

*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

*"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
the hour and the end!"*

Eze. 7:6 (Moffat)

EXEGESIS OF REVELATION

THE HARLOT AND THE BEAST

(Part 5)

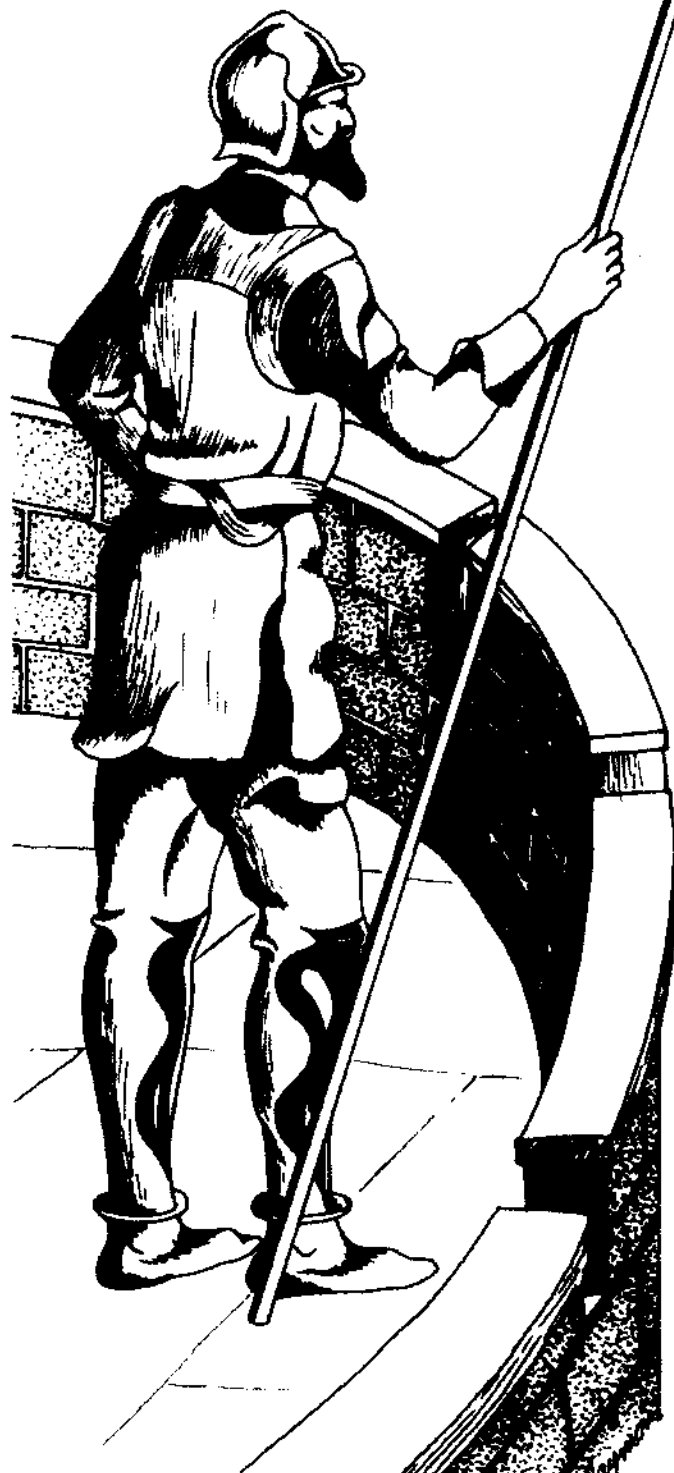
In 1534, the Luther Bible, in connection with Revelation 17, showed a cut of a woman wearing the triple tiara of the popes and riding a seven-headed dragon. The obvious deduction was that this symbolic woman represented the Papacy. Uriah Smith in his Thoughts on the Revelation, adopts the same basic view. He wrote:

"This prophecy is more definite than others applicable to the Roman power, in that it distinguishes between church and state. We here have the woman, the church, seated upon a scarlet-colored beast, the civil power." (pp. 702-703, 1897 ed.)

This same basic concept from the Reformation has continued to be the traditional Adventist view of the woman and the beast of Revelation 17, with the added focus on what is termed, "the daughters of Babylon." However this designation is not found in the book of Revelation. Looking at Revelation 17 from an exegetical viewpoint, what is its message?

First it is uniquely connected with the time just preceding the Seven Last Plagues. Of the woman who sits as a "queen," it is declared that "her plagues (shall) come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire." (Rev. 18:8; 17:16) Further, it is one of the angels of the Seven Last Plagues who shows to John "the judgment of the great whore." (17:1)

The designation of the angel who unfolds to John these final visions of the book as "one of the angels which had the seven vials" is in itself revealing from different perspectives. (17:1; 21:9) First, "the Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him to shew unto His servants ... He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John." (1:1) Twice during the final revelation by the designated angel as one who was involved in the Seven Last Plagues, John attempts "to worship" him. (19:10; 22:8-9) Each time he is told, "See that thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets that have the testimony of



Jesus." (Composite of the two previous references) It was Gabriel who stated to Daniel that "there is none who holdeth with me in these things (the Scripture of truth) but Michael your prince." (Dan. 10:21) Not only does this confirm Gabriel as "His angel" but also clearly indicates that Gabriel is one of the angels involved in the pouring out of the Seven Last Plagues, if not the chief angel.

The question arises, if Gabriel shows to John, "the Lamb's wife" - "that great city, the holy Jerusalem," whose wife is she who is also designated as "that great city." and boasts herself as a "queen"? The use of the word, "holy" is in contrast to the "city" which is "full of abominations." (17:4-5) Is it **unholy** Jerusalem?

One must recognize that in this final section of Revelation there is set forth two cities - Babylon and the New Jerusalem; two women - the one "clothed with the sun" and the one bedecked with gold and pearls; two wives - one, the wife of the Lamb, and the other, the wife of the "scarlet-colored beast."

Who is this "scarlet colored beast"? It has seven heads and ten horns as the serpent-dragon of Revelation 12. It should be observed that when the beast of Revelation 13, which also had seven heads and ten horns, is described, its bodily differences from the dragon are noted. (13:2) No such differences are given of the beast of Revelation 17, except the absence of crowns on the heads, and the color change from fire red to scarlet. The word for scarlet (*kokkinon*) is used to describe the color of the robe the Roman soldiers put on Christ in mockery of Him as "King of the Jews." (Matt. 27:28) No longer are the heads crowned, the dragon is reigning.

This beast is described as "was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition." (17:8) This past, present and future designation parallels the same description for "the Almighty" who "is, and which was, and which is to come" (1:8); but with distinct differences. In contrast to the One who "is to come," whose kingdom the dragon-beast has challenged, this beast goes into "perdition," or destruction (20:10) The kingdom of God is confirmed by the power of His Christ.

The first section (Chapters 2-11) of the book of Revelation closes with three Woes. During the time of the Second Woe, "the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit" is introduced. (11:7) He operates just prior to the

Third Woe - which cometh, "quickly." The final Woe marks the close of all human probation, and the pouring out of "the wrath of God." (11:15-19) If then, the activities of the beast designated in Revelation 11 are amplified in Chapter 17, the time frame for the fulfillment of the events in Chapter 17 is established - "the last remnant of time."

"The beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven". Note carefully, that while the eighth, he is **not** of the seventh, but of the seven. He is the power which, though invisible, has operated through all seven heads. Now he assumes openly his claim of rulership of the kings of earth gathered together to a place called in the Hebrew tongue, Har-Mo'ed. (16:13-14, 16)

This brings us to a review of who are the seven heads. Various interpretations have been set forth. One must keep in mind that the controversy between the dragon and the woman who gave birth to the Man-Child goes back to the first gospel promise (Gen. 3:15) which is symbolically represented in the vision which introduces the second section of Revelation (12:1-3). Further, the scope of the book includes those who sing the song of Moses as well as the Lamb (15:3). This binding of the Bible together as a unit with Moses standing for the Old Testament times, and Jesus Christ for the New Testament is an established concept. (John 1:17; Heb. 3:5-6) Thus the warfare of the dragon-beast against the people of God must begin with the persecution of the corporate body by Egypt. Understanding the definitive declaration of the angel as being expressed from John's point of time (17:10), the five which had fallen were Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Grecia. One was, Rome - Pagan and Papal - and one yet to come, and he was to "continue a short space."

The reason I suggest the sixth head as pagan-papal Rome as a viable exegesis of this definitive declaration is that in the Book of Daniel, the two are placed as one. The "little horn" of Daniel 7, ever remains a part of the non-descript beast. The "little horn" of Daniel 8 represents both phases of Rome. But what is represented by the "head" that continues a "short space"? Is it the second beast of Revelation 13, or the "image" formed? Regardless which power is chosen, following this, the dragon - "that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan" - appears in person asserting his right of rulership - he "is."

We next turn our attention to the woman. Instead of eisegetically reading into the symbol

the traditional concept from the Reformation and the Millerite Movement, let us see just what the Scripture is saying. The "woman" is designated as "that great city" (17:18), or Babylon the great. By pursuing this avenue of revelation, we observe that "that great city" in its fall is to be divided into three parts (16:19). Further, there are three symbolic powers, out of whose mouths come "unclean spirits" (16:13-14) which assemble "the kings of the earth and the whole world" to a place called in the Hebrew, Har-Mo'ed, or Mount of the Congregation.

Perceiving this scarlet-colored beast to be the symbolic representation of Satan's literal appearing as the long looked-for Messiah of Judaism, and the "Coming King" of Christian tradition, coincides with God's revelation of Lucifer's intent. He purposed in his heart "to sit also upon the mount of the congregation (har-mo'ed), in the sides of the north." (Isa. 14:13) This is defined as mount Zion, "the city of great King." (Ps. 48:2)

Again, you have a contrasting aspect of the prophecy of Revelation. While the rulers of earth are gathered on earthly Mount Zion, which Jesus declared to be desolate (Matt. 23:38), there is portrayed another gathering on the heavenly mount Sion - the 144,000 with the Lamb (14:1). Those who refuse to bow to the false christ, are honored by the true Christ through Whom they overcome and by Whom they are delivered (12:11; 17:14).

Now let us return to the three parts of Babylon. As we seek to find an answer, we need to keep in mind that any interpretation must be tentative, and can only be truly known as the scroll unrolls. However, it is interesting to observe that the one which Bible prophecy designates as a key player in the final drama of earth - the Papacy - speaks not only of Jerusalem, but of that city as the source of reverence of three monotheistic religions - Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.¹

Attention must also be directed to "the ten horns." (17:12) These ten horns are "ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power (authority) as kings one hour with the beast," not with any "head" but with the beast itself when he appears with his "wife." The parallel prophecy is not the ten horns of the nondescript beast of Daniel 7 - these were reduced to seven - but rather with the ten toes of the image of Daniel 2. Again the identification must wait the "final rapid movements" as they reign only "one hour" with

the beast.

The text states that these "ten horns" have one mind and "shall give their power (dunamis) and strength (exousia) to the beast. One must ask with a bit of wonderment, how do the "spirits of devils" effect such a unity when for more than six thousand long years, Lucifer in his rebellion has sought to create confusion and discord? In fact the very name of "that great city" Babylon has come to mean confusion. The text gives the answer - a Sovereign God "puts in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled." (17:17)

The oneness of these ten horns leads them to unite in "the war (polemos) of that great day of God Almighty" (16:14). In this final phase they now join in the last battle of the "war in heaven" where Michael and His angels fought against the dragon, when at its climax there came the cry, "Now is come salvation, and strength (dunamis), and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ." (12:7, 10) This final battle of the war involves "the remnant of [the woman's] seed." Trusting in the blood of the Lamb, they remain "called, and chosen, and faithful." The Lamb, coming forth to rescue His bride, overcomes the ten kings "for He is Lord of lords and King of kings." (17:14; 19:11)

When the powers of earth see that they have been beguiled and deceived by the final religious union, "these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire." (17:16)

The name of the "whore" that "great city" which reigned over the kings of the earth - "Babylon the Great" - should be given consideration. The name comes from Babel where God confused the languages and dispersed the "gathering together" of man to defy the God of heaven. (Gen. 11:9) Because of this, the name has stood for confusion. However, Brown Driver & Briggs, in their Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, note that the Assyrian, written Babil, means "gate of god." (p. 93, art. babel) While God uses strong language in describing the departure from truth - harlotry - the deception in reality will be so great that the whole world, apart from a small remnant, will be swept through this delusive "gate of god" to perdition.

¹Apostolic Letter - "Redemptionis Anno" - April 20, 1984; Encyclical - Tertio Millennio Adveniente, Nov. 10, 1994.

THE POPE SPEAKS -4-

In 1891, Pope Leo XIII issued his Encyclical, Rerum Novarum, setting forth the "social gospel" of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1991 celebrating the 100th anniversary of this Encyclical of Leo's, John Paul II issued his Centesimus Annus. In this pronouncement, he emphasizes Leo XIII's affirmation of "the need for Sunday rest so that people may offer the worship they owe to Almighty God." However, in 1994, when John Paul II set forth his agenda in preparation for the celebration of a Year of Jubilee in the year 2000, his only comment in regard to Sunday in the Encyclical, Tertio Millennio Adveniente was - "Every Sunday commemorates the day of the Lord's resurrection." What caused the change of emphasis?

Between 1991 and 1994, there were negotiations between the Vatican and Israel, and the plan, calling for the Vaticanization of Jerusalem in harmony with the Papal position which had been set forth in the United Nations Security Council Document #S/14032, appeared imminent. Further, the Pope in his 1994 Encyclical observed that "the eve of the year 2000 will provide a great opportunity ... for interreligious dialogue." Then he added, "In this dialogue the Jews and Muslims ought to have a pre-eminent place." Anyone knows that to include the Jews and Muslims who observe Saturday and Friday respectively, the demand for Sunday observance had to be toned down. In fact, in his book, Crossing the Threshold of Hope, released in 1994, John Paul II refers to the Jews as "our **elder brothers in the faith**." (p. 99; emphasis his) This whole picture of historical data demands a review of traditional eschatological projections.

In his new book, The Fatima Factor in the Final Hours, Rene Noorbergen, notes a series of celestial phenomena which must be factored into any review of closing events leading to the Second Advent. These phenomena begin with the Fatima revelation which took place May 13, 1917 near Ajustrel, Portugal. On this date three children were tending their sheep when suddenly a ghostly lady appeared in the sky who identified herself as "the Lady of the Rosary." They were told to meet "Mary" on the 13th of each month thereafter. On July 13, this "Mary" predicted that she would perform on October 13, a miracle "so that all may believe." When the day arrived the 70,000 people who gathered to the designated spot reported seeing a "solar phenomenon." (p.

133) Malachi Martin telling of this same event describes it thus:

"The sun was a fast-spinning plate of brightly shining silver, a giant pinwheel turning on its own axis, casting off beams of colored lights. ... All were fascinated by the rim of color around the spinning disk of that sun. At first deep red, the rim's color changed successively to all the colors in the rainbow." (The Keys of This Blood, p. 628)

Martin, however, adds a dimension to this solar apparition. John Paul II believes that he was saved from death by Mary in the attempted assassination on May 13, 1981 - the official feast day of Mary as Our Lady of Fatima. While convalescing, John Paul II is reported to have received a vision of that same event of October 13, 1917 "in the luminous skies of Latio above the Seven Hills of Rome." (p. 627)

Noorbergen quotes from Pope Pius XII's diary which tells of that pope's experience with what is termed "the miracle of the sun" at the time when he defined the dogma of the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven in 1950. (pp. 138-139) Keeping in mind that the Roman Church believes that the "woman" of Revelation 12 is "the Virgin Mary" clothed with the sun, this solar phenomenon has special significance to them. To the student of history and prophecy, it tells a different story.

"Along with the sun, as the great fire-god, and in due time, identified with him, was the serpent worshiped. ... In Egypt, one of the commonest symbols of the sun, or sun-god, is a disc with a serpent around it." (The Two Babylons, p. 227) The Bible identifies the symbol of the serpent, as "that old (Gr. archaios - ancient) serpent, called the devil and Satan." (Rev. 12:9) Lucifer has sought to "exalt his throne above the stars of God" (Isa. 14:13) and has deified himself in sun worship.

As the gospel of Christ was making its way in the Roman empire through apostolic witness, the Iranian mysteries were also invading the empire via the legions of Rome in the form of Mithraism. In Mithraism, "each of the planetary bodies presided over a day of the week," the first day being dies Solis - Day of the Sun. (Cumont, Mysteries of Mithra, p. 120) Arthur Weigal in his book, The Paganism in Our Christianity, notes that "as a solar festival, Sunday was the sacred day of Mithra; and it is interesting to notice that since Mithra was addressed as Dominus 'Lord,' Sunday must have

been 'the Lord's day' long before Christian times." (p. 145) Gilbert Murray comments that Mithraism "had so much acceptance that it was able to impose on the Christian world its own Sunday in the place of the Sabbath, its Sun's birthday, 25th December, as the birthday of Jesus." (See Sunday in Roman Paganism, p. 150)

Knowing this pagan background of Sun worship and Sunday observance, the solar phenomena connected with the supposed appearance of the Virgin Mary has added significance. The devotion in Roman Catholicism and especially by the present Pope to "the Virgin Mary" means only a temporary toning down of the position taken in his 1991 Encyclical in regard to an enforced Sunday rest. We dare not forget that the final battle is between truth and error, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition.

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WCC - EIGHTH ASSEMBLY

The eighth assembly of the WCC is scheduled for 1998 for Harare, Zimbabwe. This will mark the fiftieth year since the founding of the World Council of Churches in 1948. This eighth assembly is to be celebrated as an "ecumenical jubilee" opening the way "for the ecumenical movement into the future of the 21st century."

Conrad Raiser, general secretary, speaking in Nashville, Tennessee, at the United States conference of the WCC, declared that this coming assembly "will have to provide a fresh articulation of the ecumenical vision as we move into the 21st century." He noted that while the term "jubilee" carries in the English language the connotation of a joyful celebration, the Bible term went beyond this everyday meaning. The Biblical "jubilee" was intended to restore just relationships in society and to offer a powerful prophetic vision of the new life in community. This idea should help develop a "new ecumenical vision."

He continued - "We are approaching the end of the second millennium, the period of Christian division, and the end of the century which has seen the emergence of the ecumenical movement." An "ecumenical jubilee" in 1998 could help to prepare churches for the year 2000 "in the spirit of true worship, binding together spirituality and the commitment to restoring right relationships in human community. (ENI Bulletin,

#10, 1995, p. 5)

This same theme of a "jubilee" in 1998 was the basis of Raiser's message to the Faith and Order Commission's world conference held in Spain in 1993. At that conference, he described the "jubilee" as a time when "doctrinal anathemas of the past could be lifted and churches could be 'expressly converted from separation to the koinonia that is God's gift and calling to them.'" (One World, October 1993, p. 15)

Keeping in mind that the Faith and Order Commission's current objective is a common confession of faith based in the Nicene Creed, Raiser suggested that "in a great act of unity the church, through their appointed delegates could confirm that they are bound together in a real ecclesial communion grounded in one baptism and in one confession of Christ." (ibid.)

Observe that Raiser called for the lifting of "doctrinal anathemas of the past." There is one in the offing. 1997 will mark the 450th anniversary of a Roman Catholic decree at the Council of Trent which condemned what it believed to be the Protestant doctrine of justification. The Lutheran World Federation is hoping to make a joint declaration with the Roman Catholic Church on that anniversary date to lift mutual condemnations on the doctrine of justification. What each will give on this basic doctrine should be revealing. (ENI Bulletin, #11, June 1995, p. 7)

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"THAT THEY MAY BE ONE"

Conrad Raiser, general secretary of the WCC, referred to the second millennium of the Christian era as "the period of Christian division." (See previous article) This is a correct assessment. There was the great schism of 1054 between Rome and the eastern church based in Constantinople. Then in 1517 came the Protestant Reformation with its resulting schism.

On May 30, John Paul issued an encyclical, Ut unum sint (That they may be one) in which he committed himself and the Roman Church to the objective of strengthening ecumenism. He set forth the claim that he, as the successor of Peter, was "the first servant of unity." He wrote:

"Among all the Church and Ecclesial Communities, the Catholic Church is conscious that she has

preserved the ministry of the Successor of the Apostle Peter, the Bishop of Rome, whom God established as her 'perpetual and visible principle and foundation of unity.'" (ENI, #11, 95-0202)

In an "exhortation" attached to the encyclical, the Pope called the bishops of the church to a renewal of commitment "to work for full and visible communion" among all the Christian churches. Also to mark the release of this encyclical, a press conference was held at the Vatican. Cardinal Edward Cassidy, president of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian unity stressed the importance of the papacy in this new initiative for ecumenism because the Pope, who claims to be the legitimate successor of Peter, is as such the leader of the Christian Church.

An American journalist asked if the Pope would give up this role in the light of the fact that the status of the papacy could never be accepted by non-Roman Catholic churches. To this Cassidy replied - "No, under no circumstances could the Catholic Church relinquish the primacy of Peter's successor."

According to various news reports, the Pope in this encyclical recognized that the papacy as an institution "constitutes a difficulty for most other Christians," and that he would seek to "find a way of exercising the primacy" of his office that is "open to a new situation." (US News & World Report, June 12, 1995, p. 16) Yet in the encyclical, John Paul II sets forth very clearly what he perceives the power of his office to be as the alleged successor of Peter. He writes:

"It is the responsibility of the Successor of Peter to recall the requirement of the common good of the Church, should anyone be tempted to overlook it in the pursuit of personal interests. He [the Bishop of Rome] has the duty to admonish, to caution and to declare at times that this or that opinion being circulated is irreconcilable with the unity of faith. When circumstances require it, he speaks in the name of all the Pastors in communion with him. He can also - under very specific conditions clearly laid down by the First Vatican Council - declare ex cathedra that a certain doctrine belongs to the deposit of faith. By thus bearing witness to the truth, he serves unity." (ENI, op. cit.)

It returns to a single bottom line - either the primacy of the Bible or the primacy of the papal teaching magisterium. Basically, there has been no change in Papal objectives nor positions.

LET'S TALK IT OVER

From 1885 to 1887, Ellen G. White, her son, W. C. and his wife were in Europe visiting the scattered churches and encouraging the workers as they sought to advance the cause of truth. Among the places which she visited were the Piedmont Valleys of northern Italy. In a report of this visit sent to the Review & Herald (June 29, 1886) is to be found an interesting comment. It reads:

"There are many honest souls in these valleys; but they do not understand the truth for this time, and it is not merely by argument that they are to learn it. There is a work to be done of feeding these hungry, starving sheep with spiritual food. Many of the professed teachers of the people are perfectly content to set their stakes and make no advancement themselves, and they are much disturbed when others are induced to seek for truth. When new light is presented, they feel as the Pharisees felt when Christ came with new light for the Jewish nation. They want to stop the increase of light. They not only refuse to search the Scriptures for themselves, but they do all in their power to prevent others from searching."

The principles enunciated and the factors of the conditions existing in 1886 in the Piedmont Valleys is not unique to that time nor place. "The Scriptures are constantly opening to the people of God. There **always** has been and **always** will be a **truth specially** applicable to each generation." (ibid.) The condition in the Community of Adventism today is very little different than was found in the Piedmont Valleys in 1886. For centuries the Waldensians had maintained the apostolic faith in spite of the assaults of Romanism. But what were they to do with the "advancing light" and "increasing truth" of the Three Angels' Messages of Revelation 14? Today, the Community of Adventism is divided as a result of apostasy and departure from the "old landmarks." But to "each generation" there is "a truth specially applicable" to that generation! How do we find it, and how do we relate to it?

It is obvious what we should not do - set our stakes, and make no personal advancement in the study of the Scriptures. But this is exactly what has been done, and is being done by those who profess to be the spiritual leaders of the concerned people of God. The term has been coined - "historical Adventism" - to distinguish between their position and the "new" theology

which has been introduced into the Church. But what has really happened? Honest souls have been confirmed in the Loadiceanism ("Phariseism") which permitted the apostasy to enter the Church in the first place. The "I-have-need-of-nothing" mentality blocked the "advancing truth" and "increasing light" which could have confronted successfully the so-called "new" theology.

Each individual needs to ask the question, "What ray of "new light" or "advancing truth" have those professing to hold to "historic Adventism" presented?" The answer is, "Not one ray!" "Advancing truth" will clarify perceptions of what was perceived as truth but which do not truly conform to the Scriptures. If all of our positions taken on truth had been carefully investigated with minds open to the guidance of the Spirit of truth, a different history would be written today of what is happening in the Community of Adventism than that which is being written.

On the other hand, some of the so-called "new light" being projected is so blasphemous that one recoils at even the suggestion that there should be "new light." For example, the present agitation over the doctrine of the Godhead with its denial of Christ as ever-existent and self-existent - the great I AM - has spawned "strong delusions." (See II Thess. 2:10-12) For example, in this area where we live, there are those teaching as "new light" that Jesus Christ was begotten prior to Bethlehem as "the Son of God" in the same way that Abraham begat Isaac. This is based on the concept that since man was created in the "Image of God," God, therefore, has reproductive organs. One of the persons promulgating this teaching was asked, who was the "mother." The answer, "We are not told." This is paganistic and revolting. However, we have been warned that the devil has different delusions prepared for different minds.

Now returning to the basic concept - "There always has been and always will be a truth specially applicable to each generation." We must recognize as fact that we are not the generation which began the Advent Movement. The light of the sanctuary was present truth following the Great Disappointment of 1844. It can still be "advancing truth" if we are willing to correct any perceptions that have become "traditional" but which do not conform to the Word of God. To the "generation" of 1888, there was "new" light. Justification by faith was presented in a way to prepare a people for the final atonement of Christ's ministry in the

Heavenly Sanctuary. It was rejected.

God again sought through two other "messengers" to revive this "light," but because of their failure to confront the issue as Ellen White advised Jones and Waggoner to do - "Take it to the people" - we have the sad story of the 1955-56 SDA-Evangelical Conferences. If that decade - 1950-1960 - had seen an agitation over a revived 1888 Message, how different the present might be. Because of human failure and faithlessness, God has sent another message of present truth. He permitted a prophecy of Jesus to be fulfilled. Today we face that message and its significance as well as its Author, Jesus Himself, the soon-to-come, King of kings, and Lord of lords. The question is simply, how are we reacting to "advancing truth" and "increasing light"?

Suggested reading - Counsels to Writers and Editors, pp. 33-42

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Jesus own prophecy of the end-time - The Hour and the End. US \$5.00 postpaid.

Rene Noorbergen's new book - The Fatima Factor in the Final Hours. Due to delays and change of publishers, the price is now \$11.95, but we will hold to our original offer - US \$12.50 postpaid.

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