

*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

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

Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)

EXEGESIS OF REVELATION

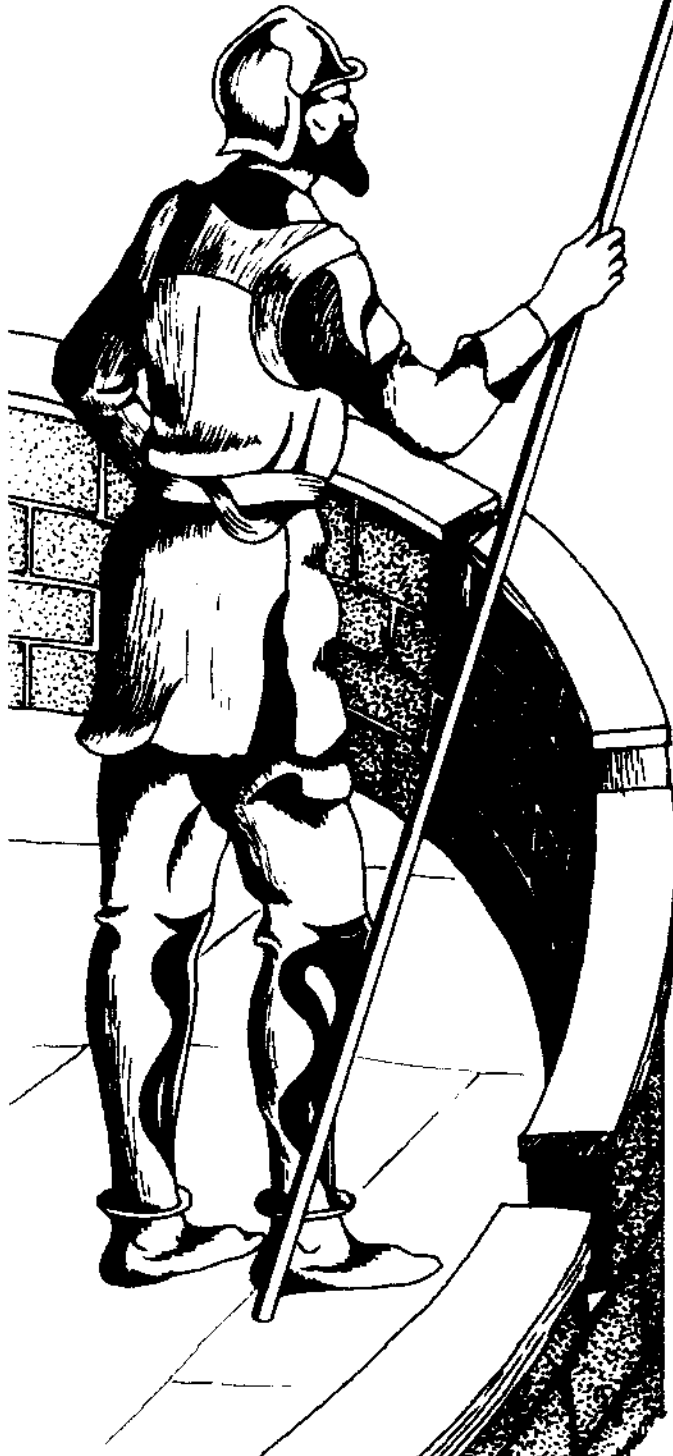
THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

(Part 4)

In the pronouncement of the Third Angel a warning was given that if anyone worshiped the beast or his image, that one "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God." (14:9-10) In the vision beginning with Chapter 15, this wrath is described as being the Seven Last Plagues. (v. 1) The format for the giving of this vision is the same as was the format of Revelation 12 - a great wonder is seen in heaven - the screen upon which the divine revelation is portrayed. (The Greek word for "wonder" in Rev. 12:1, and "sign" in Rev. 15:1 is the same)

These plagues are defined as the seven last plagues. The first reference to "plagues" in Revelation is in connection with the sixth trumpet. (9:20) This would indicate that the fulfillment of the "trumpets" in the time sequence of the book of Revelation precedes the final wrath of God, and therefore, is not a parallel prophecy. The second reference to "plagues" is noted in reference to the Two Witnesses which are given authority "to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will." (11:6) It is interesting to note that in the Greek text, the word "wound" is used to translate the "plague" received by one of the heads of the beast of Revelation 13. In verses 3 and 12, the phrase is "plague of death," while in verse 14, it is "the plague of the sword." These previous plagues as described under the sixth trumpet, and the wound received by the beast are ministered by earthly forces, while the seven last are directly ordered by God, and placed under seven angels who come from the Throne of God with their mandate. (15:5-6)

Verses 2 - 4 are interpolated like Rev. 16:15, and serve as an interlude as does Rev. 19:1-4. In each of these interludes, we are taken back to the original vision given to John when "a door was opened in heaven" and John was instructed by "the first voice" to "Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." (4:1) He sees a throne "set in heaven." upon which sat the Eternal Majesty. Around the throne sat 24 elders, while before the throne were "seven tounches of fire burning" declared to be "the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth,"



representing the omnipotence (horns) and omnipresence (eyes) of the Lamb. (4:5; 5:6; Hab. 3:4; Zech. 4:10) Also before the throne, there is "a sea of glass like unto crystal." (4:6) In the midst of the throne are four living creatures, and "a Lamb as it had been slain." (4:6; 5:6)

The interlude of Revelation 15:2-4 returns to the setting of the vision of the open door with its sea of glass; but here it is "mingled with fire" rather than merely being "clear as crystal." (Compare 4:6 with 15:2) Could the "fire" be symbolic of the means by which the ones standing on the sea of glass were victorious over the beast and his image and purified so as to be fitted to be in the presence of God? (See Mal. 3:2-3; Luke 3:16)

There are some parallels between this vision and the vision of Rev. 14:1-5, as well as some distinct differences. Here it is stated that those who stand on the sea of glass are victors "over the beast and over his image," while such a conclusion concerning the 144,000 on Mount Zion can only be inferred. The 144,000 sing an unique song, while those standing on the sea of glass sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, the words of which are given.

Another question arises, how far back in time must we go to find victors over the beast? Is the "beast" only that phase of the beast which had a wound by the sword and did live? That is the emphasis used in previous identification of the beast in connection with "his image"? (13:12, 14) However, the beast has "seven heads" which, depending on the interpretation given to the seven heads, could reach back to Egypt the first power to "persecute" the corporate people of God. Of interest in this connection, "the song of Moses" is introduced. All of these factors must be programmed into any exegetical study of these verses.

After recording this interlude, John's attention is returned to the "seven angels having the seven last plagues." He sees the open temple - "the tabernacle of the testimony" - from which these angels are to come. This is none other than the Most Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary wherein is the ark of the covenant with the Law of God. John has seen this tabernacle before as the vision of the trumpets was concluded. (11:19) Another parallel between these two revelations is that God in Chapter 11 is declared to have taken His "great power, and has reigned," while in Chapter 15, "the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His great power." This assumption on the part of God

brings forth His wrath in judgment, and no "man" is able to "enter the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled." (15:8) Intercession has ceased, for there is but "One mediator between God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. 2:5)

Next John hears a voice described as "a great voice out of the temple." (16:1) It is a mandate from the throne. (See 16:17) To the seven angels, the command is given - "Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth." Little have we realized what the mercy of God has been, and what the wrath of God against sin is. We have tried to reconcile the God of the Old Testament with how we perceive the God of the New Testament. In our finite perceptions we have not realized the hatred God has toward sin, nor the significance of the separation that took place when on the cross, Christ became verily sin for us, nor the full significance of the fact that "in the midst of the throne" has "stood a Lamb as it had been slain." (5:6) But when that Lamb steps aside and when no longer His blood pleads for the sinful race, and the wrath of God unmixed falls upon the unsheltered heads of the devotees of the beast and his image, then will all know that the Eternal God is the same God as is revealed in both the Old and New Testaments.

In noting the plagues, it becomes obvious that no plague falls without a reason. "The curse causeless shall not come." (Prov. 26:2) The warning was given to the final generation that to "worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark" meant only one thing, the unmixed wrath of God. (14:9-10) To those who received this mark, the first angel directs his plague. "A foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image." (16:2, NKJV) If the symbols as given in these chapters are to be consistently interpreted, the image was created and worshiped by those "who dwell on the earth" meaning the place from whence the second beast arose. (13:11-12)

The second plague is more difficult of interpretation than would first appear. (16:3) Is it the literal oceans that are here meant, or is "the sea" to be understood as the place where arose the first beast? (12:12; 13:1) It is singular in number. If "the sea" is to be symbolically understood, what does the clause - "every living soul died in the sea" - mean? The explanation given by "the angel of the waters" as to why this plague is poured out states "they have shed the blood of saints and prophets." Who are the

"they"? The only plural antecedent would be the collective, "sea," "rivers and fountains of waters."

The third plague is the one plague of the seven which is repeated. (16:4) It is directed against the sources of the sea - "rivers and fountains of waters." However, it does not state that "every living soul" in the rivers and fountains" dies; but the pronouncement of the angel of the waters covers both plagues. The first beast makes "war with the saints." (13:7) It could be assumed that blood was spilt. The "image to the beast" issues a death decree but no where is it indicated it was carried out. (13:15) The intent is clear, there would be bloodshed. However, similar language as used by the angel of the waters, "blood of saints and prophets," is used to describe the "woman" of Revelation 17. (See verse 6) Can it be that the same principle enunciated by Jesus for the generation which crucified Him, will apply to the generation which issues the "death decree" against "the remnant" of the woman's seed? (See Matt. 23:34-36)

Since the death decree is issued not by the beast that came up out of the "sea," but rather by "his image," and since the "beast" did shed much innocent blood during the Dark Ages, does the doubling of the plague of blood to drink, give an indication as to when the "death decree" will be issued? If this indication is correct, the "decree" comes **after** the close of human probation. Further, from this point on in the detailing of the plagues, the wording used by John becomes more reflective of that which is to be revealed than with that which had been previously revealed. Confirming this assumption, is the fact that one of the seven angels of the seven last plagues, becomes John's instructor following the vision of the plagues. (See 17:1; 21:9)

The fourth angel poured out his vial "upon the sun." (16:8) The sun has been the object of worship from ancient times in most if not all pagan religions. The Bible recognizes such worship as a denial of the God of heaven. Job declared that "if I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge; for I should have denied the God that is above." (Job 31:26-28) Transferred into professed Christian religions through Rome are numerous elements of pagan sun worship. The birthday of the sun-god Mithra, December 25, is now the celebrated birthday of Jesus. Easter sunrise services are

but echoing the pagan ritual of greeting the sunrise with an act of worship. Then weekly, the Christian world, for the most part, worships on the Day of the Sun. Significant, then is the inclusion in the "everlasting gospel" (14:6) of the call to "worship Him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (v. 7) God's designated day of worship as the Creator is the Sabbath. (Ex. 20:8-11) The "beast's" designated day is the Day of the Sun.

Keenan in his catechism asks the question, "Have you any other way of proving that the [Roman] Church has power to institute festivals of precept?" Then he answers - "Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her; — she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, for the observance of the Saturday, the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority." (Doctrinal Catechism, p. 174)

The fifth angel pours out his vial "upon the seat of the beast." (16:10) If the "sea" in the second plague does represent the area from which the "beast" arose, and as a result of the plague, "every living soul died in the sea," this "seat" could not be Rome, its original seat. The prophecy in Daniel does cast some light on this problem. There a power "shall plant the tabernacle of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain" (Dan. 11:45) which is Jerusalem. This fact is further emphasized in the sixth plague.

Resultant from the plague, "the (beast's) kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain." This is an interesting use of words, "darkness" associated with the "tongue." The victorious 144,000 do not have in their mouth "a deceitful tongue." (Zeph. 3:13; Rev. 14:5) Spiritual darkness comes from deception and the corruption of the Word, for the entrance of the Word giveth light. (Ps. 119:130) This plague strikes the seat of the beast from whence came spiritual "darkness" during probationary time. Now the medium - the tongue - by which that darkness was conveyed is plagued with pain.

The next plague - the sixth - is poured upon "the great river Euphrates." (16:12) What is this plague? It is something which dries up the waters of the river, and the drying is for a purpose - "that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared." Each plague, except for the third, is directed toward what man did in probationary time. For example, the first plague came upon those "which had the mark of the

beast and upon them which worshipped his image" - activity during probationary time. The description of this activity which brings the sixth plague follows in verses 13-14, 16, verse 15 being parenthetical.

To understand the import of what took place during the last remnant of time, one must understand the imagery of the sixth plague - the river Euphrates, and its waters. Significantly, one of the angels of the seven last plagues tells John - "Come hither, I will shew thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters." (17:1) Yet, when John is shown the judgment on this woman, he sees her sitting upon a scarlet colored beast. (17:3) Further, he is told that "the waters which thou sawest, **where the whore sitteth**, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." (17:15) The only vision, previous to the explanation of the "whore" where John could have seen her on "many waters", is during the vision of the seven last plagues. This whore is "Mystery Babylon the Great" (17:5) the great antitype of ancient Babylon which sat on the River Euphrates.

Even as literal Babylon was situated on the Euphrates, so where this antitypical Babylon will be situated is also revealed. In the explanation as to why this plague is given, we are informed that the "spirits of devils" gather the leadership of "the whole world" to a place called in the Hebrew tongue, "Harmagedon." (16:16) The Hebrew word, Har-mo'ed, means the Mount of the Congregation or Jerusalem. (See Isa. 14:13; Ps. 48:2) There is also another connection of thought in regard to Babylon and Jerusalem. This woman whom John saw on the river Euphrates is called "that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth." (17:18) This "great city" is described elsewhere as the city "which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." (11:8)

The conclave at the Mount of the Congregation is religious in nature, motivated by the spirits of devils emanating from the dragon, beast, and false prophet. (16:13) They gather together for "the war (Gr. polemos) of the great day of God Almighty." (16:14) In the explanation given concerning the "whore" it states that these powers "make war with the Lamb." (17:14)

The plague itself is something which dries up the river, in other words, the support of the people and multitudes. What could cause those who once supported the woman to turn upon her? (17:16) The seventh plague involves a great earthquake and hail. (16:18, 21) Another

scripture indicates that, just prior to the earthquake and hail, the temple of God is opened in heaven and "there was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant" which contains the Law of God. (11:19) Paul writes, "The Law worketh wrath." (Rom. 4:15) Coming from the darkness of the fifth plague, what greater revelation could arrest the attention of the inhabitants of the earth than the meaning of the Law of God in all of its reality? Sensing their deception, and the eternal loss involved, where would the rage of those who have lost all in the battle of life be vented?

The purpose of this plague is to prepare the way for "the kings of the east." (16:12) Again the "type" needs to be invoked. Cyrus, who overthrew Babylon came from the "east" and with him were other kings. (Dan. 5:31) Cyrus is pictured in prophecy as the Liberator of the captive people of God. (Isa. 44:28-45:4) When Christ comes the second time, He comes as "King of kings and Lord of lords" to set the captives free. (Rev. 19:11-16; Phil. 3:20-21)

When the seventh angel pours out his vial into the air, "a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the Throne" declares - "It is done." A series of events involving the earth are pictured to John as following this declaration from the Throne. A great earthquake, Babylon divided into three parts, the "cities of the nations" fall, "every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." A judgment call must again be made. Are these literal happenings, or is symbolic prophetic language still being used? It is obvious from context that "Babylon" is a symbolic term and is applied to the "harlot." (17:18). Then are the "cities of the nations" the national units of the great international city? Does the symbolism stop here, and the "islands" and "mountains" are to be understood literally?

The seventh plague itself is described as hail, every stone being "about the weight of a talent." (16:21) It is said to be "exceeding great." This can be understood only as literal language. While men "blasphemed God," those who have been looking at the transgression of earth's inhabitants from heaven's perspective declare, "Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments." (16:7)

The first section of the book of Revelation, closes with similar language as is found in this 16th Chapter. Under the seventh angel of the Trumpets, and the Third Woe are described events

THE POPE SPEAKS -3-

In the two previous issues of W^WN we called attention to the Papal pronouncements in two recent Encyclicals, Tertio Millennio Adveniente, devoted to the Papal plans in preparation for the coming Third Millennium, and Centesimus Annus, a centennial review and amplification of Leo XIII's encyclical, Rerum Novarum, (New Things) issued in 1891. We also indicated that certain "nagging questions" remain as we noted the pronouncements made by Pope John Paul II. These we wish to explore further in this article.

In the "Prologue" to the book, A New Worldly Order, that the Roman Catholic oriented Ethics and Policy Center released in 1991, commenting on Centesimus Annus, the play is made on the words, "new things," the translation of the Latin, Rerum Novarum. Weigel, the editor and president of the Center, wrote:

"Written to honor the centenary of Rerum Novarum, the 1891 letter of Pope Leo XIII that began the papal tradition of modern Catholic social teaching, Centesimus Annus ('The Hundredth Year') is both a look back at the res novae, the 'new things' that seized the attention of Leo XIII, and a look ahead at what might be called the 'new new things,' the new facts of public life at the end of the twentieth century and the turn of the third Christian millennium. Like other papal documents, Centesimus Annus reaffirms the classic themes of Catholic social thought." (p. 1)

Herein is the question. What is reaffirmed? Weigel continues by emphasizing that this papal encyclical "is not, however, a matter of Catholic inside baseball. The encyclical addresses itself to 'all men and women of good will.'" (ibid.) It is considered indeed to be "a new worldly order." Does this then mean that the coming "new worldwide order" is as Malachi Martin stated was the Pope's "most specific" insistence "that men have no reliable hope of creating a viable geopolitical system unless it is on the basis of Roman Catholic Christianity"? (Keys of This Blood, p. 492) If so what form will it take, for Martin states that the pope's "geopolitics is strictly religious... and specifically Christian from a Roman Catholic perspective." (ibid.)

The book edited by Weigel, A New Worldly Order, gives a condensation of the Papal encyclical, Centesimus Annus. In this encyclical, the Pope declares:

"The 'new evangelization' which the modern world urgently needs must include a **proclamation of the [Roman Catholic] Church's social doctrine**. This doctrine indicates the right way to respond to the great challenges of today when ideologies are being increasingly discredited. We repeat that there can be **no genuine solution of the 'social question' apart from the Gospel**. In the Gospel we find the context for proper moral perspective on the 'new things.'" (p. 32, emphasis his)

Two questions immediately arise: 1) What "Gospel"? and 2) What is the "social doctrine" of the Roman Catholic Church? It would appear from context that the "social doctrine" and "the Gospel" as perceived by the Pope as one and the same thing. Pope Leo XIII's intent was to bring peace in "**the conflict between capital and labor**." (his emphasis) He recognized "the dignity of the worker" and therefore the "dignity of work." Other, or corollary rights is "the right to establish professional associations" commonly called "trade unions" assuring a "just wage."

Now note carefully what the pope then said, and what he meant by what he said:

"Leo XIII adds another right, namely the right to discharge freely one's religious duties. The general opinion, even in his day, was that such questions pertained exclusively to an individual's private life. He affirms the need for Sunday rest so that people may offer the worship they owe to Almighty God. We see in this statement a springboard for the principle of the right to religious freedom, which was to become the subject of many solemn International Declarations as well as of the Second Vatican Council's Declaration and of my own repeated teaching." (p. 33)

The "opinion" in Leo's day was the right to worship, or not to worship, as dictated by the individual's own conscience without the intervention of the State. Against this concept of religious liberty Leo XIII inveighed. This present Pope is invoking the term, "religious freedom" to mean a state ordered freedom from the demand of the work place, not "freedom of conscience." Coupled with this freedom from the work place is to be a provision for a specific day of rest so as to worship "Almighty God." John Paul indicated that Leo XIII's "Encyclical points to the error of an understanding of freedom that detaches it from obedience to the truth." (p. 37) But again, what "truth"? This brings us back to the same nagging question, Is the "truth" to which the Pope refers, the truth

of the Word of God, or is it "the implementation of the message of Christ's revelation announced by the papacy and the Roman Catholic Church?" (Keys of This Blood, p. 74)

John Paul II stated that Leo XIII's Rerum Novarum "criticizes two social and economic systems, socialism and liberalism." (A New Worldly Order, p. 33)

In 1939, The National Catholic Welfare Conference in Washington D.C. published a book translated out of the French, The Liberal Illusion by Louis Veillot. It stated:

"When the time comes and men realize that the social edifice must be rebuilt according to eternal standards, be it tomorrow, or be it centuries from now, the Catholics will arrange things to suit said standards. ... They will make obligatory the religious observance of Sunday on behalf of the whole of society and for its own good, revoking the permit for free-thinkers and Jews to celebrate, 'incognito,' Monday or Saturday on their own account. Those whom this may annoy, will have to put up with this annoyance. Respect will not be refused to the Creator nor repose to the creature simply for the sake of humoring certain maniacs, whose phrenetic condition causes them stupidly and insolently to block the will of the whole people. ... In a word, Catholic society will be Catholic, and the dissenters whom it will tolerate will know its charity, but will not be allowed to disrupt its unity." (pp. 63, 64)

The bottom line is simply that the term, "religious freedom," as used by the Pope in defining his "new worldly order" is not to be confused with "religious liberty" as guaranteed in the Bill of Rights of the American Constitution.

This is further affirmed in a recent article in The Catholic World Report. Pope Leo XIII not only issued the Encyclical, Rerum Novarum in 1891, but in 1899, he sent to Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore, an Apostolic Letter, Testum Benevolentiae, condemning Americanism. Russell Shaw, director of public information for the Knights of Columbus, wrote an "Essay" on "Americanism: Then and Now" in the May, 1995 issue of The Report. (pp. 50-54) That there be no question as to the intent of the Essay, two cartoons from Harpers Weekly, February 19, 1870, were reprinted with this article showing the then attitude toward separation of Church and State. One cartoon showed Ms. Liberty tearing apart a cloth reading "Church" & "State," with the crowned heads and leaders of Europe

looking on with approval. The second cartoon, set in the United States shows Ms. Liberty chained to a box marked, "Fradulent Votes" with an opulent priest holding a bag captioned, "Public School Money." In the center of the cartoon is a crone mending a cloth marked, "Church, State," under the blessing of Pope Pius X.

The last line of the Essay reads - "If the Catholic Church in the United States means to survive, Americanism must finally - nearly a century after Testem Benevolentiae undertook to do the job - be laid to rest. What comes next?" (p. 54) Review in Facts of Faith what Leo XIII had to say about the American Way, and the Bill of Rights of the American Constitution. See pages 243-272.

What is interesting as one checks the on-going drama of the Catholic objective for the whole world as well as for America, is the change from a specific agenda for a mandatory observance of Sunday under the guise of "religious freedom" in John Paul II's centennial Encyclical on Rerum Novarum in 1991, and the generalization as found in the Encyclical in 1994 detailing the preparation for a Year of Jubilee in the year 2000. (See WWN, 6(95), p. 5) A possible answer for this down-play can be found in a series of events which began to unfold in 1991.

(To be continued)

LET'S TALK IT OVER

In the course of our morning devotional readings in May, we read the article in the Review & Herald, January 8, 1886, captioned, "Rejection of Light." Certain statements found in this essay need to be reviewed and serious consideration given to their import.

Contrasting that time in 1886 with previous generations, this comment is made:

"We are not living in the age in which our fathers lived. God gave them treasures of wisdom, which, through the manifestation of His Spirit, and through the testimony and example of His children from generation to generation, have come down the line to our time."

How true as applied to our time. 1996, just before us, is not 1886. Over one hundred years separate us, and much has occurred in this century - more than in any other previous

century of time. It must also be perceived that we have advanced, or should have advanced in our understanding of truth. Further, "We have all the light which they [previous generations] had, and the additional light is continually shining, and will shine more and more unto the perfect day."

Here are four categories relating to truth - light from God - which must be kept in balance: 1) The truth from previous generations of time; 2) Truth committed in sacred trust to the Church in 1844 and in 1888; 3) "The additional light" that has been "continually shining" since then; and 4) The light that will continue to shine to the end.

Truth is eternal as it finds its source in Jesus Christ who is the Truth. There is no variance in that truth from generation to generation. In God's plan, however, there is a continual unfolding of that truth, not only in the individual experience, but from generation to generation. There is also a human factor - the perception of truth, which necessitates a review of truth from generation to generation.

Do we discard the light of the previous generation because the human element was involved? Some today would do this. This is evidenced in the publication - Adventism for a New Generation. Or do we take note of what the human element actually introduced, and rectify their perceptions by the Word of God? Another approach is also being advocated. Some say that they hold to "historic" Adventism. What does that mean? Does it mean that we accept without review from the Scriptures, all that the previous generation taught and proclaimed including the introduction of the human perceptions of that truth?

One area of truth that is particularly plagued with human innovations is the understanding of Bible Prophecy. The speculative interpretations of Bible prophecy are causing sincere seekers of truth to back away from anything and everything which proclaims itself as "new light," yet light is to be "continually shining." There is in the prophetic Word, time prophecies, such as the 1260 days and the 2300 days of Daniel. These times have been fulfilled. Jesus gave another criterion on fulfillment. He stated - "I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe." (John 14:29) In other words, events become the key for understanding the prophecies. We need to know what the prophetic word says, and then "watch" (not speculate), another key word of Jesus. (Luke 21:36; Mark 13:37)

One further factor must be understood. There are several schemata of prophetic interpretations in use today, 1) The Allegorical, 2) Preteristic, and 3) The Futuristic. The latter two were invented by Jesuits to counteract the Reformation which used the historicist methodology which holds that history is but the response to the voice of prophecy. Today most, if not all, Evangelical interpreters follow the Jesuitical Futuristic method, as well as a growing number of voices in the Community of Adventism.

The counsel in the article we read for morning devotions is apropos - "Truth is progressive; and those who are preparing for the last great day will go forward in accordance with the accumulated light which shines upon them from the prophecies and from the lessons of Christ and His apostles."

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when God takes unto Himself, His great power and reigns. (11:15-19) These must be considered as parallel with the time of the seven last plagues.

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"Watchman, What of the Night?" is published monthly by the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi, Inc., P. O. Box 69, Ozone, AR 72854, USA.

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