

Adventism's Biggest Nemesis!

Entertainment, Indulgence, and Amusement

"How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her:" Rev. 18:7

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The subject most hated:

There is one subject more than any other in Adventism that brings the most vicious attacks on anyone addressing it. I have never seen it fail that when material dealing with it is sent out, published, or placed on the internet, the most angry and offended letters start pouring in. People seem to foam at the mouth every time this area is touched. Rationalization and Self-Justification pour forth in elegant or un-elegant torrents of indignant words and if in person—angry, glaring looks.

No other subject will get you branded as a Pharisee, unloving, antisocial and so on, than to speak the God-given truth on this subject. There are certain principles clearly established in the Bible, and especially spelt out vividly in the Spirit of Prophecy—principles that leave no doubt at all where God stands regarding these things. These are among the main reasons why so many in the denomination try every way possible to reject, gainsay, denounce, and deride the Testimonies of the Spirit. From the first sounding of the prophetic voice among Adventists there has been in reply the orchestra of scorched cats screaming out as certain raw nerves were hit by the Sword of the Spirit.

Why do people go to such amazing lengths to try and rid themselves of the reproofing voice of the Spirit of Prophecy? The reasons are loud and clear for any who wish to remove their blinders and see them. In Mrs. White's days there were many who upheld the 'testimonies' heartily—Until—until she was given a personal message for them! Then, suddenly the luster was gone and there were a thousand criticisms and rationalizations as to why Ellen White was unreliable.

We don't get testimonies in the mail-box with our name on them any more, but any who read or hear them often get the uncomfortable jab from the Holy Spirit right in the sorest spot of our personal self-esteem. The result is the same: dozens and dozens of dozens of reasons and excuses why the 'testimonies' are to be ignored. The main area I had noticed people reacting against was appetite; and it is indeed a big area. But when you combine the counsels regarding appetite and indulgence with the clear counsels regarding amusement, sports, games and entertainment, I confidently believe that 99^{94/100} % of people out there denouncing, vilifying and/or excusing away (making of none effect) the Spirit of Prophecy have problems in their lives regarding these very areas.

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Many who do address the subject modify and smooth it over. It is hard for any person or ministry that depends on free-will donations for support to really speak solidly regarding Adventism's cherished idols. I guess all of us need more of the spirit of the ancient prophets, to speak the TRUTH whether men will hear or not and look to God not man for support. I have a deep burden to try and sound a wake-up call. I hope that someone or maybe even two, will turn around, cast away the garbage and find True Fulfillment in the Lord, fulfillment that doesn't just wait for heaven. For those who place ALL on the altar, heaven begins now—for those that refuse to surrender ALL, heaven will never happen!

"But we never can prove
The delights of His Love—
Until ALL on the altar we lay;
For the favor He shows, and the Joy He bestows
Are for them who WILL Trust and Obey!"

Retreats & Defeats:

We have the example of Jesus and the disciples in Mark 6:31: "And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." Oh how many these days use this example to justify all kinds of amusement, entertainment, indulgence and just plain 'goofing off'.

Let us just take a closer look at what was going on that day with Jesus and His disciples. Read the verse carefully and you see a picture of faithful workers nearing exhaustion as they sought to meet the needs of the multitudes starving for the Living Word. They had just received word of the tragic death of John the Baptist and questions and concerns were certainly on their minds. Jesus needed to be able to have them in quiet surroundings, away from the crowds and the ever-present spies of the Sanhedrin so He could address their concerns, answer their questions and—using the Holy Scriptures—re-fortify their faith.

You will also notice that Jesus said 'rest awhile', He did not say; "you need to have your appetites indulged, you need entertainment and to throw off all restraint in silly games and foolish behavior for a while. You need to joke and indulge in trivial talk to take your mind off religion for a while." No indeed not! Instead they were actually going to be receiving serious spiritual guidance so as to return to their labors for the people with renewed spiritual vigor. They were not to be dissipated by indulgences that would unfit them for their labor and open a dozen doors of temptation whereby Satan could march into their lives.

Jesus said to come into a desert place; that is a place out in nature, away from man-made distractions, also away from luxury and indulgence. They would sit on the grass of a mountainside, listen to the wind in the trees, sleep under the stars and their surroundings would turn their thoughts to nature's God. He did not take them to a resort where rich food, physical comforts and luxurious surroundings would detract from the spiritual and distract from the simplicity of true godliness.

Adventist Entertainment Syndrome:

There is a sad phenomenon in Adventism that is highly developed in our day. We have ministries that are well supported by the pockets of Adventists and all they really are accomplishing in the world, is the entertainment of Adventists. Find a way to entertain Adventists and give them programs to watch and meetings and 'retreats' to attend and you will have the support money rolling in. You can even preach a little, just make sure you don't start presenting the straight Word of God with authority.

You can also entertain Adventists and get lots of support if you think up some new ideas on prophecy and call it 'new light'. No matter how clearly your ideas may be denounced by the Spirit of Prophecy, you are bound to have a good support group and roll in the money—but remember, if you run out of weird 'new things' to send out every month, or if you put forward just plain, solid Bible, Spirit of Prophecy concepts, that's not entertaining enough, and you'll soon have to work for your living.

Even when community service or work-bees occur, they have to be followed up by a 'pizza party' or some such indulgence. If the poor are helped, the people or youth doing the 'helping' must have a big bash afterwards as a reward. Indeed, as Jesus said of the Pharisees, "they have their reward", heaven will never reward them.

My heart has been heavy when I have heard of groups of ministers taking their families, at church expense, to worldly theme parks and it wasn't so they could hand out books! Recently I heard of Adventists hurrying to the local theme park to get a special deal on a season's pass. What do the books of heaven show as to how God's means are being used by professed Adventists these days?

Camps and Campouts: a brief history of tragic changes:

Any one of us who has any spiritual eyesight at all, and has walked this old earth for half a century or more, has seen a lot of changes come in. Sad to say, nearly all of them have eroded away the spiritual values of a people who were once known as 'the People of the Book'. In fact even a twenty-year-old today, if they have any spiritual eyesight can see things sliding further and further in the world-ward direction as the momentum is accelerating. I want to take you back for a quick look at what camps can be and once were.

As most of you know, many regional conferences own 'camps' or resorts where 'retreats' and other gatherings are held. It is not a bad idea for a wilderness area to be owned by our people and a simple camp established without a lot of expense.

I will describe what such camps used to be like. Picture a remote forested area at the side of a small lake. There was a roped off beach, a wooden dock with a row-boat and a couple canoes at the water's edge. The main assembly building, that was also where the meals were cooked and served, was a plain barn-like structure with windows. Plain wooden benches and tables provided the seating.

The boys' and girls' bunkhouses were a long way apart, with the boys' being the furthest from camp. At Junior and youth camps, counselors shared the bunkhouses. Washroom facilities were outhouses and a central hand pump to acquire a bucket or wash dish of water to 'freshen up' hands and face in the morning. Bathing was only when we went in swimming.

There was a smaller building, again just plain wood with benches and tables in it, where crafts were taught and done. Basketry, painting plaster plaques, leather work and sometimes copper tooling were a few of the crafts available. All activities were supervised in kindly but sensible ways. No horseplay or silliness entered in to spoil the activities.

There were three 'assembly' areas; each one brings back sweet memories as I recall them. First was the main assembly, just back from the beach, where we stood in a circle around the flag for morning worship. We were expected to be there on time and properly attired. Our personal grooming was inspected and later on, the orderliness of our bunk area. A song was sung and prayer offered then we marched into the dining room for breakfast.

Second was the 'campfire' area. Down the beach about half-way between the girl's bunkhouse and the boy's, was a cleared area with a fire-pit in the center. Around this were logs placed in a circle to sit on. Towards sunset we assembled there and sang songs and courses as we lit and watched the fire. No food

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was served here as we were not encouraged to eat between meals, but worthwhile stories of nature and missions were read or told and then prayers offered and we headed off to our bunks for the night. Never were foolish, untrue jokes or stories used at campfire in those days.

The third area was a sacred place. It was only used for Sabbath-school, church and sacred meetings. Back from the camp road was a slightly cleared area in the forest. Plain benches of boards were the pews, and a wooden pulpit fitted well into the atmosphere. The sky and the branches of the tall trees were the only roof and the whisper of the breeze rustling the leaves was our background music. How lovely it was to lift our voices in songs of praise and listen to the sacred Word of God in this peaceful natural setting.

Activities were planned, scheduled and supervised, and all had a worthwhile purpose to them. Through the week, swimming, boating, crafts, and assemblies kept all happy and busy getting fresh air and exercise while learning practical skills. Work duties were shared, girls taking turns with doing dining hall and kitchen duties and boys with cleaning, firewood and laying the evening campfire. As a special treat a group was sometimes taken to another lake where we had campfire and then slept out under the stars. I do not recall there ever being any purposeless games, untrue stories, or silly behavior at these camps and yet we all were very happy.

On Sabbath, there was never any swimming, crafts or boating. Food had been prepared on Friday and there was no cooking done or needless kitchen work. Sabbath school and church took the morning while there were usually nature walks in the afternoon. Counselors who were naturalists would teach us many useful bits of knowledge about birds, animals, plants and trees.

Now jump ahead with me a decade and visit another weekend 'retreat'. At this one a resort building was rented for the purpose. This was adult and family camp so the activities weren't quite as scheduled or supervised, but still there was certain propriety. Work was shared and some activities scheduled. Sabbath was quiet and properly observed with a real spiritual feast at church and Sabbath school.

There were many changes even then. Most activities were now indoors and no outdoor assemblies held. Games such as shuffleboard, ping pong, pool and ball were indulged in and no nature study or nature hikes were held. Sports, team games and purposeless pastimes were now very much present.

Evening assembly was indoors and although there were some worthwhile stories and Christian hymns and choruses, there were also meaningless and worldly ditties as well as foolish jokes and stories for the sake of a laugh. Fiction and even ghost stories were also told.

During the days, young girls assembled in some of the young boys' rooms, where popular 'hit parade' songs were played. Standards of conduct had vastly deteriorated.

Now come with me into today's Adventist world. The simple old nature camp owned by the conference where I grew up has long since been sold. A resort-type place has taken its place. Lawns are manicured and nature, although still present, is definitely kept at bay. All meetings and assemblies are indoors. Outdoors there is swimming and boating and these may occur on Sabbath as well as any other time.

There is a crew who are paid to do the work of the camp and keep it in order, but they do not have an easy time. Many 'Adventist' youth and even adults attending retreats here seem to delight in a 'hierarchy of badness', trying to out-do one another with foolish and destructive behavior. The maintenance crew has to deal with broken equipment, smashed doors, walls, and even holes smashed in the ceilings!

Noise and hilarity rule the scene. Now nearly all the stories consist of foolish jokes, triviality and meaningless chatter is par for the course. Popular music is played over the sound systems, even songs

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with vile and degrading words are heard and some even indulge in worldly dancing. The games are mostly purposeless time-wasters where nothing useful is learned or accomplished. The spiritual talks consist of people trying to push concepts that anyone who is remotely acquainted with Bible doctrine and Spirit of Prophecy would immediately recognize as false and misleading; concepts that support and advocate the very hilarity and nonsense taking place at that retreat.

Even if one wanted to, it would be impossible to indulge in deep heart searching and seeking renewal of spiritual strength in such surroundings. One of the main reasons this would be impossible is that the Holy Spirit will not attend gatherings where boisterous mirth and hilarity is the order of the day. We are told that these gatherings are carnivals for Satan and his angels.

Now comes the climax of the event—a movie provided by the Pastor for the edification of the faithful on Saturday night. And what is this item? Is it a worthwhile nature documentary? Is it a presentation and appeal for the needs of mission fields? Or perhaps at least a Bible story or inspiring biography? Remember there are many children present here and their whole lives can be easily influenced for good or bad from what is seen at such a gathering.

So what was it? A fictional occult fantasy that no Christian should ever set before his eyes! Something exalting spiritualistic ideas and that has not one word of truth in the whole thing. Children that watched it have complained later about how 'scared' they felt and how they were now plagued with terrifying dreams from the sights and sounds of this devil's delight.

I would like to sound a clear warning here to anyone responsible for presenting entertainment at a gathering such as this, and yes, those who are responsible for what is seen and heard in their own families. God is not amused when fiction, fantasy, foolishness or any other type of worldly entertainment is flashed before the eyes of children and youth. Leaders and Pastors that do this will someday wish that they were never born.

Jesus said clearly: "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" Matthew 18:6,7.

This is one of the strongest denunciations in the Bible and it came from the lips of our loving Savior! Only in the third angel's message do we see again such a dire warning. What is being warned against here? It is causing any child or vulnerable person to become deceived, confused, discouraged or to lose their faith by something we do or say to them. This spiritualistic movie will have long term effects. The devil had a field day at this event and his angels were pressing the ideas and concepts of this spiritualist garbage into the minds of all, young and old who watched it.

Not one person present was immune to these effects and for some this exposure may well lead into more of the occult and spiritualistic until they are hopelessly entangled in witchcraft and spiritualism. Souls may be lost with the result being traced to the source, seeing this movie at the church gathering. Whether he knows it or not, whether he would acknowledge it or not, this pastor now has the blood of souls on his garments and the curse of God hanging over his head. Without full and true repentance, confession and forsaking of such sin and seeking in every way to counteract the influence turned loose by what he did, he is a lost man. Am I judging? Yes indeed I am—and I am using the very words of Jesus to do it!

The Curse of Meroz:

Why, Oh Why, did not someone speak up and protest this wicked entertainment presentation? Why, Oh Why, did not at least some parents hasten their children away from this satanic spectacle? Why did all sit there, as one who attended described the situation, 'Like a deer caught in the headlights of an approaching car'? Sat there transfixed and watching this garbage; allowing their children's minds to be darkened and sullied by it, paralyzed as it were?

We have an interesting case in the Bible, a name of a group of people that only occurs once in the entire canon of scripture: Meroz. Even the Hebrew word only appears once and yet the Spirit of Prophecy has a lot to say about this text, it appears in 52 references on the E.G. White CD-ROM. Here is the sentence

"Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty." Judges 5:23

Meroz it seems, was a place where lived a group of people in the time of the ancient Judges of Israel. At a time of crisis they did absolutely nothing. What their excuse was for this, we do not know, but they complacently just 'did not get involved'.

There are many ways the Spirit of Prophecy uses this text, here are a few: to warn that those who have not been faithful in their homes and communities to honor the Lord will be lost in the Day of Judgment. To awaken those who have complacently listened to the needs of missions and done nothing to help, those who have known of the needs for medical missionary workers and have had no interest to help, and so on.

Here is an example:

"Obedience is required; and unless you obey you will stand on worse than neutral ground. **Unless you are favored with the blessing of God you have His curse.** He requires you to be willing and obedient, and says that you shall eat the good of the land. A bitter curse is pronounced on those who come not to the help of the Lord. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." **Satan and his angels are in the field to oppose every advance step** that God's people take, therefore the help of everyone is required." 2T 165

This should alarm us for our souls if we still have enough spiritual life left to even feel alarm. Notice there that if we do not have God's blessing, we have His curse! **There is no middle ground.** We do not have to commit some heinous revolting crime to have God's curse—all we have to do is complacently refuse to live out the light we have received.

Here is another quote:

"As an illustration of the failure on your part to come up to the work of God, as was your privilege, I was referred to these words: "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Judges 5:23. What had Meroz done? Nothing. And this was their sin. They came not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

Satan wants to destroy all traces of true Sabbath-keeping remnant from the earth. He is present at every gathering and when our people give him an inch, he boils over us and takes a mile of advantage over our souls. And we, like Meroz of old, sit quietly and do nothing—WHY?

I'll tell you why that even conscientious persons, who knew this thing was wrong, did not do anything to oppose it—it was because long before that program, Satan had taken over the minds of those present. The battle had already been fought—and lost in the so-called 'little choices'. ('Oh, it's just in fun, I don't want to seem stuffy and anti-social. Sure it is a bit silly, but we can't be serious all the time.') Compromises, excusing and rationalizing, triviality and vanity had taken the field and all had sold out to it. You say, 'How dare you say all?' Because if they hadn't—the faithful would have quickly sized up the situation, protested, and left the grounds long before the movie was known about or shown.

Meroz does not want to be the one who speaks out and bears the flack from the pleasure lovers. Does the fact that others are doing it excuse us to sit paralyzed?

"Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." My sister, **excuse not your defects because others are wrong**. In the day of God **you will not dare to plead as an excuse** for your neglect to form a character for heaven, that others did not manifest devotion and spirituality. The same lack which you discovered in others was in yourself. And **the fact that others were sinners makes your sins nonetheless grievous.**" 2T 395.

Knowing compromise, in even seemingly 'little things', allows Satan to immediately throw his blinders over our spiritual eyes; the Holy Spirit has to back off and we are hypnotized and led on until 'like the deer in the headlights' we can only stand paralyzed waiting the crash. And dear readers, Satan never applies the brakes! When he has our spiritual sensitivities blunted, he smashes right into us with seduction and temptation from which many never recover.

"In the future (now present) Satan's superstitions will assume new forms. Errors will be presented in a pleasing and flattering manner. False theories, clothed with garments of light, will be presented to God's people. Thus Satan will try to deceive, if possible, the very elect. Most **seducing influences will be exerted; minds will be hypnotized.**" Mar 59.

If even one person would have protested that night, even one parent spoken up and hurried their children away from the scene, others would have followed! At least for some the spell might have been broken, but Satan had laid his plans well; his 'deer' was ripe for the killing.

Pulling the plug on the Holy Spirit and Angelic Protection:

"My message to you is: **No longer consent to listen without protest to the perversion of truth.** ... I have been instructed to warn our people; for many are in danger of receiving theories and sophistries that undermine the foundation pillars of the faith." 1SM 196.

"I was shown the necessity of those who believe that we are having the last message of mercy, being separate from those who are daily imbibing new errors. I saw that neither young nor old should attend their meetings; for it is wrong to thus encourage them while they **teach error that is a deadly poison to the soul** and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. The influence of such gatherings is not good. If God has delivered us from such darkness and error, we should stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has set us free and rejoice in the truth. **God is displeased with us when we go to listen to error, without being obliged to go;** for unless He sends us to those meetings where error is forced home to the people by the power of the will, **He will not keep us. The angels cease their watchful care over us, and we are left to the buffetings of the enemy,** to be darkened and weakened by him and the power of his evil angels; and the light around us becomes contaminated with the darkness. I saw that we have no time to throw away in listening to fables." EW 124

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The above were written to warn those who were attending religious meeting where false doctrines were presented—how much worse is it to be present where nothing of any religious value and yes, even the very entertainment of hell is presented? Can we hope to maintain our souls in a condition of purity and readiness for heaven in such surroundings?

Christian VS Worldly:

"There is a distinction between recreation and amusement. Recreation, when true to its name, **re-creation, tends to strengthen and build up**. Calling us aside from our ordinary cares and occupations, it affords refreshment for mind and body and thus **enables us to return with new vigor to the earnest work of life**. **Amusement, on the other hand, is sought for the sake of pleasure** and is often carried to excess; **it absorbs the energies that are required for useful work** and thus proves a hindrance to life's true success. Between the associations of the followers of Christ for Christian recreation and worldly gatherings for pleasure and amusement will exist a marked contrast. Instead of prayer and the mentioning of Christ and sacred things **will be heard from the lips of worldlings the silly laugh and the trifling conversation**. Their idea is to have a general high time. Their amusements commence in folly and end in vanity. **There is great need of temperance in amusements**, as in every other pursuit. And the character of these amusements should be carefully and thoroughly considered." AH 512

Notice that the silly laugh and trifling conversation and having a 'high time', is the mark of worldlings! Yes, even when it is found in Adventist schools, churches or camp meetings, it is the mark of worldliness. True Christians can not indulge in this behavior. Notice this example:

"In April, 1900, a holiday was appointed at the Avondale school for Christian workers. The program for the day provided for a meeting in the chapel in the morning, at which I and others addressed the students, calling their attention to what God had wrought in the building up of this school, and to their privilege and opportunities as students. After the meeting, **the remainder of the day was spent by the students in various games and sports**, some of which were **frivolous, rude, and grotesque**. ...

"I was shown that in the amusements carried on at the school that afternoon **the enemy gained a victory, and teachers were weighed in the balances and found wanting**. I was greatly distressed and burdened to think that those standing in responsible positions should **open the door and, as it were, invite the enemy in; for this they did** in permitting the exhibitions that took place.... The students were encouraged in a course **the effects of which were not easily effaced**. There is **no end to the path of vain amusements**, and every step taken in it is a step in a path which Christ has not traveled. ...Had their eyes been anointed with the heavenly eyesalve, they would have realized that they could not permit the exhibition that took place that afternoon, without dishonoring God." CT 349.

What did God think of these proceedings?

"This instruction presented (at the morning meeting) before the students duties of the highest order; and to efface by the amusements afterward entered into, the good impressions made, was virtually saying, **"We want not Thy way, O God; we want our own way; we want to follow our own wisdom.**" CT 349.

"In the night season I was a witness to the performance that was carried on on the school grounds. **The students** who engaged in the grotesque mimicry that was seen, **acted out the mind of the enemy**, some in a very unbecoming manner. A view of things was presented before me in which the students were playing **games of tennis and cricket**. Then I was given **instruction**

regarding the character of these amusements. They were presented to me as **a species of idolatry, like the idols of the nations.**

"There were more than visible spectators on the ground. Satan and his angels were there, making impressions on human minds. **Angels of God**, who minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation, **were also present, not to approve, but to disapprove.** They were ashamed that such an exhibition should be given by the professed children of God. **The forces of the enemy gained a decided victory**, and God was dishonored. He who gave His life to refine, ennoble, and sanctify human beings was grieved at the performance." CT 350.

"Hearing a voice, I turned to see who spoke to me. Then **with dignity and solemnity One said**, "Is this the celebration for the anniversary of the opening of the school? Is this the gratitude offering you present to God for the blessings He has given you? The world could render as acceptable an offering on this memorial occasion. The teachers are making the same mistake that has been made over and over again. They should learn wisdom from the experiences of the past. The careless, godless world can offer an abundance of such offerings as these, in a much more acceptable manner."

Turning to the teachers, He said, "**You have made a mistake the effects of which it will be hard to efface.** The Lord God of Israel is not glorified in the school. If at this time the Lord should permit your life to end, many would be lost, eternally separated from God and the righteous." CT 351.

Notice in this quote the word 'One' capitalized; that means it was Jesus Himself who was speaking! So many when excusing gatherings of indulgence and vain amusement will say, "Oh, but Jesus wants us to be happy and have fun", but here it is clear that He wants nothing of this sort of indulgence in the lives of His people.

In the home:

We live in an age when foolishness and vanity is everywhere and worldly entertainment surrounds us like a swamp. Parents tend to be 'so busy' with work and social events that children are often left to themselves. It is so easy for parents to allow children to pass their time with videos, video games, and TV as this keeps them away from the parent who can then follow his or her own selfish pursuits.

Whether we like it or not, **we are responsible and answerable** to God for the example and training we give or fail to give our children. No occupations or social concerns can erase that responsibility. Notice what Ellen White said about priorities when visitors came into her home:

"I began to teach my children about the love of Jesus when they were mere babes. I could not leave the work of training my children to the hands of servants. They were my first considerations. **When visitors came, I told them that they must excuse me** until I had set my children their little task, or provided some suitable amusement for them. **It is the duty of every parent to do as did Abraham**; for he did not betray his sacred trust. If you allow your children to grow up in rebellion against your authority, they will be receiving a training that will cause them to **rebel against the authority of God.**" RH, March 1, 1892.

It takes planning and effort on the part of parents, teachers and church leaders to provide occupation for the youth and children that will have a sanctifying influence on their lives. Activities that promote Bible knowledge, nature appreciation and practical skills may take a little more planning and preparation, but will pay off greatly in character building. True happiness comes only with doing something worthy of a Christian, hilarity and foolishness is the devil's cheap counterfeit.

"Parents had much better burn the idle tales of the day, and the novels as they come into their houses. It would be a mercy to their children. Encourage the reading of these story-books, and it is like enchantment. **It bewilders and poisons the mind.** I saw that unless parents awake to the eternal interest of their children, they will surely be lost through their neglect." Letter 252, 1906. (How much greater is the effect of movies than books?)

The Snare of Pleasure Seeking:

Everywhere in Adventism today we see examples of luxury and self-indulgence. Simplicity of diet and surroundings seems truly a lost art. Adventist activities are nearly all based upon some form of entertainment. Fifty years ago, most school-aged Adventist children knew their Bibles often better than many ministers do today. Soft living, worldly holidays, entertainment, feasting and partying have taken a terrible toll on Adventism.

Just before Israel was to enter Canaan, Balaam was asked by Balak to curse Israel. He was unable to do it, but he later told Balak how to get Israel to curse themselves! Yes, as they responded to invitations to join in the 'holidays', the spirit of feasting, partying and frolic along with the sensual heavy-beat music and the pageantry and gaiety took Israel's mind far away from serving God, and led to the loss of thousands of souls—right on the very border of the Promised Land.

Do you think that most of those who fell into gross idolatry and sensuality at this time really planned to do it that way? No, they just excused and rationalized on the 'little things' until 'like a deer in the headlights', they were set up for Satan to destroy them. Those people lost their souls, friends; they lost eternity for the sake of brief worldly pleasures.

Shall the Angel Record, "A Day Lost?"

"After a day of pleasure seeking is ended, where is the satisfaction to the pleasure seeker? As Christian workers, whom have they helped to a better, higher, and purer life? What would they see if they should look over the record the angel wrote? A day lost! To their own souls a day lost, a day lost in the service of Christ, because no good was accomplished. They may have other days but never that day which was idled away in cheap, foolish talk, of girls with boys, and boys with girls. Never will these same opportunities offer themselves again. They had better been doing the hardest kind of labor on that holiday. They did not make the right use of their holiday, and it passed into eternity to confront them in the judgment as a day misspent." AH 473.

"The young generally conduct themselves as though the precious hours of probation, while mercy lingers, were one grand holiday and **they were placed in this world merely for their own amusement, to be gratified with a continued round of excitement.** Satan has been making special efforts to lead them to find happiness in worldly amusements and to **justify themselves by endeavoring to show that these amusements are harmless, innocent, and even important for health.** He [Satan] presents the path of holiness as difficult, while the paths of worldly pleasure are strewn with flowers. **In false and flattering colors he arrays the world with its pleasures before the youth.** But the pleasures of earth will soon come to an end, and **that which is sown must also be reaped.** He is in every sense of the word a deceiver, a skillful charmer. **He has many finely woven nets, which appear innocent,** but which are skillfully prepared to entangle the young and unwary." AH 523.

No one is going to float to heaven on beds of self-Indulgence:

How is it with you? Worldly holidays are getting bigger and crazier every year and Adventists are neck and neck with worldlings in the indulgence of them. Think of the means wasted by God's people on entertainment and selfish gratification. Adventists have been given a job to do by God; the task that we are to do is to warn a world of their approaching doom and the need to seek to be right with God while mercy still lingers.

All time and means used by God's professed people in luxury, indulgence and entertainment will have to be accounted for in the judgment. How must Jesus look upon our selfish provision for the indulgence of appetite, to please our guests, or to gratify our own inclination! It is a snare to us to aim at making a display or to allow our children, under our control, to do so. When the judgment shall sit, and the books are opened, the losing side will be presented to your view--the good that you might have done with the funds that were used for wholly selfish purposes.

For the price of one candy bar a missionary book could be purchased to bring light to a soul in darkness; for the cost of one party for self indulgence a whole case of books could be bought and shipped to people who are hungering for the privilege of having the light which we leave gathering dust on our library shelves.

If you don't conquer it entirely—You will be LOST!

Vanity, foolishness and frolic are in no way part of Adventism's rightful heritage; no part of any true Christian heritage. Gatherings for entertainment, feasting and gaiety have always been part of the heathen scene. Angels of God are not found there except to record the condemnation of those who indulge in them.

Where is the missionary spirit that Adventism was once famous for? Is it as extinct as the do-do bird? Does anyone these days encourage children to deny their self indulgences for the sake of sacrificing to help spread the light of truth? It costs something to be a true Christian, dear readers. Nothing less than a total surrender, a complete sacrifice of self will ever lead one to stand with the redeemed on the Sea of Glass.

And what about speaking up and protesting wrongful activities in our gatherings? Meroz was cursed—because they did nothing. They might have been 'nice people', they may not have been found doing great wrong. But their decision at that crisis was already made a long time before. Indifference to God's requirements, unconcern about God's honor, slothfulness and carelessness in God's service had left them paralyzed and inactive when action was required.

A true story comes to us from the interesting country of Rumania. There had grown up in a village a nice little Adventist congregation, the members of which had come out of the Orthodox Catholic church. The priests and Bishop were determined to crush out this heresy and gaining the support of the local authorities, they ordered all the Adventists to attend a meeting held in the Orthodox Church.

All the Adventists were there and the Bishop railed on them for a long time. He cursed them as only such men can curse. He brow-beat them until influenced by their past upbringing, he had them trembling before him.

He ordered them all to line up and they obeyed; he ordered them to their knees and they obeyed. Then he ordered them to repent, confess their heresy and plead to return to the Orthodox Church. They were about to do this when a woman, small in stature but big in faith rushed over to them and shouted, "These men are not God! Are you going to pray to a Bishop? Get up on your feet!"

Adventism's Nemesis

Like an electric shock the words hit the trembling Adventists and the spell was broken. They jumped to their feet and ignoring the angry Bishop, returned to their seats. The Bishop was at a loss to know what to do but the mob shouted that they would kill the woman and all the Adventist believers. It seemed that the blood of martyrs was once again to flow, when the officials, who had been asked by the priests to serve their purposes, flew to the assistance of the woman and the believers, escorting them safely to their homes. The Bishop was warned by the officials never to molest the Adventists again.

Friends, God can't fight for Meroz, but if we have the courage of that little woman to speak up for God against wrong, He will honor and bless us. We need to avoid situations where God is not being served and honored and if we, through no compromise on our part, find ourselves where wrong seems to be taking over, we must come to the help of the Lord! What if we even had to shed our blood for standing for righteousness—how much better that would be than the shameful curse of Meroz!