

## SEVEN ENCOURAGING THINGS

A Sermon by C. Mervyn Maxwell  
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Today is November 18, 1989.

Sabbath, November 18 in the year 1848 fell during the last of those famous 1848 "Sabbath and Sanctuary" conferences, the one that was held in the home of Otis Nichols in Dorchester, Massachusetts.

This particular conference continued into Sunday the 19th; and as the Sunday meeting was beginning, on November 19, Joseph Bates and others fell into a discussion about the identity of the seal of God in Revelation 7:1-3. Soon Ellen G. White was given a vision on the question, showing that the seal of God is Sabbath observance. During the vision she spoke aloud several times. Elder Bates had accustomed himself when at sea to maintaining a running record of events in his ship's log. As this vision progressed, he wrote down anything that Sister White said. Among the statements he recorded is this one:

When that truth [about the Sabbath] arose there was but little light in it, but it has been increasing. . . . It grows in strength . . . [and] it lasts forever when the bible is not needed. . . . O how mighty is that truth; it's the highest after they enter the goodly land, but it will increase till they are made immortal . . . [and] it never sets [Joseph Bates, *A Seal of the Living God*, p. 25].

For those of us who are convinced that Ellen G. White meets the Bible tests for a prophet, here is a basis for reassurance, even for triumphalism! As we step over the threshold of the 1990s and speculation is rife as to the form Adventism will assume in the upcoming decade, we can nail down one datum with confidence: The Sabbath message will keep growing stronger and stronger.

We must candidly admit that some data are not so encouraging. Congregations we know are scarcely growing and some are actually declining. Sabbath attendance in some places seems to be about half the membership even when the children are counted in, whereas thirty years ago attendance usually equaled membership. Some conferences are reducing their pastoral staffs. M.Div. enrollment is down. Influential theologians with apparently escalating effectiveness are siring an Adventism only slightly distinguishable from its cultural environment.

The very genesis of the Adventist Theological Society confirms the observation that our church today is in a crisis.

I worry about such things; but I keep reminding myself that there is much to encourage us! Was it not Elder W. A. Spicer who used to direct our leaders to "cheer everybody on" by choosing to talk about encouraging things?

### Encouraging Thing No. 1

For our first Encouraging Thing this morning, let us not forget the vision of November 19, 1848 that we talked about a moment ago, with its promise that *the Sabbath will last forever and will increase until we are made immortal*.

At the same time, let us not forget that "in order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy. . . . We must be partakers of the righteousness of Christ" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 283).

### Encouraging Thing No. 2

Here's a second Encouraging Thing, a well-known 1886 statement that appears today in book 2 of *Selected Messages*, p. 380:

Satan will work his miracles to deceive; he will set up his power as supreme. *The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat.* This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place. None but those who have been overcoming by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony [see Rev 12:11] will be found with the loyal and true, without spot or stain of sin [see Eph 5:27], without guile in their mouths [see Rev 14:5]. We must be divested of our self-righteousness and arrayed in the righteousness of Christ [emphasis added].

Whenever I read this passage I say to myself, "I want to be among Zion's wheat, not the chaff," and I want to be "arrayed in the righteousness of Christ." Don't you feel the same? "In Christ" we want to be members of this church of His that may seem about to fall but which He will keep from falling. Isn't the church Christ's? Isn't it His body?

### Encouraging Thing No. 3

Now for a third Encouraging Thing: *No other church can match the qualifications of end-time prophecy.*

To fulfill Revelation 14:6-12, a church had to arise around 1844 proclaiming the arrival of judgment hour and the fall of Babylon, and soon thereafter had to preach the Sabbath message. According to Revelation 12:17, this same movement had to keep the commandments and have the "testimony of Jesus," which is the "Spirit of Prophecy" (see Rev 19:10).

Any other group that might arise claiming to fulfill prophecy would also have to start with the judgment hour message in the 1840s and the sanctuary message soon afterwards and would also have to preach the Sabbath and cherish the genuine Spirit of Prophecy. In other words, it would have to be so similar to our own God-given movement as to be virtually indistinguishable from it. It would also have to be somewhat imperfect, inasmuch as Jesus said that tares would grow in the church until the harvest.

While we're looking at the three angels' messages, let's remind ourselves incidentally that the third angel is commissioned to carry the 1844 message to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Which reminds us of Matthew 24:14, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, . . . and then shall the end come."

By God's grace and foreknowledge, we are a people of prophecy, fore-seen to be a *triumphant* people of prophecy.

### Encouraging Thing No. 4

The message of our *current Sabbath School lessons* provides our fourth Encouraging Thing.

The first wave of Jews had come back from the Babylonian exile with high hopes and expectations—maybe with something of the excitement of East Germans at last getting out into the west.

These Jews enjoyed the full support of the great conqueror King Cyrus and a sizable grant for the rebuilding of the temple.

But things hadn't worked out very well.

The reality of the ruins was worse than the old timers remembered and the younger generation imagined. Times were hard, crops were poor, and any cash the people came by seemed to escape through holes in their money bags. All things considered, it seemed to many that the moment hadn't arrived yet for bothering to build the temple. Materialism and disillusionment led even God's people who had left Babylon to put their own affairs first.

So things progressed, or failed to progress, for almost twenty years. We recall that the Gentiles in the area demanded the right to participate in building the temple on the basis that they were sixth generation God worshipers (or something like that; see Ezra 4:2). When Zerubbabel perceived their worldliness and refused their request, they found new ways to harass the builders, even appealing all the way up to leadership at imperial headquarters.

But the temple got built anyway! After accomplishing practically nothing for 18 years, the Jews at last rose up and finished the job in four years from re-start to final finish.

So what made the difference? The presence of the Spirit of Prophecy, which is the testimony of Jesus (cf. 1 Pet 1:11)—and the commitment of church leadership to stepping out by faith in the leadership of the Spirit of Prophecy. As Ezra put it, "Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and with them were the prophets of God, helping them" (Ezra 5:1). The words of Zechariah 4:6-10 are classic:

6. This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the Lord of hosts.

7. "What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain; and he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'"

8. Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

9. "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you."

10. "For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel [RSV]."

If this is triumphalism, so be it! God knows we need it.

And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,  
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,  
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong,  
Alleluia [William H. Howe, "For All the Saints"].

This history is encouraging to us not only because it reveals how the unchanging God gets things done but also because our modern prophet applied the experience specifically to our day. Said she in commenting on the story of Joshua and Zerubbabel, "Human power and human might did not establish the church of God, and neither can they destroy it" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 595).

Again, commenting on the same events on the same page:

Often men are tempted to falter before the perplexities and obstacles that confront them. But if they will hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end, God will make the way clear. Success will come to them as they struggle against difficulties.

Thus far we've found encouragement in a November 19 vision that the Sabbath would grow not weaker but ever stronger; in our prophet's testimony that the chaff will be sifted out of Zion, but Zion will not fall even though it may appear to be about to fall; in the fact that prophecy clearly points to the triumph of this movement; and in our Sabbath School lessons about Joshua, Zerubbabel, and the way the prophets helped them.

#### Encouraging Thing No. 5

Our fifth Encouraging Thing is something Jesus said about the wheat and the tares. He said, "Let both grow together until the harvest" (Matt 13:30).

It struck me with new force a few Saturday nights ago that if the tares will grow among the wheat until the harvest, two conclusions are inescapable: (1) we shouldn't be surprised or dismayed by the presence of tares; Christ foresaw them and will take care of them; and (2) if tares are growing among the wheat, there must be wheat growing among the tares! So in our conversations about the church, why not give the good wheat equal time? Let's enjoy the wheat. Let's draw strength from its vigorous spread and rich

maturation. I'll try to develop this thought as we go through Encouraging Things six and seven.

#### Encouraging Thing No. 6

Our sixth Encouraging Thing is that *God has already brought the church through a number of tare-ible crises* (please excuse the pun; Bible writers often punned when they were the most serious); and as each crisis has passed, the wheat by God's grace has been found to be growing stronger than before, usually much stronger. Let me give you several examples from our denominational experience, benefiting from God's "leading and teaching in our past history."

##### A. THE CASE OF CASE & RUSSELL, "THE MESSENGER PARTY," AND STEPHENSON & HALL. GROWTH: FROM 1,000 TO 2,000.

In June 1853, H. S. Case and C. P. Russell rejected the sanctuary message, Ellen White's inspiration, and Elder James White's leadership and started a paper called *Messenger of Truth*. When they heard that James White was ill, they rejoiced that he would soon be out of the way. When Elder White read about their joy in their paper, he rose up in bed and declared (with Wycliffe and Psalm 118:17) that he would not die but would outlive them. After two years Ellen White (see *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:123) urged the loyal ministers to preach only the present truth and not expend their energies any longer opposing the *Messenger* party.

The loyal ministers faithfully complied, even though for awhile things seemed actually to get worse. J. M. Stephenson, a leading theological writer in our movement, and another of our ministers called D. P. Hall defected together and soon linked up with Case and Russell. But the loyal ministers persevered in teaching only present truth, and after three years the opposition had melted clear away, and Elder White reported that the *Review* subscription list had doubled from 1000 to 2000.

At its worst, the *Messenger* party seems to have attracted a full third and possibly a half of all our ministers (or "traveling brethren") at the time. It presented a real crisis! But Christ loved His church and not only preserved it through the crisis but prospered it significantly. (For more on this crisis, see *Tell It to the World*, pp. 134-136.)

B.: THE CASE OF SNOOK & BRINKERHOFF AND "THE MARION PARTY"  
(1860s).

In 1865, two years after our denomination was organized, the officers of the Iowa Conference—B. F. Snook and W. H. Brinkerhoff—rejected the sanctuary message, Ellen White's visions, and James White's leadership and broke away from the church. Inasmuch as we had only seven conferences at the time, the Iowa defection involved one-seventh of all our conferences. The name "Marion Party" came from the location of its headquarters in Marion, Iowa.

But the crisis didn't last long, and the church continued to advance to better things, while Snook and Brinkerhoff rather abruptly faded away. (For more, see *Tell It to the World*, pp. 136-137.)

C. THE CASE OF D. M. CANRIGHT. GROWTH: FROM 25,000 (1887) TO  
175,000 (1919).

Elder D. M. Canright's defection in 1887 is doubly significant in that before it he had been our leading evangelist and after it he wrote stinging books against us which continue to wield influence around the world. His loss might be compared with the departure of a Vandeman, Cleveland, or Brooks.

In 1889, two years after Canright's defection, his *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced* appeared, containing the unhappy prediction (on p. 33) that "without doubt" the Adventist movement would be ruined by "discouragement, divisions, apostacies, infidelity, and ruin to souls."

But under God the Seventh-day Adventist church has not been ruined but instead has marched ahead without Elder Canright. We had about 25,000 members when he left us in 1887—and 175,000 when he died in 1919. (For more, see Carie Johnson, *I Was Canright's Secretary*, and the summary of this book in R. W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant*, pp. 464-470.)

Before we leave the 1800s, let's allow ourselves to be encouraged by the good that was happening in our church even during the post-1888 era. That crucial period has been characterized as a time of angry saints, but we should remember that it was also the time when Abram LaRue, a volunteer self-supporting worker, went evangelizing to Hong Kong—and to Shanghai, Japan, Borneo, Java,

Ceylon, Sarawak, Singapore, and even Palestine as well! It was also the time when the indefatigable Stephen Haskell went from New Zealand to do pioneer work in England and later traveled the world seeking mission sites. This was the time when several colporteurs went to India to open our work there on a self-supporting basis; and when George James became our first missionary to non-Christian Africans. To buy his ticket to Africa, James sold everything he owned except his clothes and his violin. In Africa he attracted friendly attention with his "box that could sing." After two years he learned that the church had founded a mission at Solusi and set out at once to meet his brethren. But on the way aboard a little steamer he died of malaria. The captain buried him in an unmarked grave somewhere along the riverbank.

And what we've been saying about the "wheat" in the 1890s we could say about the wheat in almost any decade. During every crisis, God's good wheat has gone right on growing, winning souls, and maturing.

D. THE CASES OF J. H. KELLOGG, M.D. AND THE LIVING TEMPLE, AND  
OF A. F. BALLENGER AND THE GATHERING CALL. GROWTH: FROM  
80,000 (EARLY 1900s) TO 800,000 (1952).

Dr. J. H. Kellogg had one of the keenest minds this denomination has ever seen. He wrote more than 50 volumes, many of them large; he established the very sizable Battle Creek Sanitarium and helped to found about 30 smaller health institutions; he became famous nationally and internationally; he helped make Ellen White's health reform scientifically respectable. And so on. But over time he became mistrustful of the sanctuary doctrine, Ellen White, and his brethren; he also became increasingly independent of the church and, at the same time, increasingly enamored of his personal concept of pantheism. During the famous seven-hour interview with two elders from the Battle Creek church prior to his disfellowshipping in 1907, Dr. Kellogg stated that he didn't see "anything ahead of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination but *complete wreckage*" as long as the *present leaders* had "hold of the crank."

Our top leaders in 1907 were the President, A. G. Daniells, and the Secretary, W. A. Spicer. Our church counted about 80,000 members when Dr. Kellogg made this dire prediction. By the time (1930) when Daniells and Spicer had both retired, we had about 314,000 members (nearly four times as many as in 1907). By the time Dr.

Kellogg died, we had 550,000 members (nearly seven times as many). By the time Elder Spicer died in 1952, we had 800,000 members, ten times as many as in 1907 when the brilliant Dr. Kellogg faithlessly predicted nothing ahead for this movement but "wreckage."

The Bible says that the wisdom of ordinary men is foolishness with God (see 1 Cor 3:19).

To save time, we'll say nothing further about A. F. Ballenger and will mention only briefly the next few tere-ible crises—

#### F. THE CASE OF L.R. CONRADI.

G. THE CASE OF VICTOR T. HOUTEFF AND HIS DAVIDIAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS (THE SHEPHERD'S ROD). GROWTH: FROM 350,000 (1930) TO 1,350,000 (EARLY 1960s).

H. THE CASE OF ROBERT BRINSMEAD. GROWTH: FROM 1,500,000 (EARLY 1960S) to 2,800,000 (1970s)

#### I. THE CASE OF DESMOND FORD.

Even those of us old enough to have lived through the Shepherd's Rod movement and the Brinsmead agitation have almost forgotten how extremely serious a threat each one appeared to be at one time. And we have difficulty recalling the apparent seriousness of the Ford challenge, even though it peaked only a decade ago. The loss of Desmond Ford is one that many of us still feel personally, yet we are led to praise God that even without Ford's wonderful eloquence, the church has marched right on. "Not by might nor by power but by My Spirit, saith the Lord."

J. THE CASE OF CONTEMPORARY LIBERALISM. GROWTH: FROM 2,000,000 (1970) TO 6,500,000 AND CLIMBING.

Crises continue to challenge the Seventh-day Adventist church. One of our current crises is apparently caused by infatuation with "liberal" hermeneutics and by embarrassment over historical Adventist differentness.

Contemporary Seventh-day Adventist liberals continue to honor the Bible, the Sabbath, the second coming, Ellen White, creation, the flood, and even the investigative judgment, and many of them tend to be conservative in their lifestyle, even to practicing vegetarianism and tithing. They are very interested in their denomination.

Their interest in the denomination, however, is focused on

changing it in the direction of the world outside. Inspection reveals further that as a group they favor the Sabbath for celebration but not especially for holiness. They seldom speak of any signs of the second coming. They tend to use Ellen White for devotions rather than for authority. When they speak of the investigative judgment they avoid saying when it began, for they're not sure whether it has begun yet; and 1844 to them is an important date in Adventist history but not for any event in heaven. The Seventh-day Adventist message is the "everlasting gospel" but not "the three angels' messages," and it is certainly not "the truth" but is rather one more good attempt at discovering truth. The creation that they believe in started hundreds of millions of years ago and is still continuing; and Noah's flood was one notable catastrophe in a long string of catastrophes. The Bible is irreplaceable as a source for sermons, but its writers were so conditioned by their contemporary cultures that we have to interpret them very broadly today.

Such "liberal" beliefs obviously sap the vitality out of Seventh-day Adventism for those individuals who choose to believe them, but in spite of the impact of liberalism on North American Adventism, our church keeps growing in other parts of the world under God's rich blessing. Membership was about 2,000,000 when the current liberal movement got under way around 1970. Today, it is more than 6,500,000.

So we take courage from the way God has brought us successfully through each of many crises in our denominational experience.

#### Encouraging Thing No. 7

Our seventh Encouraging Thing is the observation that *there's a lot of good wheat growing today*, and it's doing wonders by God's Spirit.

Let none of us in the Adventist Theological Society allow our minds to brood on our denomination's North American problems to the neglect of its ongoing worldwide triumphs.

Lance Morrow, in his *Time* essay for Oct. 30, 1989 (p. 100), recalled that

In March 1933, Albert Einstein was visiting the Long Beach campus of the University of California. He and his host from the department of geology walked through the campus, intently discuss-

ing the motions of earthquakes. Suddenly they looked up in puzzlement to see people running out of campus buildings. Einstein and the other scientist had been so busy discussing seismology that they did not notice the earthquake occurring under their feet.

Is it possible that while we theologians mull over our deep anxieties, this movement of ours is speeding ahead to its God-ordained success without our realizing it? Are we entitled to a lot more triumphalism than we allow ourselves to enjoy?

Think for a moment about the number of baptisms being reported. During the Thousand Days of Reaping (1982-1985), do you remember how many were baptized into this message every day? More than 1100!

The goal of baptizing a thousand people in a day was based on the inspired promise in *Evangelism*, p. 693 that "more than a thousand will soon be converted in a day."

I first became aware of this promise in the 1940s. From time to time the back page of the *Review* would announce that ministers in the South American Division were preparing to hold multiple baptisms on a certain day and that they expected, in doing so, to fulfill Ellen G. White's promise of more than a thousand in a day. I remember dwelling on those announcements, thinking that probably Sr. White's promise was for more than a thousand every day, but fearing within myself that such a prospect was remote indeed. And now see what has happened! For a thousand days prior to the 1985 General Conference our people baptized more than *one thousand one hundred* every day.

And today our brothers around the world are baptizing more than *one thousand five hundred* every day!

Let us not allow the full impact of this information to escape us, like the earthquake Einstein missed. While you're rejoicing in it, let me ask you how many people our movement was baptizing in 1885 when Sr. White predicted "more than a thousand" in a day?

Only five or six.

Think of it! We were baptizing only five or six persons a day and had a total membership of only about 20,000 members in 1885, when Ellen White made this prediction of more than a thousand in a day. At that time a thousand accretions a day would have represented an "impossible" 5% growth rate per diem!

Now listen to this promise, written in 1905 and printed in *Evangelism*, p. 692: "The time is coming when there will be as many converted in a day as there were on the day of Pentecost."

According to Acts 2:41, the number converted on the day of Pentecost was *three thousand!*

We know that not all who are being baptized these days are truly converted; but many seem to be. It's been my privilege this year to travel to West Africa and also to Hong Kong and China—besides being five times on the west coast and filling appointments in still other places. Many of you have traveled similarly or more.

From personal contacts on these trips I believe there is a wonderfully fine crop of wheat growing in this church today, more good wheat in fact than at any previous time in the history of our movement.

In Nigeria I found our pastors charged with as many as fifteen churches apiece and paid only about half enough to buy their food, yet they are carrying on heroically. Each minister, it seems, has a story to tell about standing firm for the Sabbath, notably during school days in the state-run universities. One told me he chose not to participate in the biology field trips scheduled for Saturdays. After the final examinations the teacher announced that only two students had passed the course, and that he was one of them. Another minister related how one of his teachers became so impressed with his courageous unbending refusal to take an examination on Saturday that the teacher himself became a Seventh-day Adventist.

At our seminary in Nigeria I met a woman in the cafeteria whose husband threatened to drive her out of her home if she chose to be baptized a Seventh-day Adventist. After anguished prayer she chose to serve the Lord, and her husband proved as harsh as his threat. He compelled her to leave behind their four children, one of whom was only two years old, and he promptly married another wife.

Claiming promises like "Thy Maker is thine husband" and "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord," she told me miracles God has worked to help her keep in touch with her children.

She also told me that she has made friends with the second wife and is leading her to the Lord!

Can we find a better Christian even in the Bible?

Our Ile-Ife Hospital has been returned to us. Once the Ile-Ife Adventist hospital was the best medical facility in Nigeria. The government, which assumed ownership of it in the 1960s, has given it back to us stripped of nearly all its equipment. I asked to see the surgical theater and was shown a worn leather surgery bench and a single overhead light. I asked about X-Ray equipment and was assured they had a machine that could still photograph a *few* positions. But the dedication of the staff members was inspiring. I found them eager to make the institution once again a seed-bed for the raising up of churches all over the nation. And the physician, who has a Loma Linda M.D. and a Loma Linda residency in pediatrics in addition to special training in surgery, is delighted to labor there on a salary of \$150.00 a month.

I read many encouraging stories in the *Africa-Indian Ocean Adventist Review*. In one story our zealous laity prepared dozens of people for baptism and then asked believers everywhere to pray for an intensely stormy night. They hoped to hold the baptism in a river at night under circumstances free from the hostile eyes of local authorities. God sent the storm they desired, and in the pelting rain and crashing thunder they conducted an otherwise normal service, except that the deacons and deaconesses didn't hand the newly baptized people towels to dry off with! When the leader called for people to get ready for the next baptism, eager flashlights picked out a good many upraised hands.

Talking about lay soul winners in far away places reminds me that Bill Fagal a few days ago directed my attention to a report from Yerba Buena in southern Mexico, where he once served as a student missionary. The report stated that Antonio Díaz, without any college education, has conducted evangelistic meetings and trained lay soul winners so effectively that in the past 25 years he has been responsible for 15,000 (*fifteen thousand*) baptisms.

Can wheat grow any greener?

Maybe it can! When Pauline and I were visiting our son Stanley in Hong Kong in February we confirmed a story he had reported to us two years earlier while he was serving in Yan Bian University. Stanley has written up the story for *Insight*. It's enough to say here that we have a Seventh-day Adventist Brother Wong in China who

must be entirely composed of "salt" (to shift a moment from our "wheat" metaphor). He's in his eighties now. He was in his fifties when he was first arrested.

Ever since his conversion, Brother Wong has had a deep seated commitment to the Sabbath and to the writings of Ellen G. White, and a delightful custom of asking people if they know his friend Jesus. This custom has helped him lead many people to the Lord, but under the communist regime it landed him in the worst prison in the whole nation. In this prison, Brother Wong found people who desperately needed the Saviour, so he bravely continued his question, "Do you know my friend Jesus?" For his Sabbath keeping and his loving witness, the guards beat and kicked him repeatedly. At one point they hung a very heavy stone around his neck and intermittently whacked his face for *seventeen days and nights*, and then dumped him on a pile of bodies. On another occasion they bound him exceptionally tight and set him outdoors on an intensely cold night, only to find him alive and well in the morning. His knots had been miraculously untied for him.

Brother Wong is home now. He is still alive, still telling people about his Friend, and accumulating letters from former fellow prisoners who thank him for his encouraging ministry.

While we professors worry over theological trends in North America, let's be wonderfully encouraged by the good wheat that is growing all around the world.

We have much reason for optimism—even if church attendance has declined in *some* congregations, *a few* conferences out of hundreds are reducing their ministerial staffs, M.Div. enrollment is *temporarily* down, and influential theologians are *momentarily* siring an Adventism only slightly distinguishable from its cultural environment.

We cite Elder W. A. Spicer again, this time from a 1930 letter to G. B. Starr. In it, like other Seventh-day Adventists of his day, he referred to our message as "the truth"—

It is a fine thing, this work of God. It is as true as truth itself. There is one little creed I do believe in, and that is the truth is true. It will stand against the world. Years ago when before things broke open I knew privately that men like Dr. Kellogg and A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner were going to probably line up against the truth, I felt weak in the knees. It seemed as though we would have a terrible time to

answer them. But I ran across that text in Jeremiah, 'O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth?' [Jer 5:3 KJV] You know, that settled the whole business and I stopped worrying. It was a good thing I did, for what is the use of our trying to carry the load that only God can carry? He will keep His eye on the truth. It is ours to push along and bear witness to it" [quoted in Godfrey T. Anderson, *Spicer: Leader with the Common Touch*, p. 79].

Yes, God brought our church and its message triumphantly through the Kellogg crisis—and through all our other past crises.

Jesus said there would always be tares among the wheat and, conversely, wheat among the tares; so we shouldn't be surprised by the tares, or overlook the splendid wheat that is growing right now among the tares.

Our Sabbath School lessons in Zechariah have reminded us that it is "not by might nor by power but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." Human power didn't establish the church—and human power will never be able to destroy it.

In 1886 Ellen G. White was inspired with the promise that Zion might seem about to fall, but that it wouldn't fall; only the chaff would be sifted out from among the wheat.

And on the 1848 equivalent of this Nov. 18-19 weekend, years ago, the Lord's special messenger to this movement was shown that the Sabbath message, far from faltering or fading away, would increase and grow brighter until Jesus comes, and after that, throughout eternity.

When that truth [about the Sabbath] arose there was but little light in it, but it has been increasing. . . . It grows in strength . . . [and] it lasts forever when the bible is not needed. . . . O how mighty is that truth; it's the highest after they enter the goodly land, but it will increase till they are made immortal . . . [and] it never sets.

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## THE LAST DAYS

### By Ellen G. White

A Book Preview by the Editor

Leo R. Van Dolson

Since we retired, my wife, Bobbie Jane, and I have been working part time for the Ellen G. White Estate. One of our most fascinating assignments has been to prepare a compilation of the Ellen G. White writings on final events.

This project was begun by Donald Mansell several years ago when he served on the staff of the White Estate. He launched a thorough review of the manuscripts in the vaults in Washington, searching for everything available that Ellen G. White had written about the last days. When Don left the White Estate, Gerard Damsteegt was assigned to organize into book form the materials that Don had spent so much time and effort collecting.

By the time of our retirement, Gerard had relocated at Andrews University, and so we were asked to put the materials into final form for publication. How amazed we were when, soon after our arrival in Kennebunkport, Maine, the United Parcel Service delivered four large cartons containing 27 thick notebooks full of copied originals and retyped Ellen White manuscripts that Don and Gerard had assembled.

It is our understanding that approximately 80 percent of this material has never been published. What a blessing we have received as we have worked through the manuscripts, arranging and editing selections for publication!

We have narrowed the exciting materials to 267 pages of single-spaced typed manuscript. As of the present date, the Pacific Press still