctors were ready for operating."

"Hopeless," said the Civil Surgeon.

"I'm afraid it's not operable," said his assistant.

"Her blood pressure is too low," said the sub-assistant.

“But they said it all in English,” continued Missionary Hare. “The patient couldn’t understand, and I told her, ‘They are going to operate in the morning, and we will all be praying for you. And away up home in the jungle the whole mission compound is having special—’”

“You’ll be with me while I smell the chloroform, and while they cut, won’t you, Thara?”

“Of course I’ll be there!”

“Then I won’t be afraid.”

The Civil Surgeon was glad that the Jungle Missionary could be present at the operation.

“She has such confidence in you,” he said, “that you are better than a dose of heart stimulant.”

“So I was there,” Mr. Hare resumed, “and after prayer, followed into the operating room. Clothed as I was from head to foot in a hospital operating gown, Auntie did not recognize me.”

“Breathe deep, Auntie,” I whispered in her ear.

Her eyes opened wide in surprise. “Is that you, Thara?” she said.

“I nodded. She closed her eyes and breathed deep for all she was worth. There was no fear, no fuss. I was proud of my patient.

“I thought she was entirely under the anesthetic, when her eyes opened again. There were no words—she was fast going under—but she wanted to be sure I was there—and I was. Again she peacefully closed her eyes and breathed deeply. Again she wanted to reassure herself—but eyes wouldn’t open. Only her thin hand groped for mine, held it tight a moment, then relaxed into sleep.

“Well! Well! She’s an easy patient,” said the anesthetist. “All ready.”

Then followed the operation, in which the hopeless proved hopeful, and the inoperable operable.

“A very lucky woman,” said the Civil Surgeon, wiping his brow.

“Sure must have been born under a lucky star, all right,” added his assistant.

“Never saw anything like it,” murmured the sub-assistant. “I didn’t think she had a chance!”

The Jungle Missionary stood out of the way in a corner, wiping off joyful perspiration, and offering up a prayer of praise.

About an hour later, Auntie opened her eyes, and after looking bewildered for a moment or two, asked, “When are they going to cut?”

“It’s all finished, Auntie,” I said, “all finished.”

“All finished!” she exclaimed. “And I didn’t know!”

“But you were a good patient,” I assured her and then asked, “Weren’t you frightened a little bit?”

Her eyes were closing again, but as she dozed off into peaceful sleep, she slowly answered, “Not frightened a bit. As long as I could see, you were there. As long as I could feel,

you were there. *And I knew it was all right.*” (Adapted from *The Youth’s Instructor*, July 2, 1935).

We cannot *see* our heavenly Father, as Auntie saw Thara, nor can we *feel* our Saviour, Jesus Christ, as she felt Thara’s hand, but we can still know they are near because of their words to us. Because of such words as “Fear not: for I am with thee” (Isaiah 43:5) and “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5), we never need fear again the storm, the tempest, or the ravages of men, for he who “sitteth in the heavens will overrule all...for the accomplishment of His deep designs”:

The followers of Christ know little of the plots which Satan and his hosts are forming against them. But He who sitteth in the heavens will overrule all these devices for the accomplishment of His deep designs. ... Satan is well aware that the weakest soul who abides in Christ is more than a match for the hosts of darkness, and that, should he reveal himself openly, he would be met and resisted. Therefore he seeks to draw away the soldiers of the cross from their strong fortification, while he lies in ambush with his forces, ready to destroy all who venture upon his ground. Only in *humble reliance upon God*, and *obedience to all His commandments*, can we be secure. No man is safe for a day or an hour without *prayer*. Especially should we *entreat the Lord for wisdom to understand His word*. Here are revealed the wiles of the tempter and the means by which he may be successfully resisted. Satan is an expert in quoting Scripture, placing his own interpretation upon passages, by which he hopes to cause us to stumble. We should *study the Bible with humility of heart*, never losing sight of our *dependence upon God*. While we must constantly guard against the devices of Satan, we should *pray in faith continually*: “*Lead us not into temptation.*” (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 528, 530)

Since it is by humbly relying upon God and obeying his commandments that we can be secure in the time of trial that is to come upon all the world, let us study *now* to show ourselves approved, for the knowledge of the word of God will prove an anchor to our souls.

In closing, an 87-year-old veteran of the entertainment business claims to be deeply religious, and he believes he is so because of the epiphanies (divine manifestations) he has experienced while smoking tobacco, eating good food, and sharing laughter with others. He believes he has a compact with his maker and is on a spiritual journey of understanding, but all he gives to support his claim of a walk with God are his experiences. There is no mention of God’s word, nor of our duty to worship God by our obedience to his commands, and he closed his article written for the *Washington Post* by stating he wished there was a church he could join that held similar beliefs.

Brothers and sisters, *there is* a sweetness in our experience with God. Holding a newborn baby or being held in the embrace of a loved one are wonderful experiences, but we

must remember they are blessings from God meant to call from our hearts praise to him for such wonderful gifts. He and not our experience is to be the focus of our worship. He and nor our experience is to be the foundation of our faith.

We have documentation today of the neural activity of the brain when the mind is focused on spiritual activities, but this documentation does not prove or disprove a true experience with God. There are many false spiritual experiences in the world, and both true and false experiences are documented equally well by medical testing. The proof of a spiritual experience with the infinite God of the universe is based solely on the truths of the Bible, and this experience bears the fruit of obedience in our lives. Our feelings and unique experiences, no matter how sweet they may be, can never be the foundation of our faith, for they are subject to fluctuation and cannot be experienced universally, at the same time, and equally by all. God's word, on the other hand, can be applied equally and at all times to every child of God. Whether we are poor or rich, literate or illiterate, farmers or presidents, or men or women, God's word can be depended upon for all truth and for complete guidance. It is a lamp unto our feet that will never fail.

Onycha Holt

"God's Way..." continued from page 9

suppressing the Jesuits. While giving the grounds of his condemnation of the Society, he witnessed to the following facts:

1. That thousand of complaints against that religious community were laid before our predecessors, upheld by the authority of some princes.

2. That the very bosom of the Society of Jesus was torn to pieces by internal and external dissensions. (M. F. Cusack, *The Black Pope — A History of the Jesuits*, p. 356)

Griesinger, well-known historian, commented upon Clement's courage thus:

The Pope who ventured to censure the Order of Jesus undertook an act of far greater daring than a warrior who placed his cannon against them in a field of battle; while, too, every representative of Christ on earth who had contemplated anything of the kind before – I call to remembrance among Popes, Sixtus V, Clement VIII, and Innocent XIII – had been quickly removed from the face of the earth. (Theodor Griesinger, *The Jesuits*, p. 636)

No document could have been worded more plainly, no document could have been issued with more deliberation than this papal Bull of Clement XIV which suppressed the Jesuits "forever". It seems scarcely needful to quote from this famous Bull. Its validity has never been disputed, and if papal infallibility means anything, it is still in force.

What makes the matter so important is that Clement XIV refers to all the decisions of previous popes who had in vain tried to reform the Society and to the complaints of so many kings and princes who had declared that they could have no peace in their dominions while the Jesuits existed. Lust of gain, and the insatiable greed of power were but too obviously the one end of the Jesuit. It is no Protestant voice which has condemned them, it is the voice of the "Universal Church" of which they even proclaim themselves the special defenders.

We can well believe with what a terrible sense of responsibility the Pope signed this document. He did not indeed know that he was personally "infallible," but he did know the awful power with which his church had invested her pontiffs. He had done and dared what none of his predecessors would have attempted; he knew the penalty and paid for it.

When he had placed his signature to the fateful document he cried out in the agony of his soul, *Sotto scriviamo la nostra morte*, "I have signed my death warrant." The signature was made on July 23rd, 1773. On September 27th, 1774, he died. From the day on which he signed the Bull, he faded away. His life was one long agony of physical torture. He could at any moment have recalled the condemnation of the Jesuits, but he did not recall it. It was a nobler courage which enabled him to persevere to the end in an act of duty under such pressure, than to have signed a retraction.

Who had poisoned the Pope? The strongest evidence of Jesuit complicity may be found in the conduct of the Jesuits themselves. The Abbé Guettée says:

They displayed the most lively joy at his illness and death, and spread abroad rumors about his last moments as horrible as they were absurd. They would have it believed that God has punished him by a horrible malady for the measure he had taken against the Company. The affection with which they spoke of this malady gave more consistency to the report which imputed to them the poisoning of the Pope. They have been too habituated to acts of this nature for these suspicions to be rejected as ill-founded, even though the accusation has not been juridically proved. (*Hist. des Jésuites*, p. 303)

If even a pope risked his life to free the world from the influence of this company, who can measure its devastating influence? Yet, only forty-one years after their so-called eradication, the Jesuits managed to secure another edict restoring them to their former privileges, an edict as infallible as the one which suppressed them.

On July 13th, 1886, Pope Leo XIII reinstated them in the canonical status which they had held previous to the suppression in 1773, restoring all the privileges withheld by Pius VIII, when he re-established the Order in 1814. The Jesuits are by this Brief exempted completely from all jurisdiction, supervision, and control of bishops, archbishops, and ordinaries. They may occupy any pulpit, hear confessions, read

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Youth's Corner — What Then?

What Then?

When the great plants of our cities
Have turned out their last finished work—
When the merchant has sold his last yard of silk
And dismissed his last tired clerk—
When the banks have rolled in their last dollar
And paid out their last dividend—
And the Judge of the world says,
'Close for the night,' and calls for a balance—
What then?

When the choir has sung its last anthem,
And the preacher has said his last prayer—
When the organ has pealed its last echo,
And its sound has died out on the air—
When the Bible has been closed on the altar,
And the pews are all empty of men—
And each soul stands facing his record,
And the Great Book is opened—
What then?

When the actor has played his last drama,
And the mimic has made his last fun—
When the movie has flashed its last picture,
And the bill boards displayed their last run—
When the crowds seeking pleasure have vanished,
And gone out into darkness again—
And a world that rejected its Saviour,
Is asked for a reason—
What then?

When the bugle dies out in the silence,
And the long marching columns are still,
When the millions of earth are gathered
From ocean and valley and hill—
When the Day that has no morrow
Has come to the last, last end,
And the voice of God from the Heavens,
Says, "It is done,"—
What then?

J. Whitfield Green

This poem was highly prized by Pastor Eric B. Hare, and he carried a copy of it with him wherever he went until he lost his copy fleeing from the advancing enemy forces pressing into Burma, and our story this month is about the questions poised in this poem. Pastor Hare knew the answers to the questions, and he shared them in a story he wrote for *The Youth's Instructor* in 1948:

"I was in Rangoon when the merchants closed their shops and dismissed their tired clerks. I saw them fleeing for their lives. I saw the banks close their doors, and the bankers flee for their lives. I saw the post office close, and the post-office

workers flee for their lives. I was in Rangoon when the doctors and nurses in the general hospital put their weak, sick patients out on the sidewalks, and then fled for their lives. Out at the zoo the keepers of the animals shot the lions and tigers to keep them from starving to death; then they ran for their lives. At the leper and insane asylums, the wardens opened the doors and let the loathsome and unfortunate people come into town, and they, too, ran for their lives. And at the jail, just three miles from our mission station, the prison doors were opened and 3,000 criminals were set at liberty, the keepers of the jail and the policemen also fleeing for their lives. I saw the last boat leave for India; I saw the last train leave the depot. I was there. I saw it with my own eyes. I know what happens *then*.

"I was in our beautiful church on the morning that we escaped for our lives. I played the organ for the last, last time, and that was the last hymn that organ ever played, for the Japanese soldiers broke it up and used it for firewood. I was there when Pastor E. M. Meleen read from the dear old Book, and I saw him close the Bible on the pulpit for the last, last time. I turned the key in the door, the pews all emptied of men. I saw it. I know what happens then. ... In that experience God gave us a preview of the end of the world and the day of judgment.

"In just one sentence I can tell you what happens, as expressed by a little rhyme which has in it more truth than poetry:

Mr. Meant-to has a comrade,
And his name is Didn't-do.
Have you ever chanced to meet them?
Did they ever call on you?
These two fellows live together
In a house called Never-win,
And I'm told that it is haunted
With the ghost of Might-have-been

"Just two days before we left Rangoon, I was packing away some of our most valuable articles in the closet under the staircase, when a well-to-do woman came into the mission headquarters and asked for the superintendent. I pointed to his office and assured her that he was in. She knocked on the door. Pastor Meleen came out, and I could not help hearing the conversation. She said, 'O Mr. Meleen, I have to go, and I can't take *anything* with me except a little suitcase and a rug for the journey. You may not know me, but I know you. I live in that grand home just a few blocks down the street, and now I have to go and leave all my lovely things behind. I hate to think of the thieves breaking in, to steal and loot and plunder. Won't you mission people go over and take my beautiful furniture? Take my beds and my tables and my chairs and my rugs. I will feel *so much happier* if you mission people use them.'

“And I heard Mr. Meleen say, “O lady, it is too late now. We are all packed up. We will be leaving any moment too. We have been waiting to evacuate our church members, and when they are out, we will be going too, with only a suitcase each. If we could have had some of those things three months ago when we were outfitting our clinic, we could have used every bed and every chair and every table. But now, lady, it is too late. It is too late now!”

“I saw the tears come to that dear woman’s eyes. “Too late?” she groaned. “You are going too?” As she turned to leave she threw her shawl over her face to hide her grief, and as she did, there escaped from her lips this awful cry, “Oh—how—I—wish—” Then emotion choked her words, and she left us to fill in the blanks, but *I knew what she wished*. Yes, I knew. I have seen people haunted by the ghost of might-have-been. ... We could not think of a single occasion when that *poor*, rich woman had done anything for humanity. And now that it was too late, she had to leave everything behind! The only picture that will burn itself into her memory is a picture of thieves breaking into her lovely house to burn, break, loot, and steal. I have seen them—men and women haunted by the ghost of might-have-been.

“Some days later, as we were leaving the little town of Pakokku, just after crossing the Irrawaddy River in our escape into India, Pastor W. W. Christiansen, who was just ahead, waved us to stop at the side of the road. We pulled up behind him, got out of our cars, and walked up to see what the difficulty might be. We found him in conversation with a well-to-do Indian woman. She was saying, “O Pastor Christiansen, this is just like the end of the world. Oh, I wish I could get baptized now. Isn’t there time to come back to the river and baptize me? No one can tell what is going to happen tomorrow, and *if I were only baptized*, I would feel it was all right with my soul.”

“And I heard Pastor Christiansen say, “It is too late now, lady. Remember six weeks ago I was kneeling in your home with you and your children, pleading that you would listen to the Spirit of God and make a decision for Jesus then. We are fleeing for our lives now, and we must be on our way. We pray that God will bring you safely into India. There we can study together again and prepare for baptism.” And I saw that prosperous, well-dressed Indian woman sink to the ground and cover her face with her sari as she sobbed, “Oh, why didn’t I get baptized six weeks ago? There was time then. I could have done it then, but now it is too late. It is too late.”

The opportunity is still available for us to follow the advice of Solomon and remember our Creator in the days of our youth (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Whether we are young or old, we need to be ready for our Saviour’s return, and then we will not be part of the group that hides themselves in the “dens and in the rocks of the mountains” (Revelation 6:15) when Jesus returns!

Onycha Holt

“God’s Way...” continued from page 17

mass, and administer the sacraments everywhere, without the consent of the local clergy or of the bishop. They have full power given them to act as they wish, uncontrolled by either the secular or ecclesiastical power. Their estates and possessions are free from any tithes, taxes, or dues whatever, and ecclesiastical and secular powers are warned, under the penalty of excommunication, not to hinder or disturb them in the exercise of the privileges conferred on them. They have, in fact, full power given to them to act as they please, unrestrained by either ecclesiastical or secular authority.

The Roman correspondent of the *Times* (August 23rd, 1886) stated that it was reported that Leo XIII was driven to this by poison, that he endured three days of severe illness, and then did what was required of him. (This information has been drawn from a history of the Jesuits entitled *The Black Pope* by M. F. Cusack. References and brackets are omitted for easier reading.)

Spiritual Application

Dear Brothers and Sisters, there are tremendous powers at stake when it comes to touching the influence of the Catholic Church or any of its orders. Why? Because it is one of the favorite means used by Satan himself to meet his purposes. The order of the Jesuits is of particular interest because its influence is such that the Catholic Church herself attempted to stop it, and yet failed to extinguish the fire she had kindled. If the general of the Jesuits is known as “the black pope,” there is a reason. Having less fame, many believe his power and influence exceeds the power and influence of the Pope himself.

One day in 2007, the year God had called me to translate key documents on the truth about God, I was peacefully gardening at our country home out in the mountains, when a military plane rushed right above my head and took a radical change of direction straight toward the perfectly blue sky. While many strange things had already happened, this one made a lasting impression on me. The plane had flown so low and so fast that my heart was stirred up until bedtime, and I felt as having somehow put into motion incredible powers that had decided to give me a lesson. While I agree that feelings are not reliable to prove anything, this frightening event made me realize how real is the battle in which we’re involved. Each day may be our last one, and we should be strong in the Lord to defend the truth.

We do not understand as we should the great conflict going on between invisible agencies, the controversy between loyal and disloyal angels. Over every man, good and evil angels strive. This is no make believe conflict. It is not mimic battles in which we are engaged. We have to meet most powerful adversaries, and it rests with us to determine which shall win. Could human beings know the number of the evil angels, could they know their devices and their activity, there would be far less pride and frivol-

ity. Satan is the prince of demons. The evil angels over whom he rules do his bidding. Through them he multiplies his agencies. . . . He instigates all the evil that exists in our world. (*In Heavenly Places*, p. 253)

When confronted with the human instrumentalities of Satan, we might sometimes lose sight of the broader view of the battle. But let us always remember that “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12). What are the means by which God wants us to fight against these powers? The first one that comes to my mind is *prayer*:

Satan cannot endure to have his powerful rival appealed to, for he fears and trembles before His strength and majesty. At the sound of fervent prayer, Satan’s whole host trembles... And when angels, all-powerful, clothed with the armory of heaven, come to the help of the fainting, pursued soul, Satan and his host fall back. . . . The great Commander in heaven and earth has limited Satan’s power. (*Ibid.*)

Prayer in secret, prayer while the hands are engaged in labor, prayer while walking by the way, prayer in the night season, the heart’s desires ever ascending to God – this is our only safety. In this manner Enoch walked with God. In this manner our Exemplar obtained strength to tread the thorny path from Nazareth to Calvary. Christ the sinless One, upon whom the Holy Spirit was bestowed without measure, constantly acknowledged His dependence upon God, and sought fresh supplies from the Source of strength and wisdom. How much more should finite, erring man feel his need of help from God every hour and every moment. (*That I May Know Him*, p. 252)

Who can evaluate the value of this privilege? By this means, God has enabled us to come to his very throne. Jesus, his Son, is the only mediator between God and us and presents our petitions to the Father (1 Timothy 2:5). Thousands of powerful angels are at their command, and we may know that, contrary to what many would have us believe, God, his Son, and the holy angels are real beings, filled with love toward mankind.

Another God-appointed means to fight against the rulers of darkness is *singing*:

With a song, Jesus in His earthly life met temptation. Often when sharp, stinging words were spoken, often when the atmosphere about Him was heavy with gloom, with dissatisfaction, distrust, or oppressive fear, was heard His song of faith and holy cheer. (*Education*, p. 166)

Let there be singing in the home, of songs that are sweet and pure, and there will be fewer words of censure and more of cheerfulness and hope and joy. Let there be singing in the school, and the pupils will be drawn closer to God, to their teachers, and to one another. As a part of reli-

gious service, singing is as much an act of worship as is prayer. Indeed, many a song is prayer. (*Ibid.*, p. 168)

Indeed, music and song are most precious means to dispel the powers of darkness. While in prayer and song, Paul and Silas were delivered from prison:

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed. (Acts 16:25, 28)

What other means does God want us to use against spiritual wickedness? I believe that Ephesians 6:13-17 gives us the answer:

Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness ; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace ; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

May we all be found faithful soldiers of Christ, always ready to fight the good battle of faith with prayer, songs, the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith until the second coming of Jesus in the clouds of heaven. This is my prayer for each one of us.



Marc Fury will be speaking at the West Virginia Camp Meeting

Marc Fury

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Editor Allen Stump — editor@smyrna.org
Associate Editor Onycha Holt — onycha@smyrna.org