

TESTIMONY

FOR

THE CHURCH.

No. 20.

BY ELLEN G. WHITE.

---

STEAM PRESS

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION.

BATTLE CREEK, MICH.

1871.

## THIS NUMBER.

---

To ALL those who recognize the voice of God in the gift of prophecy, as manifested in connection with the cause of present truth, this number of the Testimonies will possess especial interest.

1. "How to Conduct Meetings" is invaluable.
2. "How Shall we Keep the Sabbath" is important.
3. "Christian Recreation" is a subject that should be understood. This was reported as spoken before two hundred who were enjoying a season of innocent recreation beside Goguac Lake, near Battle Creek, May, 1870.
4. The Dreams given are of thrilling interest. May the great facts they illustrate deeply impress the reader.
5. "Camp-Meetings" are a matter of interest just now. This article sets forth the pure spirit of sacrifice, and the duty of the times.
6. And let all read the "Address to Ministers" with especial care. This also was reported as spoken before the General Conference of 1871.
7. We have not space to further particularize. God grant that the reader may be stirred to duty by the appeals in this work.

J. W.

## TESTIMONY FOR THE CHURCH. NO. 20.

---

### **How to Conduct Meetings.**

I recently received a letter from a brother I highly respect, making inquiries in regard to meetings, how they should be conducted. He inquires if there should be many prayers offered in succession, and then a relief of a few moments, and quite a number of prayers again.

From the light I have had upon the subject, I have decided that God does not require us, as we assemble for his worship, to make these seasons tedious and wearisome, by being obliged to remain bowed quite a length of time, listening to several lengthy prayers. Those in feeble health cannot endure this taxation without extreme weariness and exhaustion. The body is weary by remaining bowed down so long. And that which is worse still, the mind becomes so wearied by the continuous exercise of prayer that no spiritual refreshment is realized, and the meeting to them is worse than a loss. They have become wearied mentally and physically, and they have obtained no spiritual strength. Meetings for conference and prayer should not be made tedious. All should, if possible, be prompt to the hour

appointed; and if there are dilatory ones, who are half an hour or fifteen minutes even behind the time, there should be no waiting. If there are but two present, they can claim the promise. The meeting should open at the appointed hour, if possible, be there few or many present. Formality and cold stiffness should be laid aside, and all be prompt to duty. There should not be, upon any common occasion, prayer of more than ten minutes' duration. If any feel the burden of prayer, after there has been a change of position, and the exercise of singing or exhortation has relieved the sameness, then let them pray.

All should feel it a Christian duty to pray short. Tell the Lord just what you want without going all over the world. In private prayer, all have the privilege of praying as long as they desire, and of being as explicit as they please. They can pray for all their relatives and friends. The closet is the place to tell all their private difficulties, and trials, and temptations. A common meeting to worship God is not the place to open the privacies of the heart.

What is the object of assembling together? Is it to inform God? or to instruct him by telling him all we know in prayer? We meet together to edify one another by a mutual interchange of thoughts and feelings, thus making one another acquainted with our

aspirations, our hopes, and gathering strength, and light, and courage, from one another. By our earnest, heart-felt prayers, offered up in faith, we receive refreshment and vigor from the Source of our strength. These meetings should be most precious seasons, and made interesting to all who have any relish for religious things.

There are some who I fear do not take their troubles to God in private prayer, but reserve them for the prayer-meeting, and then do up their praying for several days in these meetings. Such may be named social conference and prayer-meeting killers. Their cold, frozen prayers and lengthy, backslidden testimonies cast a shadow. They emit no light. They edify no one. All are glad when they get through, and it is almost impossible to throw off the chill and darkness their prayers and exhortations have brought into the meetings. From the light which I have received, our meetings should be spiritual and social, and not too long. Reserve, pride, vanity, and fear of man, should be left at home. Little differences and prejudices should not be taken with us to these meetings. Like a united family, simplicity, meekness, mutual confidence, and love, should exist in the hearts of brethren and sisters who meet to be refreshed and invigorated by bringing their lights together.

Ye are the light of the world, says the

heavenly Teacher. All have not the same experience, and the same exercises in their religious life. But those of diverse experiences come together, and with simplicity and humbleness of mind, talk out their experience. All should have, and will have, an experience that is living, that is new and interesting, if they are pursuing the onward Christian course. A living experience is made up of daily trials, conflicts, and temptations, strong efforts and victories, and great peace and joy gained through Jesus. A simple relation of such experiences give light, strength, and knowledge, that will aid others in their advancement in the divine life. The worship of God should be both interesting and instructive to those who have any love for divine and heavenly things.

Jesus, the heavenly teacher, when he was upon the earth, among the children of men, did not hold himself aloof from them, but in order to benefit them, he came from Heaven to earth where they were, that the purity and holiness of his life might shine upon the pathway of all, and light the way to Heaven.

The Redeemer of the world sought to make his lessons of instruction plain and simple, that all might comprehend them. He generally chose the open air for his discourses. There were no walls which could inclose the multitude which followed him. But he

had special reasons for choosing the groves and the seaside to give his lessons of instruction, for he could have a commanding view of the landscape and scenery, and make use of objects and scenes with which those in humble life were familiar, to illustrate the important truths he made known to them. The works of God in nature, he associated with his lessons of instruction. He made use of the birds which were caroling forth their songs without a care, and the flowers of the valley glowing in their beauty, and the lily that reposed in its purity upon the bosom of the lake, the lofty trees, the cultivated lands, the waving grains, the barren soil, the tree that bore no fruit, the everlasting hills, the bubbling stream, the setting sun, tinting and gilding the heavens, to impress his hearers with divine truth. He connected the works of God's finger in the heavens and upon the earth with the words of life he wished to impress upon their minds, that as they should look upon the wonderful works of God in nature, his lessons would be fresh in their memories.

Christ, in all his efforts, sought to make his teachings interesting. He knew that a tired, hungry throng could not receive spiritual benefit, and he did not forget their bodily needs. He wrought a miracle to feed five thousand, who had gathered together to listen to the words of life which fell from his

lips. Jesus regarded his surroundings, when giving his precious truth to the multitude. The scenery was such as would attract the eye, and awake admiration in the breasts of the lovers of the beautiful. He could extol the wisdom of God in his creative works, and could bind up his sacred lessons by directing their minds through nature up to nature's God.

The landscape, the trees, the birds, the flowers of the valley, the hills, the lake, and the beautiful heavens, were associated in their minds with sacred truths, which would make them hallowed in memory, as they should look upon them after Christ's ascension to Heaven.

When Christ taught the people, he did not devote the time to prayer. He did not enforce upon them, as did the Pharisees, long, tedious ceremonies, and lengthy prayers. He taught his disciples how to pray: "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray use not vain repetition, as the heathen do; for

they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye."

Christ impressed upon his disciples the idea that their prayers should be short, expressing just what they wanted, and no more. He gives the length and substance of their prayers, expressing their desires for temporal and spiritual blessings, and gratitude for the same. This sample prayer, how comprehensive! It covers the actual need of all. One or two minutes is long enough for any ordinary prayer. There may be instances where prayer, in a special manner, is indited by the Spirit of God, and where supplication is made in the Spirit. The yearning soul becomes agonized, and groans after God. The spirit wrestles as did Jacob, and will not be at rest without special manifestations of the power of God. This is as God would have it.

But there are many prayers offered in a dry, sermonizing manner. These pray to men, not to God. If they were praying to God, and really understood what they were doing, they would be alarmed at their audacity; for they delivered a discourse to the Lord in the mode of prayer, as though the Creator of the universe needed special information upon general questions in relation

to the things that were transpiring in the world. All such prayers are as sounding brass, and tinkling cymbal. They are made no account of in Heaven. Angels of God are wearied with them, as well as mortals who are compelled to listen to them.

Jesus was often found in prayer. He resorted to the lonely groves, or to the mountains, to make his requests known to his Father. When the business and cares of the day were ended, and the weary were seeking rest, Jesus devoted the time to prayer. We would not discourage prayer; for there is far too little praying and watching thereunto. And there is still less praying with the Spirit and the understanding also. Fervent and effectual prayer is always in place, and will never weary. Such prayer interests and refreshes all who have a love for devotion.

Secret prayer is neglected, and this is the reason why many offer such long, tedious, backslidden prayers, when assembled to worship God. They go over in their prayers a week of neglected duties, and pray round and round, hoping to make up for their neglect, and pacify their condemned consciences, which are scourging them. They hope to pray themselves into the favor of God. But frequently these prayers result in bringing other minds down to their own low level in spiritual darkness. If Christians would take home the teachings of Christ in regard to

watching and praying, they would become more intelligent in their worship of God.

---

### **How Shall we Keep the Sabbath ?**

God is merciful. His requirements are reasonable, in accordance with the goodness and benevolence of his character. The object of the Sabbath was that all mankind might be benefited. Man was not made to fit the Sabbath; for the Sabbath was made after the creation of man, to meet his necessities. God rested, after he had made the world in six days. He sanctified and blessed the day upon which he rested from all his work which he had created and made. He set apart that special day for man to rest from his labor, and reflect, as he should look upon the earth beneath, and the heavens above, that God made all these in six days, and rested upon the seventh; and that his heart might be filled with love and reverence to his Maker, as he should behold the tangible proofs of his infinite wisdom.

In order to keep the Sabbath holy, it is not necessary that we inclose ourselves in walls, shut away from the beautiful scenes of nature, and also deprive ourselves of the free, invigorating air of heaven. We should in no case allow burdens and business transactions to divert our minds upon the Sabbath

of the Lord which he has sanctified. We should not allow even our minds to dwell upon things of a worldly character. The mind cannot be refreshed, enlivened, and elevated, by being confined nearly all the Sabbath hours within walls, listening to long sermons and tedious, formal prayers. The Sabbath of the Lord has been put to a wrong use, if thus celebrated. The object is not attained for which the Sabbath was instituted. The Sabbath was made for man, to be a blessing to him, by calling his mind from secular labor, to contemplate the goodness and glory of God. It is necessary that the people of God assemble to talk of him, to interchange thoughts and ideas in regard to the truths contained in the word of God, and to devote a portion of time to appropriate prayer. But these seasons, even upon the Sabbath, should not be made tedious by their length and lack of interest. During a portion of the day, all should have an opportunity to be out of doors.

How can the minds of children become better impressed, and receive a more correct knowledge of God, than in spending a portion of their time out of doors; not in play, but in company with their parents? Surrounded with nature's beautiful scenery, as their minds are associated with God in nature, by their attention being called to the tokens of God's love to man in his creative

works, their young minds will be attracted and interested. They will not be in danger of associating the character of God with everything that is stern and severe. But as they view the beautiful things he has created for the happiness of man, they will be led to regard him as a tender, loving Father. They will see that his prohibitions and injunctions are not made merely to show his power and authority, but that he has the happiness of his children in view. As the character of God puts on the aspect of love, benevolence, beauty, and attraction, they are drawn to love him. You can direct their minds to the lovely birds making the air musical with their happy songs, the spires of grass, and the gloriously tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air. All these proclaim the love and skill of the heavenly Artist, and show forth the glory of God. Parents, why not make use of the precious lessons God has given us in the book of nature to give our children the correct idea of his character? Those who sacrifice simplicity to fashion, and shut themselves away from the beauties of nature, cannot be spiritually minded. They cannot understand the skill and power of God as revealed in his creative works, therefore their hearts do not quicken and throb with new love and interest, and are not filled with awe and reverence as they see God in nature.

All who love God should do what they can to make the Sabbath a delight, holy and honorable. They cannot do this by seeking their own pleasure in sinful, forbidden amusements. They can do much to exalt the Sabbath in their families, and make it the most interesting day of the week. We should devote time to interest our children. We can walk out with them in the open air. A change will have a happy influence upon them. We can sit with them in the groves, and in the bright sunshine, and give their restless minds something to feed upon by conversing with them upon the works of God, and inspire them with love and reverence by calling their attention to the beautiful objects in nature. The Sabbath should be made so interesting to our families that its weekly return will be hailed with joy. In no better way can parents exalt and honor the Sabbath than to devise means to impart proper instruction to their families, and to interest them in spiritual things, giving them correct views of the character of God, and what he requires of us, in order to perfect Christian characters and to attain to eternal life. Parents, make the Sabbath a delight, that your children shall look forward to it, and have a welcome in their hearts for it.

### **Christian Recreation.**

I have been thinking what a contrast would be seen between the gathering that we are having here to-day and such gatherings as they are generally conducted by unbelievers. Instead of prayer and the mentioning of Christ and religious things, we should have the silly laugh and the trifling conversation. Their idea would be to have a general high time. It would commence in folly and end in vanity. We want in these gatherings to have them so conducted, and to so conduct ourselves, that when we return to our homes we can have a conscience void of offense toward God and man; a consciousness that we have not wounded nor injured in any manner those with whom we have been associated, or had an injurious influence over them.

Here is where very many fail. They do not consider that they are accountable for the influence they daily exert; that in all their associations in life, they must render an account to God for the impressions they make, and the influence they cast. If this influence is such as shall have a tendency to draw the mind away from God, and attract it into the channel of vanity and folly, and lead persons to seek for their own pleasure in amusements and foolish indulgences, they must give an account for this. And if these

persons are men and women of influence, if their position is such that their example will affect others, then the greater sin will rest upon them for neglecting to regulate their conduct by the Bible standard.

The occasion we are enjoying to-day is just according to my ideas of recreation. I have tried to give my *views* upon this subject, but they are better illustrated than expressed. I was here on this ground about one year since, when there was a gathering similar to this. Nearly everything passed off very pleasantly then, but still there were some things objectionable. There was considerable jesting and joking indulged in by some. All were not Sabbath-keepers, and there was an influence manifest that was not as pleasant as we could wish.

But I believe that while we are seeking to refresh our spirits and invigorate our bodies, we *are required of God* to use all our powers at all times to the best purpose. We may associate together as we are here to-day, and do all to the glory of God. We can, and should, conduct our recreations in such a manner that we shall be better fitted for the more successful discharge of the duties devolving upon us, and our influence be more beneficial upon those with whom we associate, especially upon an occasion like this, which should be of good cheer to us all. We can return to our homes improved

in mind and refreshed in body, and prepared to engage in the work anew with better hope and better courage.

We are of that class who believe that it is our privilege every day of our lives to glorify God upon the earth ; that we are not to live in this world merely for our own amusement, merely to please ourselves. We are here to benefit humanity, and be a blessing to society. And if we should let our minds run in that low channel that many who are seeking only vanity and folly permit their minds to run in, how can we be a benefit to our race and generation ? how can we be a blessing to society around us ? We cannot innocently indulge in any amusement which will unfit us for the more faithful discharge of ordinary life duties.

We want to seek the elevated and lovely. We want to direct the mind away from those things that are superficial and of no importance, and that have no solidity. What we desire is, to be gathering new strength from all that we engage in, from all these gatherings for the purpose of recreation, from all these pleasant associations. We want to be gathering new strength to become better men and women. We want from every source possible to gather new courage, new strength, new power, that we may elevate our lives to purity and holiness, and not come down upon the low

level of this world. We hear many who profess the religion of Jesus Christ speak often like this: "We must all come down upon a level." There is no such thing as Christians' coming down upon a level. As we embrace the truth of God and the religion of the Bible, this is not coming down, it is coming up upon a high and elevated level, a higher standpoint where we may commune with God.

For this very reason Christ humiliated himself to humanity, and took upon himself our natures, that by his own humiliation, and suffering, and sacrifice, he might become a stepping-stone to fallen men, that they might climb up upon his merits, and through his excellence and virtue receive from God an acceptance of their efforts to keep his law. There is no such thing here as coming down upon a level. It is the elevated and exalted platform of eternal truth that we are seeking to plant our feet upon. We are seeking to be more like the heavenly angels, more pure in heart, more sinless, more harmless and undefiled.

We are seeking for purity and holiness of life, that we may at last be fitted for the heavenly society in the kingdom of glory; and the only means to attain this elevation of Christian character is through Jesus Christ. There is no other way for the exaltation of the human family. Some talk of humiliation,

and of the sacrifice they make because they adopt the truth of heavenly origin ! Surely, this is not accepted by the world, it is not received by the unbeliever. They may talk of those that have embraced the truth and sought the Saviour, and represent them as leaving everything, and giving up everything, and making a sacrifice of everything that is worth retaining. But do not tell me this. I know better. My experience proves this to be otherwise. You need not tell me that we have to give up our dearest treasures, and receive no equivalent. No, indeed ! That God, that Creator, who planted the beautiful Eden for our first parents, and has planted for us the lovely trees and flowers, and everything that is beautiful and glorious in nature for the human race to enjoy, designed that they should enjoy it. Then do not think that God wishes us to yield up everything which it is for our happiness here to retain. All he requires us to give up is that which would not be for our good and happiness to retain.

That God who has planted these noble trees and clothed them with their rich foliage, and given us the brilliant and beautiful shades of the flowers, and whose handy and lovely work we see in all the realm of nature, does not design to make us unhappy ; he does not design that we shall have no taste, and take no pleasure in these things. It is his design that we shall enjoy them. It is his design that

we shall be happy in the charms of nature, which are of his own creating. It is right that we should choose such places as this grove for seasons of relaxation and recreation. But while we are here, it is not to devote our attention to ourselves merely, and fritter away precious time, and engage in amusements which will encourage a disrel- ish for sacred things. We have not come here to indulge in jesting and joking, in the senseless laugh and foolish talking. We here behold the beauties of nature. And what then? fall down and worship them? No, indeed. But as you behold these works of nature, let your mind be carried up higher to nature's God; let it be elevated to the Creator of the universe, and then adore the Creator who has made all these beautiful things for your benefit, for your happiness.

Men and women will delight in lovely paintings; but where do the artists get their ideas of these things to put upon the canvas? From nature's beautiful scenery. Persons are ready to worship the talent which can produce a beautiful drawing; but where do those who devote their lives to this work obtain their designs? From nature, only from nature; and yet these individuals will devote the entire strength of their being, and will bestow all their affections upon their tastes in this direction. Yet art can never attain the perfection seen in nature. Many withdraw their