

# In a Position Where The Enemy Can Talk With Them

Satan's Startling Attack on Seventh-day Adventism

By Jon Wade Shumway

**W**ould you willingly enter a chamber to speak with Satan? Of course you wouldn't—at least knowingly—that is if you are a Christian! But what if you were invited to enter the same chamber to converse with one of his fallen angels? "Ridiculous!" you might be saying to yourself, "There is no danger of me ever even dreaming of such a thing! Why, I am a Seventh-day Adventist! I know all of the proof texts that warn a Christian against spiritualism. I would be able to identify one of the Devil's imposters immediately!" Are we as Adventists not virtually immune to such deceptions? Don't be too certain! Will a rock-solid belief and understanding of the state of the dead protect you from the spiritualism that is threatening Adventism today? Did it protect yesterday's Seventh-day Adventists from speaking to the enemy of their souls?

It was the dawning of a new century. In Battle Creek, the center of SDA medical ministry, the flagship institution appeared to be headed for its zenith of prosperity and popularity. Under John Harvey Kellogg's leadership the sanitarium was enjoying worldwide acclaim. It seemed that nothing could stand in the way of the advancement of the institution. Everything Dr. Kellogg put his hand to seemed to succeed. What could stop him from achieving his highest ambitions now? What or who could turn him from God and the work God desired him to accomplish?

Kellogg had a brilliant mind. Whatever he set his mind to it seemed he mastered, until the day it mastered him. Bright minds are ever eager to learn. The appetite for knowledge grows as more and more knowledge is gained. To such it is a temptation to become intemperate in the search for knowledge. It can advance until it becomes a form of gluttony. To such, books are feasts to be ravenously devoured. Becoming intrigued with the question of God's nature, apparently Dr. Kellogg began reading books that led him into a fascination with the spiritualistic mysticism embraced by pantheism. This was despite the warnings of the Spirit of Prophecy:

The study of God's word should take the place of the study of those books that have led minds **into mysticism and away from the truth.**

*Testimonies vol. 6, pages 132-133*

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Dr. Kellogg, brushing aside the repeated warnings finally became controlled by a philosophy that takes in the idea, that since God is omnipresent, He is therefore contained in every flower, rock and leaf--and if in the leaf, then in the breast of every man. If this is so, he reasoned, with every breath inhaled we receive an inspiration of God's Spirit—and that the mind of God indwells every mind that realizes the "God within". The mind opened to these spiritualistic beliefs leads one into mysticism whereby one naturally comes to believe that the prophetic gift and visions are available to anyone who cares to learn how to prepare their minds to receive them. This is what *defines* mysticism. And this is what the Kellogg crisis led to.

In the editorial comments in Manuscript Releases, vol. 10, a revealing note is inserted regarding the fruit of the mysticism brought into the church by Kellogg. In a discourse by one of Kellogg's better known followers, E. J. Waggoner, he expressed his belief that every Christian could manifest the gift of prophecy:

During the General Conference of 1901 the Lord warned me against sentiments that were then held by Brethren Prescott and Waggoner. These sentiments have been as leaven put into meal. Many minds have received them. The ideas of some regarding a great experience supposed to be sanctification have been the **alpha** of a train of deception. Because of some overdrawn expressions frequently used by Brother E. J. Waggoner at the conference, [IN HIS MESSAGE DELIVERED AT THE 1901 GENERAL CONFERENCE, ELDER E. J. WAGGONER ADVOCATED SEVERAL CONCEPTS WHICH WERE NOT ENTIRELY IN HARMONY WITH ADVENTIST TEACHINGS. THESE WERE (1) THAT **EVERY CHRISTIAN COULD "GET THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS" OR SPIRIT OF PROPHECY**, (2) THAT SANCTIFICATION INCLUDED BODILY HEALING, AS WELL AS HOLY LIVING, AND (3) THAT THE LIFE OF GOD COMES TO US THROUGH THE AIR AND OTHER NATURAL MEANS. NOTE THE FOLLOWING CITATIONS DRAWN FROM THREE OF HIS SERMONS: EXCERPTS ARE CITED ON PAGE 88 FROM THE 1901 GENERAL CONFERENCE BULLETIN, PP. 78, 79, 149, 222, AND 223.] I was led to speak words intended to counteract their influence. *10MR 87*

Of course the idea that every Christian is privileged to "get the testimony of Jesus" or Spirit of Prophecy does not agree with Scripture, which declares that it is the Holy Spirit that decides which spiritual gift will be given to whom:

For the **prophecy** came not in old time by the **will of man**: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. *2 Peter 1:21*

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.... For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another **prophecy**; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as **he will**. *1 Cor. 12:4-11*

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It is the Spirit of God that distributes the gifts according to His own all-wise and perfect will. God's word is clear that, though all may benefit from the messages of those manifesting the gift of prophecy, not all will receive direct messages from God. Not all are given the gift of prophecy. The apostle Paul highlights this truth in his rhetorical question to the believers in Corinth:

Are all apostles? **are all prophets?** are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? *1 Cor. 12:29-31*

Not all who seek dreams and visions from God will receive these spiritual gifts. God spoke through inspiration to Ellen White regarding the seductive and deadly nature of the mysticism, which Kellogg interwove into his book, the Living Temple:

"We need not the mysticism that is in this book. Those who entertain these sophistries will soon find themselves **in a position where the enemy can talk with them**, and lead them away from God." *SpTB02 52*

Do you comprehend that? Those who entertain the philosophy of mysticism will "find themselves in a position where the enemy--Satan or a fallen angel can talk with them. You might ask, "But what does this have to do with us today? Adventists are not reading The Living Temple. Kellogg has long ago retired to his grave."

Indeed, Kellogg and his book are no longer posing any threat to Adventism, but are we now safe from the seductive lure of mysticism? Through the gift of prophecy Ellen White cautioned that the mysticism of the Living Temple was only the beginning:

Be not deceived; many will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. We have now before us the **alpha of this danger**. The omega will be of a most startling nature. *1SM 197*

Again she warned:

"Living Temple" contains the **alpha of these theories**. I knew that the omega would follow in a little while; and I trembled for our people. *SpTB02 53*

And once more:

In the book Living Temple there is presented the alpha of deadly heresies. The omega will follow, and will be received by those who are not willing to heed the warning God has given. *1SM 200*

Notice, that the mysticism of the book Living Temple was only the beginning, or "alpha of deadly heresies", but that at last it would appear yet again as the "omega". When mysticism made its first appearance in the SDA church it was very *subtle*—so subtle, history reveals that the majority of the leadership of the SDA church could not even

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detect its presence in Kellogg's book. However, when it re-emerges as the "omega" it will be "of a most *startling* nature." It will be a shocking, blatant and unabashed form of mysticism. Is this possible? Could a brazen form of mysticism find any kind of favorable reception within mainline Seventh-day Adventism today? Judge for yourself.

On the back page of a recent issue of the Adventist Review [June 2001, NAD edition], will be found an advertisement for a book from Pacific Press by the title, *Devotional Retreats*, by Debbonnaire Kovacs. In this book she defends the practice of combining the techniques of "Zen Buddhism, Yoga, and Transcendental Meditation" with "Christian meditation".

In chapter one of *Devotional Retreats*, the author tells how she became interested in various meditation disciplines, such as Zen Buddhism, Yoga, and Transcendental Meditation. Seeing what she believed to be the benefits of the mysticism of these oriental religions, she relates how it occurred to her that perhaps there was a way to "combine" these practices "with Christian meditation." She experimented with the idea and found a way to blend the mysticism of these oriental religious practices into her devotional life. After using the process that both pagan and Roman Catholic mystics employ to go into vision, she would in the chamber of her imagination see "Jesus" and talk with him. However, after being warned by Seventh-day Adventist counsel against the danger of inculcating mysticism into Christianity, she became afraid and for a time discontinued her mystical exercises.

She tells how in "meditation" "Jesus" promised to grant to her a cherished desire. She does not reveal what that desire was, but goes on to explain that the promise was never fulfilled and she realized that it would never be fulfilled. This of course added to her doubts and apprehension.

After a protracted struggle with her fears and doubts, alas, she tells how she finally went back to her self-initiated trances. She relates how she had a break though after reading Morris Venden's book, *How to Know God's Will in Your Life*:

The answer to my question—Is it, or is it not, safe to prayerfully imagine conversations with God—is Yes, it is safe, as *one part of a whole, well-rounded Christian understanding of how God leads us!*

She relates her emotions at her return to the "Jesus" created through the workings of her own imagination:

I cried. I told my friends and family. Most of all, I thanked God. I went back to meditation. I hugged Jesus and cried some more.

I cannot but be touched by her struggle and heartache, her unrequited loneliness and yearning to see Jesus! I too long to see his face, no longer through a glass darkly but to know even as I am known! Face to face in all His glory I *shall see Him* by and by! Oh, I do not condemn her. I pray with tender sympathy for this dear sister. I do not oppose her because she is a bad person

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but because she is teaching falsehood, and is endeavoring to put upon *deadly heresy* the stamp of truth. My eyes well up in tears as I contemplate her comforted in the arms of a demon spirit who she thinks is Christ! If only she had heeded the counsel of the Lord:

There are many who shrink with horror from the thought of consulting spirit mediums, but who are attracted by **more pleasing forms of spiritism**. **Others are led astray by** the teachings of Christian Science, and by the **mysticism** of Theosophy and **other Oriental religions**. *PK 210 with horror from the thought of consulting spirit mediums, but who are attracted by more*

Speaking of the pantheistic ideas that led Kellogg into mysticism, Ellen White wrote, "I have seen the results of these fanciful views of God, in apostasy, spiritualism..." *Letter 230, 1903 (3MR 351)*

This book, *Spiritual Retreats* is fast becoming a best seller among SDAs. It was featured on page three of the Pacific Union Recorder [July 2001] in a positive review by the Director of Women's Ministries for the North American Division. In her comments she expressed her belief that, "This book is definitely worth your devotional time...!"

The Review and Herald® Publishing Associations 2001 Camp Meeting Catalog features the book on page five in its "Knowing God Better" section. The advertisement promises that using the method taught in the book, one will "**draw closer to Jesus.**" However the counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy advises us just the opposite regarding the sophistries of mysticism:

"We need not the mysticism that is in this book. Those who entertain these sophistries will soon find themselves in a position where the enemy can talk with them, and lead them **away from God.**" *SpTB02 52*

The Scriptures warn us not to inquire as to the methods used by heathen nations to worship their gods:

Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, **How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.** *Deut. 12:30*

If only sister Kovacs had taken this warning to heart! Oh, how her guardian angel must weep as Satan laughs in triumph:

Today the mysteries of heathen worship are replaced by the secret association and séances, the obscurities and wonders, of spiritistic mediums. The disclosures of these mediums are eagerly received by thousands who refuse to accept light from God's word or through His Spirit. Believers in spiritism may

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speak with scorn of the magicians of old, but **the great deceiver laughs in triumph as they yield to his arts under a different form.** *PK 210*

I am sure she would never have considered consulting a spirit medium. Oh, but poor deluded soul, in reality, she has been tricked into *becoming* a spirit medium *herself*! Not a “medium” in the classic sense. She does not hold séances to communicate with spirits, but placing herself in a position where the spirits of demons can talk to her, is she not communing with spirits? When she in turn relates the messages received to others is she not making herself a medium for communication with evil spirits? She knocked on the door to the spirit world of darkness hoping to find Christ on the other side. She did find *a Christ* on the other side. As the Bible informs us:

For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. *Mark 13:22*

Oh, dear reader, how many of our SDA friends and family members will be deceived? How many of our dear brothers and sisters will be seduced into consenting to let the enemy come into the chamber of their soul and speak to them? As many as “are not willing to heed the warning God has given”.

Could it be that we are once again repeating the history of ancient Israel? It may be instructive to notice what was seen when Ezekiel was invited to behold the abominations within the inner court:

Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery?...  
*Ezekiel 8:12*

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”  
*Jeremiah 17:9.* Both Ezekiel and Jeremiah warned the people of God about embracing prophesies and visions arising out of the heart and imagination of man:

But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in **the imagination of their evil heart**, and went backward, and not forward. *Jeremiah 7:23-24*

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a **vision of their own heart**, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. *Jeremiah 23:16*

Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which **prophesy out of their own heart**; and prophesy thou against them,  
*Ezekiel 13:17*

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Dear sister Kovacs is not alone in this developing movement. The inroads of this mysticism through the labors of former prominent SDA pastor and college president and professor, Dr. William Loveless are not news to many. Even NAD vice president, Manuel Vasquez has taken notice. He was so concerned that he wrote two books in which he warned our people of this mysticism. Though giving no names, in chapter one of *The Mainstreaming of The New Age* he refers to Loveless:

A pastor who believes that Ellen White was a 'mystic' leads workers in mystical meditation at a conference meeting and then instructs them in turn to do the same with their members during one of their 11 o'clock services.  
<http://www.pacificpress.com/books/mainstre.htm>

In this book he outlines the primary features of this mystical meditation, point for point defining the elements that this and other SDA leaders in this movement are promoting:

These people go on to tell me about the importance these Christian proponents of mystical meditation place on preparation for meditation—rhythmic breathing, posture control. Closing eyes, guided imagery, the imaginary place where they are to meet the visualized “Christ,” the actual dialogue with him, and finally, keeping a careful journal of their experience. *The Danger Within*, p. 62.

He also brings out that:

Christians are instructed to conjure up the image of Christ, dialogue with Him in their minds, and equate his message (given though an inner voice) with those of Scripture. *Ibid.* p. 59.

Again, Dr. Loveless acknowledged, “Because you see, I believe that your imagination in conjuring up images is dealing with equal truth to scripture.” *A Short Meditational Prayer Exercise, transcript*, William Loveless.

Like E. J. Waggoner, Loveless goes on to express the idea that every Christian can possess the gift of “inspiration”. However, he limits this gift to only those who practice the mystical meditation that he promotes:

Because the Scriptures say the same Spirit that inspired it inspires us to understand it. That’s what we mean by the doctrine of inspiration. People who are not everyday meditators shouldn’t even be discussing the doctrine of inspiration because they don’t know anything about it. And we shouldn’t be talking about things in public that we don’t know anything about. *Ibid.*

By his criteria, neither Jesus nor His disciples had any business discussing the doctrine of inspiration, for none practiced or taught others to utilize the elements of mysticism involved in being an everyday “meditator” as Loveless defines it! Not one hint of this mystical meditation is to be found in Christ’s response to the disciple who asked him to teach them to pray (see Luke 11:1). Not one suggestion of endorsement of this form of “meditation” can be found in the whole of the Bible.

The insinuation of principles of mysticism is not limited to a small segment of Adventism. Debbonaire Kovacs has authored two books and several articles and has

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written the first two of four new elementary Bible textbooks. Very subtle elementary facets of this mysticism have been woven into the Grace Link Curriculum, a publication of Sabbath School/Personal Ministries Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Our children in Sabbath School class are instructed to practice the less objectionable simple facets of mysticism:

Imagine you are at the foot of the cross. Record in your Bible study journal what you “see” happening around you. Describe what the soldiers, priests, common people, disciples, and Mary (Jesus’ mother) are doing. *Grace Link Curriculum, Power Points, Second Quarter- Year A, p.21.*

Imagine. Close your eyes and imagine the scene. What smells and sounds are there? What colors do you see? Write in your Bible study journal.... *Ibid. p. 37.*

Even the highly acclaimed NET 98 series included some of these elements. In the final program, *A New Way to Pray*, these same milder basic components of mysticism were introduced. Dr. Dwight Nelson encouraged the participants to visualize details of a Bible passage utilizing their imaginations to supply details not given in the text:

We are sensory craved; we have become people who now live, move and think this kind of visual encounter. So a full-sensory reliving of the gospel stories of Jesus will allow our minds to be impressed in a manner they are very much used to today. Go over and over that story. And to bring fresh variety into each rereading, why don't you add one of the five senses to the story--seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting--with each reading. By your fifth rereading, you should have a full-color portrayal of that gospel incident with Jesus in your mind! Smell the crowds around you if it's a hot Palestine day. Feel the waves of Galilee cool and lapping against your ankles. Hear the sounds of children laughing in the distance, birds soaring overhead. See the dew-kissed grassy knoll where Jesus meets alone with His Father. Taste the fresh grapes that Jesus points to and the broken bread He hands to you. Smell it, see it, sense it, taste it, touch it.

He then urges them to journal the experience and to either write a letter to God or write a letter from God to them. Expanding on the letter from God he said:

Or you could have Jesus write you--now look, nobody's hearing voices-- but you know that if Jesus were sitting in that empty chair across from you, you know exactly what He'd say to you.... What does the story tell me about my Best Friend Jesus? You see, your heart will tell you--and you can write down what you're sensing. Finally, have a kneel down prayer to commit your day and the people you want to pray for to this same God with whom you've already been in dialogue.

Now, it is apparent that Dr. Nelson’s “new way to pray” does not contain all the elements of eastern mysticism proper. It does not include rhythmic breathing, holding the spine and neck straight, or adjusting the body tone for deep “relaxation”. However,

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it does introduce the visualization, seeking to have a multi-sensory experience and the journaling of the experience. It does seek to engage the mind to image “Jesus Christ” and incorporates a recording of the words of “Jesus” communicated to the meditator. Though this “new way to pray” is not full-scale mysticism we are not to accept it as harmless. It is all the *more* dangerous!

Satan is a master of subtlety. He rarely seeks to take one from spiritual purity to infidelity in one step. It is usually a slow path of measured steps that suits his purposes. If he boldly suggested his full intention at the outset, he would be immediately repulsed. So he introduces first the least objectionable elements, clothed with the garments of promised spiritual illumination. After the lure is received and supposed gains are secured, then he advances his more sophisticated allurements, but only as rapidly as the subject is willing to embrace his cunning suggestions. His seduction advances in this way until his object is gained.

So it is with the milder elements of mysticism. The seemingly benign elements have first been introduced. In one quarter of Adventism the seemingly harmless techniques are introduced as neutral principles of relaxation and stress reduction. Deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation and guided imagery of scenes of natural beauty are presented with soft music. In another quarter the use of the imagination to recreate the scenes of the Biblical narrative are introduced. Eventually all the elements are merged into the spiritism of advanced mysticism!

We do not want to glorify Satan by magnifying his power. Neither do we want to minimize his power to deceive and destroy. Satan is pleased to have God’s people ignorant of his devices. Oh, but we do want to glorify God and recognize His marvelous and unsearchable riches of mercy, wisdom and power!

He is willing and able to deliver all who put the full weight of their faith and confidence in Him! It is our privilege to be “made more than conquerors through Him who loved us” and gave His life for us! As we give ourselves, through His grace, fully and completely to Him, we may have the confidence “that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” *Romans 8:38-39*

We should take comfort in this disheartening hour that our God knows the end from the beginning. He is not surprised or ill prepared to take the reins into His own hands and deliver his people during this time of final deception. He foresaw these events and prophesied concerning them. When the mysticism of Kellogg crisis was yet developing, He knew that the subtle “alpha of deadly heresies” would be replaced by the startling “omega”.

God can take what Satan means for evil and turn it for good. He declared that, through His providence, the heresies that would come into the church He would use as a means to awaken his slumbering church and separate the faithful from the false professors of faith:

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God will arouse His people; if other means fail, heresies will come in among them, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat. The Lord calls upon all who believe His word to awake out of sleep. Precious light has come, appropriate for this time. It is Bible truth, showing the perils that are right upon us. This light should lead us to a diligent study of the Scriptures and a most critical examination of the positions which we hold. God would have all the bearings and positions of truth thoroughly and perseveringly searched, with prayer and fasting. Believers are not to rest in suppositions and ill-defined ideas of what constitutes truth. Their faith must be firmly founded upon the word of God so that when the testing time shall come and they are brought before councils to answer for their faith they may be able to give a reason for the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear. *5T 707, 508*

In the struggle just ahead of us, a threefold union of Catholicism, apostate Protestantism and Spiritualism are prophesied to unite in opposition to God's remnant people. Roman Catholics are now joining such mystics as the Dalai Lama in mystical meditation and prayer. Protestants are taking up the same spiritualistic practices. And now, unbelievable as it is, Adventists professing faith in the third angel's message are preparing to join them. Yet the prophetic eye is not blind to what is taking place and to where it shall lead:

Protestantism will yet stretch her hand across the gulf to grasp the hand of Spiritualism; she will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, our country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience. *4SP 405*

As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position, and join the ranks of the opposition. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren. When Sabbath-keepers are brought before the courts to answer for their faith, these apostates are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the rulers against them. *GC88 608*

Take heart. Let not your soul despair. Now is the time to be faithful. Now is the time to exercise courage and zeal. Now is the time for God to be glorified in His people. Through Him we may stand the test. Through Him we will be more than conquerors—champions for the Lord, taking the battle to the very gates:

Now is the time for God's people to show themselves true to principle. When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage and firmness the most unflinching. To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be

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our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason. *5T 136, 137*

Praise God dear brothers and sisters PRAISE GOD! His mercy endureth forever! He will yet deliver a people who will glorify Him in this world and the world to come! Amen!