

### **Tithing and Spiritual Gifts**

We believe, too-

18. That a tithe of our increase belongs to the Lord and that besides this we should give cheerfully of offerings, for we are but stewards of the treasures in our hands.

There are ex-Adventists who sigh a deep sigh of relief to be delivered from this tenet. They do not wish to set apart one tenth of their income for God and then add offerings thereto. This is all understandable. The Scriptures are filled with descriptions of the natural selfishness of the human heart. But we cannot understand how a person finds greater joy in the Lord by eliminating tithe and reducing his offerings. A host of Sunday keeping ministers urge tithing on their members and assure them there is joy in such a plan. There is. Adventists know from experience.

### **Spiritual Gifts**

We believe, too-

19. "That God has placed in His church the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. That these gifts operate in harmony with the divine principles of the Bible, and are given for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ."

Ex-Adventists do not wish to be delivered from the general belief in the gifts of the Spirit as this statement sets forth. But they often express joy over being delivered from a certain specific application of this belief. One of the gifts of the Spirit is the gift of prophecy. Adventists believe that this gift has been displayed in the life and writings of Ellen G. White. And how are those writings distinguished? Do they set forth a circumspect view of religious living, or do they advocate fanatical religious habits that lead to excesses? Do they uphold the Scriptures as the very Word of God, the supreme authority in our lives, or do they minimize the Bible or spiritualize it away? Do those writings uphold the great verities of revelation, such as the deity of our Lord and His sacrificial death and literal resurrection, or do they minimize or undermine them?

To anyone who has read Mrs. White's writings the answer is evident. Even her critics will generally agree that her writings promote the highest code of holy living in the setting of the Bible as the very voice of God to us. And that her writings call for constant sacrificial liberality in order that we may complete a task for God and be ready to meet Him in peace at His appearing. Certainly no unbiased person could make any other appraisal.

We can easily understand how an ex-Adventist might find a certain sense of relief in being "delivered" from the belief that Mrs. White's writings are a manifestation of the gift of the Spirit of prophecy. He need not live so highly, he need not sacrifice so deeply, he need not take the Scriptures of God so seriously.

But we cannot understand how that would give him a greater sense of joy in the Lord!

### **The Second Advent and the New Earth**

We believe, too-

20. "That the Second Coming of Christ is the great hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel and plan of salvation. That this coming will be a personal, and literal, and that "it is near, even at the doors," though the exact time cannot be known.

21. That for a thousand years after the Second Advent the saints will be in heaven and the earth will lie desolate under the judgments of God. That at the end of that time the saints will return with their Lord, and fire from God destroy forever the wicked, turning them to ashes, and purging this earth.

22. "That God will make all things new. The earth, restored to its pristine beauty, will become forever the abode of the saints of the Lord."

### **Ex-Adventist May Feel Relief-But**

The ex-Adventist may feel relief at being delivered from the belief that Christ is soon coming to solve the tragedy of a world that seems to be headed for the third world war and mutual suicide. He may find satisfaction in the realization that he no longer believes that Heaven's purging fires will completely destroy every trace of sin and unrepentant sinners. He may feel much better pleased to think that in some segregated area of the universe the horrible thing called sin will be present never ending in the person of its writhing, tortured, flaming devotees. He may even feel relieved that he no longer believes that God will re-create this earth a perfect and eternal abode for redeemed men and women. We can understand how he might so change his theological thinking that he would feel a sense of deliverance from these doctrines in which he no longer believed. But we do not understand how he

would thereby find greater joy in the Lord!

### **In Conclusion**

And now this comment in conclusion. Genuine joy in religious living is not revealed by noisy the amen and bodily gesticulations, but by the zest and enthusiasm with which a person engages in the religious life. The psalmist was "glad" for the invitation to go to the "house of the Lord." The genuinely joyful Christian will be found regularly in attendance at divine services. If he truly loves his Lord, he will give liberally. If he is filled with joy at the realization of what Christ has done for him, he will gladly devote hours of his time to missionary service.

Now as to church attendance, liberality, and missionary activity, how do we stand by comparison with other religious bodies? If we may judge by the way in which Adventists are often set forth by the leaders of other churches as worthy of emulation in these matters, we evidently do not suffer by comparison. But it is our doctrines that make us what we are religiously. We do not wish to be "delivered" from these beliefs; we find in them great joy in the Lord.