

## **Balancing Statements on Cultural Adaptation In Ellen White's Writings**

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### **Adapt Your Methods to the Context**

"Many efforts, though made at great expense, have been in a large measure unsuccessful because they do not meet the wants of the time or the place. For many years we have sought to impress upon our people the necessity of working more intelligently. God would have us realize constantly that those around us are the purchase of the blood of Christ, and that it depends very much upon our deportment and manner of labor whether these souls are saved" (Gospel Workers 297-298).

"The people in every country have their own peculiar, distinctive characteristics, and it is necessary that men should be wise in order that they may know how to adapt themselves to the peculiar ideas of the people, and so introduce the truth that they may do them good. They must be able to understand and meet their wants. Circumstances will arise which demand immediate action, and it will be necessary that those who are right on the field should take hold of the interest, and do the thing that is necessary to be done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit" (Testimonies to Ministers 213)

"Too many of the methods and habits and fashions have been transported from America to Africa, and the result is not favorable" (Testimonies to Southern Africa 97).

"We rejoice in the good work which has been done in foreign lands; but had different plans of labor been adopted, tenfold, yes, twentyfold, more might have been accomplished; an acceptable offering would have been presented to Jesus in many souls rescued from the bondage of error" (Testimonies, Volume 5, 391).

"The worker in foreign fields will come in contact with all classes of people and all varieties of minds, and he will find that different methods of labor are required to meet the needs of the people. A sense of his own inefficiency will drive him to God and to the Bible for light and strength and knowledge.

The methods and means by which we reach certain ends are not always the same. The missionary must use reason and judgment. Experience will

indicate the wisest choice to follow under existing circumstances. It is often the case that the customs and climate of a country make a condition of things that would not be tolerated in another country. Changes for the better must be made, but it is best not to be too abrupt.

Let not controversy arise over trifles. The spirit of love and the grace of Christ will bind heart to heart, if men will open the windows of the soul heavenward and close them earthward. By the power of the truth many difficulties might be adjusted, and controversies hoary with age find quietude in the admission of better ways. The great, grand principle, 'Peace on earth, good will toward men,' will be far better practiced when those who believe in Christ are indeed laborers together with God" (Gospel Workers 468).

"The apostle Paul, in describing his manner of labor, says: 'Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.' [1 Corinthians 9:19–22.]

Paul did not approach the Jews in a way to excite their prejudices. He did not run the risk of making them his enemies by telling them the first thing that they must believe on Jesus of Nazareth; but he dwelt on the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament Scriptures, which testify of the Messiah, of his mission and his work. He led them on step by step, showing them the importance of honoring the law of God. He also gave due honor to the ceremonial law, showing that Christ was the one who instituted the whole system of sacrificial service. After dwelling upon these things, evincing that he had a clear understanding of them himself, he brought his hearers down to the first advent of Christ, and proved that in the crucified Jesus the specifications of the ceremonial law had been fulfilled. He showed them plainly how the light from the cross of Calvary gave significance and glory to the whole Jewish economy. He approached the Gentiles, not by exalting the law at first, but by exalting Christ, and then showing the binding claims of the law. Thus he varied his manner of labor, always shaping his message to the circumstances under which he was placed; and yet" (Gospel Workers 300).

### **Reveal Truth Gradually**

"Christ drew the hearts of His hearers to him by the manifestation of His love, and then, little by little, as they were able to bear it, He unfolded to them the great truths of the kingdom. We also must learn to adapt our labors to the condition of the people--to meet men where they are" (Evangelism 57).

“The minister must not feel that the whole truth is to be spoken to unbelievers on any and every occasion. He should study carefully when to speak, what to say, and what to leave unsaid. This is not practicing deception; it is working as Paul worked” (Gospel Workers 117).

“Our ministers need more of the wisdom that Paul had. When he went to labor for the Jews, he did not first make prominent the birth, betrayal, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ, notwithstanding these were the special truths for that time. He first brought them down step by step over the promises that had been made of a Saviour, and over the prophecies that pointed Him out. After dwelling upon these until the specifications were distinct in the minds of all, and they knew that they were to have a Saviour, he then presented the fact that this Saviour had already come. Christ Jesus fulfilled every specification. This was the ‘guile’ with which Paul caught souls. He presented the truth in such a manner that their former prejudice did not arise to blind their eyes and pervert their judgment” (Evangelism 141).

“Paul did not approach the Jews in such a way as to arouse their prejudices. He did not at first tell them that they must believe in Jesus of Nazareth; but dwelt upon the prophecies that spoke of Christ, His mission and His work. Step by step he led his hearers on, showing the importance of honoring the law of God. He gave due honor to the ceremonial law, showing that it was Christ who instituted the Jewish economy and the sacrificial service. Then he brought them down to the first advent of the Redeemer, and showed that in the life and death of Christ every specification of the sacrificial service had been fulfilled. The Gentiles, Paul approached by exalting Christ, and then presenting the binding claims of the law. He showed how the light reflected by the cross of Calvary gave significance and glory to the whole Jewish economy. Thus the apostle varied his manner of labor, shaping his message to the circumstances under which he was placed. After patient labor he was successful to a large degree; yet there were many who would not be convinced. Some there are today who will not be convinced by any method of presenting the truth; and the laborer for God is to study carefully the best methods, that he may not arouse prejudice or combativeness. This is where some have failed. By following their natural inclinations, they have closed doors through which they might, by a different method of labor, have found access to hearts, and through them to other hearts.

God’s workmen must be many-sided men; that is, they must have breadth of character. They are not to be one-idea men, stereotyped in their manner of working, unable to see that their advocacy of truth must

vary with the class of people among whom they work and the circumstances they have to meet.

There is delicate work for the minister to do as he meets with alienation, bitterness, and opposition. More than others, he needs that wisdom which 'is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.' [James 3:17.] As the dew and the still showers fall gently upon withering plants, so his words are to fall gently when he proclaims the truth. He is to win souls, not to repulse them. He is to study to be skilful when there are no rules to meet the case.

Many souls have been turned in the wrong direction, and thus lost to the cause of God, by a lack of skill and wisdom on the part of the worker.

Tact and good judgment increase the usefulness of the laborer a hundred-fold. If he will speak the right words at the right time, and show the right spirit, this will exert a melting power on the heart of the one he is trying to help" (Gospel Workers 118-119).

### **Do Not Attack**

"The people of the world are worshipping false gods. They are to be turned from their false worship, not by hearing denunciation of their idols, but by beholding something better. God's goodness is to be made known. 'Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.' Isa. 43:12" (Christ's Object Lessons 299).

"Great wisdom should be used in the presentation of a truth that comes directly in opposition to the opinions and practices of the people.... I have been shown that our ministers go too rapidly through their subjects and bring the most objectionable features of our faith too early into their effort" (Evangelism p. 246).

"In every case special efforts should be made to come close to hearts by personal efforts. Avoid running down the churches; do not let the people receive the idea that your work is to tear down, but to build up" (Evangelism 227).

"Do not make prominent those features of the message which are a condemnation of the customs and practices of the people, until they have opportunity to know that we are believers in Christ" (Evangelism p. 231).

"Some ministers, when they find before them unbelievers who are prejudiced against our views upon the nonimmortality of the soul out of Christ, feel all stirred up to give a discourse on that very subject. This the hearers are in no way prepared to receive, and it only increases their prejudice and stirs up their opposition. Thus all the good impressions

that might have been made if the worker had pursued a wise course are lost. The hearers are confirmed in their unbelief. Hearts might have been won, but the combative armor was put on. Strong meat was thrust upon them and the souls that might have been won were driven farther off than before.

The combative armor, the debating spirit, must be laid off. If we would be Christlike we must reach men where they are”(Evangelism p. 248).

### **Value Good Where You Find It**

“The world has had its great teachers, men of giant intellect and extensive research, men whose utterances have stimulated thought and opened to view vast fields of knowledge; and these men have been honored as guides and benefactors of their race; but there is One who stands higher than they. We can trace the line of the world’s teachers as far back as human records extend; but the Light was before them. As the moon and the stars of our solar system shine by the reflected light of the sun, so, as far as their teaching is true, do the world’s great thinkers reflect the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. Every gleam of thought, every flash of the intellect, is from the Light of the world” (Education, p. 13).

“Agree with the people on every point where you can consistently do so. Let them see that you love their souls, and want to be in harmony with them so far as possible. If the love of Christ is revealed in all your efforts, you will be able to sow the seed of truth in some hearts; God will water the seed sown, and the truth will spring up and bear fruit to His glory” (Evangelism 140).

“If you walk humbly with God you may unite with the students not of our faith, agreeing with them as far as possible by dwelling upon points wherein you harmonize. Make no effort to create an issue. Let them do that part of the work themselves. Let them see that you are not egotistical, pharisaical, thinking no one loves God but yourselves, but draw them to Christ, thus drawing them to the truth. All heaven is engaged in this work. Angels wait for the cooperation of men in drawing souls to Christ. ‘We are laborers together with God’” (Manuscript Releases, Volume 4, 49).

“In laboring in a new field, do not think it your duty to say at once to the people, We are Seventh-day Adventists; we believe that the seventh-day is the Sabbath; we believe in the non-immortality of the soul. This would often erect a formidable barrier between you and those you wish to reach. Speak to them, as you have opportunity, upon points of doctrine on which you can agree. Dwell on the necessity of practical godliness. Give them evidence that you are a Christian, desiring peace, and that you love their souls. Let them see that you are conscientious. Thus you will

gain their confidence; and there will be time enough for doctrines” (Gospel Workers 119–120).

“During the twenty–four years from 1821 to 1845, Wolff traveled extensively: in Africa, visiting Egypt and Abyssinia; in Asia, traversing Palestine, Syria, Persia, Bokhara, and India. He also visited the United States, on the journey thither preaching on the island of St. Helena. He arrived in New York in August, 1837; and after speaking in that city, he preached in Philadelphia and Baltimore, and finally proceeded to Washington. Here, he says, ‘on a motion brought forward by the ex–President, John Quincy Adams, in one of the houses of Congress, the House unanimously granted me the use of the Congress Hall for a lecture which I delivered on a Saturday, honored with the presence of all the members of Congress, and also of the bishop of Virginia, and the clergy and citizens of Washington. The same honor was granted to me by the members of the Government of New Jersey and Pennsylvania, in whose presence I delivered lectures on my researches in Asia, and also on the personal reign of Jesus Christ.’

Dr. Wolff traveled in the most barbarous countries, without the protection of any European authority, enduring many hardships, and surrounded with countless perils. He was bastinadoed and starved, sold as a slave, and three times condemned to death. He was beset by robbers, and sometimes nearly perished from thirst. Once he was stripped of all that he possessed, and left to travel hundreds of miles on foot through the mountains, the snow beating in his face, and his naked feet benumbed by contact with the frozen ground.

When warned against going unarmed amongst savage and hostile tribes, he declared himself provided with arms, --‘prayer, zeal for Christ, and confidence in his help.’ ‘I am also,’ he said, ‘provided with the love of God and my neighbor in my heart, and the Bible is in my hand.’ The Bible in Hebrew and English he carried with him wherever he went. Of one of his later journeys he says, ‘I kept the Bible open in my hand. I felt my power was in the book, and that its might would sustain me.’

Thus he persevered in his labors until the message of the Judgment had been carried to a large part of the habitable globe. Among Jews, Turks, Parsees, Hindoos, and many other nationalities and races, he distributed the Word of God in these various tongues, and everywhere heralded the approaching reign of the Messiah.

In his travels in Bokhara he found the doctrine of the Lord’s soon coming held by a remote and isolated people. The Arabs of Yemen, he says, ‘are in possession of a book called “Seera,” which gives notice of the coming of Christ and his reign in glory, and they expect great events to take place in the year 1840.’ ‘In Yemen I spent six days with the Rechabites. They drink no wine, plant no vineyards, sow no seed, live in tents, and remember the words of Jonadab, the son of Rechab. With them were the children of Israel of the tribe of Dan, . . .

who expect, in common with the children of Rechab, the speedy arrival of the Messiah in the clouds of heaven.’

A similar belief was found by another missionary to exist in Tartary. A Tartar priest put the question to the missionary, as to when Christ would come the second time. When the missionary answered that he knew nothing about it, the priest seemed greatly surprised at such ignorance in one who professed to be a Bible teacher, and stated his own belief, founded on prophecy, that Christ would come about 1844” (GC88 360–362).

### **Lift Up Jesus—More Than Adapting Methods**

“Now let us see if there is not something for us to do. Let us see if we have not bound ourselves about with iron bands. Every one of us must come in that position where Christ can work with us. We must get where we will respect the judgment of others and not think that ‘My way is the only right way in the world.’

They say to me in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, ‘You cannot labor here as you do in America.’ But I tell them I will give them the message as God has given it to me. God has not changed since I came to Europe and I will bear my message just as He has given it to me, and if I fail of meeting the ideas of the people in this place I want them to remember that God has not changed; He is the same here as in America, and He can give the same message here.

It is Christ and Him crucified, and the Christ in me will respond to the Christ in you. Here is the Bible and the truth, and we must come to the platform of eternal truth and seek to be partakers of the Divine nature, and then the true light will come into this nation” (Manuscript Releases, Volume 4, 104).

“Seek to widen out. Let your preaching be with power and spirit--not the repetition of old discourses, but let fresh, new manna be given to the hungry sheep. You must draw daily from the living fountain of the waters of life. . . .

You will be inclined to assimilate the habits of the people in England, and to think this will give you more influence. You wrote that you were trying to become as English as possible, that the prejudice against Americans may not stand in the way of presenting the truth. But if you possess kindness and tenderness of soul for everyone around you, if you esteem others better than yourself--if you just pattern after Jesus--you will have an influence.

If you attempt--in dress, in the ordering of your house, in your manners--to be English, you will have a very little influence. Act out the American. No one expects you to act an Englishman. No one will respect you any more for adopting English speech, English hours, English customs. Just carry all the Americanism you can into your England Mission, and let England see you are not at all ashamed to stand under the Stars and Stripes” (Manuscript Releases, Volume 4, 104).

“We have had a decided purpose not to merge our ways and conform our habits and practices to the mold of the habits and practices of the colonials [in Australia].

God would not be pleased to have us do this, and catch up their sentiments, their manners of speech, and method of pronunciation.

Christ is our model, and we are to change our reason, our affections, our speech, our habits, according to his divine example, rather than seek to meet the customs, practices, and habits of education of any nation.

We are to receive our mold from Christ. He is to see himself in the character of his followers. We are to copy his Spirit, to have our lives hid with Christ in God. In every true believer the character of Christ is to be reproduced. The Spirit of Christ is to be made manifest through human efforts” (Review and Herald, September 25, 1894 par. 5).

“The will of God is revealed in his written word, and this is the essential knowledge.

Human wisdom, familiarity with the languages of different nations, is a help in the missionary work. An understanding of the customs of the people, of the location and time of events, is practical knowledge; for it aids in making the figures of the Bible clear, in bringing out the force of Christ's lessons; but it is not positively necessary to know these things. The way-faring man may find the pathway cast up for the ransomed to walk in, and there will be no excuse found for any one who perishes through misapprehension of the Scriptures.

In the Bible every vital principle is declared, every duty made plain, every obligation made evident. The whole duty of man is summed up by the Saviour. He says, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ [Matthew 13:37, 39.] In the word the plan of salvation is plainly delineated” (Counsels on Health 84).

### **Seek Balance in Mission Adaptation**

“Elder W. read to me the matter you had written for a tract or publication to come to the public to notify them of your meetings.

Now, my dear Brother Daniel [Bourdeau], I think it would not leave the best influence upon the people for you to advertise in this manner. Although we are not to be ashamed of our nationality, as Brother L\_\_\_\_\_ and some others have appeared to be in that they have sought to imitate the customs and blend with the peculiarities of the nations where and for whom they labor, thinking this would give them influence with the people, yet we must also consider in what manner we shall best introduce ourselves to the people with the object of gaining their confidence and engaging their attention.

I have been shown that we need to move with the greatest wisdom that we shall not in anything create prejudice by giving the impression that Americans feel themselves superior to people of other nations. There have been two errors,—one error in seeking in our words and actions to exalt foreign national customs above our own American habits and practices and suiting our American stamp to adapt it to foreign countries which will bring us no influence. Then there has been still another error of extolling in conversation and in the labor for souls American practices as far above those of other nations. We need to be constantly guarded on every point. The religion of these nations they think superior to all others, and are exceedingly jealous on this point. They send their missionaries to the uncivilized heathen, and to bear on the front in our approach to them that we are sent to this country from America as missionaries, will create the suspicion and jealousy at once that [they] are regarded as heathen. . . . This is missionary ground; we are doing missionary work, but the peculiar prejudice will be stirred against us if we put it just as it truly is.

Now, my brother, I think it would be better if you did not put before the people so distinctly that you are an American and a missionary. I do not think it wise to present the sayings of men in reference to our own capabilities. Let nothing appear before angels or men savoring of self-exaltation, elevating yourself, that you are a smart man or a great man, and quote not the praises of men. But just go to work in the fear of God. Make no great spread, but keep self out of sight and let Jesus appear, and commence in a humble manner. It is not best to arouse in this country, and in such a place as Geneva, the special attention of the clergy. If you enter large halls and then have to come down to the smaller buildings, it will not have the best influence. It would be best to take the lowly seat and then come up higher” (Manuscript Releases, Volume 4, 106).

### **Watch out for Syncretism (Compromise)**

“The mind in which error has once taken possession can never expand freely to truth, even after investigation. The old theories will claim recognition. The understanding of things that are true and elevated and sanctifying will be confused. Superstitious ideas will enter the mind, to mingle with the true, and these ideas are always debasing in their influence. Christian knowledge bears its own stamp of unmeasured superiority in all that concerns the preparation for the future, immortal life. It distinguishes the Bible reader and believer, who has been receiving the precious treasures of truth, from the skeptic and the believer in pagan philosophy.

Cleave to the word, ‘It is written.’ Cast out of the mind the dangerous, obtrusive theories which, if entertained, will hold the mind in bondage so that the man shall not become a new creature in Christ. The mind must be

constantly restrained and guarded. It must be given as food that only which will strengthen the religious experience” (Medical Ministry 89).

“Even before the establishment of the papacy the teachings of heathen philosophers had received attention and exerted an influence in the church. Many who professed conversion still clung to the tenets of their pagan philosophy, and not only continued its study themselves, but urged it upon others as a means of extending their influence among the heathen. Serious errors were thus introduced into the Christian faith” (Great Controversy 58).

“It was by associating with idolaters and joining in their festivities that the Hebrews were led to transgress God's law and bring His judgments upon the nation. So now it is by leading the followers of Christ to associate with the ungodly and unite in their amusements that Satan is most successful in alluring them into sin. ‘Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean.’ 2 Corinthians 6:17. God requires of His people now as great a distinction from the world, in customs, habits, and principles, as He required of Israel anciently. If they faithfully follow the teachings of His word, this distinction will exist; it cannot be otherwise. The warnings given to the Hebrews against assimilating with the heathen were not more direct or explicit than are those forbidding Christians to conform to the spirit and customs of the ungodly. Christ speaks to us, ‘Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.’ 1 John 2:15. ‘The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.’ James 4:4. The followers of Christ are to separate themselves from sinners, choosing their society only when there is opportunity to do them good. We cannot be too decided in shunning the company of those who exert an influence to draw us away from God. While we pray, ‘Lead us not into temptation,’ we are to shun temptation, so far as possible.

It was when the Israelites were in a condition of outward ease and security that they were led into sin. They failed to keep God ever before them, they neglected prayer and cherished a spirit of self-confidence. Ease and self-indulgence left the citadel of the soul unguarded, and debasing thoughts found entrance. It was the traitors within the walls that overthrew the strongholds of principle and betrayed Israel into the power of Satan. It is thus that Satan still seeks to compass the ruin of the soul. A long preparatory process, unknown to the world, goes on in the heart before the Christian commits open sin. The mind does not come down at once from purity and holiness to depravity, corruption, and crime. It takes time to degrade those formed in the image of God to the brutal or the satanic. By beholding we become changed. By the indulgence of impure thoughts man can so educate his mind that sin which he once loathed will become pleasant to him” (Patriarchs and Prophets 458–459).

“Those who will to do his will, shall know of the doctrine. But if their human ideas, received through traditions and maxims and customs of men, are still retained as of value, they may be convinced that the words of Christ will satisfy their highest wants; that these words can comfort, encourage, strengthen, and settle them, and remove from them their unrest and uncertainty; they may feel a most earnest desire for the results following the partaking of the bread from heaven, and may even be frank enough to express their wish, ‘Lord, evermore give us this bread:’ yet they will reject Christ, and lose his proffered blessings” (Review and Herald, November 16, 1897 par. 9).

“Earnest prayer must be blended with devoted labor, so that a responsive influence will be seen and the inmost depths of mind and heart reached, the whole nature stirred to abandon every phase of idolatry, making the hearts of this ignorant people thrill with solemn awe and bound with exultation. And the souls of the teachers, under the inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit, will be filled with the determination never to give up the effort to conquer in the strength of the Lord Jesus. And the Sun of righteousness shall rise upon them, and lead true converts to cooperate with the teachers with a degree of energy that will demonstrate the power of truth to influence hearts. The power of the cross of Christ, the power of an endless life, must take hold of these blood-bought souls” (Manuscript Releases, Volume 20 34).

### **Nationalities Must Press Together for True Success**

“Since these meetings began, I have felt urged to dwell much upon love and faith. This is because you need this testimony. Some who have entered these missionary fields have said, ‘You do not understand the French people; you do not understand the Germans. They have to be met in just such a way.’ But, I inquire, does not God understand them? Is it not He who gives His servants a message for the people? He knows just what they need; and if the message comes directly from Him through His servants to the people, it will accomplish the work whereunto it is sent; it will make all one in Christ. Though some are decidedly French, others decidedly German, and others decidedly American, they will be just as decidedly Christ-like.

The Jewish temple was built of hewn stones quarried out of the mountains; and every stone was fitted for its place in the temple, hewed, polished, and tested, before it was brought to Jerusalem. And when all were brought to the ground, the building went together without the sound of ax or hammer. This building represents God’s spiritual temple, which is composed of material gathered out of every nation, and tongue, and people, of all grades, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned. These are not dead substances, to be fitted by hammer and chisel. They are living stones, quarried out from the world by the truth; and the great Master-Builder, the Lord of the

temple, is now hewing and polishing them, and fitting them for their respective places in the spiritual temple. When completed, this temple will be perfect in all its parts, the admiration of angels and of men; for its builder and maker is God.

Let no one think that there need not be a stroke placed upon him. There is no person, no nation, that is perfect in every habit and thought. One must learn of another. Therefore God wants the different nationalities to mingle together, to be one in judgment, one in purpose. Then the union that there is in Christ will be exemplified.

I was almost afraid to come to this country, because I heard so many say that the different nationalities of Europe were peculiar, and had to be reached in a certain way. But the wisdom of God is promised to those who feel their need and who ask for it. God can bring the people where they will receive the truth. Let the Lord take possession of the mind, and mould it as clay is moulded in the hands of the potter, and these differences will not exist. Look to Jesus, brethren; copy his manners and spirit, and you will have no trouble in reaching these different classes. We have not six patterns to follow, nor five. We have only one, and that is Christ Jesus. If the Italian brethren, the French brethren, and the German brethren try to be like Him, they will plant their feet upon the same foundation of truth; the same spirit that dwells in one, will dwell in the other,—Christ in them, the hope of glory. I warn you, brethren and sisters, not to build up a wall of partition between different nationalities. On the contrary, seek to break it down wherever it exists. We should endeavor to bring all into the harmony that there is in Jesus, laboring for the one object,—the salvation of our fellow-men” (Historical Sketches 136–137).

### **Truth Unites, Destroying Prejudice**

“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.’ 1 Cor. 1:10.

We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The gospel of Christ is to reach all classes, all nations, all tongues and people. The influence of the gospel is to unite in one great brotherhood. We have only one Model that we are to imitate in character building, and then we all shall have Christ's mold; we shall be in perfect harmony; nationalities will blend in Jesus Christ, having the same mind, and the same judgment, speaking the same things, and with one mouth glorifying God. This is the work the world's Redeemer is to do for us. If we accept the truth as it is in Jesus, national prejudices and jealousies will be broken down, and the Spirit of truth will blend hearts in one. We will love as brethren; we will esteem others better than ourselves; we will be kind and

courteous, meek and lowly, easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits. . . .

God knows just how to meet the peculiarities of different nationalities. . . . The third angel's message . . . is to unite the people to do a special work, preparing them with perfection of character to unite in one great family in the mansions Christ has gone to prepare for those who love Him. . . .

The truth is all powerful and far reaching. It will unite nationalities in one great brotherhood. . . . Christ in men unites them on one grand platform, preparing for the uniting in one family in heaven. It is the truth that makes men one and removes national prejudice. . . .

The truth will have the same molding influence upon hearts whatever the nationalities. Every human heart that accepts the truth will bow to the majesty of its sway, and when Christ is abiding in the heart by faith they will be of one mind, for Christ is not divided. They will be strong in His strength, happy and united in His peace. The truth is the same in its subduing power upon all hearts. It will refine and ennoble the heart of the receiver" (Our High Calling 171).

### **Don't Separate by Ethnic Lines**

"In regard to the question of caste and color, nothing would be gained by making a decided distinction, but the Spirit of God would be grieved. We are all supposed to be preparing for the same heaven. We have the same heavenly Father and the same Redeemer, who loved us and gave Himself for us all, without any distinction. We are nearing the close of this earth's history, and it does not become any child of God to have a proud, haughty heart and turn from any soul who loves God, or to cease to labor for any soul for whom Christ has died. When the love of Christ is cherished in the heart as it should be, when the sweet, subduing spirit of the love of God fills the soul-temple, there will be no caste, no pride of nationality; no difference will be made because of the color of the skin. Each one will help the one who needs tender regard and consolation, of whatever nationality he may be.

Ask yourselves if Christ would make any difference. In assembling His people would He say, Here brother, or, Here sister, your nationality is not Jewish; you are of a different class. Would He say, Those who are dark-skinned may file into the back seats; those of a lighter skin may come up to the front seats?

In one place the proposition was made that a curtain be drawn between the colored people and the white people. I asked, Would Jesus do that? This grieves the heart of Christ. The color of the skin is no criterion as to the value of the soul. By the mighty cleaver of truth we have all been quarried out from the world. God has taken us, all classes, all nations, all languages, all nationalities, and brought us into His workshop, to be prepared for His

temple” (To Elder Hyatt in South Africa, February 15, 1900.) (Manuscript Releases, Volume 4, 16).

### **Learn Each Other’s Language to Promote Unity**

“I felt urged by the spirit of God throughout the meetings to impress upon all the importance of cultivating love and unity. I tried to present the danger of building up separate interests between nationalities. We are all bound together in the great web of humanity, and all that we do has a relation to others. There is a great work before us, and our hearts must be open to receive God's light and love that we may reflect it to others.

There is a great work to be done in our world. Last evening the question came up in regard to our Scandinavian brethren. It was asked whether they should divide into different sections, according to their nationalities. I was in Europe for two years, and two or three times I visited the various places where our work had been established there. Some such questions as this came up before us then, and the light that was given me was that the different nationalities were not to divide up into separate companies, but were to press together just as much as possible. God wants unity to be seen among these different nationalities. Each should try to learn the language of the other, so that they can all assemble in conference, and understand what is said. Should they divide into different companies, making no effort to unify, there would be little prospect of their being able to meet together at general meetings.

The Lord wants us to help one another. We have largely lost sight of this. He wants us to use the powers he has given us in strengthening and blessing one another, not in condemning and destroying. We are to be a blessing to those whom Christ has purchased with his own blood” (General Conference Bulletin, April 10, 1901).

### **Seek the Same Experience for All**

“The light that God has given me I have tried to impart to you through an interpreter, and I have evidence that your hearts have been open to receive the truth that God has sent to you. Before I came to Europe, the situation and condition of different nationalities were presented before me. I was shown that of necessity there must be a different mold given to the spirit and the workings of these different peoples, or there would be developed in each nationality a selfish disposition to build up a separate interest. The very first work that God would have us do is to seek to unite the interests of the brethren of different nationalities, that there may be a blending together of sympathies and forces in the work. Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and prayed to the Father in behalf of his church. He said, ‘Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may know that thou hast sent me.’

In speaking of plans proposed for the progress of the work in these foreign countries, many have said, 'You cannot labor here as you do in America. You must approach the people of different nationalities in a way to meet their peculiar prejudices and opinions.' Are these peculiarities fine gold, or are they dross that God would have consumed? The word of God reveals the fact to us that there must be a united phalanx against the enemy. The French have their peculiarities, and the English have theirs, and the Germans theirs; but God has made it manifest that all nations must have the mold of Christ if they would enter the kingdom of heaven.

Says the apostle James, 'Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.' And Paul says, 'I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.'

There is one God, one faith, one baptism. There is one Lord Jesus, who must abide in the soul of every one of these brethren. When the brethren of one nationality separate themselves from the brethren of another nationality, to build up a separate interest, they are doing that which God never designed should be done. The very same truth which sanctifies my heart will sanctify the hearts of brethren of other nations. The fact that my brethren and sisters are obliged to talk another language is no reason that their characters should not be fashioned according to the one true Pattern, Christ Jesus. In order to be fitted for heaven they need the same discipline that I need. It is because our foreign brethren have thought the work must be carried on to suit the peculiarities and prejudices of the people that the cause of present truth has not advanced as it should have advanced during these years.

Some have thought that you must labor for the Germans in a different way from the way in which you work for the French or English; but the Germans need to learn at the foot of the cross the same lessons that the French must learn there. We have but one Saviour, and but one cross of Calvary. We have but one school in which to learn the lesson of humility. Christ has said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find

rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' It is at the cross of Calvary that we all must meet, and learn meekness and lowliness of heart.

My French brethren have many lessons to learn from the great Teacher. Christ says to them, 'Take my yoke upon you, lift my burdens.' Christ says to the Germans, 'Come unto me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' He says to the English, 'Take my yoke, bear my burden, learn of me, and ye shall find rest.' The yoke of Christ never galls the neck of the wearer. It is the yoke of our own manufacture that is heavy and unendurable. It is when you are not willing to bear the yoke with Christ that you find the burden grievous.

As you learn the lesson of meekness, as you become one with Christ as He is one with the Father, you will draw together. The brethren of different nationalities will have but one interest and hope and work. You will not feel that because the French have habits of thought and action to which you are not accustomed, you must divorce your interests from theirs. The Germans will not feel that because they have some good ideas and customs, they can never learn of others. Every follower of Christ must come to the foot of the cross. I must not say to my French brother, 'You stand on that side of the cross, because that is your place,' and to my German brother, 'You stand on that side, and I will stand on this side because I am English.' We must seek for unity and harmony. We should seek for the deep movings of the Spirit of God, that the sweet spirit of Christ may blend heart with heart. When we reach this union, God will let His rich blessing rest upon us as He let it rest upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost, and then we shall be able to go forth to proclaim the message of love and mercy to all nations. We must all drink at the same fountain; for Christ has said, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.' If we all partake of the same nourishment, we shall all have the same testimony to bear. I cannot see that the experience of our German brethren differs from the experience of our French or English brethren. And why should there be a difference in the experience of the children of God?

The idea that there must be a difference in the manner of presenting and carrying forward the work in different nations, must be dispelled from our minds. There must be no separate interest. Distinctions must be broken down, that we may all meet together as brethren of the same household. And this unity must exist before the foreign work will have the strength that it is possible for it to have.

Our work is to elevate one another as brethren. We are to feel a Christian interest for one another and for every one,--for Germans, French, Italians, English, Scandinavians,--for souls of all nationalities. All who name the name of Christ are to be one in Him. Then do not divide the body, but seek to worship God together as brethren. If there is a brother of another nationality in your meeting, take especial interest in him, and invite him to take part in the service. If there is no one who can interpret the stranger's words, this need not deter

him from taking part, for God understands all languages, and He will write his testimony and his name in the book of his remembrance. The spirit he manifests will make its impression upon hearts, although the words he utters cannot be comprehended.

Brethren and sisters, we must have less of self and more of Jesus. We must lie lower at the foot of the cross, and the more humble our views of self, the more exalted will be our views of Jesus and heaven. We need the power of the living God. We need to become living channels of light. It is not education or intellectual ability that will bring souls into the light of truth. The power to move souls will be found when you practice the lessons that you have learned in the school of Christ. Self must be hid in Jesus. God has rich blessings to bestow upon our German brethren, for the truth is to be opened more fully before them. He has rich blessings for the French brethren, and for all who are seeking to follow in the steps of the Master. And the lessons we learn of Christ must be repeated to others. There will be power in the testimony that is given in simplicity, and Christ has said, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.'" (Review and Herald, November 12, 1889).

### **Don't Have Separate Ethnic Organizations**

"Dear Brethren: Some of our ministers have written to me, asking if the work among the Germans and Scandinavians should not be carried forward under separate organizations. This matter has been presented to me several times, and I have written upon the subject: but I do not know where to find all that I have written regarding the matter. When I was in College View, the Lord gave me a straight testimony to bear, and since that time the matter has been presented to me again.

At one time I seemed to be in a council meeting where these matters were being considered. One of authority stood in the midst of those assembled, and opened before them principles that should be followed in the work of God. The instruction given was that should such separation take place, it would not tend to advance the interests of the work among the various nationalities. It would not lead to the highest spiritual development. Walls would be built up that would have to be removed in the near future.

According to the light given me of God, separate organizations, instead of bringing about unity, will create discord. If our brethren will seek the Lord together in humility of mind, those who now think it necessary to organize separate German and Scandinavian conferences will see that the Lord desires them to work together as brethren.

Were those, who seek to disintegrate the work of God. to carry out their purpose, some would magnify themselves to do a work that should not be done. Such an arrangement would greatly retard the cause of God. If we are to carry on the work most successfully, the talents to be found among the English

and Americans should be united with the talents of those of every other nationality. And each nationality should labor earnestly for every other nationality. There is but one Lord: one faith. Our effort should be to answer Christ's prayer for His disciples, that they should be one.

'Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.' John 17:17-19.

'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one: as Thou, Father, are in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.' Verses 20,21.

It should be understood that perfect unity among the laborers is necessary to the successful accomplishment of the work of God. In order to preserve peace, all must seek wisdom from the great Teacher. Let all be careful how they introduce ambitious propositions that will create dissension.

We are to be subject one to another. No man, in himself, is a complete whole. Through submission of the mind and will to the Holy Spirit, we are ever to be learners of the great Teacher.

Study the second chapter of Acts. In the early church the Spirit of God wrought mightily through those who were harmoniously united. On the day of Pentecost they were all with one accord in one place.

We are to demonstrate to the world that men of every nationality are one in Christ Jesus. Then let us remove every barrier, and come into unity in the service of the Master. In the erection of national barriers, you present to the world a plan of human invention, that God can never indorse.

To those who would do this, the apostle Paul says, 'Ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal? . . . Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered: but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one; and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God; ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.' 1 Cor. 3:3-9...."

"I had the burden to speak of the different nationalities and the necessity of union and harmonizing in their efforts, that Italians, Germans, French, Swedes, and every tribe and nation have, not six paths, but only one model to copy, and this one mould to receive--Jesus Christ the perfect example" (Testimonies for the Church Regarding the Spirit of Unity, 04, 29-30, 31).

“This idea that French must stand French, and the Germans stand Germans, and thus the nationalities stand apart in their independence, is a device of the devil. It is the truth alone that saves the nationalities. The truth proves its power. It comes from God and it is His own Spirit in its agency which renders it effectual in the conversion and sanctification of those who hear and accept it. The sufficiency is not in the preacher, but in the mighty agency of the Holy Spirit, which gracious influence transforms the soul, bringing every thought into subjection to Jesus Christ.

Christ in men unites them on one grand platform, preparing for the uniting in one family in heaven. It is the truth that makes men one, and removes national prejudice. God forbid that any one of us will plan and devise to keep up separate interests. Nothing but the quick and powerful word of God, working in the heart of His delegated messengers to give the knowledge of the glory of Christ, can gain victorious results, which are essential for the blending of hearts and minds that they may be of the same judgement, speaking the same things” (Manuscript Releases Volume 15, 359).

### **Each Nationality to Help the Other Nationalities**

“I told them that they should be constantly guarded not to build up separate interests between the different nationalities. Some have pleaded that we must be very careful in our labor, for these people have peculiarities and the truth must be presented to them with the greatest care. There is much more made of this than there should be. We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The gospel of Christ is to reach all classes, all nations, all tongues and people. The influence of the gospel is to unite in one great brotherhood.

We have only one model to imitate, and that is Christ. Then we shall all be in perfect harmony; nationalities will blend in Jesus Christ, having the same mind, the same judgment, speaking the same things, and with one mouth glorifying God. This is the work the world’s Redeemer is to do for us. If we accept the truth as it is in Jesus, national prejudices and jealousies will be broken down, and the spirit of truth will blend hearts in one. We will love as brethren; we will esteem others better than ourselves; we will be kind and courteous, meek and lowly, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruit.

I warn my brethren, Keep your partition walls down. In all your efforts as God’s workmen, ‘preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus’ (Colossians 1:28). This can be done only by striving according to His workings which worketh in you mightily. God knows just how to meet the peculiarities of the different nationalities. Do not, my brethren, interpose yourselves between the work and God, for God knows better than you how to reach these men and women, and He will clothe His message to this people with that power which will reach their hearts and unite them with us in warning the world by giving the

trumpet a certain sound. Men are not infallible, and we are not to bend to men's fallibility and human judgment.

The third angel's message is infallible. It is to unite a people to do a special work, preparing them with perfection of character to unite in one great family in the mansions Christ has gone to prepare for those who love Him. And all the laborers are God's workmen to present infallible truth, to do the work of blending hearts in one. Never let your words or your efforts be directed to the end to disunite that which God would have united. You should influence France to work for the upbuilding of the cause in Switzerland. Do not encourage a one-sided interest, but all labor to cement together that they may have a molding influence on one another, that if any of the nationalities are encouraging peculiar ideas, that one may have a reformatory influence upon the other. Urge upon all to receive Christ's mold and imitate Christ's character. The apostle states, 'Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.' Christ in the German believer will recognize Christ in the French believer" (Manuscript Releases Volume 15, 361-362).

### **How to Work Through Differences**

"When differences arise among brethren as to the understanding of any point of truth, there is one Bible rule to follow. In the spirit of meekness and love for God and one another, let brethren come together, and after earnest prayer, with sincere desire to know God's will, study the Bible with the spirit of a little child, to see how closely they can draw together, and not sacrifice anything but their selfish dignity. They should regard themselves as in the presence of the whole universe of God, who are watching with intense interest as brother tries to see eye to eye with brother, to understand the words of Christ, that they may be doers of the word. When you recall the prayer of Christ, that his disciples may be one as he was one with the Father, can you not see how intently all heaven is beholding the spirit you manifest toward one another? Are those who claim to be saved by the righteousness of Christ, seeking with all their entrusted capabilities to answer the Saviour's prayer? Will they grieve the Holy Spirit of God by indulging their own unconsecrated feelings, struggling for the supremacy, and standing as far apart as possible?" (The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials 1008)

"Not until you feel that you could sacrifice your own self-dignity, and even lay down your life in order to save an erring brother, have you cast the beam out of your own eye so that you are prepared to help your brother. Then you can approach him and touch his heart. No one has ever been reclaimed from a wrong position by censure and reproach; but many have thus been driven from Christ and led to seal their hearts against conviction. A tender spirit, a gentle, winning deportment, may save the erring and hide a multitude of sins. The revelation of Christ in your own character will have a transforming power upon

all with whom you come in contact. Let Christ be daily made manifest in you, and He will reveal through you the creative energy of His word--a gentle, persuasive, yet mighty influence to re-create other souls in the beauty of the Lord our God" (Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings 128-129).

### **Two Good but Varying Methods Illustrated**

"The city of Athens was the metropolis of heathendom. Here Paul did not meet with an ignorant, credulous populace, as at Lystra, but with a people famous for their intelligence and culture. Everywhere statues of their gods and of the deified heroes of history and poetry met the eye, while magnificent architecture and paintings represented the national glory and the popular worship of heathen deities. The senses of the people were entranced by the beauty and splendor of art. On every hand sanctuaries and temples, involving untold expense, reared their massive forms. Victories of arms and deeds of celebrated men were commemorated by sculpture, shrines, and tablets. All these made Athens a vast gallery of art.

As Paul looked upon the beauty and grandeur surrounding him, and saw the city wholly given to idolatry, his spirit was stirred with jealousy for God, whom he saw dishonored on every side, and his heart was drawn out in pity for the people of Athens, who, notwithstanding their intellectual culture, were ignorant of the true God....

His principal work in Athens was to bear the tidings of salvation to those who had no intelligent conception of God and of His purpose in behalf of the fallen race. The apostle was soon to meet paganism in its most subtle, alluring form.....

Others who came in contact with him, soon saw that he had a store of knowledge even greater than their own. His intellectual power commanded the respect of the learned; while his earnest, logical reasoning and the power of his oratory held the attention of all in the audience. His hearers recognized the fact that he was no novice, but was able to meet all classes with convincing arguments in support of the doctrines he taught. Thus the apostle stood undaunted, meeting his opposers on their own ground, matching logic with logic, philosophy with philosophy, eloquence with eloquence....

In that hour of solemn responsibility, the apostle was calm and self-possessed. His heart was burdened with an important message, and the words that fell from his lips convinced his hearers that he was no idle babbling. 'Ye men of Athens,' he said, 'I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To the Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you.' With all their intelligence and general knowledge, they were ignorant of the God who created the universe. Yet there were some who were longing for greater light. They were reaching out toward the Infinite.

With hand outstretched toward the temple crowded with idols, Paul poured out the burden of his soul, and exposed the fallacies of the religion of the Athenians. The wisest of his hearers were astonished as they listened to his reasoning. He showed himself familiar with their works of art, their literature, and their religion. Pointing to their statuary and idols, he declared that God could not be likened to forms of man's devising. These graven images could not, in the faintest sense, represent the glory of Jehovah. He reminded them that these images had no life, but were controlled by human power, moving only when the hands of men moved them; and therefore those who worshiped them were in every way superior to that which they worshiped.

Paul drew the minds of his idolatrous hearers beyond the limits of their false religion to a true view of the Deity, whom they had styled the 'Unknown God.' This Being, whom he now declared unto them, was independent of man, needing nothing from human hands to add to His power and glory.

The people were carried away with admiration for Paul's earnest and logical presentation of the attributes of the true God--of His creative power and the existence of His overruling providence. With earnest and fervid eloquence the apostle declared, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." The heavens were not large enough to contain God, how much less were the temples made by human hands!

In that age of caste, when the rights of men were often unrecognized, Paul set forth the great truth of human brotherhood, declaring that God 'hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.' In the sight of God all are on an equality, and to the Creator every human being owes supreme allegiance. Then the apostle showed how, through all God's dealings with man, His purpose of grace and mercy runs like a thread of gold. He 'hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us.'

'And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.' In the ages of darkness that had preceded the advent of Christ, the divine Ruler had passed lightly over the idolatry of the heathen; but now, through His Son, He had sent men the light of truth; and He expected from all repentance unto salvation, not only from the poor and humble, but from the proud philosopher and the princes of the earth. 'Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.' As Paul spoke of the resurrection from the dead, 'some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.'

Thus closed the labors of the apostle at Athens, the center of heathen learning, for the Athenians, clinging persistently to their idolatry, turned from the light of the true religion. When a people are wholly satisfied with their own attainments, little more need be expected of them. Though boasting of learning and refinement, the Athenians were constantly becoming more corrupt and more content with the vague mysteries of idolatry.

Among those who listened to the words of Paul were some to whose minds the truths presented brought conviction, but they would not humble themselves to acknowledge God and to accept the plan of salvation. No eloquence of words, no force of argument, can convert the sinner. The power of God alone can apply the truth to the heart. He who persistently turns from this power cannot be reached. The Greeks sought after wisdom, yet the message of the cross was to them foolishness because they valued their own wisdom more highly than the wisdom that comes from above.

In their pride of intellect and human wisdom may be found the reason why the gospel message met with comparatively little success among the Athenians. The worldly-wise men who come to Christ as poor lost sinners, will become wise unto salvation; but those who come as distinguished men, extolling their own wisdom, will fail of receiving the light and knowledge that He alone can give.

Thus Paul met the paganism of his day. His labors in Athens were not wholly in vain. Dionysius, one of the most prominent citizens, and some others, accepted the gospel message and united themselves fully with the believers.

Inspiration has given us this glance into the life of the Athenians, who, with all their knowledge, refinement, and art, were yet sunken in vice, that it might be seen how God, through His servant, rebuked idolatry and the sins of a proud, self-sufficient people. The words of the apostle, and the description of his attitude and surroundings, as traced by the pen of inspiration, were to be handed down to all coming generations, bearing witness of his unshaken confidence, his courage in loneliness and adversity, and the victory he gained for Christianity in the very heart of paganism.

Paul's words contain a treasure of knowledge for the church. He was in a position where he might easily have said that which would have irritated his proud listeners and brought himself into difficulty. Had his oration been a direct attack upon their gods and the great men of the city, he would have been in danger of meeting the fate of Socrates. But with a tact born of divine love, he carefully drew their minds away from heathen deities, by revealing to them the true God, who was to them unknown.

Today the truths of Scripture are to be brought before the great men of the world in order that they may choose between obedience to God's law and allegiance to the prince of evil. God sets everlasting truth before them--truth that will make them wise unto salvation, but He does not force them to accept

it. If they turn from it, He leaves them to themselves, to be filled with the fruit of their own doings.

“The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.” “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.’ 1 Corinthians 1:18, 19, 27, 28. Many of the greatest scholars and statesmen, the world’s most eminent men, will in these last days turn from the light because the world by wisdom knows not God. Yet God's servants are to improve every opportunity to communicate the truth to these men. Some will acknowledge their ignorance of the things of God and will take their place as humble learners at the feet of Jesus, the Master Teacher” (Acts of the Apostles 233–241).

“In preaching the gospel in Corinth, the apostle followed a course different from that which had marked his labors at Athens. While in the latter place, he had sought to adapt his style to the character of his audience; he had met logic with logic, science with science, philosophy with philosophy. As he thought of the time thus spent, and realized that his teaching in Athens had been productive of but little fruit, he decided to follow another plan of labor in Corinth in his efforts to arrest the attention of the careless and the indifferent. He determined to avoid elaborate arguments and discussions, and ‘not to know anything’ among the Corinthians ‘save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.’ He would preach to them ‘not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.’ 1 Corinthians 2:2, 4” (Acts of the Apostles 244).

“Paul well knew how his message would be regarded by both the Jews and the Greeks of Corinth. ‘We preach Christ crucified,’ he admitted, ‘unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.’ 1 Corinthians 1:23. Among his Jewish hearers there were many who would be angered by the message he was about to proclaim. In the estimation of the Greeks his words would be absurd folly. He would be looked upon as weak-minded for attempting to show how the cross could have any connection with the elevation of the race or the salvation of mankind.

But to Paul the cross was the one object of supreme interest. Ever since he had been arrested in his career of persecution against the followers of the crucified Nazarene he had never ceased to glory in the cross. At that time there had been given him a revelation of the infinite love of God, as revealed in the death of Christ; and a marvelous transformation had been wrought in his life, bringing all his plans and purposes into harmony with heaven. From that hour

he had been a new man in Christ. He knew by personal experience that when a sinner once beholds the love of the Father, as seen in the sacrifice of His Son, and yields to the divine influence, a change of heart takes place, and henceforth Christ is all and in all” (Acts of the Apostles 245).

“Paul and his companions preached Christ as the Saviour of the fallen race. Avoiding complicated, far-fetched reasoning, the messengers of the cross dwelt upon the attributes of the Creator of the world, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Their hearts aglow with the love of God and of His Son, they appealed to the heathen to behold the infinite sacrifice made in man's behalf. They knew that if those who had long been groping in the darkness of heathenism could but see the light streaming from Calvary's cross, they would be drawn to the Redeemer. ‘I, if I be lifted up,’ the Saviour had declared, ‘will draw all men unto Me.’ John 12:32” (Acts of the Apostles 248).

“Paul was an eloquent speaker. Before his conversion he had often sought to impress his hearers by flights of oratory. But now he set all this aside. Instead of indulging in poetic descriptions and fanciful representations, which might please the senses and feed the imagination, but which would not touch the daily experience, Paul sought by the use of simple language to bring home to the heart the truths that are of vital importance. Fanciful representations of truth may cause an ecstasy of feeling, but all too often truths presented in this way do not supply the food necessary to strengthen and fortify the believer for the battles of life. The immediate needs, the present trials, of struggling souls--these must be met with sound, practical instruction in the fundamental principles of Christianity.

Paul's efforts in Corinth were not without fruit. Many turned from the worship of idols to serve the living God, and a large church was enrolled under the banner of Christ. Some were rescued from among the most dissipated of the Gentiles and became monuments of the mercy of God and the efficacy of the blood of Christ to cleanse from sin” (Acts of the Apostles 251-252).

“During the year and a half that Paul had spent in Corinth, he had purposely presented the gospel in its simplicity. ‘Not with excellency of speech or of wisdom” had he come to the Corinthians; but with fear and trembling, and ‘in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,’ had he declared ‘the testimony of God,’ that their ‘faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.’ 1 Corinthians 2:1, 4, 5” (Acts of the Apostles 270).

### **Christmas as an Example of Using Cultural Practices**

“As the twenty-fifth of December is observed to commemorate the birth of Christ, as the children have been instructed by precept and example that this was indeed a day of gladness and rejoicing, you will find it a difficult matter to

pass over this period without giving it some attention. It can be made to serve a very good purpose.

The youth should be treated very carefully. They should not be left on Christmas to find their own amusement in vanity and pleasure-seeking, in amusements which will be detrimental to their spirituality. Parents can control this matter by turning the minds and the offerings of their children to God and His cause and the salvation of souls.

The desire for amusement, instead of being quenched and arbitrarily ruled down, should be controlled and directed by painstaking effort upon the part of the parents. Their desire to make gifts may be turned into pure and holy channels, and made to result in good to our fellow men by supplying the treasury in the great, grand work for which Christ came into our world. Self-denial and self-sacrifice marked His course of action. Let it mark ours who profess to love Jesus; because in Him is centered our hope of eternal life" (Adventist Home 478).

"In no case should mere amusement be the object of these gatherings. While there may be some who will turn these occasions into seasons of careless levity, and whose minds will not receive the divine impress, to other minds and characters these seasons will be highly beneficial. I am fully satisfied that innocent substitutes can be devised for many gatherings that demoralize" (Adventist Home 482).

"Christmas is coming. May you all have wisdom to make it a precious season. Let the older church members unite, heart and soul, with their children in their innocent amusement and recreation, in devising ways and means to show true respect to Jesus by bringing to Him gifts and offerings. Let everyone remember the claims of God. His cause cannot go forward without your aid. Let the gifts you have usually bestowed upon one another be placed in the Lord's treasury. . . . In every church let your smaller offerings be placed upon your Christmas tree. Let the precious emblem 'evergreen' suggest the holy work of God and His beneficence to us; and the loving heart-work will be to save other souls who are in darkness. Let your works be in accordance with your faith" (Review and Herald, December 9, 1884, par. 9).

"I see no objection to placing even in our churches a Christmas or New Year tree bearing fruit in gifts and offerings for the cause of God. We may thus take advantage of the occasion to turn the customary gifts of the season into the right channel. And such a holiday celebration is a useful lesson to our children, teaching them to bestow their gifts in a manner to honor their Redeemer. But when we devote our means and labor to feasting ourselves, we fail to render to God that honor which is his due.

I have resolved from this time to make Christ first and last and best in everything. I will not sanction feasts made to celebrate birthday or marriage

anniversaries, but will bend all my energies to lift up Jesus among the people. I will seek to impress upon the minds of my brethren and sisters the great necessity of preparation of heart, by confession and humiliation, to be accepted of God and acknowledged as his dear children. My heart has ached as I have seen men honored, while Jesus was neglected and almost forgotten,—liberal gifts for earthly friends, but poor and meager offerings for him to whom we owe our all” (Signs of the Times, January 4, 1883 par. 7–8)

**Use Nature as the Best Method**

“The most effective way to teach the heathen who know not God is through His works. In this way, far more readily than by any other method, they can be made to realize the difference between their idols, the works of their own hands, and the true God, the Maker of heaven and earth. . . . There is a simplicity and purity in these lessons direct from nature that makes of the highest value to others besides the heathen. The children and youth, all classes of students, need the lessons to be derived from this source. In itself the beauty of nature leads the soul away from sin and worldly attractions, and toward purity, peace, and God” (Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students 186).