

The Sabbath

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THE setting for our discussion of the Sabbath is a statement made by James White early in the history of Seventh-day Adventists. In 1868 he wrote a work entitled *Life Incidents, in Connection With the Great Advent Movement, as Illustrated by the Three Angels of Revelation XIV*, in which he declared:

"The title page of this work calls attention to the great Advent movement as illustrated by the three angels of Rev. xiv. The truth and work of God in this movement, commencing with the labors of William Miller, and reaching to the close of probation, is illustrated by these three angels. The first was a time message, and related to the Judgment. The second described the condition of corrupted Christianity. The third is a solemn warning relative to what men may not do, and what they must do, in order to be saved at the coming of Christ. These angels illustrate the three great divisions of the genuine movement. . . .

"Seventh-day Adventists hold fast the great Advent movement, hence have use for the messages. . . . They cannot spare these links in the golden chain of truth, that connect the past with the present and future, and show a beautiful harmony in the great whole. . . .

"All Adventists who do not acknowledge the special providence of God in the work of William Miller and his associates, in 1843 and 1844, have no use for the three angels' messages. . . . I repeat it. The three messages symbolize the three parts of the genuine movement."—Pages 306, 307.

The Third Link

From the earliest days Seventh-day Adventists have held that the third angel's message is the third link in a chain that is anchored to Millerism at one end and to the gates of the New Jerusalem at the other. Furthermore, we have believed that, like links in the chain, there is a close connection between the three messages. Finally, from the days of the pioneers we have believed that there is a timeliness to each of these messages in relation to the closing events of earth's history.

In other words, from the very beginning we have considered the doctrine of the seventh-day Sabbath as of prime importance. True, the pioneers were not able

Three Inseparable Links of the Advent Movement. William Miller Led Out in Preaching the First Angel's Message; Charles Fitch, the Second Angel's Message; Joseph Bates and James White, the Third Angel's Message, Which, With the First Two, Is Today Being Preached With Increasing Power, Calling Men to the Worship of the True God and to the Keeping of His Sabbath

to see the Sabbath in the perspective that we, who live a hundred years later, can see it. By faith they took the simple order set forth in Revelation 14:6-11, and having concluded that the first and second angels' messages had begun to be given as a part of the Millerite preaching, decided that the third must certainly follow them, making a threefold message for the world.

When they first set out to preach the seventh-day Sabbath, even to fellow Adventists who had been in the Miller movement, very great opposition resulted. There were strange cries on every hand that such preaching was bringing men back into bondage to law, that the Sabbath was Jewish, that there was really no difference in days, and that Christians keep the first day to remember the glorious central truth of the resurrection. We shall not tarry on such objections, except to say in passing that those who cry legalism seem very ready to preach the binding claims of the remaining nine precepts, that no one has ever been able to show how a day that was made sacred at creation could possibly be Jewish, and that if there is really

in the Setting of the Threefold Message

no difference in days, why has there been such a vigorous endeavor through the centuries to enforce Sunday sacredness, even with legal aid!

Through such controversy as this the pioneers passed, holding tenaciously to the elementary truth that the decalogue commands the keeping of the seventh day and that the decalogue has never been repealed. They could not escape the deep conviction that if the third and last of the three angels' messages, just preceding the coming of Christ, is concerned with warning men against the keeping of a false Sabbath, there must be a vast significance to the doctrine of the true Sabbath

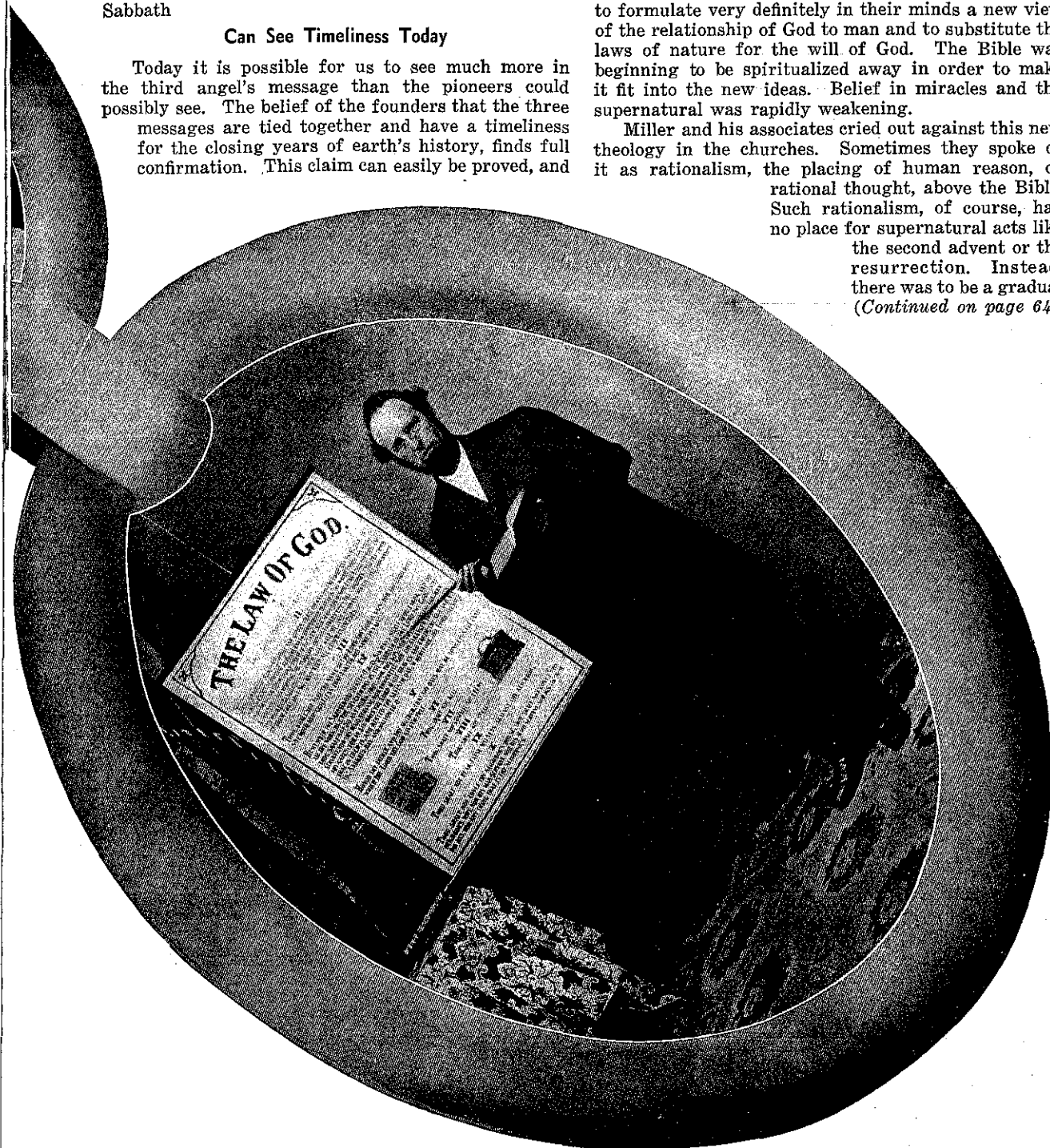
Can See Timeliness Today

Today it is possible for us to see much more in the third angel's message than the pioneers could possibly see. The belief of the founders that the three messages are tied together and have a timeliness for the closing years of earth's history, finds full confirmation. This claim can easily be proved, and

the proving of it provides one of the most weighty reasons for believing, in a new and stronger way than ever before, that we have a distinctive message for the world today. To provide the proof calls for us to survey briefly the trends in the religious world in the nineteenth century.

That century witnessed the rapid development of what is generally described as the modern scientific age. We are not thinking now of inventions and discoveries, but rather of attitudes of mind, of basic premises of thinking, and of scientific ideas as to the laws that operate in the universe. Learned men were beginning to formulate very definitely in their minds a new view of the relationship of God to man and to substitute the laws of nature for the will of God. The Bible was beginning to be spiritualized away in order to make it fit into the new ideas. Belief in miracles and the supernatural was rapidly weakening.

Miller and his associates cried out against this new theology in the churches. Sometimes they spoke of it as rationalism, the placing of human reason, or rational thought, above the Bible. Such rationalism, of course, had no place for supernatural acts like the second advent or the resurrection. Instead, there was to be a gradual
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improvement of man right on this world until a millennium would inevitably ensue. This idea of gradual improvement was really a reflection of a philosophical idea of progress that was becoming increasingly prominent in the thinking of educated men. The idea was that there is a far-reaching, all-pervasive, and finally irresistible force that works for progress in the world. Skeptics freely believed this; it made unnecessary any faith in the redeeming power of the gospel or in the second coming of Christ. Easy-going churchmen found little difficulty in breathing in such an idea. It was more popular to present to fashionable congregations.

Second Angel Sounds

Against all this, we say, Miller and his associates cried out. For years they had been sounding forth the judgment-hour message and calling on men to make ready for the coming of Christ. As the opposition of the churches increased, the second angel's message began to be heard on the lips of various Millerite leaders, "Babylon is fallen." But those men could not foresee in the early 1840's how rationalism was to become increasingly dominant, or how there was to be a third message added that would bind all three together. And, as we have already said, the pioneers among Seventh-day Adventists, though they faithfully went forth to preach the third message as the inevitable, prophetic climax of Revelation 14:6-11, did not see what the future would hold.

Evolution Theory Spreads

The rational, skeptical attitude that was already well developed in the 1840's, suddenly took on increased life and breadth of activity in 1859 with the publication of Darwin's work *On the Origin of Species*. Darwin, apparently, had discovered how species originate by natural means, and hence had provided the "proof" for a theory which had long been held by philosophers, but which was soon to be held by scientists and religionists—the theory of evolution. That theory soon crystallized into what seemed to be a sure and undebatable laboratory proof of the truth of numerous speculations about the origin of all things and of the laws that govern the universe.

Rapidly the evolution theory spread, first finding acceptance with the skeptics, the irreligious scientists, and from there moving to the circles of the more liberal clergy. As the theory began to envelop all classes of the learned and all fields of learning, there was a fervent attempt among those who wished to be considered up to date and yet devout and orthodox, to harmonize the Bible with evolution. The primary endeavor was made in the area of Genesis, for the Bible opens with an account of the origin of the world and all that is in it. With these various attempts at harmonizing we need not here concern ourselves, except to say that they failed dismally to save the Bible from being discredited.

The doctrine of creation, as recorded in Genesis, is today quite largely abandoned, even by churchmen. But that is simply another way of saying that the doctrine of the fall of man, as there recorded, has also been abandoned. And that in turn is but another way of saying that the plan set forth in the Bible for saving man from his fallen estate has been abandoned. The great majority of religious people today simply do not believe that man was made originally perfect, and that he fell into sin. Therefore they do not believe that Christ really came to save man from sin. Indeed, they do not believe that Christ was essentially more divine than we are. They do not believe in His literal resurrection, and how could they believe in His literal return? To believe such old-fashioned ideas about Christ would be to believe in miracles, and miracles simply do not happen, according to the scientific view.

There was only one more step that was needed in order for men to move entirely outside the circle of Christian faith, and that step was inevitable. When men begin to explain the universe in terms of natural laws that inevitably produce evolutionary results, what place is there, finally, for God Himself? The answer was given long years ago by the evolutionist Karl Vogt: "Evolution turns the Creator out of doors." There were many in the early days of the evolutionary theory who were shocked at such a bald statement and who insisted that evolution was simply a different way of describing the activities of God on this earth. But the exclusively scientific approach to all learning, colored by the evolutionary theory, has finally resulted in dethroning God Himself in the minds of multitudes and leaving them, instead, only a hazy impersonal force, or pantheistic spirit, in the place of that personal God.

A widely quoted writer, Walter Lippmann, thus describes what has happened to the faith of men:

"If faith is to flourish, there must be a conception of how the universe is governed to support it.

"It is these supporting conceptions—the unconscious assumption that we are related to God as creatures to a creator, as vassals to a king, as children to a father—that the acids of modernity have eaten away."—*Preface to Morals*, p. 56.

Strange Debates in Religious Press

In recent years very calm and matter-of-fact discussions have been conducted in religious publications as to whether we need to believe in God. If God is not necessary why believe in Him? And most certainly if God is but an impersonal force why pray to Him? This disappearance of God from the thinking of men has long been ground for alarm among more conservative churchmen. For example, the moderator at the Fifth International Congregational Council, in 1930, took as the subject of his address, "The Recovery of Our Sense of God." In that address he declared that "the very existence of God is being challenged and denied." He referred to attacks on the Christian religion in past centuries and described them as "affairs of 'outposts' and 'outworks' compared to the fight that is upon us today. The attack today is not upon the outworks, but upon the citadel itself. It is the existence of God that is being called in question."—*Congregationalist*, July 24, 1930.

Step by step for a century the scientific, rationalist attitude has caused men to break down one after another of the doctrines of the Bible until now they are attacking the citadel itself—the belief in a personal God. And why have they succeeded in these assaults? The answer is evident: The defenders of the faith abandoned the first line of fortifications, the record in Genesis. When Genesis was abandoned the defenders could find no secondary line half so strong. They could only continue to fall back till the citadel was reached.

Import of the Threefold Message

In the setting of these facts let us return to the subject of the threefold message, to discover how timely are the warnings they contain. The first message is this: "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and fountains of waters." Rev. 14:7.

Now it is in the setting of the relation of Creator to those created that Bible writers place this most important subject of the judgment. When Paul spoke on Mars' Hill he described the true God as the "God that made the world and all things therein," explaining that "we are the offspring of God." Paul went on from this to draw the lesson. He informed his hearers that this God who made us and to whom we owe obedience as children to a father, has "appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world." (See Acts 17.)

In other words, God's rightful claim on us, according to the Bible, is that He has made us. He is the Creator. Said the revelator: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." Rev. 4:11. Hence, the real force of the doctrine of the final judgment can be felt only by those who believe in creation.

In the light of this how significant is the message of the first angel who announces the judgment day of "Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Here is a call to worship a personal God, the Creator. Is there increasing need of such a message today? The question answers itself.

The second angel follows on with the cry that "Babylon is fallen." Rev. 14:8. Taking the word "Babylon" to signify all of Christendom that has turned from the truth of God in sufficient degree to come under the condemnation of Heaven, we have here an announcement of apostasy and spiritual fall. The Millerites saw the beginnings of such apostasy in their day. Has the second angel's message become less timely? Not when the very citadel of the Christian religion is now under attack.

The third angel's message warns men against receiving the mark of the beast. By the beast we understand the Papacy, as Protestant commentators have done for centuries. By the "mark" we understand that distinguishing evidence of its power to tamper even with the law of God, which it flaunts in the face of Protestants constantly—the placing of Sunday in a formal way in the church calendar as a holy day in place of the seventh-day Sabbath. Viewed positively, the third angel's message is therefore a call to men to keep God's Sabbath.

Timeliness of Sabbath Truth

Is there genuine significance and timeliness to a message that calls men back to the Bible Sabbath, and is it linked to the first two messages? Or is this third message merely a quibbling about days, a return to legalism, as the opponents of the pioneers so vigorously asserted? The answer is to be found in the Sabbath command itself. Why did God set the seventh day apart as holy? We are not left in doubt. It was because "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is." (See Ex. 20:8-11.) The language is plain. Here is a command to keep a certain day holy because of a certain great event, the creation of the world.

Now when we examine the language of the first angel's message we find the phrasing strangely like this of the commandment. The Bible ever distinguishes God from all false gods by describing Him as the Creator. Thus the commandment is dealing with the most primary truth concerning God, and thus the Sabbath message ties in with the first angel's message of the judgment hour. When the command opens with the word "remember," it is calling on men not to forget that most central truth of creation and the Creator. This is too evident to admit of debate. And is it timely and very important that men should be called to "remember" the Creator and His creation as it is set forth in the opening chapters of Genesis? Again the question answers itself. The whole sad story of apostasy in the Christian church during the last hundred years provides the answer. Thus the Sabbath message ties in with the message of the fall of Babylon.

A Mark of Allegiance

Seventh-day Adventists today need not revise or reduce in any way the forceful statement of their pioneers as to the threefold message which is at the heart of our preaching. The messages interlock like links in a chain. We call on men to make ready for the judgment, the investigative now going on, and the executive soon to take place at Christ's appearing. We make this call effective by asserting the sovereign power of the Creator, God, to bring all men to account. We call on men to come out of Babylon, and we show how the modern apostasy has struck at the heart of Christianity by surrendering the very idea of creation and thus of the plan of salvation. We call on men to keep God's holy Sabbath, thus seeking to stem apostasy and to provide a rallying point for those who wish to witness before all men their belief in the true God. In a day of widespread apostasy, an apostasy that has inundated all Christendom because the dikes of Genesis were opened, the Sabbath becomes a mark or sign of those who have no part in that apostasy.

Every religious body is torn by dissension between those who wish to hold to old-fashioned orthodox views of God and salvation and those who have capitulated to evolutionary views. But there is a movement in the religious world in these last days that is free from such controversy. Seventh-day Adventists spend one day each week in memory of the great event when the God whom they serve created the heavens and the earth, as Genesis records. We could not therefore be split by the forces of modern apostasy. On the contrary we have as our special mission the calling of men out of the apostasy to stand before God at the hour of His judgment, and we do this in the setting of an appeal to men to "remember" the Sabbath day to keep it holy, the one way that the Bible sets forth for keeping in our memories the great fact of the Creator and His creation. We have a threefold message for the world. Let us arise and proclaim the Sabbath more fully, as the Spirit of prophecy long ago declared that we must.

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"The experience of William Miller and his associates, of Captain Joseph Bates, and of other pioneers in the advent message, should be kept before our people."

E.G. White, Letter 105, 1903.