

The latter part of Revelation 19:10 makes this statement: "...for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Some have been made to wonder whom this is speaking about, particularly since the Seventh Day Adventist church claims this was fulfilled in their early leader. To them this verse

by Ray L. Straub

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gift, as do others, but the spirit is different.

This places the prophet(ess) of one religious organization alongside those of all others. Everyone who prophesies claims the gift. They all teach that their utterings and revelations have a divine source. Whether their claim is more

What Is the 'Testimony of Jesus'?

implies that the "testimony of Jesus" and "spirit of prophecy" are synonymous terms.

They say that the "spirit of prophecy" and the "gift of prophecy" are "inseparably connected." I place these last two words into quotes not only because they are direct quotations (*Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrines*), but also because of this interesting choice of words. Obviously, they are meant to communicate the concept that the *spirit* of prophecy and the *gift* of prophecy are the same. Their explanations bear out this interpretation. At the same time, they seem to offer recognition that Scriptures do not support such a contention.

One of their cardinal doctrines declares that "Seventh-day Adventists believe that this gift [of prophecy] was manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White."

This assertion leads many to conclude that the life, utterings, and writings of Ellen G. White form or are part of the testimony of Jesus or the spirit of prophecy.

Before proceeding with an explanation of what the testimony of Jesus is, it will be helpful to reflect on the assertion that the *spirit* of prophecy and the *gift* of prophecy are the same. This is an important link in the chain upon which the church's claim hangs.

Their own explanation of the relationship between gift and spirit undermines the implication that they are the same. Quoting from

Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrines (page 96), "The Spirit of prophecy is intimately related to the gift of prophecy, the one being the *Spirit that indites* the prophecy, *the other the evidence of the gift bestowed*. They go together, each inseparably connected with the other. *The gift of the manifestation* of that which the Spirit of God bestows upon him whom, according to His own good purpose and plan, He selects as the one through whom such spiritual guidance is to come."

This says that the spirit and gift are not the same. It observes correctly that the spirit provides the inspiration, while the human vessel displays the ability. A faith in the prophetess might defend her possession of the *gift*, but how can it identify her or her work as being the *spirit*?

Simple reasoning would then force us to conclude that if Mrs. White had the *gift* of prophecy, her ministry cannot be considered to be the *spirit* of prophecy. This destroys the linkage between the writings of Mrs. White and the testimony of Jesus. A car cannot run without gasoline, and in this way they are inseparably related. Nonetheless, an automobile and gasoline are not the same.

When members of the denomination declare that their church has the spirit of prophecy, they make a statement that finds support in neither the Bible nor their own doctrines. They may claim the

genuine than others is open to conjecture. One thing is sure, it is not unique.

Unfortunately, prophecy is an area of study where few people allow caution and intellect to temper their curiosity. Here the glib and naive become experts. They accept almost all explanations as being profound and precise.

It seems we all want to know something about prophecy, so as soon as a teaching is grasped, we tend to accept it as our belief even though we have not determined its accuracy.

Few people demonstrate that they have the ability or the learning to adequately investigate the validity of a proposed prophetic interpretation. Consequently, the gift is claimed, but it is not genuine.

What is the "testimony of Jesus"? While Revelation 19:10 identifies it as the spirit of prophecy, it is not the only passage where the phrase is found. The testimony of Jesus is not always related to prophecy.

John the Baptist said of Jesus, "And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him" (John 3:32-34). Jesus' testimony is composed of the Words of God

and that which Jesus had seen and heard.

This testimony of Jesus is mentioned in Paul's introduction to his first letter to the Corinthians, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ: that in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the *testimony* of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 1:4-8).

Paul is making a skillful play on the use of the verb "confirm." He points out that their lives gave evidence of (confirmed) the words of Jesus abiding in them, and this in turn would hold them steadfast (confirm them) until the return of Jesus.

The testimony of Jesus was observed in the lives of the membership of the Corinthian Church, as well as all others who believed, accepted and demonstrated faith in Jesus Christ.

Similar use of the phrase is found in II Timothy 1:8, another of Paul's introductions. "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the *testimony of our Lord*, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God."

Here the definition of the "testimony of our Lord" is clearly presented. The advice given is not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, but instead to participate in the gospel work, accepting afflictions as they arise. There is no allusion to the gift of predicting.

This usage of the testimony continues right into the book of Revelation. It is interesting to note the description of the opening of the fifth seal in Chapter 6:9, "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the *testimony* which they held."

Chapter 12:10 says that now

"... is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down..."

The following verse tells how this was accomplished: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the *word of their testimony*; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

This compares to the previous use Paul made of "confirm" in I Corinthians 1:6. The testimony was *confirmed* in the brethren, and this in turn would *confirm* (keep them steadfast) until the coming of Christ. In Revelation, the testimony gave power to overcome.

This brings to our attention a comparison of two more interesting verses, Revelation 12:17 and Revelation 14:12. We have just been told that the brethren overcame the accuser by "... the word of their testimony..." The last verse of the chapter reports, "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the *testimony of Jesus Christ*." This testimony gives sustaining power.

Hence, chapter 14, speaking of those who did not fall victim to God's wrath, says, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the *faith of Jesus*." The "testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17) and "faith of Jesus"

Are You Going His Way?

by Sylvia Salem

**Are you going His way,
Or rushing out on your own?
Remember on the Judgment day,
You have to stand alone.**

**Are you going His way,
Seeking not your own fame?
Kneeling often to pray,
Asking forgiveness in His name.**

**Are you going His way,
Working daily for your place?
Knowing the price you'd pay,
By falling from His grace.**

(Revelation 14:12) as used here are synonymous. One would have to be prejudicially opinionated to reject such an obvious implication.

These texts all speak of the message that Jesus brought from God. This message of salvation is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the power of God unto salvation, witnessed in those who receive Jesus by faith. The testimony of Jesus is hardly described as a latter-day gift identifying the "remnant church."

Now we proceed to the specific treatment of Revelation 19:10, where it is stated that "... the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." This statement concludes the description of a circumstance that is reported in at least two other references in the Book of Revelation.

They have to do with the specific transmission of the prophecies in the Book of Revelation to John, its author.

Particular attention must be directed toward the opening of this book. It is introduced as "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the *testimony of Jesus Christ*, and of all things that he saw... I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the *testimony of Jesus Christ*" (Revelation 1:1, 2, 9).

These important parts of the introduction must be kept in mind:

(1) It is the revelation of Jesus Christ.

(2) It was to inform His servants of things which must shortly come to pass.

(3) He sent and signified (made it known) *by His angel* to John.

(4) John then recorded (a) the word of God, (b) the testimony of Jesus, and (c) all things that he saw. Verse 9 mentions just the first two.

Note the similarities mentioned
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breakers in direct opposition with God. It is no wonder the world is in such a pitiful state today.

Wars, murders, theft, rape; all kinds of things that destroy human freedom are practiced that destroy the freedom God wants us to enjoy.

If all men and women kept God's holy Ten Commandments from the heart with love for God and fellowmen, no man-made laws regarding moral relationships would be necessary.

The filth in some books and on television would not even be. Yes God's law, the Ten Commandments, does engulf everyone, but it in no way imprisons us. It stands as a moral guide for human decency for all mankind.

But "the fool has said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 53:1).

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin ye became the servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:16-18).

Jesus healed a lunatic's mind, a crazy man who ran around naked. The first thing that man did when he knew right from wrong, was to put some clothes on. It's a pity men and women, supposedly with sane minds, don't have enough intelligence to clothe themselves properly but continue running around naked and half-naked.

In Acts 19:18, 19 when the men and women of that day learned the moral standard of God, they brought their works of curious art and their filthy books together and burned them in the sight of all men, \$50,000 worth.

So the question is not what is right in my sight, your sight or that of any other person or group. It's God's standard that matters.

Antipornography and antiobscenity laws are necessary because some men and women will not use the good moral sense that God gives. To line oneself against the

moral standard of God is to join Satan in opposition to God. You thus become a slave to that rattlesnake you thought was harmless, and his bite is fatal.

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WHAT IS THE 'TESTIMONY OF JESUS?'

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in the conclusion of Revelation, beginning with chapter 22:6, "And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it: for I am thy fellowservant; and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God."

The conclusion mentions that:

(1) The sayings were faithful and true.

(2) The Lord God sent *His* angel.

(3) He was to shew His servants things which must shortly be done.

(4) Upon seeing those things, John fell down before the angel to worship him.

(5) John was restrained because the angel said he was only a fellowservant "... of them which keep the sayings of this book."

(6) The angel encouraged John to worship God.

A review of Revelation 19:9, 10 can now easily be placed into correct perspective. "And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto

me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the *testimony of Jesus*: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Note the many similarities:

(1) These are true sayings of God.

(2) John fell down to worship and was restrained.

(3) The messenger (unidentified here) declared himself to be a fellowservant "... and of thy brethren that have the *testimony of Jesus...*" (apparently the same as "*the sayings of this book*" in 22:9).

(4) John was encouraged to worship God.

(5) The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

What could that last phrase mean? We learned earlier that the testimony of Jesus was the Word He brought from God. The last passages considered informed us that the revelations given to John were also the words of God, brought and made known to him by an angel.

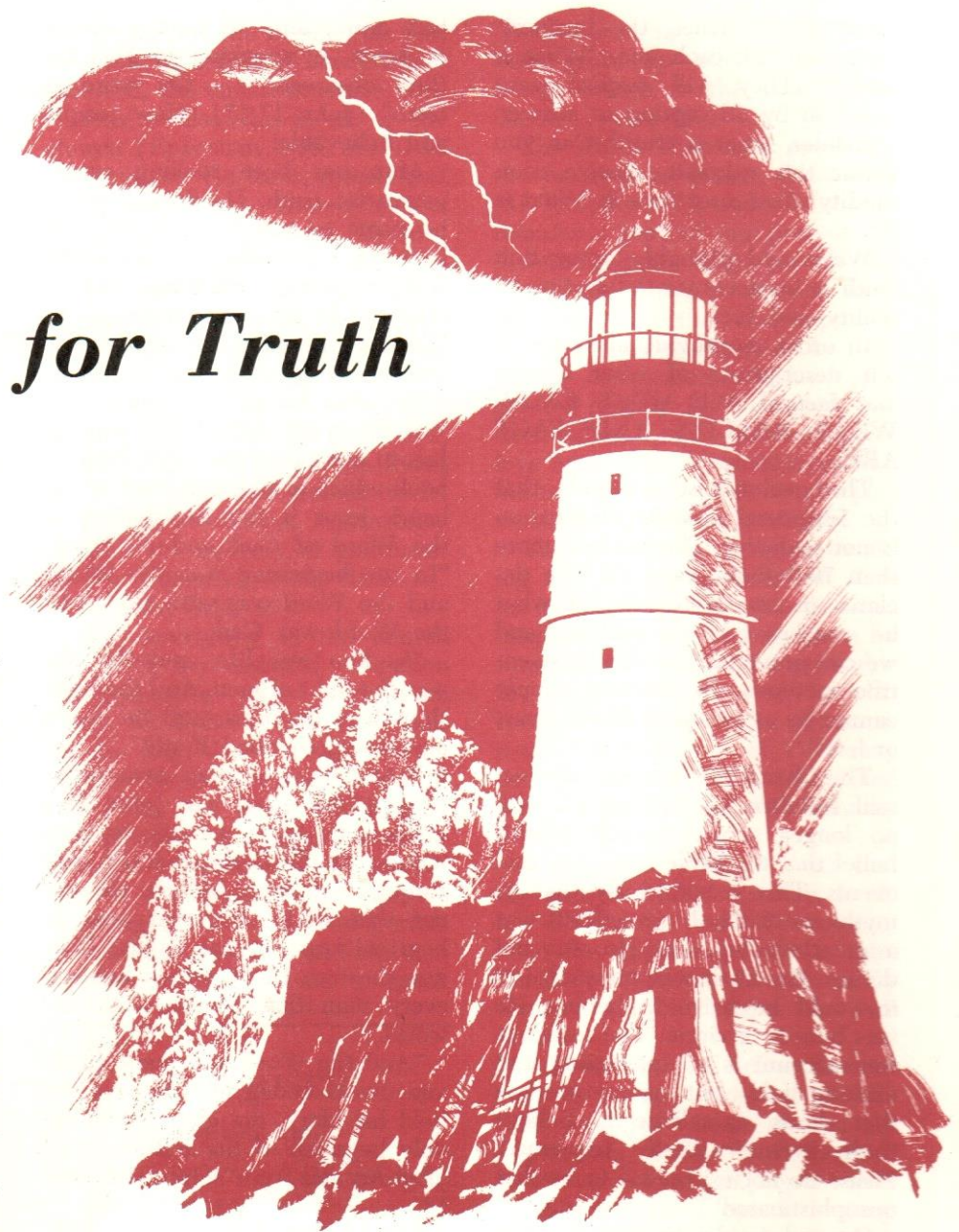
A careful examination of Revelation 22:6 provides the answer to the meaning of the phrase. "And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the *Lord God of the holy prophets* sent his angel..."

A comparison of versions along with notations in the margin of many Bibles inform that the "Lord God who inspires the prophets" (The New English Bible; Phillips) sent his angel. Or, the Lord God "of the spirits of the prophets" (marginal reading; Berkley Version of the New Testament) sent his angel. These clarifications are easily accepted because they fit into the context without changing impressions and meanings.

Knowing that it is God who inspires prophetic utterings, and having learned that the prophecies in Revelation are the words of God, sent by His angel, we can understand that the words of God and the prophetic inspirations given by God are the same. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. The Words of God inspire the prophecies.

by Ray L. Straub

The Love for Truth



The love of many shall wax cold," answered Jesus to His disciples after they had asked Him, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the world?"

So, preachers and laity have been expressing sorrow for the loss of love among men. No wonder. It is lamentable! The cooling of affection for mankind is serious, because along with it comes a loss of love for truth.

Many witty proverbs declare truth's eternal value. Daniel Webster said, "There is nothing so powerful as truth — and often nothing so strange." Another warns, "Falsehood may have its hour, but it has no future." A poet intones:

There is no defeat in truth,
Save from within;
Unless you're beaten there,
You're bound to win!

A Scriptural proverb advises, "Buy the truth, and sell it not..." (Proverbs 23:23).

A college professor told his class the value of truth in our modern terms by stating, "I would rather teach the truth from this insignificant desk than to spread falsehood from the highest star." This was mentioned in reference to the space race to land technical instruments on the moon or other distant planets.

All of these express a regard for

truth. It is a love that must not diminish!

A New Testament prophecy predicts, "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming; even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the LOVE OF THE TRUTH, that they might be saved" (II Thessalonians 2:8-10).

Those who fail to receive the love for truth not only miss their

salvation, but God *removes from them the ability to recognize truth when it confronts them.* "And for this cause shall God send them strong delusion, that they might believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (verses 11, 12).

If the love for truth is so important, the bewildered Pilate represents well the confounded masses who ask, "What is truth?" It is a good question. At least a great many scholars nowadays would think so!

Go to the man on the street, the housewife, the clerk, the sec-

The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust: my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. (Psalm 18:2).

Personification is used by the Hebrews to show nature's responsiveness to God. Inanimate objects of nature are given human characteristics to glorify God.

Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel. (Isaiah 44:23).

Let the floods clap their hands:
let the hills be joyful together. (Psalm 98:8).

Abstract concepts are also personified.

Destruction and death say,
We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.
(Job 28:22).

Scattered throughout the Bible, hyperbole is a valuable device to the Hebrew poet. In Exodus 11:7, Moses threatens Pharaoh with this hyperbole:

But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue . . .

Another example can be found in Psalm 22:6.
But I am a worm, and no man . . .

Although end rhyme is absent in the poetry of Israel, assonance is often used as a literary tool. A good illustration is Samson's song in Judges 15:16.

With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of an ass have I slain a thousand men.

Repetition of words and refrains, exclamations, and sudden questions are other poetical devices that contribute to the vitality and life of the Hebrew style. Repetition of the word "praise" is used throughout Psalms 148 and 150.

Praise ye the Lord, Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise him in the heights. (Psalm 148:1)

The refrain, "for his mercy endureth forever," is repeated in each of the 26 verses of Psalm 136. An exclamation is used in Psalm 119:97 for added emphasis.

O how love I thy law!
it is my meditation all the day.

The sudden question is also a much used device for attracting the reader's attention.

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1).

All of the above characteristics separate the factual prose accounts from the poetic beauty in the Old Testament. The best example of the contrast between prose and poetry can be seen in Judges, chapters four and five. Chapter four gives the historical account of Israel's victory over Jabin and his captain, Sisera. These events are treated as factually as

possible. In chapter five, Deborah's song tells the same story but in poetry.

Considered as one of the best illustrations of patriotic lyrics in literature, Deborah's song paints the bare facts of chapter four with color, emotion, and excitement. Deborah's song includes most of the characteristics of Hebrew poetry.

It contains a rhythmic beat because it was probably first sung as a chant and accompanied with music. The theme of the song concerns the praise of God over the victory of the enemy. Verse seven contains synthetic parallelism:

... until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother of Israel.

The song contains a simile in verse thirty-one:
... but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.

In verse five this metaphor is used:

The mountains melted from before the Lord . . .

Repetition is used in verse twelve:

Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake . . .

In verse eight, attention is aroused with this sudden question:

They chose new gods; then was war in the gates:
was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?

All of these poetic principles establish Deborah's song as a perfect sample of Hebrew lyric.

Although many people do not consider that the Old Testament contains poetry, except for the Psalms, the Scriptures abound with a style of verse found in no other writings. The principles of the praise of God as a theme, the reflection of nature to God's majesty, the vitality of language, the universal expression of human emotions, the variety of imagery and figures of speech, the parallelism of thought between lines, the repetition of words and phrases, and the sudden questions are the strong points of Old Testament poetry.

It is because of such characteristics that the *Holy Bible* has managed to survive through the ages and will continue to endure and to outlive all other literary works.

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Should Christmas be celebrated as the birthday of Christ? The Bible does not give us the time of His birth, but history identifies the origin of this popular day as an idolatrous tradition—and God denounces such practices.

by Ray L. Straub

Why Not Celebrate Christmas?

This is A.D. 1975. A.D. are the initial letters of "anno Domini," the year of our Lord. Supposedly, Jesus was born 1975 years ago.

Chronologists have discovered an error in the calculations pinpointing the year of Jesus' birth. More recent attempts determine that it may actually have been as much as 1979 to 1985 years ago.

While there is uncertainty concerning the date of His birth, the fact that we number our years since then is indication of the imposing impression Jesus made upon the world. Who else can claim an existence of such consequence that all the world identifies the time of historical events in relation to the time of His birth?

Nebuchadnezzar began building the great Babylonian empire in joint rulership with his father in 606 B.C. — before Christ. Alexander the Great, who was sorrowful

upon realizing that his dominance of the whole world left him no more kingdoms to conquer, died before his 32nd birthday, 323 years before Christ. Columbus discovered America in the year of our Lord, 1492. No matter how important, the mention of a date involves the birth of our Saviour.

It is not unusual to celebrate the birthdates of great men. February 12, the birthdate of Abraham Lincoln, is a holiday. George Washington's birthday is, too.

In recognizing the birthdates of members of families people nowadays prepare special meals, present gifts, invite friends, and employ other means to indicate personal appreciation. If anyone deserves birthday honors, why not Jesus?

Indeed, people celebrate the supposed birth of Jesus with a fervor accorded none other. Christ-

mas decorations have long been up, shopping catalogs have flooded the mails, and the Christmas cards are on their way. Carols fill the air, bells are ringing, and cash registers are jingling. Jesus' birth is celebrated, all right! Almost everyone joins in, some way or another.

This festive occasion is so entrenched into the religious sentiment, pious fervor, economic frenzy, and festive spirits, that it seems nothing short of bold fanaticism to question whether the birthday of Jesus should be celebrated on December 25, if at all.

Even those who know there is no Scriptural support for celebrating Christmas find it difficult to divorce themselves from the traditional holiday spirit and festivities. Refusal to celebrate Christmas is repugnant and alienating to society. To be a Christian and not

celebrate Christmas is irreconcilable and repudiated.

Accusations of fanaticism have nothing to do with the issue. Such approaches are emotional and confusing — effective escapes for the intellectually inept!

This is no defense for fanaticism. There are many so afflicted, and they are to be pitied. The overly zealous have emotional problems that keep them separated from both reality and happiness. Fanaticism is a term that accurately describes a twisted attitude, but it can also be an accusation behind which we hide to keep from having to face real issues.

To find God's attitudes toward Christmas is not difficult. Anyone who wants to can. One needs not be much of a historian, nor Bible student. Nor need he involve himself in complicated logic. All he needs is a little curiosity for truth and a smidgen of ambition.

If the information given here is not sufficient to be convincing, it will serve as a stimulus to any who wish to pursue the matter further.

Substantive comment about Christmas is dependent upon knowing something about it. Where did it originate? To find this out, one needs only to go to a library, find an encyclopedia, look up the word, "Christmas," and begin reading.

Here are some excerpts. From the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1960), volume 5, pages 642 and 643, "Christmas customs are an evolution from times that long antedated the Christian period — a descent from seasonal, pagan, religious and national practices, hedged about with legend and tradition. Their seasonal connections with the pagan feasts of the winter solstice relate them to the beginning of time and their legacy in the birthday of Christ makes them shareholders in the most significant event in the history of the world — an event that gave it a new date, *anno Domini*.

"In the beginning many of the earth's inhabitants were Sun worshippers because the course of their lives depended on its yearly round in the heavens, and feasts were held to aid its return from dis-

tant wanderings. In the south of Europe, in Egypt and Persia, the sun gods were worshipped with elaborate ceremonies at the season of the winter solstice, as a fitting time to pay tribute to the benign god of plenty, while in Rome the Saturnalia reigned for a week. In northern lands mid-December was a critical time for the days became shorter and shorter and the sun was weak and far away. Thus these ancient peoples held feasts at the same period that Christmas is now observed; they built great bonfires in order to give the winter sun god strength and to bring him back to life again. When it became apparent that the days were growing longer, there was great rejoicing because of the promise of lengthening days to follow. Thus, the central idea of the winter solstice — the return of light — became the hope of the world in the birth of Christ, the light of the world.

"The exact day and year of Christ's birth have never been satisfactorily settled, but when the fathers of the church in A.D. 440 decided upon a date to celebrate the event, they wisely chose the day of the winter solstice which was firmly fixed in the minds of the people and which was their most important festival. Because of changes in man-made calendars the time of the solstice and the date of Christmas vary by a few days.

"The tradition from paganism to Christianity was gradual but became apparent after the fall of Rome (A.D. 476) when the church was the one organization which had the strength and wisdom to withstand the disorganized centuries of the dark ages. During this time great progress was made by the Christian leaders in extending the new faith.

"When missionaries were sent from Rome to the outlying provinces in 601 their instructions given by Pope Gregory I made clear the policy of the church: 'Let the shrines of idols by no means be destroyed but let the idols which are in them be destroyed. Let water be consecrated and sprinkled in these temples; let altars be erect-

ed . . . so that the people, not seeing their temples destroyed may displace error, and recognize and adore the true God . . . And because they were wont to sacrifice oxen to devils, some celebration should be given in exchange for this . . . they should celebrate a religious feast and worship God by their feasting, so that still keeping outward pleasures, they may more readily receive spiritual joys.' (Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*.)"

The *Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. 6, page 623, under the heading "Christmas" reads, "In the 5th Century the Western Church ordered it (the birth of our Saviour) to be celebrated forever on the day of the old Roman feast of the birth of Sol, as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's birth existed. Among the German and Celtic tribes the winter solstice was considered an important point of the year and they held their chief festival of Yule to commemorate the return of the burning wheel. The holly, the mistletoe, the Yule log, and the wassail bowl are relics of pre Christmas time."

None can conscientiously doubt that Christmas finds its roots in paganism. It is a "Christian feast" celebrated at the time when sun-worshippers had their most festive commemoration.

What difference does that make?

Quite a bit when one is forced to acknowledge that the birth of Christ cannot be established. No one knows when it took place. Lacking this information one must conclude that the Scriptures are devoid of any hint or suggestion that the birth of Christ should be celebrated.

The gala nature of the pagan feasts apparently found Christians enviously searching for some excuse to enable them to join in the festivities. They wanted to celebrate without being pagan.

What difference does that make?

The Bible answers. "And they transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed be-

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that plays down the drink problem and refuses to take a stand for abstinence.

As church members we should pray for an ever-increasing capacity to hate alcoholic beverages and all the evil it stands for and ask God for strength to battle this demon to the end.

Then and only then can we say with a clear conscience, "I am my brother's keeper."

THE EIGHT WOES OF MATTHEW 23

(Continued from page 10)

wardly they appeared beautiful to men. Some of these sepulchres are still in existence in and near Jerusalem, and they are indeed beautiful.

The lesson our Saviour was trying to teach is quite evident, and needs to be applied to our present-day generation. You may be a leading member in a popular church, you may be called up at public functions to offer prayer for you are known as one who can make an eloquent supplication, or you may have the outward appearance of a pious, religious man, yet if you have not received Christ within, been born again, born from above, been washed from your sins by the blood of Christ, and have had a personal experience with Him, you are merely a repository of dead men's bones!

Respect can be paid to the memory of faithful ministers of God and this is not a difficult task, for they no longer are able to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. The prophets of bygone ages may be revered very easily for they are not now able to look into the future, and foretell dire events if people do not turn in repentance to God.

People today declare that if our Saviour were now alive in our midst, they would listen and heed His teachings. But, friend of mine, Christ is alive today, and His teachings are the same now as they were during His personal ministry.

They rejected Christ then, they would reject Him now. They crucified Him then, they would kill Him now. Human nature has not changed, and that is why every true minister of God cries out to you to have that old nature changed, and be given a new nature.

"Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O House of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye" (Ezekiel 18:30-32).

WHY NOT CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS?

(Continued from page 7)

fore them" (I Chronicles 5:25).

The term used in Scriptures to identify attempts to integrate a devotion to God with idol worship is "fornication." This word, of itself, indicates God's feelings about it.

Second Chronicles relates some of the evils carried on under King Jehoram. Along with several atrocities he "... made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah thereto" (II Chronicles 21: 11).

A clarification of what is meant by "high places" is given in II Chronicles 28:25, "And in several cities of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the Lord God of his fathers."

More graphic descriptions of God's sentiments toward the adulteration of allegiance to Him with idolatry can be read in Ezekiel, chapters 16 and 23. Few people will read these and retain any idea that God is permissive about intermingling worship of Him and indulgence in paganism. Assuredly, He is not!

A divine criticism of the mem-

bers of the church in Pergamos was that they would "... eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication" (Revelation 2:14). The same combination appears in the list of faults with the church in Thyatira.

Some may contend this refers to actual physical fornication. It more likely refers to a tendency to compromise with idolatry. One could hardly assume that spiritual fornication is less damnable than unchastity!

What has this to do with the millions who are not worshipping a pagan god but are sincerely celebrating the birthday of their Saviour on December 25? Why accuse them of pagan worship when they are honoring the Saviour they love?

Suppose that someone declared his opposition to smoking cigarettes but could not contain his craving to indulge. If upon being discouraged he contended that what he was smoking was not a cigarette but a piece of candy which appeared and smelled like tobacco, how convincing would he be? No amount of self-justification or self-deluding would turn that cancer stick into a stick of candy. It is not candy. It is tobacco. No proclamation can change that.

The 25th of December is not the birth of Jesus. That is clear. What is also obvious is that it is a feast to the sun god. The various rituals with which Christmas is celebrated nearly all antedate the birth of Christ, and so they were not originated to honor Him. No proclamation can change that any more than talk or sentiment can change tobacco to candy.

Attempts to put on Christ and to unite our membership in God's family with pagan celebrations surely will adulterate our devotion. The Bible has made this plain.

The minority viewpoint which rejects the celebration of Christmas is not popular. Many who know better go along with the holiday traditions. Earlier restrictions have been so seriously compromised that children never question misleading yuletide propaganda.

Sizeable church denominations

have capitulated. Once they rejected. Now they flow with the crowd. No resistance is detectable. They were not convinced, they were dragged. Rationalizations are profuse. Efforts to return to love for truth, if existent, are undetectable.

We love our Lord Jesus. We rejoice that He came. We received Him as our Saviour, and we are dedicated to serving Him. We see no need to go to the pagans for encouragement to celebrate a birth-date that God has never divulged. Their methods of celebrating their sun-god have no meaning to us. We'll not do as they say. We'll not fantacize. We'll not compromise.

The elderly Simon spent many years in the Temple praying for the consolation of Israel. The infant Jesus was brought to him when His parents performed certain temple rites. Simeon took the child into his arms, blessed God and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32).

He verbalized Jesus' mission. Christ brought salvation to all people. He was a light to make clear the way to the Gentiles. How inappropriate that the method of celebrating His advent should come from the pagans!

Jesus is hardly honored by celebrations born out of idolatry. He is the Son of God Who came to bring

light and salvation through His ministry, death and resurrection. We hold to that which is born of God!

GROWING IN GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE

(Continued from page 17)

is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (I Corinthians 13:4-7).

Every Christian who has come into the saving grace and knowledge of Christ should walk as his Saviour walked, in the spirit of God's Word. He should grow up in the image of Christ, Who grew up in the image of God. "God is love."

AS THE DAYS OF NOE

(Continued from page 5)

sarily to sin. When done to the glory of God there is a great blessing in any of these things. As Christians our bodies belong to God. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your

body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Corinthians 6:19, 20).

To eat and drink is essential to life, and God Himself instituted marriage. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4). But even those things normally allowable become sinful when abused, or indulged in to excess. Gluttony and drunkenness are frowned upon in Scripture.

To be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God (James 4:4). We are not to love the world, nor the things of the world (I John 2:15-17).

Worldliness is often defined as lack of modesty in dress, excessive use of jewelry, questionable entertainment, etc. Certainly such things are included, but to do all those things which the Bible allows are permissible, if carried to excess, and to the exclusion of God in our lives, is the greatest form of worldliness there is.

Jesus said, "... As it was in the days of Noe... they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage... Likewise... in the days of Lot... they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;... Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:26-28, 30).

In our own day we see these very things being carried to excess on every hand while God is ignored completely, or at best, being given no more than a token form of worship. It is regrettable to see these things in the world about us. What is tragic, however, is that it is happening as well in the lives of professing Christians.

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matthew 5:13).

Noah stood alone against the multitude. He did not yield to the pressure. As a result he and his family, alone, entered into the ark, and were saved. Where do we stand?

PRAYER

by Rhea Hendricks

Prayer is a wondrous thing that everyone can do;
Its blessings fill the world, then come straight back to you.
Prayer always brings sweet peace and rest to mind and soul,
And never fails to make your weary body whole.

Prayer is a golden line to heaven's door
From whence our blessings flow forevermore.