

# The Endtime Sign Of Worldwide Evangelization

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## Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Forum:

The last newsletter was devoted exclusively to the study of the Biblical view of the human soul, in accordance with the theme of the Sabbath school lesson. The justification for departing from my customary practice of posting an essay dealing with ENDTIME ISSUES is the simple fact that the belief in the immortality of the soul is without doubt one of the greatest deception of our times and thus, a most relevant ENDTIME ISSUE.

The interest for the subject of the make up of human nature is evident. Many of you have requested the two chapters of my book IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION? dealing with the Old and New Testaments view of human nature. I would like to thank in a special way those of you who have offered the book at 50% discount to members of your Sabbath School classes. Feel free to contact me if your Sabbath School class has not yet receive a supply. We have just reprinted this timely book and we have an ample supply on hand.

It is heart warming for me to receive every week letters from Christians of all persuasions, expressing appreciation for the way the book has help them to see the deception of conscious life after death. I firmly believe that there is an urgent need to unmask such a deception that has fostered a host of heresies that are plaguing today Catholic and Protestant churches.

In this context let me share with you an encouraging experience I had last night. At 10:00 p. m. EST, I received a call from Pastor Allen Stanfield, a Southern Baptist minister from Riverside, California. He attended the Sabbath Seminar I presented on February 12-13 at the La Sierra University SDA Church. Someone introduced Pastor Stanfield to me and I gave him a complimentary copy of my latest book THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE.

Last night Pastor Stanfield called me to inform me that he and his whole congregation have accepted the principle and practice of seventh-day Sabbathkeeping after two and half months of diligent study. I was not aware that he had ordered a case of THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE which he passed out to his church members. He expressed his gratitude for the way the book has helped the members of his congregation to accept the validity and value of the Sabbath. He promised to write out his testimony so that I can share it more fully in my itinerant ministry.

When I alerted Pastor Stanfield that recently I received a letter from a Baptist minister in Montana who is also using my books to bring his congregation to the acceptance of the Sabbath, he immediately asked me for the name, address, and phone number of that pastor. He wants to share with him the providential way the Lord brought him and his congregation to accept the Biblical Sabbath. I was glad to supply him the information. Let us remember these Baptist ministers in our prayers.

This newsletter contains two main items. The first is a brief outline on this week Sabbath School Lesson titled "The Origin of Sin" (April 24-30). The outline is taken from the syllabus which I use to teach my class of DOCTRINES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH I. The outline is on upper case letters because I project it on the screen with overhead transparencies. This outline is rather simple, yet it may provide some new concepts helpful especially to those of you who teach the lesson. You will find the outline at the end of this newsletter.

The second item is a Bible study on the endtime sign of worldwide evangelization given by Jesus in Matthew 24:14. This is an important sign which, however, is generally ignored because it does not provide a clear basis for sensational prognostications. Yet in the Olivet Discourse, the proclamation of the Gospel to "all nations" is the only sign which is clearly linked to the End: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nation; and THEN the end will come" (Matt 24:14; par. Mark 13:10).

It is noteworthy that with regard to the manifestation of antichrists and wars (Matt 24:4-6), it is said: "but the end is not yet" (v. 6). Similarly, with regard to the occurrence of conflicts among nations, famines, and earthquakes, it is said: "all this is but the beginning of the sufferings" (v. 8). But concerning the sign of worldwide Gospel proclamation, it is clearly stated: "and then the end will come" (Matt 24:14).<sup>2</sup> What this means is that of all the given signs, the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world is the only sign connected temporally to the End.

The various signs of turmoil, apostasy, and tribulation are given in the Olivet Discourse as the context of the Gospel proclamation. In other words, by means of these various signs, Jesus is characterizing some of the unfavorable conditions that will accompany the mission of evangelizing the whole world. The latter, however, is given by Christ as the sign that will usher in His Return. Being, then, the outstanding Advent sign, it deserves priority in this study.

### **Evangelization in the Old Testament**

The Old Testament prophets already anticipate the proclamation of salvation to all the nations. In Isaiah 45:22, God says: "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! And also: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (Is 56:7). The same prophet predicted that God would send His messianic Servant "as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Is 49:6; cf. 42:6; 40:5; 45:22).

Paul says the fulfillment of this prediction in the Christian mission to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46-47). Similarly James interpreted the Gentiles' acceptance of the Gospel as the fulfillment of Amos's prophecy: "After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up, that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who has made these things known from of old" (Acts 15:16-18; cf. Amos 9:11, 12).

The Old Testament anticipation of the proclamation of salvation to all the nations becomes in the New Testament Christ's Great Commission to His followers: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19). The fulfillment of this Commission is presented by Christ in His Olivet Discourse as the sign or condition preceding His Parousia (Matt 24:14; par. Mark 13:10).

### **The Meaning of the Great Commission**

What does it mean that before Jesus comes the Gospel must be preached throughout the world, "as a testimony to all nations"? Evidently Jesus does not mean that every single person of every nation must be converted. The phrase "as a testimony to all nations" suggests rather that the Gospel must become a force to be reckoned with, a witness which calls for decision in every nation, so that those who reject it can be held accountable for their decisions.

Paul seems to understand this passage in this way, when he says: "From Jerusalem as far round as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Rom 15:19). Paul was convinced that in this rather extensive area, extending from Greece to Palestine, the Gospel had been fully preached. This is indicated by his further statement,

"But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, . . . I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain" (Rom 15:23-24).

Obviously Paul felt that he had "fully preached the gospel of Christ" in this vast territory, not because he had been able to witness to every single person, nor because most of the population had become Christian, but rather because the Good News of salvation had been proclaimed in each region, offering to all the opportunity to hear the Gospel and be saved. The actual number of converts in this vast area was relatively small.

According to the World Christian Encyclopedia (published in 1982 by Oxford University), it is estimated that by A.D. 100 there were 1 million Christians in the Roman Empire out of a population of 181 million.<sup>1</sup> This means that by the end of the first century less than 1 percent of the population (0.6% to be exact) was Christian. Presumably the number of Christians was even less in the fifties when Paul wrote. Thus Paul's conviction of having evangelized the Eastern wing of the Roman Empire rested not on the large number of converts, but on the fact that Christian outposts had been established in crucial centers from where the light of the Gospel was being beamed to the entire region.

### **Can Christian Outreach be Measured?**

Today, nineteen centuries later, we may ask, Are we closer to or further away from the completion of the Great Commission of evangelizing the world? How is this important Advent sign being fulfilled in our time? A logical way to answer this question is by surveying the evangelization of the world in our time.

Some may question the legitimacy of using statistical surveys to determine the extent to which the Christian commission of evangelizing the world is being fulfilled. One reason is that the invisible work of the Holy Spirit upon human hearts cannot be measured by numbers. A second reason is that statistics of church memberships may be misleading because there are registered members who are not practicing Christians, and there are people who are not affiliated with any particular church and yet they profess and practice the Christian faith.

Obviously any statistical survey of Christianity in its world mission has its limitations and is open to the danger either of excessive optimism or of undue pessimism. The recognition of this fact does not, however, negate the value of statistical surveys which can give us a general overview of the growth of Christianity as well as of the magnitude of the unfinished task. The New Testament shows a healthy interest in numbers and their relation to the growth of the Church.

The book of Acts records the progress of the Gospel in numbers and statistics: "there were added that day about three thousand souls" (2:41); "many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to about five thousand" (4:4); "And the word of the Lord increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem" (6:7; cf. 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:23, 31).

These numbers and quantifications given in Acts serve as signs of divine grace manifested in the growth of the Christian mission. By the same token, contemporary statistics of a specific church or of Christianity as a whole can help believers to perceive the progress or regress of the Christian mission. With this in mind we will look briefly at the status of Christianity at this point in history. Our aim is not to calculate the nearness of the Second Advent on the basis of how much of the world has been evangelized or of how much still remains unevangelized, but rather to verify how this important Advent sign is being fulfilled in our time.

### **Christian Expansion Over 20 Centuries**

To put in proper perspective the status of Christianity today, it helps to take a global overview of its growth over the past twenty centuries. The data used for this

report are drawn mostly from the World Christian Encyclopedia, a major research project produced by competent scholars and newly released (1982) by Oxford University Press.

During the past nineteen centuries Christianity has gradually grown in size and influence. At the end of the first century (A.D. 100), as already mentioned, Christians numbered about 1 million in a population of 181 million, thus representing less than 1 percent of mankind (0.6%). A thousand years later (A.D. 1000) there were 50 million Christians in a population of 269 million, thus representing 18 percent of the population. Nine centuries later, by the year 1900, one third of humanity (34.4%) were Christians, that is, 558 million Christians in a population of 1,619 million.

During the twentieth century Christianity has grown enormously from 558 million in 1900 to 1,433 million by 1980. The latter, however, represents only 32.8 percent of the world population estimated in 1980 at 4,374 million. What this means is that in spite of Christianity's phenomenal expansion, the actual percentage of profession Christians has declined in proportion to the world population from 34.4 percent in 1900 to 32.8 percent in 1980.

This decline has been caused primarily by defections from Christianity due to secularism in Western Europe, Communism in Eastern Europe, and materialism in the Americas and elsewhere. The massive apostasies of our century themselves constitute a significant Advent sign, to be considered in a future newsletter.

### **Global Christianity Today**

**Massive Gains.** The massive losses Christianity has experienced in the Western and Communist worlds over the last sixty years—primarily due to secularism, materialism, and ideological totalitarianism—have been offset by massive gains in other parts of the world. In the Third World Christianity has surged from 83 million in 1900 to 643 million by 1980.

In Africa, Christians have mushroomed from 9.9 million in 1900 to 203 million in 1980. The present net increase in Africa is 6 million new Christians a year, of which 1.5 million are new converts. In South Asia also there is a sizable net increase of over 3 million per year, of whom 447,000 are new converts. Significant increases are also taking place in Latin America (8 million per year), and in East Asia (636,000 per year of whom 360,000 are new converts).

These statistics point to a significant aspect of the growth of Christianity in the twentieth century, namely, its internationalization. Jesus had predicted that the "gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world, as a testimony to all nations," yet by 1900 Christianity was still predominantly a Western religion. Eighty-five percent of its member (470 million) lived in the Western World and only 15 percent (87 million) lived in the Third World. During the course of our century a radical change has occurred: Christianity has truly become a global religion. In 1980 only 32.8 percent of Christians lived in the Western World, while 44.1 percent lived in the Third World, and 17.7 percent lived in the Communist World.

It can no longer be said that Christianity is a white man's religion. This was still largely true at the turn of the century when 81 percent of Christians were white, but it is no longer true today when the whites have become a minority (48%) and the non-whites a majority (52%).

Today for the first time the Gospel is being proclaimed to practically "every nation and tribe and tongue and people" (Rev 14:6). The World Christian Encyclopedia notes in this regard: "During the 20th century, Christianity has become the most extensive and universal religion in history. There are today Christians and organized Christian churches in every inhabited country on earth. The church is therefore now, for the first time in history, ecumenical in the literal meaning of the word: its boundaries are coextensive with the oikumene, the whole inhabited world."<sup>12</sup>

## **Availability of the Scriptures**

**Bible Translations.** The unique expansion of Christianity in the twentieth century is reflected also in the number of Bible translations produced during this century. According to the World Christian Encyclopedia, there are today some 7,010 different languages, two-thirds of which are spoken by relatively few people. By 1900 the Bible had become available, in whole or in part, in 537 languages. During the course of our century prodigious efforts have been made to translate the Bible into many new languages. The result of this effort has been impressive. By 1995 the Scriptures had been translated into a total of over 1,850 languages which are spoken by 98 percent of the world population.

Christianity still faces the staggering challenge of translating the Scriptures into the remaining 5,000 languages. It must be noted, however, that the total number of people speaking these languages is today some 185 million, a number which, though impressive, in actual fact represents only 4.2 percent of the world population.

To meet this challenge at present there are 986 translation projects in progress. Though the task of translating the Scriptures into every distinct language is still formidable, the fact remains that the Scriptures are available today for the first time in languages spoken by 98 percent of the world population. This global availability of Scriptures is an indispensable prerequisite for worldwide evangelization.

Not only the translation but also the annual distribution of Scriptures has risen enormously during this century. From a total of 5.4 million whole Bibles sold or distributed in the year 1900, the number has risen to a total of 36.8 million in 1980. In this same year the United Bible Societies distributed also over 432 million Scripture selections.

Certain modern translations of the Bible have been best sellers. The Living Bible, for example, for several years has outsold all other books in the United States. The global availability and widespread distribution of the Scriptures represent a significant indication of the way the Advent sign of worldwide evangelization is being fulfilled in our time.

## **The Unfinished Mission**

Someone may ask: "Is the sign of the evangelization of the world truly being fulfilled in our time when professing Christians today still account for only one third (32.8%) of the world population?" We noted earlier that the Great Commission to evangelize all the nations requires not a global conversion of every person, but a global proclamation of the Gospel to every nation.

The question then is, What is the extent of the Gospel proclamation today? How many persons still remain unevangelized, that is, unaware of the Christian message? According to the statistical report compiled by the World Christian Encyclopedia, "the global total of evangelized populations in 1980 was 2,993 million. The evangelized can be further divided into 1,433 million Christians, who by definition either profess Christ or are part of his church; and 1,561 million whom we here term evangelized non-Christians—persons who are not Christians in any recognized sense, but who have become aware of Christianity, Christ and the gospel, and yet have not, or not yet, responded positively by accepting them."

This means that by 1980, 68 percent of the world population had been evangelized while 32 percent (1,381 million) still remained unevangelized, unaware of Christianity and the Gospel. Though the percentage of unevangelized persons is still very large—about one third of the world population—in comparison to previous periods of history, it is the smallest it has ever been. For example, the percentage of the evangelized population of the world was 28 percent by the year 100, 25 percent by the year 1000, 50 percent by 1900, 68 percent by 1980 and is projected to reach 90 percent by the year 2000.

Christianity possesses today an unprecedented quantity and variety of resources such as service agencies, educational and medical institutions, national and foreign workers, books and periodicals, the Scriptures in over 1850 languages, radio and television broadcasting, and impressive financial means. Resources such as these, utilized by committed Christians under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, make the task of evangelizing the whole world a realistic possibility in our time.

Perhaps one of the most far-reaching evangelistic resources available today is Christian broadcasting. At the turn of this century radio broadcasting did not yet exist, since it came into existence in 1921. Today Christian radio and TV programs reach a staggering monthly audience of over one billion persons. In the light of these human and technical resources available today, "the dimensions of the unfinished task of world evangelization," as pointed out by the World Christian Encyclopedia, "are in fact very much smaller than contemporary Protestant and Catholic missionary organizations realize."

Obviously the task of finishing the evangelization of the world depends not merely upon human resources but primarily upon divine enablements. The unparalleled human and technical resources available today can be used effectively by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the divine mandate to evangelize the whole world.

### **Seventh-Day Adventist Evangelization**

Seventh-day Adventists see their movement as one of the instruments used by God to fulfill the prominent Advent sign of the evangelization of the world. They perceive themselves as one of the folds of God's universal flock of believers (John 10:16), called into existence to announce to the whole world the saving good news of a soon-Coming Savior and inviting all to prepare to meet Him.

As suggested by their church's name, Seventh-day Adventists believe that an important aspect of the preparation to meet the Lord in space on the Day of His Coming is the weekly preparation to meet the Lord in time on His Holy Sabbath day. To put it differently, the weekly Lord's Day is theologically and existentially interrelated to the final Day of the Lord.

The pattern of growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church resembles, at least in one way, that of global Christianity. Like the latter, the Seventh-day Adventist Church at the turn of the century was still predominantly a Western religion. According to the General Conference Statistical Report, at the turn of the century (1902), 93 percent of the Seventh-day Adventist membership (72,156) lived in North America and Europe, whereas only 7 percent of its members (5,396) lived in the rest of the world.

A radical change has occurred during the twentieth century as the Seventh-day Adventist Church has expanded not only numerically from a total membership of 77,000 in the year 1902 to 10 million members by the year 2000, but also geographically. In fact, it is estimated that by the year 2000 only 10 percent of SDA believers will live in North America and Europe while 90 percent will live in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Oceania, Australia, and New Zealand.

This means that in less than a century the SDA Church has grown from an American-based church to a universal church which today is well established in 90 percent of all the countries of the world and embraces people of many different cultures, races, language groups, and political systems.

Numerically the SDA Church is still small in comparison to older Christian churches, yet its evangelization of the world transcends its relatively small membership. Today, in fact, the SDA Church is the most widespread of all Protestant denominations, proclaiming the Gospel in 184 countries, supporting the largest number of missionaries in the field (ca. 3,200), and operating a worldwide chain of institutions such as 420 hospitals and clinics,

82 universities and colleges, 844 secondary schools, 50 publishing houses, nearly 3500 radio and TV stations used each week, Bible correspondence schools, etc.<sup>20</sup>

The effectiveness of the world evangelization of a church cannot be determined, however, solely by its geographical expansion, institutional strength, and numerical growth, but rather by the way it helps people and societies to experience the fruits of the Gospel such as love, peace, freedom from the power and penalty of sin, joy, hope, meaning in life, healing from destructive habits, and social and moral reforms. Measured by these criteria, the SDA Church has been greatly used by God-beyond its relatively small membership-to accomplish the mission of proclaiming the Good News of salvation to all nations.

An indication of the effectiveness of the Adventist mission is the fact that various governments and international agencies channel through the SDA church millions of dollars to help people in various countries in their programs. In the current conflict in the Balkans, ADRA, the SDA relief organization, serves as one of the major agencies used to distribute food and supplies to the refugees.

## **CONCLUSION**

This brief study of the outstanding Advent sign of world evangelization has shown that its fulfillment has occurred in an unprecedented way in our century. Christianity in general and Seventh-day Adventism in particular have grown spectacularly during the twentieth century, both in numbers and in geographic expansion. From a predominantly Western white man's religion, both Christianity and Adventism have become global, proclaiming the Gospel for the first time in history to practically all the nations of the world.

Though the mission of evangelizing all the world is still unfinished-one third of the world population is still unaware of Christianity, Christ, and the Gospel-Christians today are provided by God with an unparalleled quantity and variety of resources which make it possible to complete the mission sooner than many realize. This means that the prominent Advent sign of the Gospel proclamation throughout the whole world is being fulfilled in a unique way in our time. The fulfillment of this sign gives us reason to believe that "he is near, at the very gates" (Matt 24:33).

## **Sabbath School Help**

### **The Biblical Teaching Regarding The Origin Of Sin**

#### **A. God Is Not The Originator Of Sin**

The scripture excludes categorically the idea that God is the originator of sin. God is presented as altogether holy (Isa 6:3) righteous, just, free from sin (Deut 32:4; Ps 92:15; James 1:13, 17). He positively hates sin (Rom 1:18) but has made provision for the salvation of sinners.

#### **B. Sin Originated In The Angelic World**

##### **1. The Time Of The Angelic Fall**

a. The bible gives only a few clues as to the origin of sin. The account of the human fall described in Genesis 3 presupposes that a fall had already occurred in the angelic world. The exact time of this angelic fall is not given in the bible. Jesus speaks of the devil as "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44), presumably meaning from the beginning of human history. 2 Peter 2:4 mentions the fact that "God did not spare the angels when they sinned but cast them into hell" (cf Jude 1:6).

b. No specific time reference is given in the bible for the fall and expulsion of these angels. This silence is reflective of the primary concern of the scripture to inform us on our

human origin and destiny rather than on that of the heavenly host. The only thing that the bible teaches us on this point is that the fall of the angels occurred before the creation & the fall of mankind.

## **2. The Cause Of The Angelic Fall**

a. Old Testament: Ezekiel 28:11-17 = Self-exaltation. The bible says very little about what caused the fall of Lucifer and of the angels. In the Old Testament there are two passages which have a secondary application to Lucifer. The first is Ezekiel 28:11-17, where the prophet describes the King of Tyre in terms which can best be applied to his spiritual master, Lucifer. The latter is described as being "full of wisdom and perfect in beauty," "blameless . . . Till iniquity was found in you" (vv. 12, 15). The cause of his downfall is explicitly given as self-exaltation: "your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor" ( v. 17).

b. Isaiah 14:12-15 = Self-exaltation. The second OT reference is Isaiah 14:12-15 where the prophet describes the overthrow of the King of Babylon utilizing the imagery of the fall of Lucifer. Isaiah expresses the self-exaltation of Lucifer even more explicitly than Ezekiel, saying: "you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high . . . I will make myself like the most high'" (vv. 13,14). Both passages suggest that Lucifer occupied an honored position among the angelic host and that his rebellion was motivated by the desire to exalt himself to equality with God.

c. New Testament: Sin of pride. The few references in the NT to the fall of Lucifer and of the angels corroborate the OT allusions Paul warns against the appointment of a novice as a bishop, lest "he may be puffed up with conceit & fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Tim 3:6). The implication seems to be that the sin of Lucifer was caused by self-conceit, aspiring to be like God. Jude 6 expresses essentially the same idea when he says that the fallen angels "did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling." Presumably they were not satisfied with the position and power God entrusted to them. If the desire to be like God was the cause of their rebellion and downfall, this would explain why they tempted Adam and Eve on the same point.

d. Ellen White: Envy and jealousy. Ellen White adds a significant detail regarding the cause of Satan's envy and jealousy: "when Satan learned the purpose of God, he was envious of Christ, and jealous because the father had not consulted him in regard to the creation of man" (SG 3:36; cf PP 36). Lucifer apparently felt that because of his exalted position, he should have been consulted by the Godhead regarding the creation of this world.

## **3. The Result Of The Angelic Fall**

a. War in heaven. Lucifer's envy and jealousy of Christ matured in open rebellion. The only account of this conflict is given in Revelation 12:7-9 where we are told that Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels. The outcome was that Satan and one third of the angelic host were cast out of heaven to this earth (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). Ellen White adds helpful insights to this graphic story, especially in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 36-41. Lucifer secretly diffused a spirit of dissatisfaction among the angels, insinuating that God's government was unfair, especially in the preference shown to Christ.

b. God's forbearance with Lucifer. In his mercy God bore patiently with Lucifer and his followers, entreating them to repent. "God permitted Satan to carry forward his work until the spirit of dissatisfaction ripened into open revolt" (PP 41). Loyal angels urged Lucifer and his sympathizers to submit to God. But Lucifer deceived his followers by declaring to them that God would no longer forgive them and thus the only course left was to gain their rights by force. One third of the angels remained loyal to Lucifer and with him they were expelled from heaven by God.

c. Extension of conflict upon the earth. The conflict which began in heaven was extended to this earth when Satan succeeded in tempting our first parents to place themselves in opposition to God (Gen 3:6-7). Since then Satan has acted as the ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30) and as the leader of evil angels (Matt 12:24; 25:41; Rev 12:7-9). The fallen angels, sometimes called "demons" (Luke 11:15-19), "unclean spirits" (Mark 9:25), serve in various roles under the leadership of Satan. They cause various kinds of physical & mental disorders (Matt 9:33; 12:22; Luke 9:27-42). They oppose the work of God (Eph 1:21; 6:12; Col 2:15) by disseminating false teachings (1 Tim 4:1-3; 1 Cor 10:20), by hindering the spiritual progress of believers (Eph 6:12), by inciting human beings to act against God and his people (1 Thess 3:5; rev 12:13-17).

d. The destiny of Satan and of the fallen angels. The evil work of Satan and his angels will not last forever. The incarnation and the atonement have already sealed the doom of the fallen angels (Luke 10:18; John 12:31). Their deceptive and destructive activities will continue until the second coming of Christ. At that time Satan will be bound and confined for a thousand years (Rev 20:2-3). Believers will have a part in judging Satan and the fallen angels (1 Cor 6:3) and all of them will be ultimately destroyed (Rev 20:10; Matt 25:41).

## **C. The Mystery Of The Origin Of Sin**

### **1. How Could Perfect Creatures Rebel Against Their Creator?**

No rational explanation can be given for how could unholy feelings of pride, self-exaltation, discontentment arise in the heart of perfect angelic creatures. In the case of our first parents, temptation came from without, but in the case of Lucifer there was not external pressure or inducement to revolt against God. The bible makes no attempt to explain how the thought of self-exaltation arose in the mind of Lucifer.

Logically, evil is impossible in a world created and ruled by a perfect God: nevertheless it is present. Thus we are driven to the conclusion that there is no explanation for the origin and fact of evil in God's good creation. As Ellen White puts it, "it is impossible to explain the origin of sin as to give a reason for its existence" (GC 492). The scripture only tells us that God did not create and does not will evil. He created perfect beings with the capacity to choose between obedience and disobedience. Why some should choose to disobey remains a mystery which is only exceeded by the mystery of the incarnation.

### **2. Why Did A Just God Allow Satan To Tempt Angels And Human Beings?**

Our human sense of justice demands the isolation of persons who are a threat to the well-being of others. Thus we feel that God should have isolated Satan to prevent him from spreading his rebellion against God. Isolating Satan, however, would not have necessarily made this world safe and secure from the rise of sin. As Satan sinned without any external temptation, so also mankind could have fallen without a tempter. In this case human beings would have become a Satan.

God saw that the ultimate solution was to be found not in the isolation but in the immunization of his creatures from the power of evil. The latter could be realized through the experience of the fall, redemption, and final restoration.

### **3. Was God responsible for the sinning of his creatures by allowing them to be tempted?**

No, because temptation in itself has no power to make a person sin. God had provided the power to resist temptation and by exercising it, human holy nature could have been confirmed in holy character. The assumption that what ought not to be, ought not to be permitted is a fallacy. Parents wish that our children would learn to walk without getting bumps and bruises, but they permit them to experience these pains to enable them to learn to walk independently.

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