

HIDDEN HERESY

Is spiritualism invading Adventist churches today?



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PREFACE

In early January 2005 I received a letter asking for my opinion on a document by an unknown author. It addressed some of the current trends in popular churches and suggested potential problems if Adventist churches took the same course. That letter and document started me on a study far more detailed than I had ever done on this subject. It also reinforced my concerns about some disturbing trends I had noticed in the church.

As I researched the positions of well-known churches and compared those findings with inspired counsel, my discoveries led to an ever growing set of notes. Later, when I shared my thinking with the conference presidents of the Pacific Union, they encouraged me to share the information more widely. What you have in your hands is a result of what I have discovered so far.

I hope what you find in these pages will bring a new awareness of the issues and a commitment to God's truth in your own life. This is the end time, and our loving Savior has shared with us—in His own words and through His prophets—everything we need to stay on course to the kingdom. He has given us guidance and warnings to help our church relate to the world around us.

Certain things I discovered as I studied were new to me, and

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they were obviously controversial. So I counseled with a number of people. I thank each one for taking the time to read the material and share their opinions and suggestions. Special thanks go to my friend Dr. Herb Douglass, who offered invaluable assistance and encouragement along the way. You should be aware that except where otherwise indicated, all bold type in this book represents emphasis that I have added. I have also included full quotations in most cases in order to better provide complete and correct context for the relevant portions cited.

You may or may not agree with my conclusions. But in any case, you will be more informed as to the veiled nature of spiritualism in the great controversy going on between Christ and Satan, and its present and future influence in the churches. I also hope your understanding and commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist mission will be expanded.

Thomas Mostert

CHAPTER **1**

CAN YOU IDENTIFY MODERN SPIRITUALISM?

Spiritualism influencing the Adventist Church? “What a bizarre idea,” you say. “How in the world could something so foreign to the very heart of Adventism possibly gain entry into this church? And what pastor or member would stand by and let it happen? That just isn’t possible!”

But before you dismiss this idea as impossible, take the quiz below and see if you are really aware of the present façade of modern spiritualism. Its concepts have become accepted in the Christian church and now seem to be coming, unrecognized, through the back door of some Adventist churches.

Spiritualism is now changing its form and, veiling some of its more objectionable features, is assuming a Christian guise. . . .

Christ is as verily rejected as before; but Satan has so blinded the eyes of the people that the deception is not discerned (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 557, 558).

“Satan . . . comes to poor, deceived mortals, through modern spiritualism. . . . The world knows but little as yet of the

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corrupting influence of spiritualism. The curtain was lifted, and much of its dreadful work was revealed to me” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 343). And in the context of Satan’s last great deception, Ellen White wrote, “The line of distinction between professed Christians and the ungodly is now hardly distinguishable. Church members love what the world loves and are ready to join with them, and Satan determines to unite them in one body and thus strengthen his cause by sweeping all into the ranks of spiritualism” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 588).

Can you identify veiled spiritualism?

Read the following statements carefully. Within these well-known non-Adventist theological teachings, see if you can spot those that prepare the way for spiritualism. *Circle the numbers that express spiritualistic concepts.* (**Note: You are looking for that which opens the door to spiritualism, not whether you agree with the theological viewpoint.**)

1. Through continuous spiritual consciousness, death no longer exists.
2. Sin is any act or thought that robs myself or another human being of his or her self-esteem.
3. To be born again means we must be changed from a negative to a positive self-image—from inferiority to self-esteem, from fear to love, from doubt to trust.
4. In the mind of Jesus, self-esteem is the ultimate human value. Christ came to teach that simple truth, and He came to live it.

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5. Jesus Christ knew, in reality, there is no evil. Therefore evil is a false law man has made for himself.
6. All true believers are one with Christ and each other, regardless of denominational background.
7. “If I Accept Jesus Christ Is My Salvation Forever?” Definitely! Your salvation is through the most trustworthy being in the universe—Jesus Christ! You didn’t do anything to earn your salvation, and you can’t do anything to lose it. Your salvation is maintained by God’s trustworthiness and love, not by what you do.
8. When you stand before God, He will not ask you about your religious background or doctrinal views. The only thing that will matter is: Did you accept Jesus?
9. If you want Jesus to come back sooner, focus on fulfilling your mission, not figuring out prophecies.
10. I invite you to bow your head and quietly whisper the prayer that will change your eternity: *“Jesus, I believe in you and receive you.”* Go ahead. If you sincerely meant that prayer, congratulations. Welcome to the family of God.

If you circled all ten statements, you spotted veiled spiritualism. If you missed some, you will learn more in the following pages. (The source for each of the ten statements above is given at the end of this chapter.)

You will also recognize that most of these statements come from very popular and fast-growing churches. Since some Adventists are studying the church growth concepts of these churches, it is possible that while pursuing the worthy goal of

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growing the church, the door is opened to concepts that could have a corrupting influence.

The two great end-time errors

In the vast sweep of end-time events that will take place before Jesus comes, spiritualism and Sunday sacredness will play pivotal roles. They will contribute to the spiritual decline of the popular churches, even as these churches seem caught up in a grand revival. Ellen White describes the last deception in these words:

Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome. The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience (The Great Controversy, p. 588).

Sacredness of God's law

Satan began his rebellion in heaven with the clear goal of doing away with the law of God. That was one of the primary issues that caused him and a third of the angels to be cast out of heaven. It is still his primary goal, and through various means he

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is attempting to erase God's law from human consciousness. We must keep this clearly in mind as we move through this study, for it is the key issue that emerges again and again in the great controversy. "Satan grew bold in his rebellion, and expressed his contempt of the Creator's law. This Satan could not bear. He claimed that angels needed no law but should be left free to follow their own will, which would ever guide them right; that law was a restriction of their liberty; and that to abolish law was one great object of his" (*The Story of Redemption*, pp. 18, 19).

Because the children of men reject the plainest teachings of his word, and trample upon his law, God leaves them to choose that which they desire. They spurn the truth, and he permits them to believe a lie. They refuse to yield to the convictions of the Holy Spirit, and Satan, transforming himself into an angel of light, leads them captive at his will. If men were but conversant with the word of God, and obedient to its teachings, they could not be thus deceived; but they neglect the great detector of fraud, and the mind becomes confused and corrupted by the deceptive arts of men, and the secret power of the father of lies (*Signs of the Times*, May 18, 1882).

Marvelous beyond expression is the blindness of the people of this generation. **Thousands reject the word of God as unworthy of belief and with eager confidence receive the deceptions of Satan.** Skeptics and scoffers denounce the bigotry of those who contend for the faith of prophets and apostles, and they divert themselves by

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holding up to ridicule the solemn declarations of the Scriptures concerning Christ and the plan of salvation, and the retribution to be visited upon the rejecters of the truth. They affect great pity for minds so narrow, weak, and superstitious as to acknowledge the claims of God and obey the requirements of His law. They manifest as much assurance as if, indeed, they had made a covenant with death and an agreement with hell—as if they had erected an impassable, impenetrable barrier between themselves and the vengeance of God. **Nothing can arouse their fears. So fully have they yielded to the tempter, so closely are they united with him, and so thoroughly imbued with his spirit, that they have no power and no inclination to break away from his snare** (*The Great Controversy*, p. 561).

The substitution of the laws of men for the law of God, the exaltation, by merely human authority, of Sunday in place of the Bible Sabbath, is the last act in the drama. When this substitution becomes universal, God will reveal Himself (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 141).

Veiled spiritualism

Spiritualism is the other great issue in end-time events. “Satan determines to unite them [professed Christians and the ungodly] in one body and thus strengthen his cause by sweeping all into the ranks of spiritualism” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 588). But it will take on a new look, dress in new clothes, and appear to be something it isn't.

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Under this “Christian” guise, spiritualism successfully prepares people to accept the false teachings of evil spirits that directly contradict Scripture.

Those who oppose the teachings of spiritualism are assailing, not men alone, but Satan and his angels. They have entered upon a contest against principalities and powers and wicked spirits in high places. Satan will not yield one inch of ground except as he is driven back by the power of heavenly messengers. The people of God should be able to meet him, as did our Saviour, with the words: “It is written.” **Satan can quote Scripture now as in the days of Christ, and he will pervert its teachings to sustain his delusions. Those who would stand in this time of peril must understand for themselves the testimony of the Scriptures.**

Many will be confronted by the **spirits of devils** personating beloved relatives or friends and **declaring the most dangerous heresies**. These visitants will appeal to our tenderest sympathies and will work miracles to sustain their pretensions. We must be prepared to withstand them with the Bible truth that the dead know not anything and that they who thus appear are the spirits of devils.

Just before us is “the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” Revelation 3:10. All whose faith is not firmly established upon the word of God will be deceived and overcome. Satan “works with all deceivableness of unrighteousness” to gain control of the children of men, and his

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deceptions will continually increase. But he can gain his object only as men voluntarily yield to his temptations. Those who are earnestly seeking a knowledge of the truth and are striving to purify their souls through obedience, thus doing what they can to prepare for the conflict, will find, in the God of truth, a sure defense. "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee" (verse 10), is the Saviour's promise. He would sooner send every angel out of heaven to protect His people than leave one soul that trusts in Him to be overcome by Satan (Ibid., pp. 559, 560).

Men of intelligence are **infatuated with Satanic sorcery** as verily today as in the days of Paul. **Thousands accept the opinion of the minister or obey the injunctions of the pope or priest, and neglect God's word and despise his truth.** God would have his people learn their duty for themselves. The Bible declares his will to men, and it is as much our privilege and our duty to learn that will as it is that of ministers and popes and priests to learn it. What they can read from God's word, we can all read (*Signs of the Times*, May 18, 1882).

It is true that spiritualism is now changing its form and, veiling some of its more objectionable features, it is assuming a Christian guise. . . .

Even in its present form, so far from being more worthy of toleration than formerly, it is really a more dangerous, because a more subtle, deception. While it formerly de-

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nounced Christ and the Bible, it now *professes* to accept both. But the Bible is interpreted in a manner that is pleasing to the unrenewed heart, while its solemn and vital truths are made of no effect. Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God, but it is degraded to a weak sentimentalism, making little distinction between good and evil. God's justice, His denunciations of sin, the requirements of His holy law, are all kept out of sight. The people are taught to regard the Decalogue as a dead letter. Pleasing, bewitching fables captivate the senses and lead men to reject the Bible as the foundation of their faith. Christ is as verily denied as before; but Satan has so blinded the eyes of the people that the deception is not discerned (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 557, 558).

Notice carefully how the quotation above details the subtle changes in the public face of spiritualism—changes all designed to create an atmosphere in which false teachers can tear down God's law. Notice that Ellen White points out five specific aspects to this veiled form of Satan's tool. All can now be seen in modern Christian churches:

1. **“The Bible is interpreted** in a manner that is pleasing to the unrenewed heart, while its solemn and **vital truths are made of no effect.**”
2. **“Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God,** but it is degraded to a weak sentimentalism, **making little distinction between good and evil.**”
3. “God's justice, His denunciations of sin, **the requirements**

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- of His holy law, are all kept out of sight.** The people are taught to regard the Decalogue as a dead letter.”
4. **“Pleasing, bewitching fables captivate the senses** and lead men to reject the Bible as the foundation of their faith.”
 5. **“Christ is . . . denied . . . ,”** but the **eyes of the people are blinded so that they don’t see the deception.**

These concepts prepare the ground for the last great deception.

The line of distinction between professing Christians and the ungodly is now hardly distinguishable. Church members love what the world loves and are ready to join with them, **and Satan determines to unite them in one body and thus strengthen his cause by sweeping all into the ranks of spiritualism.** Papists, who boast of miracles as a certain mark of the true church, will be readily deceived by this wonder-working power; and Protestants, having cast away the shield of truth, will also be deluded. Papists, Protestants, and worldlings will alike accept the form of godliness without the power, and **they will see in this union a grand movement for the conversion of the world, and the ushering in of the long-expected millennium** (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 588, 589).

I was directed to this scripture as especially applying to modern spiritualism: Colossians 2:8: “Beware lest

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any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” . . .

“Vain deceit” fills the minds of poor mortals. They think there is such power in themselves to accomplish great works that they realize no necessity of a higher power. **Their principles and faith are “after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ”** (*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 723).

Jesus has not taught them this philosophy. Nothing of the kind can be found in His teachings. He did not direct the minds of poor mortals to themselves, to a power which they possessed. He was ever directing their minds to God, the Creator of the universe, as the source of their strength and wisdom. Special warning is given in verse 18: “Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshiping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 297).

Inspiration describes other pieces of the end-time puzzle that help us understand more clearly how “the two great errors” are established. Jesus prophesied, “Many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. And many false prophets will appear and will lead many people astray. Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:10–12, NLT).

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Paul said,

And now, brothers and sisters, let us tell you about the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we will be gathered together to meet him. . . .

For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God and the man of lawlessness is revealed—the one who brings destruction. He will exalt himself and defy every god there is and tear down every object of adoration and worship. He will position himself in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God (2 Thessalonians 2:1–4, NLT).

The Bible declares that before the coming of the Lord there will exist a state of religious declension similar to that in the first centuries. “In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be *lovers of their own selves*, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, *despisers of those that are good*, traitors, heady, high-minded, *lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness*, but denying the power thereof.” 2 Timothy 3:1-5. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” 1 Timothy 4:1. Satan will work “with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.” And all that “received not the love of the truth, that they might be

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saved,” will be left to accept “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11. When this state of ungodliness shall be reached, the same results will follow as in the first centuries.

The wide diversity of belief in the Protestant churches is regarded by many as decisive proof that no effort to secure a forced uniformity can ever be made. But there has been for years, in churches of the Protestant faith, a strong and growing sentiment in favor of a union based upon common points of doctrine. To secure such a union, the discussion of subjects upon which all were not agreed—however important they might be from a Bible standpoint—must necessarily be waived (*The Great Controversy*, p. 444).

By the pride of human wisdom, by contempt for the influence of the Holy Spirit, and by disrelish for the truths of God’s word, many who profess to be Christians, and who feel competent to teach others, will be led to turn away from the requirements of God. Paul declared to Timothy, “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” [2 Timothy 4:3-4.]

The apostle does not here refer to the openly irreligious, but to the professing Christians who make inclination their guide, and thus become enslaved by self. **Such are willing to listen to those doctrines only that do not rebuke their sins or condemn their pleasure-loving**

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course. They are offended by the plain words of the faithful servants of Christ and choose teachers who praise and flatter them. And among professing ministers there are those who preach the opinions of men instead of the word of God. Unfaithful to their trust, they lead astray those who look to them for spiritual guidance (*Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 504, 505).

After describing in graphic detail how society will fall apart in the end time, Paul adds that the basic reason will be due to people acting “as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly” (2 Timothy 3:5, NLT). Peter puts it this way: “I want to remind you that in the last days there will be scoffers who will laugh at the truth and do every evil thing they desire” (2 Peter 3:3, NLT).

Key to quiz references:

1. *Love, Medicine, and Miracles*, p. 220. Dr. Bernie Siegel, New Age/occult writer endorsed by Norman Vincent Peale.
2. *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation*, p. 14. Robert Schuller, Word Books, 1982.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
4. *Hour of Power* Web site. Robert Schuller. Spiritual Guidance section (basic beliefs) “The Greatest Day in the History of the World,” February 4, 2005.
5. *The Game of Life*, p. 30. Florence Shinn, metaphysician, endorsed on the cover by Norman Vincent Peale. (Peale was the inspiration for Robert Schuller.)
6. Willow Creek Statement of Belief, *The Church*. From the Willow Creek Web site, February 4, 2005. Bill Hybels, founding pastor.
7. Saddleback Church Beliefs, Rick Warren, from the church Web site.
8. *The Purpose Driven Life*, p. 34. Rick Warren, Zondervan, 2002.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 286.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 58, 59.