

Close of Probation

God has not revealed to us the dates when probation will close, but His warnings are clear. To the antediluvians He warned: "My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Genesis 6:3). To ancient Israel He said: "thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting" (Jeremiah 15:6). To us today He says: "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:33). But you may ask why is the study of the close of probation important? It is important for mainly two reasons.

First, the close of probation reveals that the mercy of God, as His justice, is everlasting. His mercy is always expressed in permitting us the freedom of our choices. Mercifully He draws us to Himself and permits us to consider repenting. He grants us the gift of repentance if we are willing to desire it. Mercifully He allows humans the freedom to choose rebellion, in the sense that He will force no one to be saved. If a person is willing to be renewed and transformed, God facilitates that. If a person is not willing, God will not force such a person.

The mercy of God does not end with the close of probation. But rather, the close of probation demonstrates that God has nurtured His creation to the point where everyone has made a free and final decision. God in His mercy has provided for a plan of salvation. Mercy lingers, pleading with all to accept it, but as all come to a free and final decision, for death or life, there is no point in continuing pleading. In the close of probation, God simply recognises the free and final decision that His created beings have made and He discontinues pleading.

Second, the close of probation reveals that the justice of God, as His mercy, is everlasting. In His justice, He intends to end sin and suffering. When the universe reaches a point where no purpose is achieved in allowing suffering to continue, then to permit it to last even one moment longer than necessary would be out of character for God. In His justice, He will punish sin and end suffering, with an everlasting effect. In that sense too, the close of probation is an important study for the saints of God.

But "Men and women are in the last hours of probation, and yet are careless and stupid, and ministers have no power to arouse them; they are asleep themselves. Sleeping preachers preaching to a sleeping people!" (Testimonies, Vol. 2, p. 337).

Judgment before probation close

Probation closes at the end of the antitypical Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgment that begun at the end of the 2300 days (Daniel 8:14) in 1844 (see The Great Controversy, chapter 24). The service is presided over by God the Father as the judge and the Son of God as the mediator. Only the cases of the professed people of God are reviewed in this first judgment, for "Judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17). The judgment of the wicked is after the close of probation and the saints sit on that tribunal, for "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Corinthians 6:2).

Decisions are based on the records. Daniel says: "the judgment was set, and the books were opened" (Daniel 7:10). John adds: "Another book was opened, which is the book of

life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Revelation 20:12).

"A book of remembrance" is kept wherein are recorded the good deeds of "them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name" (Malachi 3:16). Nehemiah refers to this when he says: "Remember me, O my God, . . . and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God" (Nehemiah 13:14). In the book of God's remembrance every deed of righteousness is immortalised. Says the psalmist: "Thou tellest my wanderings: put Thou my tears into Thy bottle: are they not in Thy book?" (Psalm 56:8).

Sins are also recorded. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Christ says: "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:36, 37). God "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Corinthians 4:5). "Behold, it is written before Me, . . . your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 65:6, 7).

Judgment is based on the law of God. Says the wise man: "Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14). James adds: "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:12).

As names come to review, names with sins on records, unrepented and unforgiven, are blotted out of the book of life. The Lord declared to Moses: "Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book" (Exodus 32:33). Due to unrepented sins, their good deeds are erased from the book of God's remembrance. Says Ezekiel: "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, . . . all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned" (Ezekiel 18:24).

All who have truly repented of sin, claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, obeyed the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they will have eternal life. The Lord declares, by the prophet Isaiah: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:25). Said Jesus: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels" (Revelation 3:5). "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32, 33).

"Solemn are the scenes connected with the closing work of the atonement. Momentous are the interests involved therein. The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. For many years this work has been in progress. Soon – none know how soon – it will pass to the cases of the living. In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review. At this time above all others it behooves every soul to heed the Saviour's admonition: 'Watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is' (Mark 13:33). 'If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee' (Revelation 3:3)" (The Great Controversy, p. 490).

At the end of this antitypical Day of Atonement, when the work of the investigative judgment closes, the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death. Probation is

ended a short time before the appearing of the Lord in the clouds of heaven. After His service, Christ declares: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:11, 12).

Music before probation close

Before the close of probation, a dramatic style of music will be brought into the Seventh-day Adventist church worship. Drums will be a major part of this new music. "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40) is largely being ignored in Sabbath-keeping worship services. Celebratory worship is on the increase. Perversion of worship is manifest in shouting, with drums, frivolous ditty choruses, dancing, clapping, jeering, excitement and confusion. But "the Lord desires to have in His service order and discipline, not excitement and confusion" (Maranatha, p. 234). This perversion is connected with the close of probation, as foretold.

"The things you have described as taking place in Indiana, the Lord has shown me would take place just before the close of probation. Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit" (Selected Messages, vol. 2, p. 36). Sadly, this prophecy has long been fulfilled in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The faithful leaders in the church are now calling for a true reformation. Unfortunately, few Adventists are heeding the call, but many are given to contemporary worship with its music and drums.

"Those things which have been in the past will be in the future. Satan will make music a snare by the way in which it is conducted. God calls upon His people, who have the light before them in the Word and in the Testimonies, to read and consider, and to take heed. Clear and definite instruction has been given in order that all may understand. But the itching desire to originate something new results in strange doctrines, and largely destroys the influence of those who would be a power for good if they held firm the beginning of their confidence in the truth the Lord had given them" (Selected Messages, vol. 2, p. 38).

"Singing is just as much the worship of God in a religious meeting as speaking, and any oddity or peculiarity cultivated attracts the attention of the people and destroys the serious, solemn impression which should be the result of sacred music. Anything strange and eccentric in singing detracts from the seriousness and sacredness of religious service.

"Bodily exercise profiteth little. Everything that is connected in any way with religious worship should be dignified, solemn, and impressive. God is not pleased when ministers professing to be Christ's representatives so misrepresent Christ as to throw the body into acting attitudes, making undignified and coarse gestures, unrefined, coarse gesticulations. All this amuses, and will excite the curiosity of those who wish to see strange, odd, and exciting things, but these things will not elevate the minds and hearts of those who witness them.

"The very same may be said of singing. You assume undignified attitudes. You put in all the power and volume of the voice you can. You drown the finer strains and notes of voices more musical than your own. This bodily exercise and the harsh, loud voice makes no melody to those who hear on earth and those who listen in heaven. This singing is defective and not acceptable to God as perfect, softened, sweet strains of music. There

are no such exhibitions among the angels as I have sometimes seen in our meetings. Such harsh notes and gesticulations are not exhibited among the angel choir. Their singing does not grate upon the ear. It is soft and melodious and comes without this great effort I have witnessed. It is not forced and strained, requiring physical exercise" (Selected Messages, vol. 3, p. 333).

"Eternal things have little weight with the youth. Angels of God are in tears as they write in the roll the words and acts of professed Christians. Angels are hovering around yonder dwelling. The young are there assembled; there is the sound of vocal and instrumental music. Christians are gathered there, but what is that you hear? It is a song, a frivolous ditty, fit for the dance hall. Behold the pure angels gather their light closer around them, and darkness envelops those in that dwelling. The angels are moving from the scene. Sadness is upon their countenances. Behold, they are weeping. This I saw repeated a number of times all through the ranks of Sabbath-keepers" (The Voice in Speech and Song, p. 420). Must you make your guardian angel weep?

Are you attending a celebratory worship service with drums and frivolous ditty songs? If "the angels are moving from the scene," suppose ye that evil angels will hesitate to come in? Can you develop a Christ-like character needed for the final test whilst you attend worship without the pure angels? Must you be indifferent to such perversion of worship?

Sunday Law before probation close

In the book Last Day Events (pp. 224-226), we are told that Sunday keeping will become the mark of the beast when the decree goes forth causing men to worship Sunday, and that the enforcement of Sunday observance will be the test. We are told that Sunday Law is to be the great test for the people of God, by which their eternal destiny will be decided.

For many years now, "Men and women have confederated to oppose the Lord God of heaven, and the church is only half awake to the situation" (Evangelism, p. 363). As the church remains 'half awake,' these confederacies cause a state and religion unity, as a result of which freedom of religious conscience is violated, and then these confederacies demand a universal Sunday Law as a solution to world peace. At first, God's people are not compromising on their faith, they refuse to worship on Sunday, and they are met with religious persecution by those nations that have united and religions that have confederated by putting away their differences.

As the shaking caused by the straight testimony from within intensifies, and whilst the persecution from without increases, the majority in the Remnant church who have not developed a Christ-like character, shall get offended and betray hitherto their brethren: "And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another" (Matthew 24:10).

The Sunday Law is the great test that will reveal the true character of those who profess to be the children of God. Those who by their lifestyle have remained lukewarm will betray their brethren. History repeats itself: Judas betrayed Jesus (Matthew 26:47-50), and we are told that, "we have far more to fear from within than from without" (Selected Messages, Vol. 2, p. 122). Those who get offended and betray the brethren will have failed the great test.

We are told that, "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” (Great Controversy, p. 608).

Those “who have step by step yielded to worldly demands, and conformed to worldly customs, will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. The contest is between the commandments of God and the commandments of men” (Review and Herald, 27 April 1911). They will not find it hard to observe Sunday. They will fail the great final test.

Our characters are now being moulded either for the mark of the beast or for the seal of God. “Those who are uniting with the world are receiving the worldly mold and preparing for the mark of the beast. Those who are distrustful of self, who are humbling themselves before God and purifying their souls by obeying the truth these are receiving the heavenly mold and preparing for the seal of God in their foreheads” (Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 214). The Sunday Law is the great test that will reveal the true character of every professed Christian.

“The Lord has shown me clearly that the image of the beast will be formed before probation closes; for it is to be the great test for the people of God, by which their eternal destiny will be decided. This is the test that the people of God must have before they are sealed. All who proved their loyalty to God by observing His law, and refusing to accept a spurious sabbath, will rank under the banner of the Lord God Jehovah, and will receive the seal of the living God. Those who yield the truth of heavenly origin and accept the Sunday sabbath, will receive the mark of the beast” (SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 7, p. 976). Sunday Law decides our eternal destiny!

It could not be clearer: “for the people of God,” at Sunday Law, “their eternal destiny will be decided.” It is now we must be Christ-like, for “the great final test comes at the close of human probation, when it will be too late for the soul’s need to be supplied” (Christ’ Object Lesson, p. 412). Just before the close of probation, we will face this great final test. Only those who have beforehand developed a Christ-like character will pass the great final test.

Seventh-day Adventists have had great light, yet many remain unconverted! “Of those who boast of their light and yet fail to walk in it Christ says, ‘But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum [Seventh-day Adventists, who have had great light], which art exalted unto heaven [in point of privilege], shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day”’ [The bracketed comments are by Ellen White] (The Review and Herald, 1 August 1893).

As many Adventists desert Christ (John 6:66), a final call is made to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46). “But I speak not my own words when I say that God’s Spirit will pass by those who have had their day of test and opportunity, but who have not distinguished the voice of

God or appreciated the movings of His Spirit. Then thousands in the eleventh hour will see and acknowledge the truth. 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed' (Amos 9:13). These conversions to truth will be made with a rapidity that will surprise the church, and God's name alone will be glorified" (Selected Messages, Vol. 2, p. 16). Do not remain lukewarm!

"Oh, that the people might know the time of their visitation! There are many who have not yet heard the testing truth for this time. There are many with whom the Spirit of God is striving. The time of God's destructive judgments is the time of mercy for those who have had no opportunity to learn what is truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; His hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter" (Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 97). Merciful God!

Sunday Law test will draw a distinction "between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not" (Malachi 3:18). But whilst a large class of Adventists fail the Sunday Law test, God's people still in Babylon are called out.

John "heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4); calling other flock out of Babylon.

Many of God's people are still in Babylon because they are kept captive in Babylon for the want of truth. No longer have the hosts of evil power to keep God's people captive; for "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city," which hath "made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication;" and to God's people still in Babylon is given the message, "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 14:8; 18:4). As the captive exiles heeded the message, "Flee out of the midst of Babylon" (Jeremiah 51:6), and were restored to the Land of Promise, so those who fear God today are heeding the message to withdraw from spiritual Babylon, and soon they are to stand as trophies of divine grace in the earth made new, the heavenly Canaan.

The message in Revelation 14 warns men against receiving the mark of the beast or of his image in their foreheads or in their hands. To receive this mark means to come to the same decision as the beast has done, and to advocate the same ideas, in direct opposition to the Word of God.

The forehead represents the mind, and the hand is a symbol of work. "On the hand" and "between the eyes" are consistent symbols in Scripture for a person's thoughts and actions (Exodus 13:16; Deuteronomy 6:8; 11:18). A person will receive the mark of the beast in his forehead by choosing to believe that Sunday is a holy day in spite of Bible truth. A person will be marked in the right hand by working on God's Sabbath or by outwardly keeping Sunday laws for convenient reasons – such as a job or family.

When you obey the decree that commands you to cease from labour on Sunday and worship God, while you know that there is not a word in the Bible showing Sunday to be other than a common working day, you consent to receive the mark of the beast, and refuse the seal of God. Those who refuse the laws of the Antichrist and obey the law of Christ will suffer persecution. Those who try to remain neutral will be counted for Antichrist, for Christ said, "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters" (Matthew 12:30). There is no middle ground: you pass the final

test and get the seal of God or you fail and get the mark of the beast. To pass the great final test, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

Sealing before probation close

The winds of strife are yet held back until God's people are sealed, after which there will be a time of trouble. We are told, "Just before we entered it [the time of trouble], we all received the seal of the living God. Then I saw the four angels cease to hold the four winds. And I saw famine, pestilence and sword, nation rose against nation, and the whole world was in confusion" (SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 968).

Before probation closes, there is a sealing time. The sealing time is the present time. Sealing is the settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so that you cannot be moved. There are changes to be made in a person, intellectually and spiritually. These occur through the ideas and doctrines we adopt. These modify our faith and practice. While truth sanctifies, error corrupts. This is why sound doctrine is important. To him that will be sealed, Paul admonishes, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16).

To be sealed is to be settled in the testimony and the law of God; when we both know and love it, then the Lord will declare: "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples" (Isaiah 8:16), and "never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Psalms 55:22). For every doctrine we must appeal to "the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). For the law of God is the one unerring rule, by which all doctrines are to be tested.

We must be settled in the truth so "that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14). The law and testimony represent "the hope of the gospel" preached to us, in which we must be "grounded and settled, and be not moved away from" (Colossians 1:23). The seal is therefore the pure mark of truth.

John "saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God" (Revelation 7:2) to place on the servants of God. This seal is "a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved" (SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1161).

To be sealed, we must depart from iniquity. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19).

To those that are to be sealed, sin must "become exceeding sinful" (Romans 7:13). Even others' sin must grieve those that are to be sealed. "The Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" (Ezekiel 9:4). We must no more be indifferent to sin.

We are told, "Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost" (Testimonies to the Church, Vol.

5, p. 214). Note that the conditions for the sealing and for the latter rain are here the same. John tells us that those who receive the seal of God are holy: "And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God" (Revelation 14:5). To be sealed therefore we must by the grace of God overcome sin.

The Christ-like character, a prerequisite for the sealing, must be developed now. Seventh-day Adventists cannot with impunity reject the warning which God in His mercy has sent them through the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy and therefore fail to develop a character that is worthy of the seal of God and hope to develop such a character amidst the panic and fear of enacted Sunday Law. We are told: "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" (The Great Controversy, p. 608).

Probation closes unexpectedly

When the last decision to enforce universal Sunday law has been made, when all have taken sides, either for the Sabbath or for Sunday law, when all have received either the seal of God or the mark of the beast, probation will end suddenly and unexpectedly.

When all the people in the world have taken sides, an irrevocable declaration is pronounced: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:11). The date of that declaration we do not know, but probation will close.

Again, we do not know exactly when probation will close, for that date and time God has not revealed it to mortal man. We are simply told: "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:33). We may die before or we may live to the close of probation. We must now be ready lest the close of probation find us unprepared.

Probation closes when Christ ceases pleading for men. "When Jesus ceases to plead for man, the cases of all are forever decided. Probation closes. Christ's intercessions cease in heaven. This time finally comes suddenly upon all, and those who have neglected to purify their souls by obeying the truth are found sleeping" (Testimonies, vol. 2, p. 191).

We are also told, "When probation ends, it will come suddenly, unexpectedly – at a time when we are least expecting it. But we can have a clean record in heaven today, and know that God accepts us" (SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 989). Probation is ended a short time before the appearing of the Lord in the clouds of heaven.

Before the Flood, after Noah entered the ark, God shut him in, and shut the ungodly out; but for seven days the people, knowing not that their doom was fixed, continued their careless, pleasure-loving life, and mocked the warnings of impending judgment. "So," says the Saviour, "shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:39). Silently, unnoticed as the midnight thief, will come the decisive hour which marks the fixing of every man's destiny, the final withdrawal of mercy's offer to guilty men.

While the man of business is absorbed in the pursuit of gain, while the pleasure lover is seeking indulgence, while the daughter of fashion is arranging her adornments – it may be in that hour the Judge of all the earth will pronounce the sentence: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting" (Daniel 5:27).

When probation closes, “the righteous and the wicked will still be living upon the earth in their mortal state – men will be planting and building, eating and drinking, all unconscious that the final, irrevocable decision has been pronounced in the sanctuary above” (The Great Controversy, p. 491).

We are told, “When the irrevocable decision of the sanctuary has been pronounced, and the destiny of the world has been forever fixed, the inhabitants of the earth will know it not. The forms of religion will be continued by a people from whom the Spirit of God has been finally withdrawn, and the satanic zeal with which the prince of evil will inspire them for the accomplishment of his malignant designs, will bear the semblance of zeal for God” (The Great Controversy, p. 615).

Those who do not now appreciate the truth, and dearly prize the Word of God spoken by His servants will have cause to mourn bitterly hereafter. After close of probation, the fearful plagues will begin to fall (Revelation 16). Then those who have despised God’s Word, those who have lightly esteemed it, shall “wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord and shall not find it” (Amos 8:12). A famine will be in the land for hearing the Word.

We should now be making the best of our present opportunities. There will be no other probation given to us in which to prepare for heaven. This is our only and last opportunity to form characters which will fit us for translation at Christ’s second coming.

All will be tested and tried according to the light they have had. Those who turn from the truth to fables can look for no second probation. There will be no temporal millennium. If, after the Spirit of God has brought conviction to their hearts, they resist the truth and use their influence to block the way so that others will not receive it, they will never be convinced. They did not seek for transformation of character in the probation given them, and Christ will not give them opportunity to pass over the ground again. The decision is a final one.

Trouble after probation close

In The Great Controversy, page 615 onwards, we read: When God’s presence was finally withdrawn from the Jewish nation, priests and people knew it not. Though under the control of Satan, and swayed by the most horrible and malignant passions, they still regarded themselves as the chosen of God. The ministration in the temple continued; sacrifices were offered upon its polluted altars, and daily the divine blessing was invoked upon a people guilty of the blood of God’s dear Son and seeking to slay His ministers and apostles.

So when the irrevocable decision of the sanctuary has been pronounced and the destiny of the world has been forever fixed, the inhabitants of the earth will know it not. The forms of religion will be continued by a people from whom the Spirit of God has been finally withdrawn; and the satanic zeal with which the prince of evil will inspire them for the accomplishment of his malignant designs, will bear the semblance of zeal for God.

As the Sabbath has become the special point of controversy throughout Christendom, and religious and secular authorities have combined to enforce the observance of the Sunday, the persistent refusal of a small minority to yield to the popular demand will make them objects of universal execration. It will be urged that the few who stand in opposition to an

institution of the church and a law of the state ought not to be tolerated; that it is better for them to suffer than for whole nations to be thrown into confusion and lawlessness.

The same argument was brought against Christ by the rulers of the people, that “it is expedient for us,” said Caiaphas, “that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not” (John 11:50). This same argument will appear conclusive; and a death decree will finally be issued against those who hallow the Sabbath of the fourth commandment.

The people of God will then be plunged into those scenes of affliction and distress described by the prophet as the time of Jacob’s trouble: “Thus saith the Lord: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace ... All faces are turned into paleness. Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it” (Jeremiah 30:5-7).

The time of Jacob’s trouble will end with the appearing of Christ. “At that time shall Michael stand up, the great Prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book” (Daniel 12:1). Final probation has long closed, the great controversy is finally ended, and God’s people are forever saved.

Closing remarks

During the Sunday Law persecution “many will be martyrs for Christ’s sake in standing in defense of the truth” (Maranatha, p. 199), for the slain souls of old have hitherto waited “... until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” (Revelation 6:9-11), for in obeying the truth, “they loved not their lives unto the death” (Revelation 12:11).

Probation closes when Christ ceases pleading for men; He makes a solemn announcement: “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still” (Revelation 22:11). Probation has now closed.

The wicked turn against the hundred and forty-four thousand who are preserved as “the first fruits” (Revelation 14:4) – it is the “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7)! The plagues begin falling upon the wicked, they receive no water but blood, “For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink” (Revelation 16:6). Christ returns at the end of the plagues.

Finally, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).