

Guarding the Reputation

By Thomas A. Davis

1956

A good reputation is much more easily lost than built up. Like a tree, which takes many years to grow but which may be felled in a few moments of time, so a reputation of long standing is sometimes destroyed in a very little while by some unwise word or action.

When we urge the importance of guarding the reputation, we are not unaware of the words of Christ: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" (Matt. 5:11). But we should underscore the words "*falsely, for my sake.*" Our present concern is lest men shall say all manner of evil against us with a certain amount of justification.

"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches" (Prov. 22:1), wrote King Solomon from the depths of his sad experience. He had cast his reputation lightly aside, and he knew the obstacles to regaining it, even though he had repented of his follies. And, sad to say, there are some today, even within the remnant church, who, like Solomon, are sacrificing a good reputation to obtain worldly honors and treasures.

But the influence of our personal lives goes far beyond ourselves. It touches in many ways and in many places upon the reputation of the church as a whole. Some time ago I was reading a magazine published by another denomination. On the editorial page was one little item that caught my eye. It seems that in a certain city one particular church had placed a literature rack in a public place. But evidently some overly zealous Seventh-day Adventist had thought it would be a good idea to replace their literature with ours. And so the editorial told how *their* literature rack was being brazenly appropriated by the Seventh-day Adventists.

Now, if they had said that a certain Mrs. Jones or Mr. Smith had been using their rack without authority, the reputation of that particular individual would be smirched, and the harm would have been more or less circumscribed. But it did not happen that way, and it seldom does. The subscribers to that magazine read not of the individual who acted unwisely, but of the whole Seventh-day Adventist Church. And it is quite likely that when they next heard the name Seventh-day Adventist they thought of that literature rack.

But the matter goes far beyond the individual, far beyond even the church, for "we are called by thy name" (Jer. 14:9). We have been called to represent and uphold the

character of God before a world that is sadly lacking in its knowledge of Him. Let it never be said of us that "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you" (Rom. 2:24). Rather let us endeavor, by God's grace, to guard His name and represent it aright to all.

The Measure of Our Love

by Thomas A. Davis

ST 1956

"HOW much do you love me?" I asked my little girl. "This much," she answered, flinging her tiny arms wide to illustrate the measure of her affection. I have asked her that question many times over the past months, and as many times received the same response. Yet while her answer was the same each time, there was a subtle difference.

As day by day she has partaken of the food and sunshine given by God, and exercised her baby muscles, almost imperceptibly her small body has been growing. Under the influence of these nurturing factors her little arms have been spanning an ever wider and wider arc of love.

All of us born of God are spiritual children who need to grow up. The sunshine of God's Spirit vitalizes us. The Scriptures, read and meditated upon, bring strength and blessing to our hearts and build us up in Christ. Prayer, the soul's animating breath, fills us with the sweet atmosphere of heaven. As we experience God's grace toward us, and witness of it to others, the bones and sinews of faith grow stronger and larger.

Day by day as the Christian develops, wider and wider grows the measure of his love for his heavenly Father. More and more he realizes the extent of the grace and benevolence of God, and more and more he is constrained to witness to that goodness in expressions of love and adoration.

There are those who claim to love, yet who give no expression of it by word or action. Such love, if indeed it really exists, cannot live long, and certainly must be unrealized by its intended recipient. Love is valuable only as it is expressed, and the measure of our love is found in its display.

"I love you, daddy," cries the little child, running to her father and throwing her tiny arms around his neck. And her father's strong arms lift her to his breast.

As His earthly children go to the great Father in heaven, expressing their affection and gratitude, in encompassing love the Father draws them to Himself. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."