

Letter from an Advent Believer

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: OUR PRESENT CRISIS WAS PREDICTED / EXCERPTS FROM JOHN PAUL'S MASS

If you ask our leaders why our conferences are having to discharge large numbers of pastors, they will tell you it is a great mystery.

If you inquire as to why tithes and offerings have fallen off so drastically, they will shrug their shoulders in puzzlement.

If you question why the standards and doctrines of our forefathers have been set aside for theories and a level of morality more acceptable to worldlings, they will refuse to discuss the matter further.

If you ask why there is an increasing flood of adulteries, financial scandals, and child molestation by church workers, and even leaders, they will hastily change the subject.

The hearts of the faithful weep as they consider the increasing wreckage within the church structure. They know the cause.

Unfortunately, both pastors and leaders do not wish to admit the truth; and that is the problem. Because they are unwilling to consider the cause, it will not be solved. Sadly, the downward slide of morality, standards, and doctrines in the church will continue to accelerate.

The faithful, the ones most faithful in paying tithes and offerings, are being chased out of the church by ungodly pastors. When they appeal to conference leaders, the modernist pastors are always sided with. When they buy *Review* and Pacific Press books at the ABC, they find that historic beliefs are held up to ridicule. And those adhering to such "legalistic ideas" are labeled "Pharisees."

So they finally give up and leave. All that is left are liberals who urge their beliefs and placid chair-sitters who love to listen to them.

And the church goes to wrack and ruin.

Last fall, the following letter was sent to three of our church leaders. It was written by an Advent believer who had been repeatedly rejected in efforts to urge a return to the church's historic teachings, and then was sent a special "come back to the church" issue of the *Review*.

You can look on the following letter as a good-bye message to a church which was once greatly beloved.

And I can tell you, the whole situation is a tragedy. The angels weep while leaders ignore the problem. Pastors keep shoving out more of the faithful;

and members enjoy the worldliness which church authorities approve.

Sabbath Evening, September 26, 2003

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Elder Don C. Schneider

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Dear Elders in Leadership Positions: I sat down this evening to read the *Review* issue, "Searching." This is not a new issue. Every so many months or years, there is a push to "reclaim" the lost and missing members. This is as it should be. However, in reading the first three articles in this reclaim issue, I came upon these phrases:

"Those who are weary of trivial squabbles and petty wrangling . . . When we fix our gaze on Jesus, the problems don't go away, they just become less annoying. Come help us focus on Him."

You folks don't seem to understand what is happening out here in the local church. Locally it has not been a "trivial squabble." It has been an all out battle between truth and error! When truth is compromised and misrepresented, that is not a "trivial matter." Many members here attend Sabbath School but avoid the church service because the truth is thrown in the street. Let me give you a few of hundreds of examples from the pastor's lips and his influence:

"Daniel could tell Nebuchadnezzar's dream because he was a psychic." "We have reason to believe that Jesus was not a carpenter, but a stone mason because many ancient stone quarries have been found near Nazareth." "The wicked are in hell now, awaiting judgment" (see 2 Peter 2:9, NIV). "Christ's sacrifice was finished at the cross." (So what about the Sanctuary?) "An unthinking scribe added the words, 'But by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God' to Christ's words, 'Man shall not live be bread alone.'" (So was Christ trying to give a little health talk to Satan by leaving out the important words?) "Just focus on Jesus."

"The King James Version of the Bible is not to be used at this church anymore." At the pastor's behest, the board of elders voted the same. "Ellen White was a good woman BUT—." Then subtle un-

dermining would begin. Constant insertion of quotations from outright worldly persons into sermons. He constantly refers to male Bible characters as “guys.”

He had the pulpit removed so he could constantly pace back and forth across the platform while preaching, borrowed from the Pentecostal style of TBN. Deletion of solid standard hymns for “praise choruses,” borrowed from Pentecostal Vineyard style services.

How is it that the seminary is fielding men with such mistaken, confused, spurious thinking? I hope as you read these lines you will not just cast aside these pages saying, “Oh yes, a letter from ‘one of those.’”

Please do not try to put words into our mouths, saying we are hurt, angry, betrayed, misunderstood, or stubborn. These are labels. Rather say the truth, “These folks are steadfast for old time Biblical truth. They want to be part of a church that is awaiting the Lord Jesus Christ, a church without spot or wrinkle. A church that will stop excusing and covering up error, trying to suppress those who would ask honest questions.”

The pastor told me, “You can believe anything you want—just as long as you don’t tell anybody in MY church.” What is this? Communist Russia or the Dark Ages?

Your beautiful magazine says, “Come back”; but the silent message is “Don’t ask questions or make any waves again . . . just focus on Jesus. Just love Him and everything will be smooth in the church.”

But guess what? How are we supposed to focus on Jesus? The pastor has the answer. He calls it “meditation.” Just sit and think about Him. A lot of religions meditate and then come to some strange ideas and beliefs. There is only one way to “focus,” if that is the word you like to use—and that is to read God’s Word; read the AUTHENTIC Scripture: the King James Version. We cannot read a dozen different versions and come to the truth. They all say something different, leaving us to choose the wording that best suits our tastes. Doing so, we become as gods, picking the words and versions that suit us.

Many of us have come to think of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church structure as “The Steam Roller Church.” Get in the way, say the wrong thing, ask the wrong questions (they call it “being divisive”) and SQUASH! ! “The Steam Roller Church” will flatten you like a bug ! No questions asked please. Just go away. Move away, retire, go to the rest home. Die, in some form or manner. BE SILENT in regards to the truth. Be gone; you are irritants. And take your money with you. Don’t bother the structure that is so busy

doing “good things” (just read the Union papers and you will see what they are).

And maybe someday you will read an issue of the *Review* like this one; and you will be welcomed back with open arms and smiles . . . just as long as you are not still “one of those.”

You will look for a name given here. I will not give a name, because you would be distracted from the message of this letter. And besides this little “bug” has been squashed enough and doesn’t care for any more of the rough and tumble theological treatment. (Remember: you folks did not give the names of any authors of the book called ISSUES, either.)

TRUTH MUST PREVAIL

by Robert Hare

We tremble in the struggle,
And often by the way,
We cast our anxious glances
Across the passing day.
It may be truth has fallen,
While wrong stands in its might;
The struggle waits unsettled
Until it’s settled right.

Kingdoms and empires perish,
But truth lives on and still.
It molds the passing ages
As by an iron will.
And when at last the reckoning
Appears in judgment light,
The things forever settled
Will all be settled right.

Man in his haste proposes,
But higher than the stars,
The Hand that holds all destinies,
Its purpose never mars.
Then perish every fancy
With all that hate the light;
There’s nothing ever settled
Until it’s settled right.

That concludes the above letter of despair. You can sense the tears which flowed with every word. A faithful child of God who, for years, loved the church ever so much. Here is one who was willing to make any sacrifice for the cause, yet was forced out by ridicule and worldliness. A believer who wants to return, but recognizes in deepest sorrow that it is the church which has changed. A church which, so far, apparently has no intention of acknowledging its fallen condition or retracing its steps.

OUR PRESENT CRISIS WAS PREDICTED

“These sighing, crying ones had been holding forth the words of life; they had reproved, counseled, and entreated. Some who had been dishonoring God repented and humbled their hearts before Him. But the glory of the Lord had departed from Israel; although many still continued the forms of religion, His power and presence were lacking.

“In the time when His wrath shall go forth in judgments, **these humble, devoted followers of Christ will be distinguished from the rest of the world by their soul anguish, which is expressed in lamentation and weeping, reproofs and warnings.** While others try to throw a cloak over the existing evil, and excuse the great wickedness everywhere prevalent, those who have a zeal for God’s honor and a love for souls will not hold their peace to obtain favor of any. Their righteous souls are vexed day by day with the unholy works and conversation of the unrighteous. They are powerless to stop the rushing torrent of iniquity, and hence they are filled with grief and alarm. **They mourn before God to see religion despised in the very homes of those who have had great light.** They lament and afflict their souls because pride, avarice, selfishness, and deception of almost every kind are in the church. **The Spirit of God, which prompts to reproof, is trampled underfoot, while the servants of Satan triumph. God is dishonored, the truth made of none effect.**

“The class who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension, nor mourn over the sins of others, will be left without the seal of God . . .

“The church—the Lord’s sanctuary—was the first to feel the stroke of the wrath of God. **The ancient men, those to whom God had given great light and who had stood as guardians of the spiritual interests of the people, had betrayed their trust.** They had taken the position that we need not look for miracles and the marked manifestation of God’s power as in former days. Times have changed. These words strengthen their unbelief, and **they say: The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil. He is too merciful to visit His people in judgment. Thus ‘Peace and safety’ is the cry** from men who will never again lift up their voice like a trumpet to show God’s people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins. **These dumb dogs that would not bark** are the ones who feel the just vengeance of an offended God. Men, maidens, and little children all

perish together.

“The abominations for which the faithful ones were sighing and crying were all that could be discerned by finite eyes, but by far the worst sins, those which provoked the jealousy of the pure and holy God, were unrevealed. The great Searcher of hearts knoweth every sin committed in secret by the workers of iniquity. **These persons come to feel secure in their deceptions** and, because of His long-suffering, say that the Lord seeth not, and then act as though He had forsaken the earth. But **He will detect their hypocrisy and will open before others those sins which they were so careful to hide.**

“No superiority of rank, dignity, or worldly wisdom, no position in sacred office, will preserve men from sacrificing principle when left to their own deceitful hearts. Those who have been regarded as worthy and righteous prove to be ring leaders in apostasy and examples in indifference and in the abuse of God’s mercies. Their wicked course He will tolerate no longer, and in His wrath He deals with them without mercy.

“It is with reluctance that the Lord withdraws His presence from those who have been blessed with great light and who have felt the power of the word in ministering to others. They were once His faithful servants, favored with His presence and guidance; **but they departed from Him and led others into error,** and therefore are brought under the divine displeasure.

“The day of God’s vengeance is just upon us. **The seal of God will be placed upon the foreheads of those only who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land.** Those who link in sympathy with the world are eating and drinking with the drunken and will surely be destroyed with the workers of iniquity. ‘The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.’

“Our own course of action will determine whether we shall receive the seal of the living God or be cut down by the destroying weapons. Already a few drops of God’s wrath have fallen upon the earth; but when the seven last plagues shall be poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation, then it will be forever too late to repent and find shelter. No atoning blood will then wash away the stains of sin.”—*5 Testimonies, 210-212.*

Read the entire chapter. Then read *5 Testimonies, 467-476.* We live in troublous times; and it is not good enough just to mourn. We must also speak.

EXCERPTS FROM JOHN PAUL II'S EASTER MASS SUNDAY, APRIL 11, 2004

In this prepared speech, read to millions in Vatican Square and over the airwaves around the globe, Pope John Paul II focused on the importance of Sunday being kept by every Christian on the planet.

When you stop to think about it, Sunday is the most universally accepted Catholic teaching in the world. Because of a crucial decision made at the Council of Trent, it is the basis of Catholic authority; and the Vatican is well-aware of the fact. When the pope delivered this Easter sermon to an audience of millions, he could speak on any subject—but he chose to emphasize the importance of all Christians everywhere keeping Sunday holy. For this reason, we are reprinting salient portions of this Easter sermon. Notice that he repeatedly mentions that it is not the crucifixion (a Friday event) which provides our salvation; but the resurrection (a Sunday event) provides our salvation. You are about to read some of the arguments for Sunday sacredness, which will be repeated to you when the National Sunday Law is enacted. In our reprint, all capitalization, or its lack, is theirs. Brackets are ours.

“The Lord’s Day—as Sunday was called from Apostolic times—has always been accorded special attention in the history of the Church because of its close connection with the very core of the Christian mystery. Sunday recalls the day of Christ’s Resurrection. It is Easter which returns week by week, celebrating Christ’s victory over sin and death, the fulfillment in him of the first creation and the dawn of ‘the new creation’ . . .

“The fundamental importance of Sunday has been recognized through two thousand years of history and was emphatically restated by the Second Vatican Council:

“Every seven days, the Church celebrates the Easter mystery. This is a tradition going back to the Apostles, taking its origin from the actual day of Christ’s Resurrection—a day that is appropriately designated “the Lord’s Day.”

“The Second Vatican Council teaches that on Sunday ‘Christian believers should come together, in order to commemorate the suffering, Resurrection and glory of the Lord Jesus, by hearing God’s Word and sharing the Eucharist, and to give thanks to God who has given them new birth to a living hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead’ (cf. 1 Pt 1:3).

“Sunday is a day which is at the very heart of the Christian life. The rediscovery of this day is a grace which we must implore. Time given to Christ is never time lost, but is rather time gained, so that our relationships and indeed our whole life may become more profoundly human . . .

“ ‘The Lord’s Day’ is the day of this relationship [of praising and meditating on God] *par excellence* when men and women raise their song to God and become the voice of all creation. This is precisely why it is also the day of rest. The interruption of the often oppressive rhythm of work expresses the dependence of man and the cosmos upon God. Everything belongs to God! The Lord’s Day returns again and again to declare this principle within the weekly reckoning of time.

“Although the Lord’s Day is rooted in the very work of creation and even more in the mystery of the Biblical ‘rest’ of God, it is nonetheless to the Resurrection of Christ that we must look in order to understand fully the Lord’s Day. This is what the Christian Sunday does, leading the faithful each week to ponder and live the event of Easter, true source of the world’s salvation . . .

“The day of Pentecost . . . when the promise made by Jesus to the Apostles after the Resurrection was fulfilled by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit—also fell on a Sunday . . .

“It was again Sunday when, 50 days after the Resurrection, the Spirit descended in power . . . Pentecost is not only the founding event of the Church, but is also the mystery which forever gives life to the Church . . .

“Sunday is not only the remembrance of a past event: It is a celebration of the living presence of the Risen Lord in the midst of his own people . . .

“It is important therefore that they come together to express fully the very identity of the Church, the *ekklesia* [Greek word for “church”], the assembly called together by the Risen Lord . . .

“This ecclesial dimension intrinsic to the Eucharist is realized in every Eucharistic celebration. But it is expressed most especially on the day when the whole community comes together to commemorate the Lord’s Resurrection.

“Significantly, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that ‘the Sunday celebration of the Lord’s Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church’s life.’ For Christian families, the Sunday assembly is one of the most outstanding expressions of their identity . . .

“As in every Eucharistic celebration, the Risen Lord is encountered in the Sunday assembly at the twofold table of the word and of the Bread of Life . . .

“In coming to know the Church, which every Sunday joyfully celebrates the mystery from which she draws her life, may the men and women of the Third Millennium come to know the Risen Christ.”

—Pope John Paul II,

Easter Sermon, Sunday morning, April 11, 2004