

Chapter 1

Moral Reform in Our Time?

The market place is a fairly good barometer of changing methods in any given community. At the top of the list is the belief that mergers, conglomerate ideas and amalgamations are the safe way to go. But are they? This human concept, choosing the value of the package over the singular specialization, even though popular, rarely gives what it promises, yet most go forward in their pursuit believing that it will yield great results.

Newsweek (May 4,1987) reviewed the current corporate use of New Age gurus who seek to change employee thinking by “alignment” and noted its mushrooming growth. These forces are working diligently at, and through the United Nations. Spiritistic entities are amalgamating with the New Age movement in its operation of networks and infiltrating schemes to tie all things together in the hope of a one world “spiritual” government.

Many Christians take all this rhetoric very lightly, but I believe many could soon be overwhelmed with this deception.

The networking, compromising notion has entered into religion and the dire results have yet to be seen. It is recognized in ecumenicalism which neglects the divine basis for union; it is seen in some concepts of church growth which ignore Biblical principles and obedience as essential for receiving the Holy Spirit’s power; it is evident in church management and organization, with increasing hierarchical tendencies on one hand and Congregationalism on the other, both to the detriment of specific doctrinal emphasis and departmental function.

In Adventism, the Spirit of Prophecy counsel capsulizes this current world trend that even seems to be attempting to envelop the church. “The agencies of evil are combining their forces and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones.”-Testimonies, vol. 9, page 11.

What does all this mean? I see it as a wind of change toward amalgamation, bringing a “revival emphasis” for morality, and under a religious guise, but not imbued with the power and spirit of the True God. Yet this movement claims to be the genuine. By its actions (or fruit) it will deny the truth and even persecute those who refuse to join

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with it. Let me show the certainty of this assessment in experiences over the past year.

Mid-1986, Thomas Neslund, ICPA Executive Director-elect and I attended the first United Nations Conference on Prevention of Drugs, convened to discuss ways of lowering the demand for drugs. Held in Stockholm, with over thirty-six countries represented by nearly three hundred specialists, we repeatedly heard the cry, "There will be no real solution to this problem until we consider and apply the spiritual dimension, and until we revive the family and moral structure." It was a "certain sound" that must be taken seriously, indicating the direction of world opinion.

Some members, alert to the issues of alcohol and other drugs and the role of temperance, are talking about the church catching up! Even in her day, the Lord's messenger made such appeals to Seventh-day Adventists. "If our people can be made to realize how much is at stake, and will seek to redeem the time that has been lost, by now putting heart and soul and strength into the temperance cause, great good will be seen as the result."- *Temperance*, page 257. But time IS running out. An air of expectancy in anticipation of the coming millennium is looming before us. The year 2000 is being projected as the time when mankind's crises will be solved, when all the ills that beset us will be healed. Slogans are rapidly coming from the U.N., saying "Health for all by the year 2000"; "Homes for all in the year 2000"; "Drug-free living in the year 2000"; "A smoke-free society in the year 2000."

We are amazed almost daily by the discoveries of scientists in understanding nature's powers-such as super-conductivity with its power potential. But, it is God's intention that a return to moral power be a major experience for end-time peoples. Moral power restored to us through Jesus Christ can supersede all human limitations, as it transforms us into the realm of the spiritual. This is the only power that can compete with the counterspiritual energies working through those of wickedness, who are enemies of virtue, holiness, and the law of God.

The winds of change are blowing with increasing strength. My feeling is we must now actually apply the leap-frog theory. This means moving ahead of and above the popular trend by now introducing as our theme and action the final objective of our temperance ministry. This is none other than the genuine spiritual dimension as the only answer-the message and experience of total dependency upon the Lord Jesus Christ for renewed moral power to live above every false craving

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and desire-to give God the glory and worship only Him, becoming overcomers in His strength. "If we can arouse the moral sensibilities of our people on the subject of temperance, a great victory will be gained. Temperance in all things of this life is to be taught and practiced."-Temperance, page 215.

This temperance revival predicates church action beyond departments or projects, as vital as they are. It predicates having church leaders, pastors, and members all speaking out for this spiritual dimension to meet the issue of our times.

So often Seventh-day Adventists have projected the future as a time of anarchy, godlessness and antagonism to reform. But what may startle and surprise even the elect will be the initial call and urging for a return to morality with all the trappings of truth, with appeals and actions against social evils as the one vital factor to unity or oneness. Already conservatism and so-called fundamentalism are flexing their muscles in an appeal for morality. In Communistic, Islamic and Eastern countries a struggle is going on to restore moral concepts, to save society from the results of moral decline.

Few Protestants could have conceived of Roman Catholicism taking the lead in worldwide moral reform, against abortion, drugs, illicit sex and homosexuality, pornography, racial intolerance, nuclear armaments, and genetic engineering. Roman Catholics are the largest segment of the Moral Majority organization. Their highlighting of these devastating evils through the media, public commitment, and even political challenge, has not gone unnoticed around the world.

In Russia, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev says: "Society is ripe for a change.... Take the national tragedy-drunkenness. People want a 'dry law.' At the same time, all kinds of epithets reach us from the queues, all kinds of anecdotes about Gorbachev. No! we won't leave this path... we will save the people."-Time, January 5,1987.

Pope John Paul II, when officially inaugurated to his office spoke on the topic of "The Virtue of Temperance." Since then, he has campaigned against alcohol and other drugs and moral reforms in Poland, in Latin America, and other areas. In his world travels, he puts morality in the forefront, speaking of abortion, pornography, alcohol, and drug use, and other national issues-propounding a moral answer.

The ICPA has contacts with priests and other Catholic officials who appreciate this prevention program for a better way of life without alcohol and other drugs. One of them invited me to visit the Pope. I explained my viewpoints as an Adventist. I then suggested that as a

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condition of such a visit, I would like the Pope to come out with a statement, after the meeting, calling on all to make a choice for alcohol- and other drug-free living. Surprisingly, the priest said, "I think that could be arranged."

Later, at a three-day prevention seminar in Kenya with other church, government, and organizations represented, the Church of Christ president observed, "You meet so many world leaders and officials-now if you could persuade the Pope to take a really strong line for alcohol prevention, this would be very effective." I replied that I did not anticipate seeing the Pope, but that we appeal to all leaders to speak out. The Roman Catholic representative then rose to his feet and stated, "We are having the Pope visit here in a few months; and only this week we received information from the Vatican listing the key topics as alcohol and other drug warnings, along with other moral problems."

At the opening of the International U.N. Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, June 17,1987, in Vienna, Austria, a Vatican official read a message from Pope John Paul II. He stated that the Holy See is pleased to take initiative in this area of global concern, and its efforts now appear to be achieving results.

Mrs. Nancy Reagan, who advocates saying NO to drugs, has several times visited the Pope with President Reagan, discussing this issue. Signals we pick up from every quarter worldwide reveal Roman Catholics are getting this message-moral concerns are a package toward change beneficial to Catholics and their program. This is just what Ellen G. White said would happen. She often heard the angel speak about those who oppose the Laws of God and the Sabbath as uniting against the truth, "binding themselves into bundles ready to be burned." Sounds harsh against those seeming to be concerned with so much good. But then we remember Jesus saying much concerning deception and the end time as He warned, "Be not deceived." This deception will take on the appearance of the genuine with people agreeing this change towards morality is just what the world needs.

Where is the deception? It is one of Satan's devices to combine with falsehood just enough truth to give it plausibility. "The temperance work, one of the most prominent and important of moral reforms, is often combined with the Sunday movement, and the advocates of the latter represent themselves as laboring to promote the highest interest of society; and those who refuse to unite with them are

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denounced as the enemies of temperance and reform.”-The Great Controversy, page 587.

It becomes apparent that the Sunday Law will not come as some separate action, but it will be a part of the package of great moral temperance reform emerging on the horizon. This counter-revival, appearing to be based on genuine Biblical principles will be hailed as the genuine. Viewing this future time, Ellen G. White wrote, “they declared that they had the truth, that miracles were among them; that angels from heaven talked with them and walked with them, that great power and signs and wonders were performed among them, and that this was the temporal Millennium they had been expecting so long. The whole world was converted and in harmony with the Sunday Law, and this feeble people stood in defiance of the laws of the land and the Law of God and claimed to be the only ones right on the earth.”-Selected Messages, Book 3, page 428.

These winds of change around us seem to indicate such moral reform will bring great changes for good and a public awareness for spiritual things, appearing as if the genuine has arrived, but it will also harbor opposition to God’s law. Now we understand why Seventh-day Adventists are called to be in the forefront of the temperance reform. Evidently we are to vigorously support all the aspects of true reform even though in the end others will co-mingle this stance with error to attack those who obey the commandments of God and keep His Sabbath holy. If we faithfully lead out in temperance and other moral reforms, we will not be challenged on our support for the moral issues, but rather the Sabbath will then become the issue in the final conflict. We will consequently stand on vantage ground to advocate the Bible position.

How significant then the counsel that “We should not work solely for our people, but should bestow labor upon noble minds outside of our ranks. We should be at the head in the temperance reform.”-Temperance, page 220. “God wants us to stand where we can warn the people. He desires us to take up the temperance question.”-Temperance, page 235, .

What then is to be the position of church leaders and members? It means throwing the energies of the entire church into a spiritual awakening-into a commitment of body, mind, and spirit with a message to the world of practical Godliness, and declaring that our God is able to give power to resist temptation and to overcome. Established on the basis of loyalty and obedience to God, this will be a warning against

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intemperance and a message of power in Christ to live as overcomers in preparation for His soon return.

“If these things were presented in connection with the evidences of Christ’s soon coming, there would be a shaking among the people.”-*Temperance*, page 257.

How grateful we should be that the Lord has given guidance on these issues; advising us that every church should have a temperance organization with individual commitment (see *-Temperance*, pages 252, 244, 234-36).

Can we not then see the importance and urgency of this church awakening? “The warfare is before us. No tame message will have influence now.”-*Temperance*, page 239. “Are our young men prepared to lift their voices in the cause of temperance and show its bearings upon Christianity? Will they engage in the holy war against appetite and lust?”-*Temperance*, page 236. “There is need now of men like Daniel-men who have the self-denial and the courage to be radical temperance reformers. Let every Christian see that his example and his influence are on the side of reform. Let ministers of the gospel be faithful in instructing and warning the people.”-*Temperance*, pp. 237.

Maybe the Lord will give us grace before the people if we urgently act and change according to His plans for the church. If not, “the work which the church has failed to do in a time of peace and prosperity she will have to do in a terrible crisis under most discouraging, forbidding circumstances. The warnings that worldly conformity has silenced or withheld, must be given under the fiercest opposition from enemies of the faith.... The members of the church will individually be tested and proved. They will be placed in circumstances where they will be forced to bear witness for the truth.”-*Testimonies*, vol. 5, page 463.

Will we listen to this counsel and obey the Lord’s message on the subject of moral reform? If so, this terrible prediction may not be such a standing rebuke. This challenge has been given that we may change our ways now, while there is comparative peace and prosperity. The Lord’s purpose is to save all who will come unto Him and receive His power to be victorious. The choice is ours, but the power is of God and His promise is to the overcomer. All must reveal a loyalty either to God or to man. We are in the end time when the winds are blowing and change is rapid. The Lord stands at the door waiting for our response-He is ready to work on our behalf.

“After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind should

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blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, 'Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.'" Revelation 7:1-3, NASB.

We are in the time period spoken of in this prophecy. Great forces are building for a final blowup. The times demand serious consideration on our behalf. At this hour, what signal should we be sending to the world about temperance and moral transformation?