

# LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES, INC Proclamation!

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FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS • INQUIRING ADVENTISTS • SABBATARIANS • CONCERNED EVANGELICALS

## Confessions of a former Adventist

Rodney D. Nelson

I fondly recall my experience in that small Adventist church in the Yakima Valley of Washington State. It was a church full of loving Christian men and women. In the late seventies and early eighties I attended that church as a newly baptized member of the Adventist church. I accepted Jesus as a result of the witness of those wonderful people. I was fifteen years old. For the next five years I faithfully attended church while finishing high school and my freshman year at Walla Walla College. I will never forget the love, acceptance, patience and leadership those people had on my impressionable young life as a new-born Christian.

*As a teenager searching for answers I felt convicted I had found them in Adventism. This conviction was slow to change.*

In particular, I was most influenced by two couples. One was a family in their early thirties with four children while the second was an elderly couple approaching eighty years old. Both were life-long Adventists. I remember frequently going to either home for Sabbath lunch and fellowship while being treated as part of their respective families. My gratitude will never diminish for these acts of kindness and love toward me. The impression of Christ-like lives

given me by them were so important to my early understanding of Christian life and practice. Without that witness I do not know what my Christian life would have been like, then or now.

I was initiated into the Adventist belief system through the Revelation Seminars given frequently in rural SDA churches back then. I still remember how I soaked in the information. Being raised in essentially a non-Christian home, I was searching for something to give me meaning in life. Not simply Jesus, but a belief system which answered any question I could pose. Adventism gave me this system and advantage. Everything was so iron-clad and simple. As a teenager searching for answers I felt convicted I had found them in Adventism. This conviction was slow to change.

Having graduated high school I now was off to Walla Walla College. I was so excited to be in an environment where I could indulge my interests in theology. I decided to pursue a history major. However, I crowded in several religion courses.

Ring in my head through all this was a comment made by the wife of the elderly couple back at my home church. She was greatly concerned about me going off to college at Walla Walla. She stated over and over that I was "her

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

**Double  
Issue!**

### Life Assurance Ministries (LAM), Inc

- MISSION:** To proclaim the good news of the new covenant gospel of grace in Christ and to combat the errors of legalism and false religion.
- MOTTO:** Truth needs no other foundation than honest investigation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and a willingness to follow truth when it is revealed.
- MESSAGE:** "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not of works, that no one should boast." Ephesians 2:8,9

### Why a double issue?

We have decided to make a double issue in the interest of economy. Thanks to your giving we have been able to send approximately \$49,000 to the Uganda Mission this year. Many donations have come in marked for this purpose and we praise God that we have been able to help these men transition into new ministries. This has, however, cut into our regular funds for printing and mailing *Proclamation*. Therefore to save a few dollars we have decided to put two issues together. Thanks for your understanding.

### Report from the annual board meeting of LAM, Inc.

In our annual board meeting we discussed the Uganda Mission. Last year we had committed to sponsor the Uganda pastors for one year only. However, we understand the difficulties and successes they have had and realized that they would be put in a very difficult position if we stopped our support. Therefore we voted to continue to provide for them another year as long as funds are available. We ask for your continued prayers that God will supply our needs so we can give to their support.

**"Thank you, Greg!"** The Board voted to give special thanks to Greg Taylor for his willingness to go to Uganda, raise funds for the Uganda Mission and for his valuable counsel and mentoring of these pastors.

**"Thank you Verle!"** The Board also voted to give special thanks to Verle Streifling for his many articles in *Proclamation*, for his help in answering emails that come to LAM and for his valuable phone counseling.

**"Thank you" to all** who have supported the ministries of LAM, Inc. with your prayers and financial donations. This is your ministry as much as it is ours. Without you we could not continue. May God richly bless you and yours.

As you know we do not pay the writers of the articles we print. I thank God that so many have sent articles for *Proclamation* without remuneration. We invite others to do the same. If you or someone you know has an article or study that would be meaningful to our readers, we encourage you to send it.

Last but not least, I personally want to thank the LAM Board members for their work and support.

### Free book offer still going

Since April of this year, LAM Publishers—thanks to donations that came in for this purpose—has sent out 1,041 free books. We will continue to send a free *Sabbath in Christ* and/or a free *Cultic Doctrine*

to any SDA pastor, conference official or local church elder who requests these books and will read them. This offer may be withdrawn at any time without notice.

### Keep the letters coming!

Your letters are a tremendous encouragement to us here at LAM, Inc. There are times when I would like to leave the "Adventist scene" and all the hassle of "Adventist Issues" and focus only on the good news of the gospel. However, we know that many of you are at different stages of your transition and your letters let us know that our ministry dealing with these issues is still on target.

### Uganda mission update from Nsubuga Daniel

Dear Friends of the former SDA family. I have the pleasure to pass to you an updated report of Uganda Mission you generously support. I thank God who has used you in these last days of world history to make an impact felt among the SDAs and the unchurched. This month alone LAM(U) has registered remarkable developments that I want to share with you.

**Car:** You have been able to support us with a good 4WD that can meet the bad roads of Uganda. We have a plan to use it for His service and carrying our equipment to our meeting centers and crusades.

**Bicycles:** We have been able to get five good brand new bicycles. In the past some of our ministers have been walking long distances—the bicycles have answered our prayers. Already they are in use and people are being visited and the Bible is opened and read in their ears.

**Generator:** We just purchased a brand new generator. This will go a long way in our gospel ministry in Uganda where power is not stable and in most areas there is no power supply at all. We are now able to show the *Jesus* films and preach and then make a call for Christ.

**Motorcycle:** We are five former SDA pastors and one of our brothers (Valentine Okello) is not as privileged as the rest of us as his right leg is lame. LAM, Inc. has given us a motor scooter so that he can also have the chance to move swiftly on God's errands.

**Fees:** Two of the pastors who were stopped from Bugema University have been assisted to finish their B.Th. We are grateful to this extra mile LAM, Inc. has gone for Uganda.

**Salaries:** LAM, Inc. promised to support us for a year which they have done faithfully. Because our situation needed much more help, LAM is going to

# Proclamation!

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continue the support as long as funding comes in. We thank God for it and we pray that the funds come in.

**Simple gospel:** In turn we have also done our best to reach all with the simple gospel of salvation by faith, with emphasis to the SDAs since we were there and we want to see all of them set free in Christ. We have set up a radio programme. Life Assurance Radio Ministry. The radio programme goes very far and is widely used in Uganda. That is the reason we decided to reach many through it. We have had two crusades and we plan to start one on the 9th November, 2003. Life Assurance Ministries Uganda has a plan to involve ourselves in HIV/AIDS awareness campaign. We also give counseling to the affected. We thank God who allowed us to be of help. In addition to the Adventists who have joined us, we have baptized about 65 souls who still meet regularly with us.

**Children's ministry:** Currently we have very few teaching aids and the children need alot more attention than the older people. God has brought so many of them into our congregations. LAM sent us some video tapes for the children but we still need more videos and other teaching aids. Our projector cannot serve both the children and the other ministries it has to do in the church and out in the villages. Children need a simple screen that can

serve their purpose. We have been able to set up two congregations, and two home cells, the one in Wobulenzi will soon develop into a church. Briefly I thank you for your support and love. There will be joy when the work is done.

Yours in a blessed hope, Nsubuga Daniel.



The vehicle that Proclamation! readers purchased for the LAM pastors in Uganda will make it possible for them to reach more people for Christ.

## CONTENTS

The Sabbath from ritual to reality	4
9 The value of systematic theology	
Three days and three nights	10
16 Delay and imminency of the second coming	
Are Adventists Protestants?	18
20 Whose authority shall we follow	
Only one old testament law—Not two!	24
28 The pitfalls of perfectionism	

Back page

The memoirs of Elder Henry Brown, part 2

# The Sabbath

## from ritual to reality

Dale Ratzlaff

*The following article is adapted from the presentation given by Dale Ratzlaff to the Worldwide Church of God convention in New York on September 27, 2003.*

**That first seventh-day was characterized by our first parents enjoying the finished work of God. They rested before they got tired and they ate before they got hungry.**

**A** farmer in the med-west had a small apple orchard that his cows occasionally would get into, so he decided to build a strong fence around it to protect his apples. He advertised for a farm hand to put up the fence. One young man who applied for work captured his attention. "I never get tired or hungry," the young man said. The farmer thought in silence for a moment and then responded, "You never get tired or hungry?" "No," said the young man, "I never get tired or hungry." The farmer thought for a moment and said, "All the other helpers I have need to rest from time to time and they take off an hour to eat lunch. So, you never get tired or hungry?" "No, I never get tired or hungry." "Well," said the farmer, "You're hired." The farmer then showed him how to use the post-hole digger, set the posts and left him to work while he had other things to look after. Several hours had passed, and the farmer decided to go out and check on his new employee. When he arrived at the apple orchard he did not see this young fellow. Then, to his dismay, he spotted him sitting in the shade, leaning on the trunk of an apple tree, eating one of the farmer's apples. "Hey," said the farmer, "I thought you told me that never got tired or hungry!" "That's right," answered the young man, "I rest before I get tired, and I eat before I get hungry!"

Wouldn't it be nice to live in a world where we could rest before we get tired and eat before we

get hungry! That would be paradise!—In fact, it was! Adam and Eve rested in the finished work of their Creator. They ate freely from the fruit of the garden. They did not do any servile work or leave the garden until after sin interrupted the rest of Eden. That first seventh-day was characterized by our first parents enjoying the finished work of God. They rested before they got tired, and they ate before they got hungry.

### Ritual

Fast forward to Sinai. God gave the Israelites the ritual of the Seventh-day Sabbath to remind them from where they had fallen. On the Sabbath the Israelites were commanded to mimic the way Adam and Eve lived on that Seventh-day.

**Eden:** Adam and Eve did not leave the garden until sin entered.

**Sinai:** The Israelites were commanded not to go out of their place on the Sabbath.

**Eden:** Adam and Eve ate freely from the fruit of the garden.

**Sinai:** The Israelites were commanded to prepare their food on the sixth day so they could eat freely, without any preparation, on the Sabbath.

**Eden:** Adam and Eve did not labor on that first seventh-day. They rested in the finished work of God.

**Sinai:** The Israelites were commanded to finish their work on the sixth day so they could rest on the seventh day. However, note the difference here. Adam and Eve rested in God's finished work. The Israelites rested from their work which was seldom really finished.

The Sabbath of Sinai was a memorial of that first seventh day. However, the rest of the Sinai Sabbath was only a faint reminder of the true rest of Eden's seventh day when man and God were in perfect fellowship.

The Sabbath of Sinai was also shadow of good things to come. The weekly Sabbath pointed forward to the seven seasonal feasts. These seven

yearly feasts pointed them forward to the Sabbatical year, and the Sabbatical year pointed them forward to the coming Jubilee when they would have a whole year when they could eat before they got hungry and rest before they got tired. On that year of Jubilee they were instructed to eat from the overgrowth of their fields, and every man was to return to the land of his birth. It was a whole year that Israel was to mimic the conditions of Eden before the fall. Each Sabbatical event kept hope alive. They pointed forward to the future when the conditions of Eden would be restored.

In Luke's gospel, Jesus' first sermon declared that the blessings of the Jubilee had arrived

with Him. After reading several Jubilee passages, Jesus made this announcement: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Lk. 4:21.

I believe a careful study of the Sabbath incidents in the Gospels reveals that Jesus treated the Sinai Sabbath laws as ritual laws and not moral laws.

Col. 2:16-17 supports this conclusion for a number of reasons. First, in the Old Testament references which list the terms used in Colossians 2:16, "Sabbath(s)" always refers to the weekly Sabbath.

Second, when these terms are listed they are listed in either ascending or descending order. Thus, in Colossians 2:16 we find "festival (season), new moon (month), sabbath (day)." Since Paul is making use of an established sequence of terms from the Old Testament, one would expect the meaning to be the same.

Third, in the Old Testament references which list the terms found in Colossians 2:16, the yearly sabbaths (Passover, Tabernacles, Day of Atonement, etc.) are never called "sabbaths" but always called "fixed festivals," "appointed feasts," "annual feasts,"

etc. While some of the yearly "appointed feasts" are elsewhere said to be "a sabbath of rest" (Lev. 23), they are not called by the term "sabbaths," probably to avoid confusion with the weekly Sabbath. For this reason the term "festival" in Colossians 2:16 must refer to the annual "sabbaths," leaving the word "Sabbath day" for the weekly Sabbath.

Fourth, in the old covenant listing of the appointed times of the Lord, the seventh-day Sabbath is closely associated with new moons and the other items mentioned in Colossians 2:16 such as "food" and "drink."

Fifth, to hold that "Sabbath(s)" in Colossians 2:16 must refer to yearly Sabbaths is contrary to the weight of evidence. It is also contrary to the immediate context where Paul is writing about the other sign of the old covenant: circumcision.

Sixth, it makes Paul's writing redundant. One must interpret "festivals" as the yearly sabbaths, and then turn around and also interpret "Sabbath day" as the yearly sabbaths.

Seventh, it destroys the natural order which is so apparent in the other biblical listings of these terms. It is contrary to the unity of the old covenant, where everything in the old covenant is related to everything else within the old covenant.

We must conclude, then, that the Sabbath mentioned in Colossians 2:16 is indeed the seventh-day Sabbath.

If we accept that the seventh-day Sabbath is intended by Paul in Colossians 2:16, then what is he saying and how does this affect those who continue to observe the seventh-day Sabbath as a necessary Christian duty?

First, Paul's comments regarding the other convocations of the old covenant, such as new moon celebrations and the annual feasts, also apply to the seventh-day Sabbath. He, like the old covenant writers, considered all these convocations as inseparable. They were all ritual laws pointing forward to Christ. This is especially true since in verse 17 he says that these are a mere shadow and he makes no distinction between the first two terms and the third. The Greek, referring back to the three terms, literally reads, "which things are a shadow," linking them inseparably together.

Many, if not most, of the Old Covenant laws were designed to point the Israelites forward to the coming Messiah. Now that Christ had come, these laws were of little value. In fact, it was the ritual laws of the old covenant which kept many people from accepting Christ. They were unable to leave the shadow and walk in the Light of reality!

***Many, if not most, of the Old Covenant laws were designed to point the Israelites forward to the coming Messiah. Now that Christ had come, these laws were of little value. In fact, it was the ritual laws of the old covenant which kept many people from accepting Christ.***



The Jews of Christ's day were more concerned with ritual than the Reality to which the ritual pointed.

So much for the *ritual*; now let us consider the *reality*.

## Reality

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."  
Matthew 11:28-30

Come. The Greek word here has the force of the imperative. Not as a hard command, but a gentle, loving invitation. It is not like an angry person saying, "Come right now or you are going to suffer the consequences," but like a parent returning from the toy store, "Come and see what I have for you!"

We are not told to go somewhere else. We do not have to go to some holy shrine.

Some years ago we lived in Applegate, California in the foothills above Sacramento. In one of the Catholic churches up the road from where we lived it was said that there appeared on the

wall a mysterious image of the Virgin Mary. This was published in the paper, and literally thousands of people drove up to this church to see this wonderful miracle. So many people came that it crated a traffic jam. Carolyn and I decided that we would check it out, so we went too—not to be blessed, but just to see what was going on. What we found was that the light shining through a west window hit a chandelier and the light reflected on the wall. Apparently on a certain day when the sun was at the right angle it caused an image on the wall that someone thought looked like the Virgin Mary. When we were there we saw nothing that remotely looked like it. And every one we

spoke with had the same reaction. Many of the Catholics who drove up to this church were disappointed.

When we come to Christ, however, we will not be disappointed. In John 6:37 Jesus said, "The one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." We

do not have to travel to some supposedly holy place, or go on a pilgrimage to some distant land. Jesus invites us to come to Him.

Not only does Jesus invite us to come to Him, but his very invitation gives us the power to come. Repentance is a gift of God. Faith is a gift of God. The ability to respond to the still small voice of the Holy Spirit is a gift of God. Yes, He says, "Come," and that invitation empowers us to come.

Peter was not able to walk on the water until Jesus said, "Come." But when Jesus invited Peter to "Come," Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came toward Jesus."

Come unto me all. This little three letter word must not be depreciated. Here we find the good news of Christ!

In Romans 5 Paul lists the characteristics of those whom God justifies. The first is "helpless." Perhaps some of our readers feel helpless when it comes to overcoming things you know to be wrong. Do you feel helpless when it comes to solving difficult relationships with husband, wife, child, employer, pastor, or church leader? If the full truth were known, there are probably many of our readers who right now feel helpless in their attempts to overcome some kind of habit or abuse. If helpless applies to you, you are included in the class of those whom God justifies.

Romans 5:6 also mentions the "ungodly." I was teaching Bible at a Seventh-day Adventist boarding high school when the truth of this verse first hit me. It came as a shock to me to realize that the people God justified were ungodly. My spirits began to rise. I now had hope. I could qualify because down deep inside I knew there was something ungodly about me. Yes, even the helpless and ungodly are included in the all of Christ's invitation to come.

Romans 5:8 lists sinners in the "all" of Christ's invitation. No wonder that sinners were so attracted to Jesus. In Luke 15:1-3, the Pharisees were grumbling because, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." Again, in Luke 19:7, 9, 10, the religious leaders of Christ's day all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." I praise God that his invitation includes sinners. Yes, I can qualify here, and so can you!

Romans 5:10 expands the outer circle of "all" even beyond the helpless, ungodly and sinners to include even "enemies." Not former enemies, but "while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

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One time two brothers went to their Rabbi to settle a longstanding feud. The Rabbi got the two to reconcile their differences and shake hands. As they were about to leave, he asked each one to make a wish for the other in honor of the Jewish New Year. The first brother turned to the other and said, "I wish you what you wish me." At that, the second brother threw up his hands and said, "See, Rabbi, he's starting up again!" It is hard for

animosity to die. But even enemies of God can come. That old hymn that we used to sing at evangelistic meetings is good theology: "Just as I am, I come, I come."

Yes, Scripture is clear that the "All" in Christ's invitation to come includes even those who are helpless, ungodly sinners who are enemies of God.

Jesus did not say, "Come all you who have perfectly kept the Sabbath." He did not say, "Come unto me all you who are without sin." He did not say, "Come unto me all you who have a daily devotional life." He did not say, "Come unto me all you who have paid your entire tithe." He did not say, "Come unto me all you who have not eaten any unclean

food." He did not say, "Come unto me those of you who met your baptismal or church growth quota last year." The invitation of Christ is to "All" the innocent, the guilty, the strong and the weak. "All" includes murders like David. "All" includes adulterers like the woman caught in adultery. "All" includes thieves like the thief on the cross. "All" includes those who are bound by the chains of habit like the Gadarene Demoniac. The "All" includes me, and it includes you. Too often religious leaders have drawn a circle that shut out those with undesirable habits and lifestyles. In doing so we have misrepresented the abundant grace of God. Let us never build a fence around that "All": "Whosoever will, may come"!

Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy-laden. "All you who are weary" represents all those who are trying to work out their own salvation, and the more serious they are, the more they will toil. Those of us who at one time felt perfection of character was a qualification necessary for last-day Christians to be ready for the coming

of Christ know how weary life can be knowing at the end of every day you could have done better.

"Heavy laden" refers to those who have let others load them down with do's and don'ts to such an extent that they continually carry a heavy burden in seeking to achieve.

Some years ago when our two boys were in grade school, our family went on a number of week-long back-pack trips. One occasion we set out on what was to be a three or four week back pack trip. We tried to hike the 215 miles of the John Muir trail in the high Sierras in California without a food drop. We started at the foot of Mt. Whitney and were going to hike all the way to Yosemite. Carolyn started with between 50-60 lbs. Our husky sixth grade boy, Bruce, had nearly 60 lbs, and our fourth grader, Mike, carried his sleeping bag and the marshmallows! Not long after we started our climb up Mt. Whitney, I ended up taking some of the weight from both Bruce and Carolyn, and I ended up with about 83 lbs. We were all overloaded.

I confess that I was once one who piled on heavy spiritual burdens. I taught that those who would be ready for the second coming of Christ would not eat meat of any kind. I taught that one should never go to any secular sporting event. We did not play chess or cards. We did not go to the theater, play pool or go bowling. We did not go to circuses. We believed that eating between meals was a sin. We did not smoke or drink any alcoholic beverage and thought those who did were outside the realm of salvation.

The message from God's word to our hearts this morning is that no matter what your burden is or who has given you the burden, all of you can come with it to Christ and leave it there. Come unto Me, Jesus said, and I will give your rest.

Some of us have searched for that rest by keeping a day. And that did provide a type of physical rest. However, reflecting back it was never a true rest for the soul because one never knew of one had kept the Sabbath well enough.

Did you every watch T.V on the Sabbath? How about eating out at a restaurant on the Sabbath? When I was a boy we lived in North Carolina, and my mother cooked on a wood stove. However, she did not cook on the Sabbath. Rather, she would do all her cooking on Friday and then heat things up for Sabbath dinner. For some reason we never felt it important to follow the law that said we should not build a fire on the Sabbath. I remember when frozen peas came out. My moth-

***Too often religious leaders have drawn a circle that shut out those with undesirable habits and lifestyles. In doing so we have misrepresented the abundant grace of God. Let us never build a fence around that "All": "Whosoever will, may come"!***

er would cook them on Friday and then re-heat them on Sabbath. We discovered, however, that the work to re-heat them was no more than the work to cook them, and they sure tasted better when she cooked them the first time, so we decided we could cook our frozen peas on the Sabbath which really was a violation of Sabbath law.

Did you ever have discussions about what was correct Sabbath keeping? What about playing baseball? Was that wrong? Yes, perhaps for an adult, but was it wrong for a teenager to play catch on Sabbath? What about a seven year old child? Could a four year old play with a ball on Sabbath? Maybe not a baseball, but what about a tennis ball?

While I have no argument with those who wish to keep the Sabbath, be it Saturday or Sunday, just be careful that you do not let the details of the ritual keep you away from the reality to which the ritual pointed!

Jesus said, "I will give you rest. In Greek, the "I" is intensive. I, myself, will give you rest—I and not another. We may search for rest in many places,

but his word to us is that Christ and Christ alone can give this rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. "Yoke" is a term the New Testament often uses for the law. Note that this is not the yoke of Moses, but the yoke of Christ. We are to learn from Christ. By taking Christ's "yoke" we receive his "rest." Jesus bids us learn from Him.

The phrase, "Learn from Me" in Greek has the force of "learn once for all. We learn once for all time that Christ is not another Moses. We learn once for all time that Christ is not like the scribes and the Pharisees, and legalistic pastors like I used to be, who

heartlessly pile on burdens. Learn from me, He says, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

On the backpack trip I mentioned earlier, after caring this amount of weight for a number of days, when the heavy backpacks were taken off, we found ourselves so light that we wanted to

walk on our toes. What a joy to be rid of the heavy burden!

Jesus gives us rest (v. 28), and we find rest (v. 29). We are reminded of the parables of Jesus. The rest of God is the treasure hidden in the field, and when the farmer found it, he sold all he had and purchased the field. But God put the treasure there for him to find. Again, Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is like finding a pearl of great price worth selling all we have to purchase it. Remember, however, that God made the pearl. When Paul met Christ and understood the grandeur of the gospel he reflected back on the losses he experienced in leaving Judaism. There was such a contrast that he could say, "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith." Phil. 3:7-10.

God wants us to experience true "rest" of which the Sinai Sabbath was only a shadow.

The writer of Hebrews says, "There remains therefore a Sabbath rest (this could be translated a Sabbath-like rest) for the people of God." He admonishes us to "be diligent to enter that rest." He says "we who have believed enter that rest" (Heb. 4:3, 9, 11). This is in the Aorist tense indicating that it was something that took place at a moment in time. And that moment was when we believed. It is instructive to note that when referring to "God's rest" that the writer of Hebrews instructs us to enter, he always associates it with the rest of Eden's seventh day when our first parents rested in God's finished work (God's rest). Conversely, the writer never links this "rest of God" to the Sinai Sabbath when the Israelites rested from their own incomplete works (Ritual). When we believe in Christ, He bids us to come to Him just as we are—helpless, ungodly sinners who are enemies of God. Yes, whosoever will, may come and the one who comes will not be cast out (Jn. 3:16, Jn. 6:37).

In Eden Adam and Even enjoyed the benefits of God's finished work of Creation. (Reality)

At Sinai Israel mimicked Eden's rest by resting from their work. (Ritual)

Today, true believers enjoy the benefits of Christ's finished work of redemption (Reality)! **!**

***While I have no argument with those who wish to keep the Sabbath, be it Saturday or Sunday, just be careful that you do not let the details of the ritual keep you away from the reality to which the ritual pointed!***



# The value of systematic theology

by Trevor Craigen, Associate Professor of Theology, The Master's Seminary, Sun Valley, CA.

**S**ystematic Theology" often conveys the idea of pious curmudgeons dogmatically drafting a system of thought which would be so binding on the mind of others that no one could really aver anything to the contrary. Nothing could be further from the truth! Systematic theology does not coerce thoughtless acceptance of its postulates without a study of the Scriptures to see if what is being taught is right—it still subjects itself to divine revelation!

Two Greek terms, *theos* (God) and *logos* (word), combine to form our English word theology which basically means, "a word about God," or "the study or science of God," but which embraces all the Scripture has to say on the subject of the Lord God as He has revealed Himself and on His relationship to His world in the past, the present and the future. Systematic theology may be defined as the joining together of all the facts, propositions, topics, subjects, and themes found in the Scriptures into an overall understanding of God, man, life, and the world, both physical and spiritual, temporal and eternal. The assumption here is that God has revealed Himself in a way intelligible to man who because of his rational endowment is able to study and comprehend what God has so revealed.

The Bible, we readily acknowledge, has not been formally organized as a textbook or manual with everything neatly grouped, analyzed and inter-related, moving from simple foundational propositions to more complex understanding and resolution of various difficulties or apparent antinomies. Since the Bible came together over a long period of time, it is best described as that which was divine revelation in progress. This in turn mandates systematization of the material in order that it may be taught, not as a jumble of bits and pieces of unrelated data, but as a coherent whole. Teaching, then, is the careful presentation of information to enhance understanding and use of the subject matter and text under study. The formation of a depository of instruction would naturally occur over the years as the fruit of men's studies and thoughts were preserved, then utilized, expanded and refined. This fits in well with how we were created to think. Philosophically, we want to unify, to classify, to correlate, and to arrange into logical order the observations we make from examin-

ing the world around us and from studying the Word God has given us. In short, we want coherency! Further, we really do want answers to questions about our world and its overall purpose, its beginning and end, and our place within the whole scheme of things. In short, we want a worldview!

The Bible itself certainly gives a high profile to teaching: it uses pedagogical vocabulary,<sup>1</sup> it views church leaders as teachers,<sup>2</sup> it stresses sound doctrine,<sup>3</sup> it makes reference to a "Body of Truth" and to statements of faith,<sup>4</sup> and it presents the apostles as having engaged in doctrinal instruction.<sup>5</sup> A high value was quite evidently placed on doctrinal instruction. Without it the Church would not have matured in the faith!

The value of systematic theology is perhaps best seen in that [1] it provides for the orderly collation of biblical truth, which is an essential base for the preaching and teaching of sound doctrine within the church, [2] it provides for the defense of the Christian truth against error from within or from other religious movements which initially seem to be of Christian orientation, [3] it provides for the apologetic response to the leading philosophy of the day, [4] it provides for the interpretation and application of Christian ethics, personal and social within the church and the world, and [5] it provides for the effective propagation of the Christian gospel in its encounter and confrontation with non-Christian religions and cultures on the mission fields of the world.

A good systematic theology will display: [1] hermeneutical integrity,<sup>6</sup> [2] doctrinal coherency,<sup>7</sup> [3] ethical relevancy,<sup>8</sup> [4] worldview explicability,<sup>9</sup> and [5] traditional continuity.<sup>10</sup> Where these are present and operative there is a good systematizing taking place which will be of value to the expositor. Why? Because, even as he carefully examines every detail of the text in preparation to expound it, he may also view the whole theological picture—one which has taken into account not only the studied conclusions from church history, but also the progress of revelation and the complete revelation of God.

Is there value in systematic theology for expository preaching? We have to reply: Absolutely!

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> cf. Luke 1:4; Acts 18:24-28; Rom 2:18; Gal 6:6 and Matt 28:19-20 for the use of teach, instruct, catechize, and make disciples

<sup>2</sup> cf. 1 Tim 3:2; 4:11; 5:17; 2 Tim 2:24 and also Eph 4:14, 20-21 which calls for the equipping of the saints; Phil 4:9 which calls for the practice of what had been learned; Col 1:7 which points to what had been learned from Epaphras; Col 1:28 which marks the intended end of admonishing and teaching; and Col 2:7-8 which shows that instruction established the learner in the faith and upheld him in the face of human philosophy and deceitful traditions of humanity.

<sup>3</sup> See references to sound doctrine, or "healthy words," in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; Tit 1:13; 2:1, 10). This all suggests an indoctrination so that the learner's life is changed and he is kept stable in the face of doctrinal error and unbiblical, or "unhealthy," worldviews.

<sup>4</sup> cf. 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6 "things handed down," Rom 6:17 "form of teaching," 1 Tim 6:20 "treasure entrusted" all being expressions of an orderly compilation of data having occurred.

<sup>5</sup> Such teaching is a natural occurrence in their mission outreach – Acts 15:35; 20:20; 28:31 inter alia. The Apostle Paul also dispatched Timothy and Titus to do follow-up teaching – 1 Cor 4:17 and Tit 2:1.

<sup>6</sup> i.e. such a high respect for the historical-grammatical

principle of interpretation that this principle will not mutate with every change of literary genre or influence of prevailing social and scientific ideas.

<sup>7</sup> i.e. an honest correlation of all the data with a willingness to acknowledge tensions and apparent antinomies without trying argumentatively to explain these away.

<sup>8</sup> i.e. an application of the truth studied so that clear moral absolutes prevail without being dictated to by cultural situations.

<sup>9</sup> i.e. a reasonably full answer to the meaning of life from both a macro and a micro perspective.

<sup>10</sup> i.e. a respect for traditional understanding of theological themes so that caution is exercised before one amends doctrinal conviction.

# Three days <sup>and</sup> three nights



**Verle Streifling**

**Editors note:** We have received several letters in response to the timing of the resurrection. Some of these letters were of great length and went into great detail why we should believe that Christ was crucified on Thursday and raised on Saturday. For some of us this may not be an important issue in that we are more concerned that Christ died for our sins and He was raised from the dead and believe that this fact is the foundation of Christian faith, however, for others of our readers this issue holds major importance. They have been taught that THE SIGN that Christ is the Messiah of the O.T. is that he was in the heart of the earth THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS. They claim that this could not mean from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning. Dr. Verle Streifling has prepared a paper to answer this question. We hope our readers will find this study useful.

**T**oday, everything historic Christianity has taught is being tested, and anything that can be shaken, is being shaken. One such historic Christian teaching is the historic view that Jesus died on Friday and rose Sunday. Some say that Jesus died on Wednesday and was raised on the Sabbath. We must evaluate this, for a number of seventh day sects endorse it such as some groups of the World Wide Church of God. Others, including the Churches of God Seventh Day and some Assemblies of God Seventh Day have also held this for a half-century. This teaching is used to strip the historic church of the reason for celebrating the Lord's day, saying Jesus rose 'late on the Sabbath'—not the first day! On this basis, they also hold Pentecost was on a Sabbath, so the church was birthed on a

Sabbath as well. Some of this has also filtered into the Companion Study Bible and Dake's Study Bible.

Those who've written studies on this don't all agree that Jesus rose on Saturday. Only the seventh day sects hold this, while others as the Christian Jew Foundation hold He was raised on Sunday,<sup>1</sup> thus they celebrate our Lord's day. But the seventh day sects strain Matthew's account to their advantage for Sabbath resurrection. One such article is well written by E. E. Franke, and it relies entirely on Jesus' crucifixion being in 31 AD, while another written by Rev. Garver C. Gray, a historian and pastor, proves it was 30 AD, showing Jesus was born BC 4, the year Herod died. These studies differ in the events preceding the crucifixion, so some harmonize on Saturday resurrection, some on Wednesday



crucifixion, but not all on any one point—except that Christians are wrong about the Friday crucifixion! Yet we must commend them for well-written articles that convince the reader so that he won't even think he needs to do deeper study.

Twenty years ago, I believed and defended this view for almost six years, until I found S. E. Anderson's book *Armstrongism's Thirty Errors Exposed*. Knowing he'd say something on this, and not finding anyone to show its errors, I got the book, which changed my opinion about the historic view on this subject. Though Anderson didn't say much, he really didn't need to, for what he said was like a little bullet that stops a charging elephant in his tracks! He reopened my blinded eyes in this, forcing me to more study to find where these writers and study Bibles that adopted their views got derailed. How could they seem so right, yet be so wrong? Where had I and so many others been misled?

For brevity I'll refer to E. E. Franke's booklet (the most thorough), to share some Bible answers I found that would convince any who believe the whole Bible.<sup>2</sup>

Error repeated often enough will sound true, so its followers will believe and recite it until God confronts them with His Word. Misinterpreted Scripture is often girded by misquoting scholars, to appear authoritative. This occurs in Franke's selectively citing scriptures, authorities, and Bible versions.

## Resurrection: 'on the Sabbath' or 'after the Sabbath'?

He begins at Matt 28:1 KJV, "In the end of the Sabbath as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week..." (the women found He had risen). He notes Jesus arose on a Sabbath as Matthew says it was 'IN the end of the Sabbath'; and it was not yet the first day, for the text says "toward the first day..." Citing four versions with 'In the Sabbath', he quotes the Siniatic Palmiset "the oldest Greek text known", saying "And on the evening of the Sabbath..."

Jewish Holy days<sup>3</sup> reckon the night as the first part of a Sabbath, and the day as the last. Yet here the translator did not mean this, for he continues "as the first day of the week dawned." Thus the Palmiset means it was the evening after the Sabbath. But does the Greek have *in* or *after*? The *Received Text* has *after*, so Franke's words, "No man can accept the inspiration of Matthew and not believe that Jesus was risen on the Sabbath" are unwarranted disjunction, placing inspiration in the KJV, but not in the Greek text!

The first Greek word in Matt 28:1 is *Opse*. Strong's Dictionary defines it: "Late in the day; by extension after the close of the day." *Thayer's Lexicon* gives the correct use in Matthew, which Franke only partially quotes, omitting what's most significant, "*Opse*, an adverb of time, after a long time, long after, late, with a genitive '*Opse sabbaton*' the Sabbath having just passed, after the Sabbath, i.e. at the dawn of the first day of the week—an inter-

***One Monday morning a church janitor found the Pastor's notes on the pulpit, and was amazed to read in the margin "Point weak: Shout loudly!"***

pretation absolutely demanded by the added specification "the dawning of the first day of the week" Matt 28:1"<sup>4</sup>

Thayer shows Franke's error, and his next in saying "Thus in every case the Greek word *opse* means late on or in." Thayer shows it with the adjective equivalent as meaning 'late...evening, either from our 3 pm to 6 pm and with four examples, or from 6 pm to the beginning of night" with ten examples). Other scholars agree<sup>5</sup> on *opse* as either early or late evening, and its meaning *after the Sabbath* in Matt 28:1. Most Bibles agree.<sup>6</sup> Goodspeed says "The plain sense of the passage is, "After the Sabbath as the first day of the week was dawning."

## 'Dawning' or 'drawing on'?

Next, Franke affirms the Greek *epiphosko* (dawning) must mean 'drawing on' in Matthew, as that's its meaning in Luke 23:54. But Greek converts a word from infinitive to verb, noun, adjective or even participle with the use of prefixes or suffixes, or both, changing the meaning or use of the word.<sup>7</sup> To say that the true use for a word in Matthew is found from its use in Luke errs, unless both have the same spelling, grammatical construct, and the same context. We compare them in Greek:

Luke 23:54 has *epephosken* using the prefix 'epe' and the suffix 'en'; but Matt 28:1 *epiphoskouse* with prefix 'epi' and suffix 'ouse'. Their prefixes and suffixes are different, so they cannot bear the same use and meaning. Reinecher shows the distinctions.<sup>8</sup> In Luke it's the figurative, inceptive imperfect verb, but Matthew uses a participle literally meaning *dawning* or *breaking forth of dawn*.

Rotherham has 'when it was on the point of dawning'. Thayer also notes that in Matthew it's followed by 'eis', explaining, "It denotes entrance into a period which is penetrated, as it were, i.e., duration through a time...dawning into the first day of the week" (p. 183). Their distinctions appear in most Bibles.<sup>9</sup>

## Greek 'eis' as 'toward' or 'into'?

One Monday morning a church janitor found the pastor's notes on the pulpit and was amazed to read in the margin, "Point weak: Shout loudly!" It seems Franke was doing this when he wrote: "The word 'Toward' is the mighty obstacle in the way of the resurrection



***“In Jewish communal life, part of a day is sometimes counted as a full day.” This is what is called “Inclusive Time Reckoning,” as seen in 2 Kg 18: 9-10 where ‘three years’ is given for what our Western culture would count as 2 years.***

on Sunday...for as long as it was dawning or drawing on toward the first day of the week, it is certain that the first day had not arrived. Sure indeed is the fact that while you are going toward anything or object, you have not reached it... If this is not true, then the English language, and the Greek from which it is taken, have lost their meaning. He stressed the English *toward*—not the Greek word it is from.

This word is ‘eis,’ which most often means ‘into’ but only rarely ‘toward.’ As Thayer said “It denotes entrance into a period which is penetrated...duration through a time...‘dawning into the first day of the week’ Matt 28:1.” *Berry’s Lexicon* says “Preposition governing accusative ‘Into to (the interior)...motion into.” Goodrick’s prepositional chart<sup>10</sup> has ‘eis’ with the accusative, as in Matt 28:1, meaning ‘into.’ *Young’s Analytical Concordance* shows ‘eis’ as ‘into,’ over 500 times; but as ‘toward’ only 27. *Strong’s Dictionary* on ‘eis,’ “A primary preposition: to or into...the point reached and entered...” Rotherham, who Franke uses for the “correct reading” of Matthew, uses ‘into.’

From the above, scholarship and translators agree Matt 28:1 says, “After the Sabbath, as it was dawning into the first day of the week...” as compared to the KJV. Matthew does not say Jesus was raised on the Sabbath, as Franke etc., affirm, but rather as the TR shows, it was ‘after the Sabbath...dawning into the first day of the week,’ which only means “Sunday, at daybreak.”

### **‘Move the comma’ trick at Mark 16:9**

Franke now wrestles other texts to uphold his error. He begins with Mark 16:9 which says, ‘Now when Jesus was risen early on the first day of the week...’ As this contradicts him at Matt 28:1, he works punctuation magic in Mark, moving the comma<sup>11</sup> from the word ‘week’ to the word ‘risen,’ making it say “early on the first day of the week He appeared to Mary...”

You can do this in English, but in Greek it doesn’t work, for the rules of syntax and declensions show which words apply to which others, and how they’re being used. We need to learn the emphasis and word order in the Greek sentence. Goodrick’s *Everybody’s Guide* tells us, “The most important part of the sentence is put first. The secondary emphatic position is last. What is not so important is buried in the middle of the sentence...usually the order is verb, subject, and direct object; or subject, verb and direct object.” (5:3)

Mark follows the first precisely, as seen from the literal translation “(He) having risen early (the) first day of the week, (He) appeared first to Mary the Magdalene.” Of the use of modifiers Goodrick tells us, “Sometimes modifiers belonging to the word come between (it and its article). The adjective usually follows the word to which it belongs.” So in Mark the modifier ‘early on the first day of the week’ follows the verb to which it belongs, ‘He having risen.’ We see the most important emphasis in Mark 16, (coming first in the sentence) is the fact of Jesus’ resurrection ‘on the first day of the week.’ Mark is correctly punctuated in the KJV saying Jesus arose ‘early on the first day of the week,’ and

Mark 16:9 is in concord with Matt 28:1, correctly translated!

Luke 24:21 also gives Franke problems. The two disciples going to Emmaus say that first day of the week, “is the third day” (since He was crucified). Literally, “It brings today, this third day, since all these things came to pass.” Diagrammed, the sentence looks like this:

‘It’ is subject; ‘brings’ is the verb; ‘today this third day’ is all direct object, for all four words are in accusative declension. We may literally translate the accusative as ‘This day (is) the Third day’ since one part of the direct object is a subjunctive to the other. The KJV rightly equated today with the third day. But Franke failed to discern between translation and paraphrase—taking Dr. Murdock’s paraphrase of the *Peshitto Syriac* “Three days have passed...” to be an accurate translation of Luke! Irrespective, Luke underscores that very day was the ‘third day’—just as Jesus had prophesied!

### **‘The third day’ biblically defined**

So we must Biblically define ‘the third day.’ The *Jewish Encyclopedia* says, “In Jewish communal life, part of a day is sometimes counted as a full day.” This is what is called “Inclusive Time Reckoning,” as seen in 2 Kg 18: 9-10 where ‘three years’ is given for what our Western culture would count as 2 years. In 13 places, as in Matt 16:21, we’re told He’d be crucified and ‘raised again the Third day.’ The Jews to whom He spoke equated this with ‘After three days.’ But we err to literalize the Greek idiom ‘Three days and three nights,’ to be exactly 72 hours, instead of being equal to ‘the third day’ as the Jews knew He meant, having a guard placed at the tomb on the Sabbath, before the third day arrived. No idiom can be literally interpreted in any language. Franke implies that Orthodoxy makes Jesus a liar by not teaching He was entombed a full 72 hrs. But this is question begging, for the Bible defines ‘the third day,’ as S.E. Anderson showed:

1 Sam 20:12: “O Lord God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about tomorrow any time or on the third day...” third day is the day after ‘tomorrow.’

Luke 13:32 “And He said to them, ‘Go tell that fox (Herod) “Behold I cast out demons and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be finished.”’” Here Jesus uses ‘the third day’ as the day after ‘tomorrow.’





Acts 27:18-19: "And we, being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackle of the ship." Acts confirms Luke's same use of 'the third day'.

Alford Edersheim says, "It was the first day of the week, according to Jewish reckoning, 'the third day' from His death" (his footnote said 'Friday, Saturday, Sunday' *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p.630-631).

A. T. Robertson at Mk 16:2: "The body of Jesus was buried late on Friday before the Sabbath (our Saturday) which began at sunset... The women rested on the Sabbath (Luke 23:56). This visit of the women was in the early morning of our Sunday, the first day of the week... Some people are greatly disturbed over the fact that Jesus did not remain in the grave the full 72 hours. But he repeatedly said that He would rise on 'the third day'; and that is precisely what happened. If he had really remained in the tomb full three days and then risen after that, it would have been the fourth day, not the third. The occasional phrase 'after three days' is merely a vernacular idiom common in all languages and not meant to be exact and precise like 'on the third day'. (*Word Pictures in the NT*, vol I, p.399+400).

Robertson's point is confirmed by a parallel idiom 'after eight days' as the same as 'the eighth day' which we read of in the Apostolic fathers. Barnabas, 75 AD, says "We keep the eighth day with rejoicing, in the which Jesus rose from the dead." Then in *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* is this instruction: "Break your fast the first day of the week, which is the Lord's day... after eight days let there be another feast observed with honor, the eighth day itself." As 'after eight days' equals 'the eighth day', so too 'after three days' equals 'the third day'.

## Matthew: 'in the sepulcher' or 'in the heart of the earth'?

These teachers get so boxed into their '72 hours of entombment', they overlook that Matthew doesn't mention the grave at all, rather he writes of how long Jesus would be 'in the heart of the earth'.

The Greek *kardia* (heart) is figurative for 'hades', but not 'sepulcher'<sup>12</sup> as the literal place for which it speaks, as hell in the center of the earth.<sup>13</sup>

So Matthew spoke of how long Jesus was to be in hell—not His body in the tomb! And this time began the ninth hour (3 p.m.) when 'He dismissed His spirit', the earth shook, and the temple veil was rent in two on Friday afternoon!

## The crucial factor: the year Jesus died!

This teaching hangs on the year of Jesus' death. He died Nisan 14, which is on a different day of the week from year to year, but always the day of the full moon after the Spring Equinox. It's easily shown astronomically when Nisan 14 began in any given year. Franke got a U.S. Naval Observatory chart showing the week day for Nisan 14, and the hour of full moon from the years 24 to 38 AD. We show their findings for the years 27 to 34 AD.

27 AD, April 9 Wed, 7 PM      28 AD, March 29, Mon, 6 PM

29 AD, April 17 Sun, 5 PM      30 AD, April 6, Thur 10 PM+

31 AD, Mar 27 Tue 2 PM\*      32 AD, April 14 Mon. 11 AM

33 AD, April 3 Fri, 5 PM      34 AD, Mar. 23 Tues. 3 PM

The chart above shows 31 AD as the only year near when Christ died, that Nisan 14 began on Tuesday, so he'd be impaled at Passover on Wednesday. Franke needs to show this is the year He died, to validate his theory. It seems easily shown from Luke 3:1, for His baptism was in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar, whose reign began AD 12, so counting 15 years from 12 AD, adding three and a half years (Jesus ministry), makes 31 AD, the year He was crucified. Yet there are serious problems with this calculation:

1. Very few Scholars will agree with Franke that Jesus was born not before 3 BC,<sup>14</sup> (an essential for His death in 31 AD). Born in 4 BC, the year Herod died, Jesus wouldn't have been crucified in 31 AD, as E. E. Franke holds, but rather He was crucified in 30 AD (as marked (+) on the US Naval's chart). This agrees with the Scriptures, for Passover began Thursday evening, and He was crucified on Friday as the historic church always held.

2. The chart has Nisan 14 in 30 AD beginning April 6, so the crucifixion on April 7 is of special note in view of a quote from Hales that Franke supplied, recording the darkening of the sun at "about April 8".<sup>15</sup>

3. Also Hales records 784 UC as when the above event occurred. It was then 34 years after Herod died (in 750 UC, our 4 BC). This places 784 UC as the year 30 AD—the year Christ died, so Hales and the chart both historically agree with the Biblical evidence.

4. Added evidence of the year He died is correctly calculating Luke 3:1, and Jesus' baptism in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar.<sup>16</sup> We must apply the Bible's *Jewish Inclusive Reckoning* to compute the year of Jesus' baptism in the 15th year of Tiberius. To do this we may not add 15 years to 12 AD, but rather we must add 14 actual years to the year of His accession, so 26 AD<sup>17</sup> was when Jesus was baptized, to which we may now add the three and a half years of Jesus' ministry, making it 30 AD when He died.

5. More evidence for 30 AD as the year Christ died is in John 2:18-22, 18 where the Jews disputed Jesus' authority. This was the first Passover of His ministry, and the 46th year since temple building began, in Herod's 18th year, which was 20/19 BC. Forty-six years after 20 BC brings us to 27 AD, since there was no '0' year from 1 BC to 1 AD. And this was the Passover week, exactly three years before Jesus death, which would then be 30 AD.





## ***After the Sabbath (after sunset, Saturday) they bought these spices that they might anoint His body. They both bought and prepared spices after the one and same Sabbath ended.***

6. Evidence Jesus died in 30 AD comes from Daniel 9:25-27, the prophecy of the Messiah. No one has a problem using the 'year-day principle' interpreting this prophecy of 70 weeks. The command it speaks of is from Ezra 7:11-28, which is in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes (458-457 BC), and being written on the first day of the first month, makes it 458 BC.<sup>19</sup>

The 69 weeks until the anointing the Most Holy are 483 days, each for a year. Counting 383 years from 458 BC, we arrive at 25 AD, but we must add 1 more for there was no '0' year, making it 26 AD, the year when Christ, the 'Most Holy One' was anointed for His ministry.<sup>20</sup> From 26 AD as fulfilling Daniel 9:25-27, we add His three and a half years of ministry to find His death in 30 AD.

The chart Franke received from the US Naval Observatory shows Nisan 14 began on Thursday in 30 AD, so He was crucified on Friday and raised on Sunday as the Bible says. Only 30 AD, from 24 to 36 AD, Nisan 14 begins on Thursday, showing this the only option, when He could be crucified on Friday and raised on Sunday.<sup>21</sup>

### **Defining 'preparation day' and 'high day'**

The Bible's meaning of 'High day' isn't found in Ex 12 nor Lev 23, but in a holy week, as in the feasts of Unleavened Bread or Tabernacles, the first and last days of these feast-weeks were holy Sabbaths, above the other days of their feast week, and 'holy convocations' when 'you shall do no servile work'. It was usual to call these days 'high days' or 'great days' (Greek. *megaleh*) which John used to denote this distinction. This word only appears twice in the NT re. Jewish feasts. *Vine's Expository Dictionary* says, "Here the meaning is virtually equivalent to 'Holy'; and *Thayer's Lexicon* says of *megaleh* in this use "Solemn, sacred, or feast days, John 7:37; 19:31."<sup>22</sup>

Franke redefines 'Preparation Day', to be only a one-day-per-year event when the Jews prepared their Passover to be eaten. But the Greek word for Preparation day is 'paraskueh'. Strong defines it as "Preparation for the weekly Sabbath" Other scholars concur.<sup>23</sup> This word is used five times referring to the weekly Sabbath, while it's used once of the Passover. From this we know Jn 19:14 can't mean preparing the passover, especially as the Gk 'etoimadzo' is used for preparing the passover 3 times in the Gospels. Josephus (p344) shows Friday was preparation day for

each Sabbath, citing Caesar Augustus' edict that Jews 'be not obliged to go before any judge on the Sabbath day, nor the day of Preparation to it, after the ninth hour'. What historic proof!

### **Preparation day defined in Mark**

God gave the first preparation day in Ex 16; and Mark 15:42 gives this definition "It was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath". From this, scholars agree that the expression 'the preparation of the passover' literally means 'the preparation day of the passover (week)', for the word passover can also mean 'passover week'. In this, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, is correct, as seen in Acts 12:3-

4.<sup>24</sup> Herod arrested Peter during the days of Unleavened Bread "intending to bring him before the people after the passover". As the Passover feast is before the days of unleavened bread, it's obvious Luke didn't intend its technical use here. Rather, 'passover' is used for the Passover week, including the Passover and Unleavened Bread, together.

### **Two sabbaths in Passover week?**

Sabbath-resurrection teachers do leave another puzzle. Comparing Lk 23: 54-56 with Mk 16:1-2 they contend there were two Sabbaths in Holy week: the first, that of Unleavened bread (a Thursday); the second was the weekly Sabbath. They note Matt 28:1 says "After the Sabbaths" (plural), and shows two separate Sabbaths. But the Greek idiom uses plural spelling for singular feast days. In Ex 20:8 God says "Remember the Sabbaths day (singular)..." LXX, as in Col 2:16 taking *sabbatwv* (plural) from Ex 20:8.

The grammatical construction of Luke 23:56 solves the difficulty as the NKJV has, "Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath, according to the commandment". In *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, Archer shows that in a grammatical construction where 'de' appears, followed by 'kai to men', we are to understand the second part of the sentence as happening first, and the first part of the sentence as following the second. So the sequence of events would be: 1. they observed where His body was laid; 2. They rested on the Sabbath; 3. Then they prepared spices to anoint Him.

The reason number three is placed before number two in the text is to continue the thought concerning Jesus' body and burial. Using 'de...kai to men' the 'de' means 'but (though the latter),' and the 'kai to men' means 'and indeed'. Thus it would read that they observed the tomb where He was laid, (then later on) prepared spices and fragrant oils, (but indeed) they rested on the Sabbath. Correctly understanding the sequence of Luke 23:56, there's no discord with Mk 16:1-2 telling the same events, but in direct chronological order. After the Sabbath (after sunset, Saturday) they bought these spices that they might anoint His body. They both bought and prepared spices after the one and same Sabbath ended.

Thus, as the historic Church has always taught, Christ was crucified on Friday, and raised on Sunday<sup>27</sup> the 'third day' according to the Scriptures. If you, beloved, were taught differently, as I had been, why not leave these errors which we've exposed in this article, and ask God the Holy Spirit to be your teacher, according to John 14:26 and 1 John 2:20-27?

How we thank God today, that thousands are leaving many of the errors Armstrong taught, and are moving into more historic evangelical churches. The fact of Jesus' Sunday resurrection was the basis on which the early church began celebrating that day with rejoicing, being so enjoined by the Scriptures, as taught by Jesus Himself in Luke 24, which we show in *Bible Answers for Sabbath Questions*, chapter 19.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Charles Haff of the Christian Jew foundation, holds the Sunday resurrection, but stresses Thursday crucifixion to evade the pagan Good Friday.
- <sup>2</sup> Often cults will use only selectively cited proof-texts as a grid to filter out what the other Scriptures say. In this they may also use poetic writings to refute didactic, or OT texts to overturn the NT, or sometimes both in the same rash act. They may also use a historic event which creates a non-sequitur to overturn direct Biblical teaching.
- <sup>3</sup> Some teach all Jewish days were calculated "from even to even", but this is based on fallacious interpretation of creation days, as TWBOT shows under 'ereb', while Lev 23: 32 limits this to Sabbaths. John 20:19 proves this point, for the same day as Jesus rose, still the first day of the week, but at least 2 hours after sunset, when He revealed himself to the two at Emmaus, Jesus appeared to His disciples. See added detail re. Jewish days and creation days in *Bible Answers for Sabbath Questions*.
- <sup>4</sup> The Greek phrase is translated for the reader's benefit.
- <sup>5</sup> *Vines Expository Dictionary* gives "Opse: Adverb. Long after, late, late in the day, at evening... in Matt 28:1 it is rendered 'late on' RV or AV 'in the end of'. Here, however, the meaning seems to be 'After', a sense in which it is used by late Greek writers". Again on Opsia Vine says :Late...the word really signifies the late evening, the latter of the two evenings as reckoned by the Jews... after sunset". Berry's *Short Lexicon of NT Words* concurs, and Reinecher's *Linguistic Key to the NT*, vol 1, p.86 says "Opse, with genitive, After the Sabbath", citing Bauer's *Greek English Lexicon of the NT*. Moulton's *Grammar of the Greek NT* says "After the Sabbath..."
- <sup>6</sup> As RSV, NIV, Amplified, NKJV, Good News, Moffatt, Byington's *Living English*, JB Phillips, EG Goodspeed, *Emphatic Diglott*, *The Interlinear Bible*, etc.
- <sup>7</sup> As a noun the word can have 8 cases, 3 genders, 2 numbers; as a verb, 3 persons, 2 numbers, 3 voices, 2 aspects, 8 tenses, and at least 4 moods. A participle that may combine a noun and verb together, the possibilities are phenomenal.
- <sup>8</sup> At Lk 23:54 "Epephosken—imperfect tense of epiphosko (to dawn) to give light. In a figurative way 'to approach' (F.W.Arndt, *Bible Commentary*, "inceptive imperfect", 'began to approach'). At Matt 28:1 "epiphoskouse—present participle of epiphosko, 'to shine forth', 'to dawn.' (*Linguistic Key to the NT*)
- <sup>9</sup> As KJV, Amplified, RSV, NIV, NASV, NKJV, Alford's *NIV Interlinear*, Berry's *Interlinear*, *Good News*, *Byingtons NT*, *Living NT*, *Moffat*, *JB Phillips*, *NEB*, *NWT*, *Emphatic Diglott*, *New American Bible*, *Jerusalem Bible*, and *Young's Literal Trans*.
- <sup>10</sup> The *Kingdom Interlinear's* prepositional chart concurs.
- <sup>11</sup> SDA, WWCOG and some others moved the comma to change Lk 23:43 to read "Verily I say unto you today, you shall be with me in Paradise". As few could call them on this, they've promoted this, without challenge, for years.
- <sup>12</sup> Greek, 'mnameon'. Matt 27:57 shows Jesus' burial wasn't finished until the sun was setting, using opsias (usually the late evening), with the aorist tense 'had come'. This construction is used 10 times with this meaning, sometimes with the addition "when the sun did set" (as Mk 1:32).

- <sup>13</sup> Jesus had told the thief "today you shall be with me in Paradise", which in Lk 16 was also called 'Abraham's bosom' and is the place for the departed spirits of the just. Peter says when Jesus died, He went down into hell and 'preached to the spirits in prison', and Eph 4:8-11 concurs 'He descended into the lower parts of the Earth' before He ascended to the Father. This subject is thoroughly exegeted by Dr Robert Morey, in his *Death and the Afterlife*, Bethany house pub.
- <sup>14</sup> In 526 AD, when the monk Dionysius Exiguus calculated our present calendar, he made an error of 4 years, placing Jesus' birth in the 'year of Rome' (UC) 754. It was later proved Herod died in UC 750, four years earlier—ie in 4 BC. Jesus was born before Herod died, so this couldn't be later than 4 BC.
- <sup>15</sup> Here Franke added in brackets "25th of March" to prevent the reader identifying by the chart the year 30 AD when Jesus died 'about April 8'. Only 30 AD comes close, with Passover Friday being April 7, while 31 AD is 11 days out. (The day difference from Apr 7 and 8 is easily accounted as calendar differences, as the Jew's sacred calendar is one day different from the Babylonian, adding greater disparage between their Sabbath, and the Babylonian Shappatu—a full moon feast, held twice a year.)
- <sup>16</sup> Franke added 15 yrs to 12 AD, arriving at 27 AD as the year of Jesus' baptism, but he failed to allow for the Jew's inclusive time reckoning. Jewish historians didn't use 'accession year' reckoning as we do today, but 'ante-dating' or 'non-accession year' method where year 1 was the year he became king, and the first complete year of his reign, beginning on New Year's day after he ascended was called 'year 2'.
- <sup>17</sup> Luke says Jesus began to be 30 years of age when baptised. Counting back from 26 AD, with no '0' year, this places Jesus' birth at 4 to 5BC, if age be counted from birth or conception. From Rome's census records, (Luke 2) Christians recorded and honored both Jesus' birthday, and Annunciation day, when He was conceived.
- <sup>18</sup> Here the Jews disputed Jesus' authority. When He gave the sign "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up", they chose to take this as Herod's temple (instead of His body which they knew He meant). "Forty six years this temple was being built, and you will raise it up in 3 days?"
- <sup>19</sup> But not 457 as SDA use for their '2300 day prophecy', ending in 1844. From 458 BC, with no 0 yr, 2300 yrs end in 1843 as Miller taught and Ellen White endorsed.
- <sup>20</sup> In baptism with water by John and with the Holy Spirit, as we read in Lk 4:18, and fulfilling Isa 61:1-2.
- <sup>21</sup> This chart also shows that many, as SDA who date this event in 33 AD err, for in that year the moon full at 5 PM Friday, so Passover was Friday night, and Jesus' death on Nisan 14 would be Sabbath, against Roman Law, and his resurrection on Monday, and Pentecost would have been Monday.
- <sup>22</sup> The fist of these is on the last day, the 8th day and "great day" of the feast of Tabernacles, when Jesus stood up and offered to all the Living Water, speaking of the Holy Spirit who would be poured out on a Sunday, the 8th day. The other 'high day' is John 19:31, which was the first day of the week of Unleavened Bread, and so considered an holy day, compared to the other days in which work could be done—except the last day which also was a 'sabbath'. Thus Nisan 14 was not the only high day, but one of 4 high days that occurred in the Jew's yearly feast cycle.
- <sup>23</sup> Berry's *Lexicon* says of 'paraskueh' "a preparation, ie, the day immediately before the Sabbath or other festival". Thayer agrees saying "the day of preparation, ie the day on which the Jews made necessary preparation to celebrate a Sabbath or a feast". Reinecher's *Linguistic Key to the NT* says "Here used technically of the day of preparation for a Sabbath or Passover (Taylor) used with prosabbaton the day before the Sabbath: that is, Friday" (p.133)
- <sup>24</sup> Here Herod arrested Peter during the days of unleavened bread "intending to bring him before the people after the Passover". Since the Passover feast itself occurred before the days of unleavened bread, it's obvious Luke wouldn't intend the technical use here. Rather passover is here being used for the whole Passover week, including the Passover and Unleavened Bread, together.
- <sup>25</sup> This being re-established, so also the wave sheaf offering was on Resurrection Sunday, pointing to Jesus as the First fruits, and subsequently Pentecost was also on a Sunday, as the Birth day of the Church.

# Delay and imminency of the second coming

By Rodney Nelson

**T**he fact that Jesus has not yet returned has evoked many approaches to understanding why he has not yet come. Approaches range from the view that he did come spiritually in 70 AD (Preterist) to anticipation of his imminent literal return in the future. Explanations for the “time-between” the first and second advents seek to find reasons for the delay. The idea that Jesus has delayed his Second Coming is the premise underlying much of the prophetic speculation seeking to determine whether he will come soon. Grappling with the imminency texts in the New Testament confronts the honest searcher with the question of why it has been so long since the initial expectations of his return. The controversy centers upon the apparent nearness of Christ’s return in the apostolic writings, the expectation of his return in their day, and seeking to explain why it did not occur then and why it has not happened yet. May I suggest that these are separate questions that require separate treatments. However, the notion that the Second Coming has been delayed is often the initial explanation for the fact it has not yet occurred.

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that the idea of a delay in the Second Advent is not supported in the New Testament.

## Delay as perspective

While attempts are made to explain the delay in the Second Coming, the Bible tells us to prepare for its eventuality and to live in anticipation of it (1 Thess. 3:13; 5:6; 5:23; 1 Cor. 7:29-31; Rom. 13:12; Phil. 1:10; Titus 2:11-15; Heb. 10:23-25; James 5:9; 1 Peter 2:12; 4:13; 2 Peter 3:11-12, 14-15). To state that God has “delayed” the Second Advent is one explanation for why Jesus has not yet come. In other words, to state that Jesus has not yet come is one thing; to state that Jesus has delayed His coming is quite another issue.

To maintain that Christ’s Second Advent has been delayed is problematical because it is built on a false assumption. How can there be a delay if there was never an expected time of arrival? A delay only results when one expects something to occur at a certain time. Jesus and the apostles never gave an indication that the timing of the Second Advent could be predicted (Matt. 24:36,42,44; 25:13; Mark 13:32-33,35; Acts 1:7; 1 Thess. 5:1-2), nor by looking at the “signs” that a prediction could be arrived at. The famous statement in Matthew 24:14, often used as a barometer for the timing of the Second Advent, itself gives no indication of when it will occur. Rather than being a predictive statement, it is a statement of sequence. However, the timing of the sequence is next to impossible to predict or determine. The same argument could be made for texts such as Matt. 24:29-31. The entire context of Matthew 24:1-35 is to affirm

that events cannot be used to exactly predict the time of the Second Advent. Rather, the signs are to be used as warnings that it is near (v.33).

## A better question

Many scholars have focused on the delay of the Second Advent. However, would it not be better to focus on understanding why the apostles and early Christians believed the Second Coming was near in their generation? Looking at the writings of the apostles will demonstrate fidelity to the teachings of Jesus to reveal a remarkable consistency in perspective. Rather than start with anticipatory statements of the Second Coming, a better perspective would be gained by starting with statements made about the first advent.

The first advent (life, death, resurrection) was an eschatological event (Matt. 3:1-3; 4:17; 9:35; 10:7-8; 11:12; 12:28; 27:51-53; John 19:30). In the non-Pauline letters this is affirmed (Heb. 1:1-2; 9:26; 1 Peter 1:10-12,20; 2 Peter 1:19). In Paul’s writings it is equally emphasized (Rom. 1:2; 16:25-26; 2 Cor. 4:5-6; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:9-10; Col. 1:13-14,26; 2:13-15; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:9-10). Paul’s usage of the term “in Christ” is eschatological (Ladd 551). The doctrine of justification by faith is eschatological (Ladd 441-443). Thus, the notion of the first advent as a last day event assures a future second advent.

The New Testament is clear that the early church lived in the last days (Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-2; James 5:3; 1 Peter 1:20; 2 Pet. 3:3-4, 8-9; 1 John 2:18; Jude 17-19). The importance of this reality is that the “between time” is eschatological time. This means that believers in Christ view intervening human history as directly connected with God’s action in the first advent culminating in the Second Coming. History is heading a particular direction based upon the historical/eschatological event of the life-death-resurrection of Christ.

## The second coming is near

This reality conditions the apostolic declaration that the Second Coming is near. The fact that intervening history is eschatological time, and hence the “last days,” means that the expectation of an imminent return of Christ is necessarily perpetual. In other words, there exists no time during the apostolic era when the Second Advent is delayed. Rather, it merely has not yet arrived. While the human condition may change (i.e. death prior to Parousia - 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Heb. 9:27-28), the time between the advents is eschatological time, not merely chronological time. For example, just as all the sins of mankind throughout chronological history were focused on Jesus at one time in history (Heb. 9:26), so the time between the

advents is not to be understood merely chronologically. The perspective is God's, not man's (2 Peter 3:8-9, esp. v. 9 - "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some (men) understand slowness").

## What is imminency?

What should one think about the notion of imminency? It is suggested that imminency does not mean "at any moment" in the New Testament. The interpretation for imminency can mean "nearness" and "impending." The reason is basic to the Second Coming itself. Often it is called the "day of the Lord" (1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10); the "Day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14); the "Day of Christ" (Phil. 1:10; 2:16); and "that Day" (2 Thess. 1:10; 2 Tim. 1:18) (Ladd 555). While imminency can be defined as something that can occur at any moment, the Second Coming is not an event which can occur at any moment.

## Three considerations

The Second Advent is a specific, predetermined day on which Jesus will come. This is supported by three considerations explicitly given in the New Testament. First, 2 Thessalonians 2:3 explicitly states that the "day of the Lord" will not come until apostasy occurs and the "man of sin" is revealed. In Rom. 11:25-26, Paul maintains that Israel will continue to be "hardened" to the gospel "until the full number of the Gentiles" had come in. Implied is the conversion of Israel to Jesus (v. 26). Therefore, this hardening will cease when the Gentiles have been given the gospel sometime in the future. By implication, the Second Coming will not occur until this is completed or fulfilled. The point is that the Second Coming could not occur at any time unless these events occur first. Furthermore, as noted earlier, Jesus declared that the gospel would be preached throughout the world before the end would come (Matt. 24:14).

The second consideration is the timing of the events surrounding the first advent as parallel to the Second Advent. The birth of the Lord was described as occurring "when the time had fully come, God sent his son" (Gal. 4:4). Jesus declared that the time had arrived for the kingdom of God (Mark 1:15). Paul states that beginning with the first advent God "put into effect (the mystery) when the times will have reached their fulfillment" (Eph. 1:10). Christ died for our sins "at just the right time" (Rom. 5:6). It is suggested the first advent occurred at precisely the right time. Likewise, the Second Coming has been arranged in the providence and sovereignty of God to occur at a specific time.

A final factor to consider is the descriptions given to the time element of the Second Coming. Jesus was emphatic and repetitive in his declaration that his coming could not be predicted as to the precise time it would occur. "No one knows about that day or hour" (Matt. 24:36), Jesus declares. If Jesus were describing a nebulous, vague time, then why did he limit the time of his coming to a day and an hour? His repeated warnings for his followers to "keep watch," and to "be ready," only makes sense because they "do not know on what day (or hour)" Jesus will come (Matt. 24:42,44,50; 25:13). When the disciples asked Jesus if he was going to restore the kingdom to Israel after his resurrection, Jesus responded that it was

not for them to "know the times and dates the Father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1:7). Paul pointed out the uselessness of speculating about when Jesus would come by pointing out to the Thessalonians that it was not necessary to write to them about "times and dates" (1 Thess. 5:2). Why? Because the "day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (v. 2), which means unexpectedly. Finally, Paul explicitly tells Timothy that God will "bring about" the Second Advent "in his (God's) own time" (1 Tim. 6:14-15).

## The element of surprise

The factor that makes the timing of the Second Advent so vague is not the day it occurs, but the fact no one knows when it will happen. God does not move the day around like a cruel prankster keeping his people off-balance in their zeal to know when Jesus will return. Rather, God has declared the timing to be a mystery that no one can figure out. The analogy of a thief reveals the element of surprise that surrounds the Second Advent (Matt. 24:43; Luke 12:39; 1 Thess. 5:2,4). If a person knows the timing of the thief's visit, there is no surprise (Matt. 24:43).

The warnings of Jesus in Matthew 24 about the inability to predict when the Second Coming would occur must carry primary weight when considering its timing. In other words, enough evidence is found in Matthew 24 to question any attempt to pinpoint even an approximate time for His return. The possibility remained that the Lord would not return for a long time (see Matt. 25:19). It is noteworthy that the so-called "delay texts" often cited to prove the Lord delayed His coming in fact describe presumption on the part of the waiting party, not on the reality of the master's delayed return. "My master is taking a long time in coming'... The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of" (Luke 12:45,46; cf. Matt. 24:48-50). The false perception and expectation of the servant is based on his own wickedness, not on the delay of the master's coming (Matt. 24:48).

## Security in uncertainty

While there are questions that will continue to vex Christians in regard to the Second Coming, let us be assured that we can be secure in our uncertainty. While it is presumptuous to state unequivocally the Second Coming will occur in a given generation, it is equally presumptuous to maintain that it cannot occur in a given generation. The promise is still there, and the Christian perspective should be that of Hebrews 9:27-28 that maintains the certainty Christ will come a second time. Nothing in the New Testament changes this expectation nor cancels that reality. The great events of the end times such as the Anti-Christ, resurrection, judgement, and coming of the Lord are all certain to occur, yet the timing is uncertain. Most importantly, the context remains imminency and suddenness. The blessed hope of the Second Advent remains the blessed hope of all Christians throughout all time. Let us comfort one another with these words.

## Source

Ladd, George Elden. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974.



# Are Adventists Protestants?

**Richard Hayes**

**Richard Hayes is a retired former Seventh-day Adventist pastor.**

A retired General Conference officer once told my Sabbath School class that the doctrinal controversies in the Seventh-day Adventist Church are the result of Adventist ministers taking graduate studies at Protestant universities. However sincere this gentleman may have been in his opinion, it does seem like blaming the toothache on the dentist whose training enabled him to locate the cavity. His statement implied that there is, or should be, a separating barrier between the Adventist Church and Protestantism. And it raises the questions of whether Adventists are Protestants.

Anyone who has read the criticism of the Catholic Church in *The Great Controversy* may be led to believe that the Adventist Church is staunchly Protestant. Indeed the assertion is made from Adventist pulpits that the church has been charged with finishing the work of the 16th century Reformers. Standing in opposition to Catholicism, however, does not necessarily establish a Protestant identity, or Communists would be Protestants. Nor do all the churches that have evolved from the Reformation adhere to Protestant principles. For the Protestantism of the Reformers was marked by certain distinctive doctrines, the most significant of which were: justification by faith; the priesthood of all believers; and the authority of the Bible.

Luther called justification by faith the summary of all Christian doctrine upon which the church stands or falls. Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised.<sup>1</sup> With the other Reformers he taught that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous by God's grace through faith, when we believe that for Christ's sake, our sin is forgiven.<sup>2</sup> The *Adventist Statement of Fundamental Beliefs* does not address

the topic of justification specifically but states that "Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments... The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of faith to change lives..."<sup>3</sup> This statement must be considered in the context of the Adventist teaching of probation and the investigative judgment. In Adventism the repentant sinner lives in a state of probation until his case is brought before an investigative judgment which determines whether or not his life work has demonstrated his faith.

This leaves a significant difference between the justification doctrine of the Reformers and that of Adventism. The Reformers maintained that the sinner is justified by grace through faith in Christ and is declared by God to be righteous at the time of repentance. Subsequent good works are the fruit of this justification but are without saving merit. Like Paul, the Reformers taught that a person is justified through faith apart from the works of the law (Rom. 3:28 RSV). The Adventist church teaches that the repentant sinner is justified (declared to be righteous) at an investigative judgment in which obedience to the law is a necessary demonstration of one's faith.<sup>4</sup> Man's justification, therefore, depends on a righteousness to be found in man, of which his obedience is a necessary component.

Such a teaching compromises the Reformers' doctrine of justification solely by God's grace through faith by making the works of obedience an essential component of salvation. It is akin to what the Catholic church taught at the time of the Reformation and still teaches.<sup>5</sup> The lack of emphasis on Biblical justification by faith in Adventism is evidenced by the dearth of Adventist books on that jewel of Scripture—Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Among all the volumes devoted to apocalyptic speculation and vegetarianism, there are few books by Adventist authors dealing with this epistle, the greatest Biblical exposition of how sinful man is justified before God; the source from which Luther and Calvin derived their doctrine of justification.

The Reformers held that church members are all on an equal footing because they are brothers and sisters in Christ. Everyone in the church is part of a royal priesthood consecrated, whatever his vocation, to minister to the needs of others. For the preaching of the Word, some are called to the vocation of the ministry, but ministers are the servants of the church and not its masters. Luther insisted that a local congregation could exercise its right to call and dismiss a minister.<sup>6</sup> The administration of Calvin's Geneva congregations was vested in a consistory made up of six



ministers and twelve laymen. In Calvin's system great responsibilities were delegated to these laymen.<sup>7</sup> By such measures the Reformers sought to implement their doctrine of the priesthood of believers.

Adventists have generally believed that their church is administered in a representative manner. It came as a shock to many when the president and a vice-president of the General Conference filed, or authorized the filing of, sworn statements in a federal court that the Adventist church has an hierarchical structure in which the final decisions are made at the top of the organization.<sup>8</sup> These church officers and their legal advisers recognized that the Adventist church organization more closely resembles the Roman hierarchal system than it does that of any Protestant church. In fact, the description of the church contained in one Adventist defense brief presented to the court is similar to the words of Pope Pius X's 1906 *Encyclical Vehementer*.<sup>9</sup>

Such representation as is accorded to the local Adventist church functions like the "democratic centralism" by which Lenin contrived to control the Russian masses. Representatives of the local congregation do vote in certain convocations, but the selection of candidates and issues to be voted upon are largely controlled by the administrative clergy. And the ruling that gives conference officers the right to participate in church board and business meetings cannot do other than extend the hierarchal control of the local congregations.<sup>10</sup>

Like his Catholic counterpart, the Adventist layman is expected to "pay, pray and obey." Under such circumstances the priesthood of believers is a fine-sounding expression which has little relation to the realities of church policies or their implementation. And the church has become an organization rather than a community of believers.

The Reformers held that God's will can be adequately known through the Bible which witnesses to Christ as the Savior and contains all the knowledge necessary to salvation. Perhaps their most significant insight into the role of Scripture was its self-interpretation in the Christian community as the reader is moved by the Holy Spirit. No other source, whether it be the teaching authority of the church or the special spiritual gift of another individual, is needed by the Bible student who yields to the Spirit of the Bible's Author.<sup>11</sup> The Reformers thereby denied the claims of both the hierarchical clergy and the spiritual enthusiasts to possess special powers of interpretation. The self-interpretation of the Bible presupposes that its message is so clear that the plowboy who reads the

Scriptures can learn the way to salvation as well as the bishop.

The Adventist church accepts the Bible as an infallible revelation of God's will and an authoritative source of doctrine. But along with this acknowledgment it teaches that Ellen White's writings are an inspired, authoritative and continuing source of truth and instruction. In Adventism then, there is an external source by which the Bible must be understood because that source (Ellen White) is an inspired teaching authority. No exegesis of Scripture differing from Ellen White can be accepted because of the authoritative position assigned to her.

It follows that no understanding of any Biblical text that differs from the statements of Ellen White is permitted. The Bible is thereby functionally subordinated to Ellen White's writings, which range from Genesis to Revelation. Such a perspective negates both the primacy of the Holy Scriptures and the leading of the Holy Spirit in the individual's understanding of their meaning. And any Adventist minister who has questions about Ellen White's interpretation of the Bible must choose between keeping his questions to himself or finding other employment.

While Adventist churches read the same Bibles, sing the same hymns and follow the same worship forms as do Protestant churches, Adventism does not conform to the basic teachings of a true Protestant church.

If the Adventist Church is not truly Protestant, as has been indicated above, then in what religious category should it be included? In making such an assessment it is not unreasonable to ask: Is Adventism, with its present commitment to the doctrinal authority of Ellen White, "another gospel" such as Paul warned about in his Letter to the Galatians? (Gal 1:8, 9)

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*. Tr. by Robert C. Schultz. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p.224.

<sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *The Augsburg Confession*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980 ed.), p.11

<sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Statement of Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, 1980 ed.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), p. 482

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Lohse, *A Short History of Christian Doctrine*. tr. by Ernest Stoeffler. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966). p. 159.

<sup>6</sup> *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-), 39: 303-314.

<sup>7</sup> A.J. Grant, *The Huguenots*. ( : Anchon Books, 1969), p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> *Spectrum*, Vol. 9. No. 2, p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in J.S. Whale, *Christian Doctrine*. (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1981), pp. 133,134.

<sup>10</sup> *Columbia Union Visitor*, April 1, 1985, p.5.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Althaus, pp.76, 77.

... the Adventist church organization more closely resembles the Roman hierarchal system than it does that of any Protestant church. In fact, the description of the church contained in one Adventist defense brief presented to the court is similar to the words of Pope Pius X's 1906 *Encyclical Vehementer*.

# Whose authority shall we follow?

Dennis L. Palmer

**A**s a youngster, I would frequently hear the “Back to the Bible” radiobroadcast. My heart would be warmed as the family sat around the breakfast table listening to the bacon popping and to the main points that the preacher was making. If anything at all was clear in the realm of theology, it was that the Bible is our only source for Christian doctrine. That was the message I heard repeatedly from the radio.

For years I was content with this doctrine and believed it fully. When it was introduced to me that Ellen White’s writings were inspired, I questioned this new teaching, and the idea haunted me. I tried to convince myself that the Adventist Church really did not see her writings as authoritative, but merely inspirational, as were the writings of Billy Graham. But this was to no avail, and nothing that anyone told me could ease my troubled spirit. I started attending the Adventist Church in my junior year in high school and later attended Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska. I hoped of all things that I would be able to defend the Adventist faith. My first exposures to the Adventist classroom were such a shock that I could hardly stop from shaking while in the classroom. I was exposed so quickly to the Adventist worldview, and it was not a theological utopia. Attempts were made to calm my inability to comprehend the Adventist relationship of the Bible and the writings of Ellen White, but to no avail. I believe, as I perceived then, that there are inconsistencies with the way that Adventists articulate the relationship between the Bible and Ellen White’s writings.

Although many would have us believe that the Bible is the Adventist’s only source for doctrinal matters, in reality the Adventist Church has three sources of authorities: the Bible, Ellen White, and the Church in council. With respect to the number of authorities, the Adventist Church does not differ from the Catholic Church which also has in reality three authorities: the Bible, tradition, and the church.<sup>1</sup> We do not always think of the “church” as a separate authority from tradition, but when the Pope speaks ex cathedra, his word becomes authoritative. In this way, the contemporary Catholic Church can act as an authority in doctrinal matters. While Adventists may want to separate themselves from having much in common with the Catholic Church’s view of what is authoritative, in controversial matters, Ellen White makes the Church, viz., the General Conference, the final authority.

The purpose of this article is to show from the writings of Ellen White that the Adventist Church, like the Catholic Church, has three sources of doctrinal authority rather than merely one or two authoritative sources. In establishing this thesis, I will make the case that

the repeated assertion by Ellen White that the Bible is the Adventist’s only rule of faith and order is a pseudo claim lacking veracity because of other competing authorities, viz., the writings of Ellen White and the authoritative status given to Adventist Church councils when confronted with doctrinal issues brought to their attention by their own inquiring church members. Thus, the Bible in Adventist thought is an authority, but not the only authoritative source for Christian doctrine. I pray that this study will be useful in breaking up the central misplaced plank of Adventism, viz., their supposed inspiration of Ellen White, and in replacing that plank with the Word of God.

## The pseudo claim: the Bible is the Adventist’s only authority

The belief that the Bible is the Adventist’s only source for doctrine is often supported by the following quotes from Ellen White:

When God’s Word is studied, comprehended, and obeyed, a bright light will be reflected to the world; new truths, received and acted upon, will bind us in strong bonds to Jesus. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union; all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony. Our own views and ideas must not control our efforts. Man is fallible, but God’s Word is infallible. Instead of wrangling with one another, let men exalt the Lord. Let us meet all opposition as did our Master, saying, “It is written.” Let us lift up the banner on which is inscribed, “The Bible our rule of faith and discipline.” *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, 416

But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines, and the basis of all reforms. *The Great Controversy*, 88

The Bible is the only rule of faith and doctrine. *Christian Education*, 118

The Bible, and the Bible only, gives a correct view of these things.

*Lift Him Up* (1988), 364.4

The Bible, and the Bible only, is to be our guide. *This Day with God*, (1979), 355.1

We then took the position that the Bible, and the Bible only, was to be our guide; and we are never to depart from this position. Manuscript Release No. 620, published in *Manuscript Releases* (8), 341

The Word of God is to be the man of our counsel. With pen and voice I proclaim to all who bear credentials, to all licentiates, to all colporteurs, and all canvassers, that the Bible, and the Bible only, studied on your knees, laid up in your heart, and practiced in your life, attended by the Holy Spirit’s power, can be your safeguard.” Manuscript Release No. 873, published in *Manuscript Releases* (11), 90

These statements give the appearance of orthodoxy, but as will be seen, Ellen White takes away the Reformation teaching of *sola*

# Back to the Bible?

## Ellen White?

### The authority of the church?

*scriptura* by asserting her writings as authoritative. Consequently, Ellen White's claim that the Bible is the Adventist's only authority in doctrinal matters is a pseudo claim. Ellen White apparently propagated that view out of expediency. She wanted her hearers to believe that the Bible was authoritative and that her writings were not in competition with the Bible. The epithet, the Bible is our only rule of faith and authority, is believed in a general way by many in the Adventist Church, but not in such a deeply held way that the implications of this doctrine are put into practice. Ellen White appealed to another authority that was in tension with the doctrine of *sola scriptura*.

#### The real claim: Ellen White is an authority in doctrinal matters

Ellen White's other authority was herself. She wanted people believe that her visions, like those of the prophets, were from God and her testimonies were inspired, reliable, and authoritative. She labors then to give her words enough creditability that in practice her writings would be used in a pseudo-canonical manner. This can be seen by the different ways that Ellen White lays claim to the importance of her calling, her work, and the authoritative nature of her writings.

First, Ellen White, in a carefully worded statement, professes no claim to be a prophet, but allows herself to be called a prophetess:

To claim to be a prophetess is something I have never done. If others call me by that name, I have no controversy with them. *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, 34

This denial of claiming to be a prophet, in my judgment, is simply a ploy giving her a guise of humility and halting devotees of her from overusing her writings.

Second, Ellen White asserts the importance of her work by claiming that she is more than a prophetess:

"My work includes much more than this name [prophetess] signifies. I regard myself as a messenger for His people. *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, 36

Ellen White preferred to be called a "messenger." Essentially, a messenger was a prophet, and yet that term is vague enough to distance her from other prophets in the Bible and from contemporary prophets such as Joseph Smith and Mary Baker Eddy who lived during her lifetime. The claim that her work is more than that of a prophet assumes that she has all the responsibilities of being a prophetess and more. When people carry out the functions of a particular job, they are ordinarily given a title consistent with their work. Ellen White laid claim indirectly to being a prophet by telling her fol-

lowers that her work was far greater in magnitude than a prophet. In this respect, she proclaimed her authoritative role as a prophet and congratulated herself

Third, Ellen White attempts to show the utter necessity of her writings in convicting sinners of their erring ways:

If their messages [Testimonies] are not heeded, the Holy Spirit is shut away from the soul. What further means has God in reserve to reach the erring ones, and show them their true condition? *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, 46

This statement goes beyond prescribing a strict adherence to her teachings. Ellen White intimates that the Testimonies are the exclusive means of "reaching the erring ones." Her statement is inconsistent with her other statements on the work of the Holy Spirit. However, in my judgment, her writings tend to underemphasize the work of the Holy Spirit in illuminating believers and in convicting sinners of their erring ways, and she takes on that role herself in order to validate her writings and her calling.

Fourth, Ellen White makes direct and indirect statements concerning the authoritative nature of her writings. She does this (1) by commanding that her writings be heeded, (2) by referring to all her writings as inspired and coming from the Holy Spirit, (3) by advocating personal apostasy would come about if the inspiration of her writings were shunned, and (4) by advocating that a last day deception will be to make void her writings.

If their messages [Testimonies] are not heeded, the Holy Spirit is shut away from the soul. *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, 46

God sets no man to pronounce judgment on His Word, selecting some things as inspired and discrediting others as uninspired. The Testimonies have been treated in the same way; but God is not in this. *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, 23

The Holy Ghost is the author of the Scriptures and of the Spirit of Prophecy. *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, 30

When I send you a testimony of warning and reproof, many of you declare it to be merely the opinion of Sister White. You have thereby insulted the Spirit of God. *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, 661

If you lose confidence in the Testimonies, you will drift away from Bible truth. *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, 98

It is Satan's plan to weaken the faith of God's people in the Testimonies. *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, 672

The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, 48

The instruction that was given in the early days of the message is to be held as safe instruction to follow in these ... closing days. Those who are indifferent to this light and instruction must not expect to

escape the snares which we have been plainly told will cause the rejecters of light to stumble, and fall, and be snared, and be taken. *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, 41

By making direct and indirect claims to the authoritative nature of her writings, Ellen White tactfully attributed to her writings an aura of authority. She sparked fear in the hearts of her followers by insisting that her words were from God and that her words were to be heeded. Ellen White did, however, have enough respect for the Bible that she did not want her writings to be placed on an equal footing with the Bible. Thus, she relegated her writings to a pseudo-canonical level by appealing to the Bible as the only guide in doctrinal matters. Ellen White probably felt compelled to assert this position to maintain her followers and to prevent devotees of her from overemphasizing her teachings and offending others within the Advent Movement. In practice, both the Bible and Ellen White are used to establish the core teachings and values of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The recognition of dual authorities has created a tension between the doctrine of sola scriptura and the inspiration of Ellen White. An Adventist apologist made the following shocking remark:

Today "the Bible only" is the cry of some who seek to discredit Mrs. White and undermine the authority of her writings. On the surface this slogan sounds logical and appealing, but when analyzed carefully, it is seen to be invalid. While it is true that the Bible is the infallible revelation of God's will and the only source of doctrine, it is also true that even the Bible is to be studied in conjunction with history, archaeology, languages, and other aids.... Those who call for us to "study the Bible and the Bible only" should see how inconsistent it is for them to draw upon Calvin, Luther, and modern commentators in their efforts to understand the Bible, yet exclude the writings of Ellen White.<sup>2</sup>

Kenneth H. Wood has constructed straw men in his argumentation and then brandished "the swords of polemics against caricatures, not unlike collective Don Quixotes tilting at the windmills."<sup>3</sup> The writings of the Reformers and those of Ellen White are very different. The Reformers did not claim to be prophets, and evangelicals do not believe their writings "are a continuing and an authoritative source of truth."<sup>4</sup> The Reformers did not believe that their writings were brought about by divine revelation. This cannot be said of Ellen White who supposedly had so-called heavenly visions and voice-related messages from God. Her writings are considered by the Adventist Church as an authoritative source for doctrine and are considered as an "invaluable tool" for "confirming church teaching."<sup>5</sup> Confidence is to be placed in her writings and they are to be heeded. The latter claims cannot be made concerning the writings of the Reformers or any modern-day Christian writer. Evangelicals maintain a proper distance between the writings of the prophets and apostles as sovereignly given to us in the Bible and the writings of other believers. The inscripturated Word of God is the authoritative basis for sound doctrine while the writings of other believers interpret God's Word. Their interpretation is not infallible as is God's Word. Contemporary Christian material provides us with information outside of the Bible so that we can apply biblical principles to our current situation. Also, Christian authors have a pastoral interest in meeting the contemporary needs of believers, refuting error, and applying sound biblical principles in interpreting the Scriptures. The advice of Christian authors is to be taken only as long as it is in harmony with the principles of Scripture.

## The hidden claim: the final authority on doctrinal matters

Ellen White in *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 293, says,

There are a thousand temptations in disguise prepared for those who have the light of truth; and the only safety for any of us is in receiving no new doctrine, no new interpretation of the Scriptures; without first submitting it to brethren of experience. Lay it before them in a humble, teachable spirit, with earnest prayer; and if they see no light in it, yield to their judgment; for "in the multitude of counselors there is safety."

Her assertion that believers are to yield to the Church's "judgment" directly contradicts the following bold claim by Gerhard F. Hasel:

Biblical authority is not founded upon the church. It is not grounded in any human philosophy, discipline, agency, or endeavor. Therefore, the acceptance, meaning, and interpretation of the Bible is not dependent on decrees or councils of human beings neither on their single nor combined scientific interpretative opinion. Divine authority is inherent in the Bible, as Scripture, which gives creative direction to life and all branches of human thought.<sup>6</sup>

The problem with Ellen White's statement is that it leaves no room for the believer to throw down the gauntlet and say, "I stand on the Word of God alone, so help me God!" There is a bending to the authority of the Church, and it is not simply another authority. It is an authority that supersedes both the Bible and the writings of Ellen White.

Ellen White clarifies the role of the church in controversial matters by designating the individual's final arbitrator:

I have been shown that no man's judgment should be surrendered to the judgment of any one man. But when the judgment of the General Conference, which is the highest authority that God has upon the earth, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be maintained, but be surrendered. *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 3, 492

Ultimately, within the structure of the Adventist Church, the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference would be the final arbitrator in doctrinal matters. Ellen White subordinates the Word of God to the decision of the General Conference. While she denies that one should not surrender their judgment to one person, she does say that we ought to surrender it to the council of many delegates assembled as the General Conference. This severely limits the role of the conscience in decision-making. Logically, the General Conference in session, rather than the Word of God, becomes the final authority, foundation, and standard for Seventh-day Adventist doctrine.

## Critical evaluation

Clearly, Adventists adhering to the teachings of Ellen White hold to three different authorities: the General Conference, the Bible, and the writings of Ellen White. From the statements made by Ellen White, I would rank them in that order with respect to their importance in deciding doctrinal issues. However, one may see Ellen White as the primary determiner of Adventist doctrine since she argues for the authoritative nature of all three sources and Adventist authors often quote her more than the Bible.<sup>7</sup>

The Adventist Church has inconsistently claimed dual authorities while maintaining the Bible alone as the foundation of their teach-



ings. Article 1 of the *Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists*, states: "The Holy Scriptures are... the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history." Article 17 of that same document affirms that the writings of Ellen White "are a continuing and authoritative source of truth" and says, "the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested." If the Bible were truly the "standard" by which everything is tested, then there would be no reason for asserting Ellen White's writings as authoritative. Adventists, however, felt that it was necessary to assert her writings as authoritative because they consider her heavenly visions as messages from God and they believe that what transpired through Ellen White was a series of divine revelations. Presupposing all of this, they use her writings to support some of their key doctrines. This doctrine that says there are two authorities (the Bible and the writings of Ellen White) flies in the face of Ellen White's own claim of the "the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines, and the basis of all reforms."<sup>8</sup> There is simply no way to resolve the inconsistencies in Adventism with respect to the issue of authority.

The murkiness of the Adventist claim to the teaching of *sola scriptura* is evident because in Article 17 the reference to "the writings of Ellen White" is interchangeable with the references to the Bible in Articles 1 and 17. The only real difficulty using these phrases interchangeably is that in the *Fundamentals Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists* the Bible is seen as "the" authority and the writings of Ellen White are designated as "an" authority. However, one wonders why any distinction exists since, according to Ellen White, "the Holy Ghost is the author of the Scriptures and of the Spirit of Prophecy."<sup>9</sup> One also wonders why nothing is said with respect to the authority of the Church in doctrinal matters since in disputed matters Adventists are to "yield" to the "judgment" of the counsel of the Church.<sup>10</sup>

Although lip service is paid to *sola scriptura*, Adventists fall short of adhering to the Reformation concept of *sola scriptura* that denies any authoritative written source other than the Bible. John T. Baldwin truthfully admits: "Adventist theology has a secondary source of doctrinal authority outside of the Bible."<sup>11</sup> That is a bold admission that the Bible is not the Church's only written authority in doctrinal matters. However, if the writings of Ellen White are inspired, should they not be viewed as another primary source of Christian doctrine rather than a secondary source? Baldwin's further assertion that the writings of Ellen White are "subject to the authority of the Bible"<sup>12</sup> is problematic because a truly authoritative source for Christian doctrine does not rely upon another source. Many of the writings of Ellen White go beyond the Bible and beyond any verification. If Ellen White's writings were truly authoritative, they would have the full endorsement of God and be subject to no other document. Although Paul should not be read in isolation from the rest of the Bible, we never speak of Paul's writings as being subject to the rest of the Bible. To do so would be to relegate the Pauline corpus to a pseudo-canonical level. Yet despite this inconsistency, the myth is propagated that Seventh-day Adventists believe in *sola scriptura* because they believe that the writings of Ellen White are a "lesser light" that is subject to the Bible, "the greater light."<sup>13</sup> This is a faulty analogy because it is an overstatement to call the strange teachings of Ellen White a "light," and any writings that are subject to the Bible cannot be authoritative in doctrinal matters.

## Conclusion

The only safe course is to return to the Bible as the only written authoritative source in doctrinal matters. We must preclude the idea that the any non-canonical writings, including the writings of Ellen White, carry "the same 'inspired' function as the Bible or an addition to the Bible."<sup>14</sup> We must furthermore rule out "degrees or levels of inspiration" and the notion that "only the portions of Scriptures pertaining to faith and redemption were inspired."<sup>15</sup> Also, we are left with no other option than to rule out the writings of Ellen White as an authoritative source for the church. Lastly, the notion of yielding to a consensus within the Adventist Church in doctrinal matters must be abandoned. We must stand on the Word of God, for each one of us will have to give an account for our beliefs. We must not fear the word of Ellen White. May God help us that we, in this "last hour" (1 John 2:18), will cling to the Bible so as to find our peace in Christ and advance His causes and His kingdom. May former Seventh-day Adventists be truly a people of the Book.<sup>16</sup>

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> W.R. Downing, *The New Testament Church: Nature, Characteristics, Perpetuity* (Morgan Hill, CA: Pacific Institute for Religious Studies, 1982), 47.
  - <sup>2</sup> K. H. Wood, "All Things Through Christ," *Adventist Review* 24 (June 1982): 15.
  - <sup>3</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Willing to Believe: The Controversy Over Free Will* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 125.
  - <sup>4</sup> This quote, from *Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists*, Article 17, is the Adventist Church's official position concerning the inspiration of the writings of Ellen White.
  - <sup>5</sup> *Constitution and Bylaws of the Adventist Theological Society*, Article III, Section 2.
  - <sup>6</sup> G. F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1985), 101.
  - <sup>7</sup> T. Crosby, "Do the Authorities Conflict on Perfectionism?" *Spectrum* 8 (January 1977), 64, tabulates the number of quotes from the Bible and Ellen White as used by the four Adventists (H. E. Douglass, E. Heppenstall, H. K. LaRondelle, and C. M. Maxwell) in their book, *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1975):
- | Author      | Ellen White | Bible |
|-------------|-------------|-------|
| Douglass    | 101         | 47    |
| Maxwell     | 148         | 60    |
| Heppenstall | 8           | 53    |
| LaRondelle  | 4           | 232   |
- From this information, it seems evident that in practice some Adventists use Ellen White as their primary source of doctrine while others use Ellen White as a secondary source.
- <sup>8</sup> E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 88.
  - <sup>9</sup> E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, 30.
  - <sup>10</sup> E. G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 293.
  - <sup>11</sup> J. T. Baldwin, "Historicization and Christian Theological Methods," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 4 (Autumn 1993): 170.
  - <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
  - <sup>13</sup> E. G. White, *Colporteur Ministry*, 125.
  - <sup>14</sup> Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today*, 100.
  - <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*
  - <sup>16</sup> I thank John R. Jones, Dean of the School of Religion, La Sierra University, Riverside, California, for reading this paper and discussing it with me.



# Only one old testament law Not two!

**V. Streifling**

**A**n essential Christian doctrine is the Trinity, that within the nature of the one true God simultaneously exist three eternal persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, being co-equal in nature, attributes and co-eternal; and that these three are the one True God.<sup>1</sup> Many Scriptures show Only one God; yet, the Father as God; the Son as God; the Holy Spirit as God—each has God’s nature.<sup>2</sup>

## **One God and one law exemplify one law**

Similar to these three being ‘one’ (Greek *Eis*, Hebrew *Echad*), so also are man and wife “no longer two but one flesh”<sup>3</sup> (Matt 19:6; Mk 10:8; Gen 2:24).

These give a basis from which to see the Old Testament (OT) Law, and see there was one law—not two. Just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are “One God”—not three; and as man and wife are “one flesh,” so also the OT moral, priestly, sacrificial and ceremonial commands were “one law”—not two nor four!

## **God states only “one law”**

Many of us were taught there was a moral law and a ceremonial law. To our amazement, Scripture nowhere speaks of God’s commands as two or more separate laws, nor are the words moral law or ceremonial law found in the Bible at all! But many Scriptures, as Ex 12:49 or Numb 15:15 say it’s only One Law, or one ordinance.<sup>4</sup>

Interchanging the law and the ordinance was commonly accepted and taught by us as Seventh-day Adventists (SDA), for in our prophecy seminars after presenting Dan 7:25, “He shall think to change times and laws” our evangelists cited Isa 24:5 for support “because they transgressed the laws and changed the ordinance”<sup>5</sup>

Eph 2:15 says the law of commandments is “contained in Ordinances.” Thus the passages which speak of both One Law and One Ordinance are speaking of the one and same entity: The whole Law, as James calls it.<sup>6</sup> Just as several Scriptures saying “there is One God” prove there is only One God, these ten scriptures prove there was only One Law and this One Law is also

called One Ordinance. The various commands, as moral, priestly, sacrificial, ceremonial, were all part of this One Law or One Ordinance.

That the whole Law, was ONE Law is seen from Deuteronomy where it’s entirely recited by Moses for the Children of Israel. In Deut 1:5 “Moses began to declare this law”; in 4:8 “so righteous is this Law”; in 4:44 “and this is the law”; in ch 5 he begins with the ten commandments, and subsequently for many chapters he recites scores of other precepts; then in 31:9 he wrote out this law; in 31:26 “Take this book of the Law”; in 33:4 “Moses commanded us A LAW”; and in 33:10 “They shall teach Israel Thy Law” so that this ‘Book of the Law’ is God’s Law.

Thus in Deuteronomy ‘the Law’ as God’s Law includes the decalogue and scores of other precepts, chapter after chapter. Yet it’s all One Law and God’s Law through the Old Testament, where some 187 times it is spoken of as ‘The Law,’ ‘This Law,’ ‘My Law’ and ‘Thy Law’ (meaning God’s Law) every time in the Singular, thus ONLY ONE LAW.<sup>7</sup>

The law that Christ came to fulfill contained more moral principles than those on stone. He shows this in His sermon on the mount, speaking of the whole law from the Book of the Law, for the precepts He spoke of included divorce (Matt 5:31+ 32); swearing oaths (33-37); abortion & injuries (38-42); loving our enemies (43-47); and being perfect (48). These samples tell what Jesus meant by ‘the Law’ that He came to fulfill. It wasn’t just the Ten Commandments, but the one whole law!<sup>8</sup>

He never intended that ‘the Law’ was speaking merely of the decalogue. Nor did the other Bible writers! We only assumed they did, based upon the faulty premise that there were two laws: a ‘moral law’ we called ‘the Law of God’; and a ‘ceremonial law’ we called ‘the Ordinances.’ So wherever ‘the Law’ appeared, we held it was speaking of the decalogue alone.

In the above passages speaking of ‘One Law,’ the same Hebrew word for ‘one’ is used as is used for ‘One God.’ Their various commands and statutes are one—a unity. For Law *Torah* is used; and ordinance is from *Huqqa* meaning ‘a statute,’ yet they are often used interchangeably, speaking of the same entity.

# The two laws

## The law of God

The writing of God

On what did God write? Ex 31:18; 34:1

What did God write? Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 31:9

Where did Moses put God's writing? Deuteronomy 10:4,5

What is the character of God's writing? Psalm 19:7,8

What was the purpose of God's Law? Ecclesiastes 12:13

How long was God's law to continue? Ps 111:7,8; 119:89, 144;  
Matt 5:17,18

## The law of Moses

The writing of Moses

On what did Moses write? Deut 31:9

What did Moses write? Deuteronomy 5:22 (see 7-12); 10:4

Where did Moses put his own writing? Deuteronomy 31:25, 26

What is the character of the Law of Moses? Leviticus 7:37, 38

What purpose did Moses' Law serve? Colossians 2:14, 17;  
Heb 9:9; 10:1

When did Moses' law terminate? Colossians 2:14

## Sabbatarian's antithetical argument

Contrary to these Scriptures stating there was only One Law, Sabbatarian sects divide God's Law into two<sup>9</sup> by arbitrarily applying certain texts to suit their needs. SDA's *Principles of Life* text, page 171 shows how they divide God's One Law into two (see above).<sup>10</sup>

## Answering this antithesis

This division is achieved by selective citing of scripture as shown above.

It's error to apply Matt 5:17-18 only to the decalogue, for as shown above Jesus was speaking of the whole law from the Book of the Law that included divorce, abortion, injuries, swearing of oaths, loving one's enemies and being perfect—these subjects were not in the decalogue!

It's error to say that only God wrote the ten commandments,<sup>11</sup> for Moses also wrote them in the Book of the Law.

It's error to apply Eccl 12:13 only to the Decalogue, for some say that the Torah had 596 commands, that are all God's, and Eccl. universally applies to all, including the other 586!

It's error to apply Col.2:14-16 only to what they call the 'law of Moses', for 1 Chr 16:40; 2 Chr 31:3 and Neh 8:14 show these sacrificial offerings, these Feasts, New Moons & Sabbaths are "IN THE LAW OF JEHOVAH", so Col. 2:14-16 applies to them IN The Law of Jehovah, as one whole law.

The Book of the Law, written by Moses, included the whole decalogue as a part of this Law, so Moses' law (with the decalogue) was also God's law. It's impossible for these ten precepts to be retained in the New Covenant because they were written on stone, yet at the same time be retired because they were written in the Book, which some call 'ceremonial' and 'types and shadows'. They cannot be both eternal and temporary.

At the same time it is impossible that the moral commands on the stones would be retained for Christians, while the many higher moral commands in the Book of the Law are "nailed to the cross" for being written by Moses, not God! This shows their error in asking 'What is the character of God's law' compared to 'the character of Moses' law', for the Decalogue being included in the Book of the Law

makes Psalm 19:7-8 apply to the book as a whole, and the more so for there are higher moral precepts in the book than on the stone.<sup>12</sup>

This division of the law denies by implication that what Moses wrote by Divine Inspiration was God "speaking through His servants". 2 Tim 3:16 says that "All Scripture is God-breathed" (Gk 'theopneustos' means the out breathing of God); 2 Pet 1:21 says this didn't come by man's will, but "Holy men of God spoke as they were impelled by the Holy Spirit"; Neh 8:14 "...written in the law, which Jehovah commanded by Moses"; and in Lev 26:37-46; 9:23; 10:13; 15:23; 16:40 & Num 27:23 God commands by the hand of Moses. Thus, what Moses commanded Israel, whether spoken or written, was still God's commands and what he wrote was God speaking through Moses, and in every way equal with the commands He spoke from Sinai and wrote on tables of stone. Other Scriptures uphold this equation as well.<sup>13</sup>

All this shows that the Law of God and the Law of Moses were THE ONE AND THE SAME LAW and these were two different names for that One Law, and they misapplied Psalm 111:7,8; 119:89, 144; and Matt 5:17-18 in dividing the One Law into two, based on question begging.

'Moral Law', 'Ceremonial Law' and 'Two Laws' are all entirely foreign to the Bible and can't be found in even one verse. A caption from the SDA Sabbath School Quarterly 3rd qtr, '72, p.37 depicts a scholar meticulously scrutinizing ancient scrolls, searching for a "missing text" to show Sunday worship; it may better show themselves searching for a text for two laws a moral law or ceremonial law. Their "two laws" teaching must be repudiated as unscriptural.

This division is selectively created to try to give the Sabbath distinction over the other feasts, so that by being in the decalogue, it becomes a moral law and would remain while the others are supposedly ceremonial and thus abolished. But God calls the Sabbath "My feasts" with these other feasts in Lev 23 and Numb 28-29, using the same Hebrew or Greek words to describe both and all. Since God repeatedly states it is One Law—not two, then the SDA's artificial division into two, is their own changing times and laws as they reference to this church age, prophesied in Dan 7:25,<sup>14</sup> being fulfilled by these themselves today.<sup>15</sup>

## Grasping for straws, unable to save

To evade all this evidence, and having no Bible reference for two laws, some grasp for straws, using 1 Cor 7:19 as a life saver!<sup>16</sup> Dr. Bacchiocchi did this in *Sabbath Under Crossfire*<sup>17</sup>, saying "We shall see that the *New Testament* distinguishes between the continuity of the moral law, and the discontinuity of the ceremonial law (1 Cor 7:19)."

1 Cor 7:19 says that circumcision or uncircumcision are nothing but keeping God's commandments are what matters. They interpret circumcision to speak of the ceremonial law, while keeping God's commands speak of the moral law (decatalogue).<sup>18</sup>

Yet here Paul speaks of keeping God's commands (Gk *entole*), but not the Law (*Nomos*), neither two laws as Dr. Bacchiocchi had read into the Bible text. Since there was only ONE Law, then circumcision as commanded in that law, would need be kept by this SDA exegesis! Yet Paul isn't speaking of circumcision as part

**Paul spoke of New Covenant commands that were far higher and more extensive than the minimal negatives of the Decalogue. These are the "Royal Law of Liberty namely 'you must love your neighbor as yourself' as defined in James 2:8.**

of the Law, but as the sign of the Abrahamic covenant, that the Jews held guaranteed their position with God.<sup>19</sup>

Paul neither refers to the Law nor its commands. For example, Christians must not still "offer burnt offerings for the morning and evening burnt offerings for the Sabbath...as it is written in The Law of Jehovah" (2 Chron 31:3). Here, the burnt offerings, and special sacrifices for the Sabbath, were a necessary part of the command "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Instead, Paul spoke of New Covenant commands that were far higher and more extensive than the minimal negatives of the Decalogue. These are the "Royal Law of Liberty," namely "you must love your neighbor as yourself" as defined in James 2:8. Jesus drew this further saying, "A new command I'm giving you that you love one another as I have loved you."

First John saying we must keep His commandments (Gk *entole*) defines them as "this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment" (1 Jn 3:23).

## The 'law of moses' WAS 'the law of God'

As already shown, "the Law of God" and the "Law of Moses" are really two different names for the *one and same law*. The NT sus-

tains this in Luke 2:22 where Jesus' circumcision according to the law of Moses is "in the Law of Jehovah" (vs 23-24) and 'according to the law of Jehovah' (vs 39); and in Heb 10:28 where the death penalty applied to breaking commands of the Decalogue including idolatry, the Sabbath, dishonoring parents and adultery. So again 'Moses Law' is in fact the 'Law of God'. This equation is sustained by many other Scriptures as well.<sup>20</sup>

To these we add Daniel 9:10-11 where "the voice of Jehovah your God" is "His laws" and "the Law" and "Your Law" and "Your voice" and yet "the Law of Moses;" and Mal 4:4 "Remember the Law of Moses which I commanded in Horeb." These many Scriptures conclusively prove the law of Moses is the same law as the Law of God, even as 'the book of the law of Moses' is the same book as 'the book of the Law of Jehovah God'. All this undergirds what we've indisputably proven, that there was only ONE LAW, but it was called 'the Law of God' because He commanded it; and it was called 'the Law of Moses' because he wrote it in 'the book of the Law of Jehovah God', and Moses mediated this Law covenant between Israel and God.

## Highest moral commands IN the book of the law

The book of the Law contained the ten commands (also written on stones), and many additional commands, which though not on the stones were even of higher moral standards, than those on stone, which generally listed only the minimal requirements. Some of these were:

1. You shall not vex a stranger (Ex 22:21)
2. You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child (Ex 22:23)
3. You shall not follow a multitude to do evil (Ex 23:2)
4. You shall not go as a talebearer among the People (Lev 19:2)
5. You shall not avenge yourselves (Lev 19:16-18)
6. You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Lev 19:16-18)
7. You shall not have respect of persons (discriminate) (Deut 16:19)
8. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart. (Deut 6:5+)
9. You shall not pervert justice due the stranger or fatherless (Deut 24:7)
10. You shall not oppress a servant who's poor and needy (Deut 24:14)
11. You must leave gleanings in your harvest for the needy (Deut 24:19-22)
12. You shall be perfect (Deut 24:17)

James uses respect of persons as being over those of the Decalogue, and saying that if you offend in this one, you've broken all the rest! Paul tells us, "Owe no man anything but to love one another: for he who loves another has fulfilled the Law. For this, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, and if there be any other command, it is briefly comprehended in this saying 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Rom 13:8).

Here we see this one command from the Book of the Law was so much greater, it included all the moral principles of the law itself! Jesus already said the same thing, that the greatest and second greatest statutes of the Law are, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, and you shall love your neigh-

bor as yourself,” adding, “On these two hang all the law and the prophets.” So these two from the book were greater than all those on the stones—even though written with God’s own hand!

Paul put precepts of the decalogue together with “love your neighbor,” for they were all part of one law, just as James did when showing the law contained “you shall not have respect of persons.” Jesus also said the law had both decalogue and other statutes as divorce, oaths, injuries, and to love your neighbor—raised to “love your enemies,” and “be ye perfect.” He shows this again in His exchange with the rich young ruler. In Luke, He seems to say to keep the decalogue, but Mark shows he included “do not defraud” while Matthew says He added “you shall love your neighbor as yourself,” both of which came from the Book of the Law (Lev 19:13-18), not the Ten commandments. Sadly the young man loved his things more than his fellow-man, refusing Jesus’ invitation to “take up your cross and follow Me.”

Yet there’s another significant reason why love for God and neighbor are the greatest commands of the Law. It’s possible to keep the decalogue from fear of eternal punishment. So on this basis, I may beat my neighbor within an inch of his life, yet if I did not kill him, I’ve still kept the decalogue which said, “Thou shalt not kill.”<sup>21</sup>

Yet if I love God with my whole heart, and I love my neighbor as I ought, I wouldn’t need the decalogue at all, for I won’t hold anything above Him, or wish to do any ill to my fellow man. Thus I’d be making God Lord over my life.<sup>22</sup>

The young ruler had this problem, having kept all the decalogue from his youth, yet loving His riches above God or his neighbor. If I loved God and my neighbor, I’d relish the opportunity to give even out of my own poverty, if only to supply his needs.<sup>23</sup> And if I love God with my whole heart, there will be no ulterior motive in my showing love to my neighbor. I will want to give, wanting nothing in return, except His love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and the joy this brings!

Still the whole law had its inadequacies because it could not change the inner man! John 1:17 says, “The law came by Moses, but grace and TRUTH by Jesus Christ!” for He portrayed even a far greater picture of God’s perfection than they knew from the Old Law although it was complete.

But how can the perfect, just, and holy God of the universe command us, his fallen creatures, to be as perfect as He? It’s humanly impossible to be that perfect. As it’s impossible for us to ever keep the Old law, how much less possible that we keep His New Law of the Spirit! And what a great chasm between the minimal requirements of the decalogue and this one precept of the New Law, for since God is infinite, to command His perfection, commands us to be infinitely perfect! So Paul concludes “There is none righteous—no, not one!” (Rom 3:10-18)

Similarly, there’s an infinite chasm between the law’s Sabbath that gave no rest for the soul, and God’s perfect rest for man’s soul which Adam lost in Eden, and Israel failed to attain in the wilderness, but Christ promised for His followers in the New Covenant! We have true rest in Him Who is our salvation, our life, our perfection, our holiness and our peace with God.

We began this study affirming the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are One God, the Trinity. In the same way the Scriptures showed there was only One Law, the whole Law, written in the Book of the Law of Jehovah God, that He commanded by Moses. While it had many priestly, sacrificial and ceremonial commands, yet it also had many more moral commands, and higher moral precepts than did the Decalogue itself.

Sadly, most often the moral commands that were broken were not from the Decalogue, but the higher and more significant moral commands of the book of the law, for it was far easier to fail to love my neighbor as myself, than to commit adultery, break the Sabbath or dishonor my parents.

Thankfully, for New Covenant Christians who face even greater challenge of keeping Christ’s higher NT commands, God has given us the way for to meet this challenge through faith in

**It’s possible to keep the decalogue from fear of eternal punishment. So on this basis, I may beat my neighbor within an inch of his life, yet if I did not kill him, I’ve still kept the decalogue which said “Thou shalt not kill.”**

Christ, beginning with the new birth so we’d desire to do His will; the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit who sheds His love abroad in our hearts; Jesus’ blood that keeps on cleansing us from our sins;<sup>24</sup> and Jesus’ righteous life<sup>25</sup> that’s imputed upon us to bridge any gaps between our frail imperfect lives and God’s infinite perfection that Jesus had. Of Christ Paul said “In Him is dwelling all the fullness of Deity bodily, and you are complete in Him.”<sup>26</sup> Christ has done it all for us, and He IS all and all for us, so we can truly rest in Him. Our standing with God is secured, not only by what Jesus has done, but even more so by what He is—the fullness of Deity, bodily.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Scripture clearly shows their unity and plurality as in Deut 6:4 “Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord.” The Hebrew word Elohim, expresses God’s plurality, while for one it is echad meaning a unity, or harmony, while yachad will speak of a single entity. So the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are a plurality of persons who are one united God—a unity—but not 3 gods, neither one single entity! This same distinction is in the NT Greek where mono and mia are for a single entity, but eis and ev describe the unity and oneness of the nature of God. The Jews sought to stone Jesus for saying “I and my Father are one” (Jn 10:30-33), declaring He had the same nature and essence as God. 1 Jn 5:7 “the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit” are spoken of as “these three are one”



meaning one essence, a unity. Early church fathers as Cyprian and Tertullian interpreted this as “He is speaking of the full and united Trinity” and “these are of one essence” using John’s words to refute and correct the false teachers of their day.

<sup>2</sup> These divine nature attributes are: omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, creative, eternal and immutable, and they distinguish the One True God from the pagan’s false gods (Gal 4:6-8). While the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are shown to have all these attributes of deity, yet they also have the attributes of personality, ie mind, will, emotions and they communicate. They are distinct from one another in such contexts as Jn 14, “I will pray to the Father, and He will send you another comforter, even the Spirit of Truth.” Here I as Jesus is nominative (subject), the Father is dative (indirect object), and the Spirit of Truth is accusative (direct object). Many such passages are in Scripture where it is shown that the Father is neither the Son nor the Spirit, as also in Heb 9 where Jesus offered His blood to the Father, through the Eternal Spirit.

<sup>3</sup> Matt 19:6; Mk 10:8; Gen 2:24.

<sup>4</sup> Ex 12:49 “One law shall be for the native born and for the stranger”  
Lev 7:7 “There is one law for them...”

Lev 14:22 “You shall have one manner of law...”

Num 15:16 “One law and one manner shall be for you and the stranger”

Num 15:29 “You shall have one manner of law...”

Num 9:14 “You shall have one ordinance for both the stranger and...”

Num 15:15 “One ordinance shall be for you...and the stranger...”

Num 19:2 “This is the ordinance of the Law”

Num 31:21 “This is the ordinance of the Law...”

<sup>5</sup> As God’s predicting Rome would change the Decalogue, a false allegation

<sup>6</sup> James so well shows this by using as his example the precept against discrimination or ‘having respect of persons’, that’s from the book of the law, not the Decalogue that was only a small part of the whole and included in this book of the law as again James shows using ‘do not covet’ etc in this context. James says non discrimination is an abiding moral principle of the law that if violated, condemns the transgressor, for in Christ there’s neither Jew nor Gentile, bond or free, rich or poor. All are one in Christ, so if we discriminate we break Christ’s moral law saying “Love your neighbor as yourself” which James says is the “Royal Law” (2:8).

<sup>7</sup> Thus the words ‘the law’ as spoken of in both the OT and the New, never spoke of the Decalogue as separate from the whole law in the book of the law; while to refer to the precepts on stone, the expression ‘Ten Words’ or ‘ten commandments’ is used.

<sup>8</sup> Another good example is Matt 23:23 where the weightier matters of the law are justice and mercy, neither of which were in the Decalogue, but were part of the law.

<sup>9</sup> For example the SDA’s *Principles of Life* text book, had a caption of the cross with a scrolled paper nailed to it, and two tables of stone at its base. The scroll was called “law of types and ceremonies” but the stones “moral law of Ten Commandments.” Then the caption explains “It was the law of types and ordinances, not God’s Law, that was nailed to the cross.”

<sup>10</sup> A similar division appears in *Bible Readings for the Home* p 396, 1915 ed, or p.288 1966 ed, expanded p.286-287 as also *SDA Believe* p.243-244 “The Law and the Gospel after the Cross.”

<sup>11</sup> Yet even for being written by God’s hand on tables of stone, and with ink by Moses, Paul called the Decalogue ‘the ministration of death’ saying ‘the letter kills’ when comparing it with Christ’s new law of the spirit in 2 Cor 3:3-13. And of this law written on stones he says it was passing away, together with the glory with which it was given, being superceded by ‘the glory that excels’ which came with the Law of the Spirit which gives life. Thus he says in Rom 8:1-2 “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death.”

<sup>12</sup> Love God and your neighbor is higher than don’t kill or steal, as Jesus taught.

<sup>13</sup> 1Kg 14:18 “the word of Yhwh...He spoke by the hand of Abijah the prophet.” Acts 28:25-27 “Well spake the Holy Ghost through Isaiah...” re what was written. 1 Chr 16:40 “to offer burnt offerings to Yhwh on the altar of burnt offerings... written in the Law which Yehweh commanded by Moses” 2 Chr 31:3 “the burnt offerings for the morning and evening burnt offerings for the Sabbaths, the New Moons, feasts, as it is written in the Law of Jehovah.”

<sup>14</sup> Daniel isn’t speaking of changing the Law (Torah), for here he uses the Persian word ‘dat’ meaning ‘decree’, not Torah which he uses in 9:10, 11, 11-13. His

speaking of a beast who’d change times and laws is no reference to the Decalogue or God’s Law, neither the Sabbath in particular! Nor does Isaiah’s reference speak of the beast in Daniel, but of Israel’s Apostasy.

<sup>15</sup> Yet this is what they accuse Rome of, claiming this makes her ‘the man of sin’ and the ‘antiChrist’. But changing God’s one law into two laws is certainly far more excessive than merely the numbering of the ten precepts of the Decalogue—which in fact Rome did not change, but takes them as found in the Masoretic Text of Deut 5, which is supported by the LXX and the Vulgate. (See “the RC Church and the decalogue”, *Proclamation II*, 5/6, 2001, p.16ff, for startling discoveries on this issue).

<sup>16</sup> This writer had a series of lengthy dialogues in 1985 with an eminent SDA evangelist, the late Dr. Waddy Farag, who finally made this very appeal as his proof text for two laws, for he had no support left for their two laws, and no refutation of the many Scriptures which showed it was only one law, not two! Dr Farag did tell of studying the OT Law in a class under a Jewish Rabbi, and when he suggested the SDA view of two laws in the class, the Rabbi adamantly dismissed the suggestion, with promise to also dismiss the student should he ever raise such a view again in his class.

<sup>17</sup> p. 106

<sup>18</sup> Here they assume what they want to prove, for they don’t show that there are these two laws, but assuming them, they try to show that they’re handled differently. In this they lift themselves by their own bootstraps.

<sup>19</sup> Now some take baptism to guarantee salvation, and others ‘the Sabbath is the seal of God’ instead of the Holy Spirit who regenerates and fills us (Eph 1:13-14; 4:30).

<sup>20</sup> Josh 23:6 The book of the Law of Moses

Josh 8:31 The book of the Law of Moses

Josh 8:3 The book of the Law of Moses

2Chr 17:9 The book of the Law of God

2Chr 23:18 As written in the Law of Moses

2Chr 31:3 As written in the Law of Jehovah

Ezra 7:6 This Ezra...was a ready scribe in the Law of Moses

Ezra 7:12 Ezra the Priest, as scribe of the Law of God of heaven

Neh 8:1 bring the book of the Law of Moses, which God commanded

Neh 8:18 He read in the Law of God...the Book of the Law of God...

Neh 9:3 read in the Book of the Law of Jehovah (same as in 8:1).

<sup>21</sup> This shows the precepts from the Decalogue were not enough for they could be kept from a legalistic point of view, and I may yet be as far from God as East is from West! The weakness in the Decalogue was it only spelled out the minimal requirements of what not to do, but it did not tell anyone to love God or neighbor—much less how to do this freely and willingly, rather than from obligation. How vast is the gulf between just not killing your neighbor, and the mandate to love him, as your self, or yet as Christ loved us? Certainly, the latter is infinitely higher, for Christ is infinite! These weaknesses in the Decalogue reveal another misapplication of Scriptures in the two Laws division by Sabbatarians, for Ps 19:7-8 “the Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul” etc, cannot apply to the Decalogue, for if they were perfect, God would not have commanded all the higher moral commands, telling us to Love God and man, and to be perfect. Thus Ps 19 could only apply to the one whole law.

<sup>22</sup> This shows Jesus’ problem with the Jews: “these people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.” Here in Matt 15:8 and Mark 7:6 He repeats the same charges he had indicted them with through Isaiah, 750 years before. From these Scriptural notices, we assess Ellen White’s ‘vision’ of the tables of stone in heaven, where “on one table was four, and on the other six. The four on the first table shone brighter than the other six. But the fourth (Sabbath) shone above them all...a halo of glory was all around it” (*Word to Little Flock* p. 18, Apr 7, 1847). This ‘vision’ fails the test of Scripture (Isa 8:19-20).

<sup>23</sup> As in 2 Cor 8 & 9 or Phil 4.

<sup>24</sup> 1 John 1:7 in the Greek text says “...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, keeps on cleansing us from all sin”; Heb 9:14 “how much more shall the blood of Christ... continue cleansing your conscience” and 1Jn 1:9 “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Thus our sins don’t remain uncleansed until Jesus makes another final atonement, in a heavenly sanctuary as Ellen White taught.

<sup>25</sup> In Rom 5:10 Paul states “For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His son, much more, having been reconciled, shall we continue being saved by His life”

<sup>26</sup> Col 2:9-1



# The pitfalls of

By Rodney Nelson

**T**he debate over perfectionism in the Christian life has persisted throughout Christian history. Such efforts have been many and varied with differing emphases. The understanding of perfectionism that shall be discussed in this article is that of sinless perfectionism. This position proclaims that it is not only possible, but necessary, to attain to an existence where a believing Christian does not commit sin either in thought or action. Thus, this view is absolute in its application to the Christian life. Many scriptures are cited in corroboration of this position, one being Matthew 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Much exegetical work could be done to show the false claims and interpretations of sinless perfection proponents. However, for the purposes of this article, a brief summary of the New Testament understanding of perfection will suffice. What is the stressing in the New Testament regarding perfection? What is the desired goal? First, the corollary English word that can mean the same as perfect when translated from the Greek is "complete." To state that God wishes His people to be complete and lacking in nothing (James 1:4) is certainly scriptural. But, to claim that to be complete is to be absolutely without sin is not the thrust of Biblical thought. To insist that this is so is to state something that scripture says is impossible. 1 John 1:8-10 states,

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

Ironically, John writes this so that his audience will not sin (2:1). Further, the clause in 2:1 "but if anyone does sin" implies that certainly there will be sin to forgive. John is stating in these passages that individuals will always be in need of forgiveness

and that this fact is perpetual in duration. Man shall always be a sinner, thus forgiveness will always be available.

The New Testament understanding of perfection is that each Christian should seek maturity and completion in their spiritual development as a goal, and that sin can and shall be overcome in the Christian life, yet not to the point of never needing forgiveness.

The biblical emphasis on perfection, then, does not imply absolute perfection but an unblemished character which has moral and spiritual integrity in relationship to God. The goal of spiritual maturity is set forth, and the believer is charged with making sincere and proper use of the spiritual resources available through Christ in order to attain this maturity in fellowship

# perfectionism

with Christ and the Christian community. (R.E.O. White, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, article "Perfection, Perfectionism," p. 839-40).

Given this short discourse on the biblical understanding of perfection, what are the central weaknesses of sinless perfectionism from a theological and practical point of view? Perfection is not a dirty word to be avoided as the above study indicates. However, a false understanding of this concept, which the above summary seeks to avoid, will lead to terrible application. The thought pattern of sinless perfectionism reveals several false assumptions and concepts that go to the heart of Christian salvation theology and practice. Following will be a discussion of some of these false concepts, not necessarily in rank order of importance.

First, sinless perfectionism implies by necessity that some degree of meritorious performance and effort is vital to one's spiritual completeness. This means that some redeeming merit is found in the performance of good works and holiness of character. The central problem with this fact, other than being legalism, is that it presumes to supplement grace, or unmerited favor, with some degree of human achievement or effort. If salvation is achieved unconditionally by divine favor and merit, then certainly sinless perfectionism implies incompleteness to God's ability to save mankind independent of human effort. Human effort is then seen to be a legitimate component of God's work of grace within human existence. However, such a position is untenable when one realizes that everything a human being does stems from grace. One's decision-making ability is a gift of God. Faith is a gift of God. Therefore, what a Christian is and does is rooted in grace. No room exists for exalting human effort

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when that effort is based on grace to begin with. Where does human effort come in? God has given you and me the capability of serving Him. Sin has rendered mankind incapable of doing so fully and justly. The Christian life is one of continual service to God that progressively results in victory over sin and temptation. Therefore, meritorious human effort and performance are only meritorious insofar as man recognizes that merit is not found in the performance, but rather in the recognition that performance derives from grace which is itself a gift of God. Until people realize that grace begins and ends human existence, they will continue to insist that what they do does necessitate some response from God as though He expects human effort to be a vital ingredient to His grace.

Second, sinless perfectionism conditions Christ's imputed righteousness by the completeness of imparted righteousness. Christian theology regarding salvation is centered on the truth of Christ's imputed righteousness taking the place of human unrighteousness in order for an individual to be righteous before God. Thus, human achievement matters nothing to God as far as meriting salvation is concerned. Why? Because man is incapable of attaining what is bestowed only by God. However, God does not give only a partial gift. Just as imputed righteousness exists outside of man, so righteousness is given to a man in order for that individual to achieve righteousness in existence here on earth. Thus, salvation is achieved by the work of Christ for mankind, and salvation is appropriated to an individual existentially through the Holy Spirit.

Sinless perfectionism turns this around by insisting that imparted righteousness through the Holy Spirit resulting in good works somehow conditions the completeness of the work of Christ. It does so by refusing the all-sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice on the cross to make a person one hundred percent acceptable to Himself. The result is that what God is doing within a person to restore His image is essential to the work of Christ for man. The failure here is that it is not recognized that what occurs within a person through the Holy Spirit is conditioned and dependent upon what Christ has done outside our existence. To qualify or condition imputed righteousness by imparted righteousness is to insist that impartation effects imputation and thus what occurs within a man qualifies for righteous merit. Rather, it is the reverse. What has been accomplished by Christ in declaring all sin abolished and all men righteous in Himself has made it possible for all mankind to become that which they already are in Christ Jesus. However, not all men will do so because they deny the all-sufficiency of Christ's work for them by insisting on their own autonomy and worth.

Third, sinless perfectionism assumes an unrealistic high estimation of human nature that in effect denies man's inherent sinful nature and its continued presence in the Christian life. This assumption is itself deadly to one's acceptance of the gospel. Why? Because as long as one sees any worth or merit in them-

selves, Christ's righteousness cannot make them into what they were meant to be, sons and daughters of God. Self-worth is only seen in the realization that one has worth because they are a creation of God. One is not worth anything autonomously independent of God. Why? Because all are a creation of God. It only follows that one's estimation of his/her value is only achieved and recognized by the sacrifice of Christ, a sacrifice which cost the life of the Son of God and which was done in order for God's creation to once again bear His image. It is this image which makes one valuable and gives a high value to human existence. God made man in His image and this image is of infinite importance to God, enough to send His Son to take my rightful place on that cross in order to restore that image. Thus, my worth is God-centered and legitimized by God's creation and redemption of me.

Sinless perfectionism underscores an attempt to restore this image by minimizing the extent of sin in the Christian life. Sin exists in the Christian's life. Paul, perhaps the greatest apostle, referred to himself as the worst of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15-16). Such a self-evaluation at the end of life by such an apostle should speak to all Christian self-evaluation. Any man who says he has no sin is a liar, as John stated, and this refers to one's station throughout life. No time will exist when a Christian can state they are sin-free. However, a Christian can know they are saved and righteous before God. Why? Because they are always in need of

mercy and forgiveness. Therefore, all human beings, by virtue of Adam's sin, are themselves sinners from birth and always in need of a Savior. Sinless perfectionism errs by believing that man can reach a position and condition of sinlessness and hence implies that man will have no need of forgiveness. Forgiveness is only necessary because of man's sinfulness. A true Christian is always a sinner, always penitent, and always forgiven. The sinful nature will always exist in the redeemed life

of a Christian and will combat with the righteous nature imparted to each saved Christian. The battle rages until death. This does not negate God's power in one's life but affirms the current reality of spiritual existence. The Christian will fight the good fight, but will always battle the enemy.

Fourth, sinless perfectionism, in its zeal to holiness and a sanctified life, tends toward legalism by incessant and perfunctory duties to be performed in obedience to the law. The problem with this factor should be quite apparent. Jesus and Paul had to battle such tendencies throughout their lives. That tendency was to seek to clarify the law of God by interpreting and imposing incessant regulations as to its observance. Thus was created the Talmud and Mishnah of second century Jewish thought. Such attempts, while seeking to clarify the law, only resulted in per-

*Sinless perfectionism errs by believing that man can reach a position and condition of sinlessness and hence implies that man will have no need of forgiveness.*

verting and clouding the laws meaning and application in one's life. Obedience becomes merely a set of rules and regulations that must be observed by punctilious ritual and self-abasement. Jesus and Paul rightly affirmed the law's validity, but also appealed to correct motive for observance, love. Paul asserts that God cannot be obeyed merely by following detailed regulations. The Christian obeys God by allowing the Holy Spirit to control one's life and motives. The Spirit guides into all truth and right observance. The tendency of perfectionism toward legalism perhaps is the greatest fallacy.

Fifth, sinless perfectionism mistakes the eradication of willful, deliberate sin for the abolition of absolute, natural sin in the Christian life. This is a very important point. There exists in scripture a distinction between willful, deliberate sin and sin which occurs as a result of sinful nature. Willful, deliberate sin results from a purposeful effort on the part of the individual to actually commit a wrong. These are sins that are performed over and over again, habitual sins. The Bible states that this type of sin will not occur in the genuine Christian experience. 1 John 3:9 states that believers will not continue to sin. Notice it does not say believers will not sin. In the Greek, the verbs denote continual action, not simply a single occurrence. This means that John is saying "that the believer cannot practice habitual sin" (Simon J. Kistemaker, James and I-III John, p. 303). Sins of habit are eradicated from the Christian life, whereas sins of human nature continue. Sin remains in the Christian life, but does not reign (See Romans 6-8). Once a believer has been born-again, sin cannot hold sway and dominion over that individual any longer. Why? Because that individual has been "born of God" and Christ's nature is imparted to them. Sinless perfectionism assumes that deliberate, habitual sin not only is eradicated, but the individual will finally be rendered incapable of any wrong action.

Sixth, sinless perfectionism tends to place the focus of attention upon the experience and performance of the individual rather than the historical experience and work of Christ. This tendency leads to preoccupation with one's perceived spirituality and attainment. It is largely subjective and tends to a guilt complex that turns into a vicious circle of legalistic condemnation of self. Fear results because we are afraid of not attaining the mark. An interesting comparison in this area is between Paul and Martin Luther. Much has been made of the similarities between these two individuals. However, whatever similarities may exist does not account for the major difference. Both realized their incapability of measuring up to God's high standard of righteousness and holiness, and both realized that only in Jesus could this required righteousness be attained. However, both reached the same conclusion from different perspectives and positions in their lives. Luther realized his condition while still a Christian whereas Paul realized it at conversion. Prior to the Damascus

road experience, Paul believed himself to be blameless and good enough to be acceptable to God (Phil. 3:4-6). His perspective changed when he was confronted with the righteousness of Christ which completely destroyed all fleshly boasting to the point that all former considerations became as refuse to Paul (Phil. 3:7-9). On the other hand, Luther was attempting to please God through the monastic Christianity of his day to the point of confessing continually his sins before his personal confessor. Luther was aware of his incapability of pleasing God by recognizing

that his Christianity would not merit standing before God, but would only lead to more confession and guilt. Only the righteousness of another would atone for his sin and guilt. So it must become with all Christians. Regardless of whether we are recent converts or life-time church members, the realization that Christ is all-sufficient for salvation by faith alone must be rooted in our Christian confession and life.

In conclusion, sinless perfectionism is not capable of one final thing, assurance of salvation. When one confuses, fuses, or uses imparted righteousness with a definition of imputed righteousness, one is left with a salvation scenario that assures a believer of one thing, continual and perpetual insecurity and guilt. Thus, what sinless perfectionism seeks to establish as its greatest strength results in its greatest curse, a salvation that is human based and legalistically motivated. Even the motivation of love to God as impelling and empowering a sinless life is ransacked of value and power.

The only genuine gospel alternative to sinless perfectionism is the righteousness of Christ as it is understood in forensic, outside-of-man application. It is a legal declaration that declares that man is incapable of salvation outside of the merits and righteousness of Christ. Righteousness by faith is not righteousness imparted to an individual to perfect in their lives, but it is the righteousness which no human life could ever live let alone merit; a righteousness which declares man a sinner and lifts him up through the action of a substitute. It is this point which perhaps sinless perfectionism misses entirely: the truth that only in Christ could a perfect substitute be found to satisfy the righteous claims of the Father. Sinless perfectionism insists that finite creatures may possess that which only the Son of God could attain, complete and final perfection of spirit, nature, and body. We as Christians are called to be Christ-like, not duplicate Christ's. Only the miracle of Glorification will see the union of both justification and sanctification, imputed and imparted righteousness, brought together into a perfect and complete entity. In the meantime believers must be content with living up to the calling they have in Christ fully realizing that the life they lead in this existence will only be partially complete. Sin shall not have dominion over us, but it shall remain in us. The nature of Adam and Christ both exist simultaneously in our bodies until the Second Advent of our Lord. Let us always glory in the righteousness of Christ rather than in our own righteousness. Sinless perfectionism will ultimately lead to the glorification of Lord Self rather than the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Obedience becomes merely a set of rules and regulations that must be observed by punctilious ritual and self-abasement.*

## The memoirs of Elder Henry Brown Part 2 CONTINUED FROM BACK

So I would put these down on a sheet of paper and put them in my file until my file was bulging with these difficulties. I knew of no way at all of answering them.

One time I found one of Canright's books on the life of Mrs. White. I said, "Now, I'll get something." I borrowed that book and read it in one night— read it all night—and found some of the difficulties that had been proven time after time by later authorities. I came to the decision, "What is this thing? Why wasn't I told? Why didn't my teacher, in whom I was so confident and who had so loved us, why didn't he tell us the truth?" But he didn't say a word about these things.

I was graduated in 1915 and years later, many years later, there appeared in the magazine *Spectrum* a transcript of a conference that was held in 1919, just three years after I was graduated and was sent down to Honduras as a missionary. There was my Bible teacher along with others who were confessing to the fact that there were things in the *Spirit of Prophecy* that they couldn't explain. I was astounded again. Why hadn't these men told me the truth? Why didn't they tell me? My dear teacher hadn't said one word to me. When I was a student at his feet, he hadn't said one word about the crucial meeting that, frankly, almost split the denomination.

There [at the conference] were Elder A. G. Daniells and Elder W. W. Prescott and W. A. Spicer and the leaders of our work. They were confessing that they couldn't understand why Sister White would say one thing and the Bible the other. I had to go on, didn't dare speak to anyone.

I was sent to Europe and there I found that most the ministers of Germany and France did not hold Mrs. White to be what we were taught to accept about her. I felt that I was sent there to straighten them out. I remember speaking one day in the church in Paris. The people were wonderful people, and how they smiled when I introduced my subject. I was going to talk on Mrs. White. My translator was a young graduate who spoke English very acceptably. He was translating for me and I tried to show them that Mrs. White was a prophet. It so happened that Mrs. White had been in Europe—in Switzerland—for about two years back in the 1880's. So they knew something about her and she wasn't too well accepted at all.

I determined that I would read the five books *Patriarchs and Prophets* clear on through *Great Controversy*. I read them and I tried to picture her as a prophetess of God. Years later Dr. MacAdams discovered that she copied from other sources—copied their mistakes along with it, showing she didn't recognize that they were mistakes.

I was a young minister nearing 40 and I was the father of two children and had a wife. I went to defend that which could not be defended and worried about the problems. Recognizing my

impossibility, the thought came to me that the easiest way out would be suicide. I drew back at the terror of the thing. How could I leave my children? How could I bring shame upon my denomination? So I decided to go along—to continue with my study—keeping up all those pages of contradictions. I now had some 200 of them.

I finally reached the age of retirement. Now that I had retired, I was determined to destroy all of that material and say nothing at all about it and to just enter the kingdom with my burden without discussing it, which was the conclusion that W. W. Prescott came to. He wrote a letter to Elder Willie White in which he says, "I cannot make myself agree with these things so I determined that I would just keep still about it and get along the best I can till the end would come."

This article that had been hidden for 50 years, since 1919, someone dug out and it appeared in the magazine *Spectrum*. To my con-

sternation, those men that I had infinite confidence in were confessing that they could not make Mrs. White agree with the Bible. It just was impossible. They didn't know how to answer their students.

I wrote out a letter to the Editor, never thinking that they would publish it. I thanked them for the wonder-

ful light that I was not the only apostate—not the only heretic—among the Seventh-day Adventists, but that all the teachers were just the same as I.

For instance, a very dear friend (a historian for many years, now passed away) had written as his bachelor's thesis, *The Life of Mrs. E. G. White*. I read it and I said, "Why didn't you bring in some of the difficulties?" He said, "I didn't want to be disloyal, so I put it just as we believe it without being disloyal to the denomination."

So I had a good interest in seeing this letter of mine present in the magazine *Spectrum*. I received some very interesting letters and was convinced not to destroy all my notes but perhaps make them available to others and maybe help someone solve the problems themselves.

About that time there appeared a doctor, one of the teachers in PUC. His name was [Desmond] Ford. He was giving a lecture to the Forum on Mrs. White. The difficulty soon resolved itself that it was only Mrs. White herself who backed the interpretations of Daniel 9, the 2300 days (especially the interpretation making 1844 the termination of the 2300 days), the day for a year, and all of those things. They were the things I simply could not — I was sincere, I wanted to know, I wanted to be equal to my leading brethren and not to be in any dividing subject.

I listened to him and as he clarified his method of thinking, little by little I found that he had the very same conclusions that I had — that 1844 could not be the date, and the day for a year was not used in any place except this one place, and so on.

### HOW COULD I LEAVE MY CHILDREN? HOW COULD I BRING SHAME UPON MY DENOMINATION?



So I had a chat with him for several hours about my conclusions. Although he was much deeper trained in these subjects, yet on the whole we agreed much the same.

I also met a man that had difficulty with our denomination named Walter Martin. He was trying to make it appear that Seventh-day Adventists were good loyal Evangelicals—that they were sound on all the Biblical principles. He had had conversations during several months with our leaders. It was my privilege to visit him and spend part of a day talking with him. I opened my heart to him and showed him that there was no possibility of getting our leaders to consider these things. He stated “They promised me this, that, and the other.” I said, “Don’t count on those promises.”

We’ve gotten rid of some of the finest men that this denomination ever had. Uriah Smith himself, while he did not leave the denomination, he did in thought. He never accepted Mrs. White as a biblical prophet, and he did not accept the Christhood of Jesus being equal with God. He held this to the day of his death.

There was Ballenger, a wonderful man, a man regarding whom Professor Prescott said, “No one has ever

answered his difficulties.” There was Canright himself. No one really answered his difficulties. These men were all lost to us. Also Fletcher of Australia. Again, students said, “That man is nearer to the understanding of the Bible than Adventists are.” But these men were all excluded from the work.

The effect of the discussion regarding Ford was such that scores of our young ministers left the denomination and went off into other churches.

Then Walter Rea came on—questionable in some things, but he is presenting facts. This is substantiated by the fact that Dr. Robert Olson published in the *Review and Herald* some weeks back that the denomination now accepts that more than 50%—and some say almost 100%—of *The Great Controversy* was not of her own thoughts, it was borrowed from other sources. The pitiful part of it was that she had said, and the thing that disturbed me so much through the years, that she refused to read Milton’s *Paradise Lost* until she had published her [*Spiritual Gifts*], when we find almost exact quotations from Milton’s book in hers.

So I would converse with Dr. Froom and Francis Nichol, and Elder Figuhr and other men, but I never could get them to talk their feelings. They would not step out beyond what the Adventist church published.

There was one man that greatly impressed me. That was Dr. Charles Stewart, a doctor at the sanitarium at Battle Creek. I went to see him one day. He set aside everything and talked with me about a little book that he had written called *The Blue Book* (now not available). I had read it, and he told me that he had been a very sincere believer in Sr. White and that she had invited anybody who had difficulty with her work to point it out to her and she would clarify it.

He did that, along with some of the other doctors, till it became a little pamphlet. He presented it to her, [whereupon] she said she had gotten a vision from God telling her not to waste her time trying to

answer those questions. And those questions never were answered.

I did not have a personal conversation with Dr. Kellogg, but I used to hear him lecture in the Sanitarium, and I read [the transcript of] his meeting with two of the ministers of the Battle Creek Sanitarium church in which they were to find out whether he was really desirous to continue as an Adventist member. The interview lasted about seven hours and composed quite a book. It is certainly revealing and it presents scores of difficulties.

For instance, when [Ellen White] was in Australia, they wanted to build a sanitarium. There was only one place to get money in those days and that was from the Battle Creek Sanitarium as Dr. Kellogg was most successful with his work. But he didn’t feel that the [Sanitarium’s charter] permitted money from the Sanitarium to be used in other countries. She from some source received a report that he was building a sanitarium in Chicago. She writes to him—he explains it there in his interview—that she had seen it in vision: the building that he had built in Chicago. In fact he never built one, and never had plans to.

When she returned from Australia, she asked to visit that building.

“Why,” said the brother [who was accompanying her], “there is no such [building].”

“Yes, yes, I have seen it—God showed it to me.” And she accused Dr. Kellogg of building it, but there was no building ever put up there at all. Those things bothered me tremendously.

Elder Conradi, the leader of our work in Europe, had done more than any other man to spread the beliefs of Adventism. His case was pitiful also. The same difficulty—Mrs. White in her method of writing “God revealed” material. Finally he joined the Seventh Day Baptist Church and left our work entirely.

One time, while in Battle Creek, I went to see Frank Belden. He was a very old man. His daughter was middle-aged. She was very kind to me but said that her father was too old and became so wrought up with discussing these things. He was a nephew of Mrs. White. He considered himself mistreated by the brothers of the General Conference and by his relations, and he left us entirely.

There was no attempt of our leaders to bring one back. For instance Elder Ballenger, with the tenderest of emotions, begged Sister White, wrote her a letter. “Point out my difficulty—show me where I am wrong—help me. You once considered me a faithful brother and now you won’t talk to me.” She utterly ignored his plea.

In later years, being down in Riverside, California we learned that his daughter was still alive—a lady in her 80’s. We went to visit her, a very pleasant lady, and she told us how, when they dropped him from the work, there wasn’t a cent of remuneration, just left to themselves, and how they wept and wondered how they would get along. He was a godly Christian until his death.

On meeting Elder Ballenger’s daughter, I told her [her name happened to be White] “What an honor to meet Sister White.” And her face showed embarrassment in having the same name as Sister White.

**(Continued in the next issue of *Proclamation!*)**

## WE’VE GOTTEN RID OF SOME OF THE FINEST MEN THAT THIS DENOMINATION EVER HAD.

## Confessions of a former Adventist

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

boy” in her grandmotherly way. To this day I get sentimental when I recall it. Her concern was the possibility that I would be led astray straight out of the church. She feared that I would be exposed to wrong ideas that would influence me to leave. I remember how her fears came true.

I remember how my history professor astonished me with the comment that so much in life is relative. What heresy I thought to myself. I remember how my black-and-white world began to get punctured. I remember my dismay when other students my age felt the same way he did. I remember going back home to the elderly couple looking for consolation for my troubled soul. I told them this astonishing news verifying her fears about college education. I remember assuring them of my continued fidelity to SDA orthodoxy. I was being tested and swayed and did not fully realize it.

*During my first year at the State university I began to sacrifice my studies for in depth, inductive studies of Adventist issues, notably the Sanctuary teaching. I found that I could not support it.*

Gradually through the course of my freshman year of 1980-81 I became exposed to challenges to my SDA faith and belief structure. First was exposure to Robert Brinsmead’s writings. Next was a *Spectrum* article that challenged the clean-unclean distinction. Third was learning about Glacier View and the Desmond Ford controversy over 1844. I was being challenged in the classroom as well. I began writing position papers challenging traditional SDA beliefs on the nature of the Church and Adventist prophetic interpretation—and getting positive feedback from my professors. I began to understand that Adventism was not the black-and-white monolithic structure pictured in that small Yakima Valley church.

The toll all this took on my psyche and nervous system was at times almost more than I could take. It was one thing to be raised to believe those cardinal doctrines. It was quite another to be converted to them from nothing, accept them as blanket fact, and then to be challenged directly regarding their legitimacy from within the bosom of an Adventist college. I was going through a double conversion.

I decided to run from the controversy. I reasoned that if I detached myself from proximity to the issues I could then get back to equilibrium. I transferred to a State university in Washington. Such was not the case. The turning point came in the Winter of 1982. The then pastor of my home church and I met to discuss the issues of the time. He challenged me to study more and that he was sure I would arrive at the correct conclusion. Not being one to turn down a challenge I did exactly that. During my first year at the State university I began to sacrifice my studies for in depth, inductive studies of Adventist issues, notably the Sanctuary teaching. I found I could not support it. What was I to do?

It may seem odd that I would be in such turmoil. However, I remembered all along the statement made to me by several Adventists that should one teaching be wrong in the church then

Adventism would not be the remnant church. Adventism’s claim that all doctrines within it conformed to scripture would be destroyed. The hole I found proved to be the Investigative Judgement. This hole proved to be a pathway out of the Adventist church. My belief structure had been shattered. The only thing that could keep me in the church was the relationships with the people in my home church. It went from a theological struggle to a relational one. How could I leave those people? In 1984 I left permanently.

Truly I was a product of the Adventist controversies of the early 1980’s. From this tumultuous time I found several things about myself and Adventism. I would like to share those with the reader. I don’t pretend that my experience was every Adventist’s experience at the time, but I am sure that many can identify with the turmoil I felt then. I will not pretend to be a voice for those who left the church back then. I speak only from my experience.

First, I was given a picture of Adventism that was not true. The Adventism I was converted into was not the Adventism of the academic world. The rift between the local church and Adventist academia is represented in my experience. It seems to me that this gulf continues today, though perhaps over differing issues.

Second, Adventism was bigger than my small church. My small church was conservative and traditional with slight cracks appearing. I recall the controversy in the late seventies over righteousness by faith in the Sabbath School lessons. I remember the conversations representing the Reformation view and the traditional view. I recall hearing about 1888 and Jones and Waggoner. I remember the perfectionist debates. My small church did feel the heat of the debates. I was simply not aware of how diverse and widely the controversy extended.

Third, Adventism had room for diversity. This became very apparent to me in two classes I took at Walla Walla College. The

first was on basic Adventist doctrines. The other was on recent trends in Adventist beliefs. The professor of the first class demonstrated that Adventism had room for diverse views, though given with caution. The second class taught me how Adventism had a rich history of theological reflection and diversity.

Fourth, I learned that my belief in Adventism was based upon false and mistaken premises. I was given a monolithic picture of Adventism—a structure which allowed only one view. I was given a straw-man which was destroyed when only one of the underpinnings was challenged and found wanting. I realized I could not exist in an Adventism where the definition of a good Adventist was itself based upon a skewed picture.

Fifth, I learned that people believed in the Adventism they wanted to believe in. When confronted with legitimate concerns and biblical evidence challenging their beliefs, many Adventists look for a fundamental element that defines their Adventist identity or they refuse to challenge their beliefs in Adventism. I found this to be the case when I confronted fellow members with my concerns.

Sixth, I recognized that I had not been completely converted to the total package of Adventism. I had in fact been converted to many distinctives of Adventism but had not swallowed every proposition hook, line, and sinker. This fact made me realize that one could be an Adventist without believing in everything taught within Adventism. Conversely, one can believe in certain Adventist distinctives without being an Adventist.

Seventh, my original notion of Adventism prevented me from reconciling it with the new Adventism confronting me. Because of my original picture of Adventism I was unable to truly be an Adventist once I found things wrong within Adventism. An Adventism with theological flaws was not the Adventism I originally accepted as a young man. I was set up to fail because of this mistaken picture.

Eighth, one's definition of Adventism will determine their place within or outside of Adventism. Mine was defined by its claims. Once those claims were harmed it was only a matter of time before the exit occurred.

Ninth, the Adventism of my local church was much more secure than the Adventism in the big world. It is at this point that my convictions revealed its superficiality as well as its strength. I was converted to the Adventism presented to me, yet not fully comfortable with what that meant. In retrospect, I was never a true Adventist by traditional definition, but one who found purpose and meaning for their life at that time within it. However, when challenged, the image became defaced because it was based upon faulty concepts and perceptions.

Finally, I found Jesus through Adventism without fully understanding the gospel. I accepted Jesus without fully grasping the essence of the gospel. That would come later through

Brinsmead and Ford and confirmed by Evangelical doctrine. That beloved Adventist lady who was so concerned for me eighteen years ago is now gone. She represents what is good about Adventism. She also represents for me what Adventism claims for itself that I can no longer hold to. I miss her. I miss her hugs and calling me her boy. I recall the pain felt within me when I left the church because I knew I fulfilled her worst fears about what could go wrong within Adventism. However, I now understand that hers was a perception based upon a faulty premise. My

***The cross-section of troubled and former Adventists cannot be limited to one description and profile.***

***Their reasons are as diverse as the nature of the Adventist church itself.***

premise for becoming an Adventist was originally based upon a particular understanding of Adventism. I no longer hold to that premise.

Over the years I have been in contact with many disenchanted and former Adventists. Much of the rationale for their discontent or estrangement centers on either personal grievances or doctrinal disagreements. I have found that many have been starved for the gospel of God's grace through justification by faith alone. I can empathize with many of those I have talked to these many years. They range from elderly to young people. The cross-section of troubled and former Adventists cannot be limited to one description and profile. Their reasons are as diverse as the nature of the Adventist church itself.

The Adventism I left years ago was much different than what exists today. There are definite divisions and descriptions within the umbrella of Adventism. However, certain things do not change. The controversies that are uniquely Adventist continue. As Adventism develops into a world-wide religion rather than a North American sect it will undergo changes which will force many to leave for reasons far different from my own. Can Adventism deter this trend? Perhaps the answer lies in Adventism's identity in the future. Will it be recognizable fifty years from now? Some believe it will not.

Why can I no longer be a Seventh-day Adventist? The simplest answer lies in the result of my own search for the truth. If something is claimed it must be backed up with proof. Adventism makes claims for itself which cannot be upheld in scripture. My search led me to this conclusion. What conclusion will you come to? Is it based on perception?

What is your Adventist confession?



### One of the most important *Proclamations* you have yet published!

The latest *Proclamation!* is awesome! The articles all address key issues that SDAs and transitioning SDAs really need addressed. Great stuff! I believe that this is one of the most important issues of *Proclamation!* you have yet published! After I read the magazine, I got onto your website to grab the PDF so I could give copies of the articles to some of my SDA family and friends. Unfortunately the articles were not there. Do you plan to put them up there anytime soon, or are you discontinuing this part of the site?

**Editor's note:** Try again, they should be there now.

### Great good news

Thanks for the great good news. We enjoy your paper very much. S. W.

### Anti-Christmas?

Hi, do you have anything on the Anti-Christmas stand? Many Christians think all of Christmas is pagan and we should have nothing to do with it. J. K.

**Editor's note:** Granted some things regarding Christmas may have come from pagan roots and others have secular, monetary overtones. However, like Paul whether Christ is preached from good or bad motives, we rejoice that Christ is preached. Remember that there are many things in Christmas that are Christ centered: much of the music—some of the most magnificent Christian music is Christmas music, like Handel's Messiah—, manger scenes draw attention to Christ's birth. Perhaps some will find Christ in Christmas and that will be good. We live in the world and we are part of the culture in which we live. Some things in culture are neither "righteous" nor "evil" and Christ is the Christ of culture. New Covenant Christianity is designed to penetrate all cultures. Therefore, we do not feel it a sin to partake in many Christmas activities. In doing

so, we are not worshiping some ancient pagan god. Rather, our thoughts are directed to the miracle birth of our Savior. "But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.'" Luke 2:10-11.

### I know it was a God thing!

I've been out of SDAism for about 2 years now and have pretty much put it behind me. At first I thought that my ministry should be to those who were still in Adventism or contemplating leaving it. However, I have found my true ministry in my local (non-SDA) church. I believe that most people who leave really need to get plugged into a local body of believers and leave Adventism behind. However, there is definitely a strong need for ministries such as yours to continue reaching people still trapped. I applaud your ministry and the things you are doing. Keep up the great work. That said, I did have an interesting experience in my church. I occasionally hear things about the local SDA church from friends and had heard that they had a potential new convert. The church is very small (20) so they were pretty excited to have a new person. I did not actively seek to find this person and just regretted that such a thing could happen. Little did I know how God would work in this situation. A while later I was helping out with our 4-hour membership class and my pastor approached me and told me that one of the ladies in the class was confused and had been told by the local SDA pastor that our church was controlled by the devil and she wasn't sure which direction she should choose. She was taking this class to help decide, but was also being encouraged by the SDA pastor to be baptized into the SDA church. Fortunately, my pastor knew my background and asked me to talk with her during the meal break. I sat down and talked with her and I believe

tipped the scales just enough to help her make the decision to discontinue contact with the SDA church. She signed our membership covenant that night. While my main ministry is not dealing with SDAs and transitioning SDAs, God entrusted me with reaching out to a person who was in this position. I felt deeply honored that God would send anyone to me, but the probability of her finding me (my family is the only transitioned SDA family in this area that I know of) without God's guidance was so low that I know it was a God thing! Again, keep up the great work. God is using you.

### One of the symptoms of a cult

After reading the books *Cultic Doctrine* and *Sabbath in Christ* I am truly sad that so many ministers have known about the mistakes in the historic SDA church and have kept silent, perpetuating the untruths. It seems to me that one of the symptoms of a cult is the difficulty one has with leaving it—which I think should be added on the list (of cult characteristics). I do appreciate your work. When my husband and I decided, about 20 years ago, that the SDA church was founded on untruths and could not possibly be "the true church" we really had no place to turn. I am so thankful that you have worked so hard to encourage formers in the joy and freedom of a truly saving Christ! Enclosed is a small donation for your work. Sincerely, P. G.

### I am now perfectly clear on the subject

Dale, ... I am writing to thank you so much for your book. I used to have questions and doubts about the Sabbath. You have done a superb job with your book and it has been such a blessing to me. I believe that I am now perfectly clear on the subject. I have read it twice and am reading it a third time. What a blessing! I keep praying that hopefully one day this type of book would be available in Spanish. My mom is an SDA and I've had a terrible time establishing a dialogue with her. I've come to find out that SDAs are really not interested in discussing the truth—even their Pastor. I cannot understand their thinking, but all I can do is keep praying. Thanks again!

**Editor's note:** *Sabbath in Christ* is now being translated into Spanish.

### Christians twist this scripture

Concerning the July/August *Proclamation* article by Pestes where he builds a case for death being "graduation" not oblivion. Pestes obfuscates the issue by using "soul + Spirit" as synonyms. They are not. Peter and Paul longed for "that day"—resurrection day—"Future" not the same as the very day they died. Paul says in Thess. 4:17 "...To meet the Lord in the air and so shall

### Painted words *Filli Dei* over original

I put nearly 50 years in the SDA church before realizing it is a cult and found much error mixed with some truth. It has ruined my life.... I have an interesting bit of information for you. SDAs have been saying for just less than 50 years that the Pope's miter says, Vicarius Filli Dei. I have always believed it. BUT a commercial Christian artist, Harry Anderson, admitted in 1993 before a public meeting that he was hired by the General Conference of SDAs to paint the words Filli Dei over the original words on the miter. This was done in the 1950s. What does it really say? Vicarius Christy! Not Filli Dei. I have checked this out with several people and some ministries and they confirmed what I was told. It's pretty bad that the so called "remnant church" has to stoop to "deception" to make a point in which they are completely WRONG. Perhaps you may have known it but I thought I would share it with you. When the truth really hits the church, it will topple much of it though many will support it no matter how wrong it is. As you know there are many places where the Holy Scriptures and the SDA church differ... H.G.



we ever be with the lord." At the last day—judgment day, resurrection day—when Christ appears in the heavens and not meeting him the very day of death. Therefore when Paul says in 2 Cor 5:8 – "to be absent from the body and to be present with the lord" it is a reference to the resurrection—not the very day he dies. Christians twist this scripture and take it out of context! 2 Cor 5:1-10 is about receiving immortality (vs. 4), meeting Christ (vs. 8), and appearing before the "judgment seat" (vs. 10)—in the end of the world—not about your immediate day of dying. Now for the 'irony' of this article with "The memoirs of Elder Henry Brown," in which he discovers E.G. White false statement about Christ's death—Just Christ's body dies not his spirit. What exactly is different between Pestes theology + E.G. White?

**Editor's note:** It is our understanding that in the resurrection we will be in our bodies. However, Paul clearly says, in 2 Cor. 5:6-9, "Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him." This statement indicates that we can please the Lord when we are absent from the body and at home with the Lord. This leads many to believe that there is some kind of a conscious existence with the Lord between death and the resurrection during which we have the ability to please the Lord. We do not believe, however, that one's position on the condition of man in death is important enough to separate Christians in fellowship.

Thanks for sending *Proclamation*. It's opening our eyes to more truth. G. & M.

## Despite all the turmoil it was worth it

Dear Whomever, I had the great pleasure of meeting Walter Rea in 1981 or 2 when he visited Avondale College in New South Wales, Australia. I have always wanted to write and thank him for the great influence he had on me at that time. I was about to graduate from a BA Theology degree course but had already [known] I would be unable to work for the organization. I picked him up in a small town called Wyong and took him and his wife to Cooranbong—the town Avondale College is located in. I gave him an informal tour of Avondale College—knowing that being seen with him would 'seal my fate' so to speak, as far as employment with the S.D.A. organization was concerned. I took a photo of Walter and his wife in front of the obelisk (with his camera) that refers to a furrow Ellen White had supposedly seen in a dream that was sup-

posedly evidence of God's divine leading in the purchase of the land for the college.

I would like to contact Walter and thank him for his graciousness and his humor on this occasion. I would also like a copy of the photo Walter! After graduating, I sold all the "Spirit-filled" EGW books I had. It was spirit-filled literature because I raised enough petrol (gasoline) to get 850 kilometers to Queensland where I eventually got work. The resulting backwash of major ethos change cost me my marriage, seeing my three beautiful children grow up (they ended up in Europe and I never saw them for years) and resulted in many years of grief and loss. The really funny thing is that I now live in Cooranbong again. Some years ago I found myself sitting on a hotel balcony overlooking Bondi Beach on a Saturday morning with my beautiful second wife and a fork in my hand about to shovel in the most scrumptious bacon and egg breakfast when I looked at my watch. By an amazing coincidence it was 9:30 am. I looked at my wife and laughed. "Guess what? I said, it's time for Sabbath School." I felt free, un-guilt-ridden and very happy to be alive out of the cult that has dominated my family since the 1880s when my grandfather lent Ellen a buggy in Gisbourne at the time of her New Zealand visit. Please pass this on to Walter! Hi Walter! Thank-you! Despite all the turmoil it was worth it. I'm glad I left. Regards, K.B.S.

## Could it be the angel was referring to the visions of Jeremiah?

Brother Dale I still attend a SDA church, so as to share the Gospel to those who need it most. They have just had an evangelistic crusade that added a few to the numbers. We are now going through Daniel verse by verse, I have found out that you are pretty much alone if you go against the standard teachings, as I was the only one that recognized Jesus as the one who bore my sins in his flesh as the scapegoat. I gave a four page study that was entirely the bible and the Greek and Hebrew meanings to the words, and was astounded by the response. So now my question: in Daniel 9 when Gabriel is going to interpret the vision to Daniel everyone I have talked to says he is referring to the vision in Chapter 8, which I personally can see no connection, could it be the angel was referring to the visions of Jeremiah? I need someone with a lot more Bible knowledge than I to help with this. Your brother in Christ, D.

**Editor's note:** I would agree with you. I think SDAs are alone in their interpretation that the vision mentioned in Daniel 9 refers back to the 2300 days of Daniel 8. Here they build on William Miller's dubious hermeneutics. All the O.T. commentaries I have understand the "vision" to be that of Jeremiah.

## Give my name, address and phone number

I'll try to keep this brief. I was pointed to *Proclamation!* by a listener to our *People to People* radio broadcast about two months ago when I explained my SDA background and some of the Biblical truths that helped my wife and me step into the freedom found only in Christ. I've read two issues now, and I want to congratulate you and your friends for a well-written, sympathetic publication.

I weep inside (and out, at times) when I read the letters you publish, both pro and con—the pro because of sharing so many of the same experiences; the con because some people just won't let truth set them free. I have one of those SDA pedigrees.

A life-long Adventist, I graduated from LLU-La Sierra Campus with a degree in Ministerial Studies. I lasted six months at the Long Beach, CA church. I just didn't have anything to offer because I had no real relationship with Jesus upon which to base my life.

I worked with/for Walter Rea. My wife and I recorded and duplicated all the tapes that went out during the months he was presenting his material on Ellen White. My wife, \_\_\_\_\_, is the grand-daughter of Fordyce Detamore and is closely related to the Bransons. And so on...

We finally studied our way out of Adventism in 1991. The very group of people who started Grace Place tried their best to get us to stay. What a thrill when their own honest searching led them to start that ministry!

Now, I work here in Dallas for People to People Ministries. You may have heard of us. We were founded by Bob George 25 years ago. Our primary outreach is our twice-daily live, call-in Biblical counseling radio broadcast, but we also have Metro Bible Fellowship. Bob has written books like "Classic Christianity," "Growing In Grace" and "Faith That Pleases God". You can hear our 55-minute broadcast on KXEG (1280AM) at 3:05 PM weekdays [in Phoenix, Arizona; check your local Christian station for time], although this is a delayed broadcast of the previous evening's program.

It's hard to explain it to people here because they don't have the history, but I, like Paul, often wish I could be cursed if it meant that SDAs, and in particular \_\_\_\_\_ and my families, would come to know real truth instead of depending on such bankrupt traditions for meaning and purpose in their lives. You probably hear that a lot.

Anyway, if there are any former SDAs in the Dallas area who need a sympathetic ear and the empathy of someone who's been there and done that, please feel free to give them my name, address and phone number. Richard Peifer, Project Manager; People to People Ministries, 1225 East Rosemeade Parkway, Carrollton, TX 75007. Phone: 972-620-1755, Email: rpeifer@earthlink.net

### Presentations made by my schoolteachers did not make sense to me

Dear *Proclamation!* The title of your publication definitely deserves the exclamation point! As a former Adventist, and now a Christian as part of the Catholic Church, I have sadly become aware that errors have been taught, pushed and used as supposed conditions for salvation throughout history. Even as a child, in sixth and seventh grade while attending an Adventist school, the presentations made by my schoolteachers did not make sense to me. This was because my basic assumption about God was that he was loving, even more loving than my own parents, who loved me dearly. As a child, I associated everything that was good, such as people being nice to one another, smiles, working together, beautiful things, animals, sunshine and snowy days, with God. Now I was being taught that God will come and judge like a thief, and wherever my actions or even my mind was at the time, (such as breaking the rules for Sabbath obedience, or just having a belief contrary to church teaching), would result in a rain of fire and brimstone, the pain of being scorched to death, and then eternal nothingness—hardly good news. In your letters section, I was taken back by W.P. who wrote in response to “A Biblical Response To Abortion.” He (or she) stated that “all of your ‘arguments’ are based solely upon emotions.” But does not the Holy Spirit speak to us

deep in our emotions? Does not Jesus teach us (command us) to love one another? To me, one of Jesus’ important messages, deserving an exclamation point, is that the law is not to be put above even one human being, because the law was made for man, not man for the law. The “justification” the crowd felt for attempting to stone the woman caught in adultery, was based on the reverse. The eschatology I was taught in the seventh grade in Adventist school was based on the reverse also. Sincerely, S. K. S.

### Helpful for a life-long SDA transitioning out

Thanks so much for your article “Do Adventists Preach Another Gospel!” I hope you will do more like it. It is very helpful for a life-long SDA that is transitioning out, not only personally but also to respond to those in the church who think I have now fallen into Eternal Darkness. J.

### Has helped my marriage so much

Thank you so much for sending us the *Proclamation*. It, as well as the many books and tapes I’ve ordered, has helped my marriage so much. I will write to tell you about this sometime in some detail. I wish I could send more money. I know this \$50 is a drop in the bucket to help cover your expenses. For now, please accept this small donation until I’m in a better position to donate more. It’s a bit of a disgrace to me to think

of how little I’ve donated when I compare it to how much you and your ministry have helped my husband and me. I will write and explain our complex situation soon. D.N.

### It’s been a long road out of the Adventist church

Just a note to let you know I received my two books in the mail... I have read two of your other books, and it’s been a long road out of the Adventist church. Only recently, after many years, have I found a church that I feel is home to me. It took forever for me to even consider going on Sunday. I soon came to the conclusion Ellen White was not a prophet, but the Sabbath was a whole other issue. My brother (who still basically holds to Adventist doctrines) has recently moved into the area. I soon realized if he started questioning me I would need to study this whole issue again. I need to be really clear and have backup when that time comes. I hope these books will help clarify things in my mind and perhaps he will even decide to read them. Thanks again. Gratefully, L.E.

### Greetings from Uganda—I baptized 19 souls

I have a pleasure to report to you that last Sunday we conducted our first baptism from the crusade I reported to you. And I baptized 19 souls. Pr. Greg knows where we baptize from and to get there transport must be involved and baptism fee per head, whoever gets into water you have to pay for him/ her, but we thank God who brought in some one and borrowed us some money which we shall refund after we get our salaries. We did not take photos for baptism because, we hired a photographer on a loan and on the last hour he never showed up. We are planning as soon as we get our salaries, we shall take them a group photo and we shall send it. The problem of power is still on, and it has cost us a lot. Continue to pray for the work in Uganda because there is a lot to do yet resources are few. We also pray for such that our good Lord enrich your stores because our work is still entirely depend on you. May the good Lord bless you all. Still yours in a living hope, Moses

### Wrong way

You are going the wrong way. Please repent. O. & L. M.

### She was outright brainwashed

I teach in a Christian school and have a student whose mother became an Adventist when she was around seven years old. The group to which she belonged was more of a cult than most Adventist churches and in my opinion she was outright brainwashed. Through patience she has shed much of the false doctrine, however she clings to the belief that Jesus is a created being;

### I had no idea how joyful God is!

Thanks for the most recent issue (May/June) of *Proclamation* magazine. I’m always blessed, and my favorite gem so far is what you said at the end of your article: “Yes, the gospel is good news; it’s not good advice. It’s simple. It’s the story of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus and it is worth defending with every fiber of our being.” Somehow, when I first picked up the magazine in my mailbox, the first thing I realized was that Adventist teaching simply doesn’t know how good God is! We weren’t taught about the Father’s love, how complete His Son’s sacrifice is for us, and how we are given the “full rights” of being His own, His heirs. I had no idea how joyful God is! No joy on earth can compare to the Lord’s! David said God would “fill him with joy in His presence!” When the lost son returned home, the Father cut off the son’s attempt to apologize and clothed him with His righteousness, put a ring on his finger and prepared the greatest party that house had ever seen! It was such a loud and joyful party that the older son could hear it far outside of the house! Our God “parties” over us! He sings over us with joy! Not a somber, “sacred” kind of reverent song, but a wild, abandoned and utterly joyful song! And when He comes again to earth, all of nature is going to resound in allelujahs and dancing! And we the redeemed will be at the front of the pack leading creation in worship! Imagine the scene at Cana—a Jewish wedding which for thousands of years includes the men dancing—Jesus dancing with the festivities! And oh, they’re out of wine—does Jesus somberly make them reverent or reprimand them for their joy? No! He secretly makes them more wine! And His glory was revealed in this! In His joy His glory is revealed! The bride says that “His love is better than wine!” Yes, the only thing that this enraptured bride could find to compare to His love was wine! His joy is intoxicating! And just as amazing, He says that our love is better than wine, and that our love overcomes Him! Imagine that! The Almighty who no army can overcome—our love is like wine to Him! We were made for Him! And He wants to give us “life to the fullest!” Not to reduce life to a set of intellectual assertions and attempts to convince ourselves that the boring “rightness” we practice is actually “fun.” Adventist teaching simply hasn’t known how JOYFUL our God is! How enraptured He is with us! How happy He is that He has us! That the joy He set before Him as He went to the cross—the joy was the knowledge that He would soon be with us forever! Our God doesn’t merely love us, He likes us! He wants to be with us forever!... R. R.

Michael the archangel. While I have shown her scriptures that prove He is the son of God, she feels that unless I can refute the proofs that He is the archangel I cannot say my proof is superior to theirs. She is a teenager. I have no fear of the battle but my expertise is in showing the fallacy in the occult teachings and the refuting of the grey line beliefs. I do not know the Adventist beliefs regarding Jesus being Michael and since this is where she wants me to start I need that information. We receive your *Proclamation* but I don't find anything regarding this subject in our copies. Her mother is still an Adventist so giving her a book would only cause trouble, but I believe this child's salvation depends upon my showing her the truth. She is open—it is not a waste of your time to help me. We have *Sabbath In Crisis* but have loaned out *Cultic Doctrine* and it never came back to us. I know your web site has a lot of stuff but I was unable to find anything on this subject. A search engine by topics would be nice for your web site. I thank you for your work and do keep it in prayer.

**Editor's note:** Verle Streifling has prepared a very good article on the Adventist teaching that Jesus is Michael the Archangel. You may request this of Verle at [vostreif@attcanada.ca](mailto:vostreif@attcanada.ca)

## I pray for friends in the SDA church all the time

The Seventh-day Adventist church has had the challenge this week when all the radio and news papers reported that five pastors left it for doctrinal differences. As usual the Adventist radio in Kampala has been running all possible character assassinating information to Ugandans. However, the secretary to the Uganda Union was approached by one of the leading TV stations and he confessed to Ugandan that those young preachers were expelled by the SDA in Uganda because of differences in beliefs. Down on the ground, however, the pastors and elders are teaching people a lot of forged stories of devil worshippers. They say we worship the devil and we go underground and we are given a lot of money to destroy the SDA church. Those who approached I told them we do not have even enough [money]. They have lists of enemies of the church which include Dale, Sander, Ford, Greg, Anderson and we the Ugandan X- SDA pastors. They say we work hand in hand with those men to fulfill the Sunday law and that all of us were trained by the Pope and we were trained in SDA institutions to get to know all details such that we can destroy the church. They say we have military training according to the plans of the Pope. All churches today have mentioned us and you out there in America. That America was prophesied that it will join the beast, according to them. They do not rest teaching ungrounded

stories. Their key books of reference currently are: *Sunday law, America in Prophecy, Lucifer's Files, The Sabbath Under Cross Fire* as well as local magazines. In view of the above the Adventists have started sowing hatred and grudge among people. Those who have gone deep in Bible study do understand but some since they joined Adventism have been breast fed on lies and fables and they hold them instead of the gospel. You men pray for us as we do not want to be taken by this little wind and diverted from the great commission. I pray that we will sow love where there is strife and hatred. Till next time may Jesus richly bless for soon we shall hug our blessed Redeemer when the work is done. I pray for friends in the SDA church all the time. Yours in a blessed hope. *Nsubuga Daniel*

## Destructive and guilt laden teachings

We read every issue [of *Proclamation!*] cover to cover, along with *Adventist Today* and *Spectrum*, although edited by a good friend of my wife's from her Academy days, seems less relevant to our lives, so we dropped it. Thank you for your good and courageous work. Since, like you, we were born into the Adventist church we know how hard it is to escape the effects of its destructive and guilt laden teachings. T.N.B.

## Friends need to come out

We enjoy receiving *Proclamation* very much. We have two friends that need to come out of the false teachings. Please add them to your prayers. B.M.

## No other prophets for me!

I grew up Seventh-day Adventist. We left the SDA church when I was 14 and are now members of a conservative Baptist Church. When we left I vowed that I would study the Bible and believe only what I found there—no other prophets for me! My husband has been a pastor for over 20 years. A friend of ours is currently studying with an SDA member and I have been helping him understand what SDAs and Ellen White are all about—I am so thankful that my mother saw the inconsistencies in her teaching and pulled us all out! Thank you for your ministry. H.S.

## On their way to heaven

Dear Mr. Ratzlaff, Thank you so much for all you do in getting the truth out to the people. We appreciate you and your ministry and we know God is using you in a mighty big way. Satan has deceived so many, but thank God because of your ministry, many have come out of following the wrong path and are on their way to heaven. May God bless you much in all you do. In Christ, J. & J. B.

## Thank you for the good reading in *Proclamation*

Please use this gift of God's money for the purpose of helping others to know the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I thank you for the good reading in *Proclamation*. It's a true blessing. J.B.

## Are we going to hell?

Can you please answer this question? Thanks a lot for your information about Adventism. It was and is very useful and helpful. Our relatives go to an Adventist Church and we talk a lot about their doctrines. They always ask the same question: Are we going to hell?

**Editor's note:** My answer would be: "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:18

## Informative and written with the Spirit of Christ

Pastor Ratzlaff, I am in receipt of the May/June issue of *Proclamation* and want to say how much I have enjoyed it, especially the article on "Do Adventists Preach Another Gospel?" I find this study very informative and written with the spirit of Christ... I want to encourage you in the Lord and would say to you that the Lord has raised you up to open the eyes of the blind and set the captives free. May God provide you with all the resources you need to accomplish all that He has called you to do. May God richly bless you and your family as well as all those who labor with you. Be Blessed! Yours in Christ. R.R.

LAM, Keep up your good work. Your newsletter is such a learning experience for me.

## What about the Seventh day?

My husband and I are both ex SDAs and we are wandering, not sure of what church to go to, and even if we did find one, what about the Seventh day? Anyway, we would be very interested in receiving *Proclamation!* and whatever else you have to help us with the decisions ahead of us. Thanks for replying to my email. I am still searching. All these years in the SDA church have left me feeling empty, instead of filling me up and bringing me close to God, it's left me wanting, so on the search goes. P.

## Mail letters and donations to:

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## The memoirs of Elder Henry Brown Part 2

*This is the second installment of Elder Henry Brown's memoirs. If you missed the first part, you may access it online at [www.lifeassurance.org](http://www.lifeassurance.org). —The Editor*

In my study through these years, I would find things that disturbed me greatly. For instance, I found in the book of Jeremiah 23:30 this: "I am against the people who steal from one another words supposedly from me." This is taken from the NIV version.

Mrs. White is the only person that I know that had that weakness. I don't suppose there is anyone in this world that has done as much borrowing and plagiarizing as Mrs. White. She is the only pretended prophet in history that gathered from others a vast library of purloined material.

In my work as a minister I had no other purpose than to preach orthodox Seventh-day Adventist doctrine. I had no doubt whatsoever that what the Adventists taught was Biblical.

I was sent down to Honduras. I had married and graduated from college, and I was sent out as an "educated" man. I was to make Adventists out of Roman Catholics. When asked to go to Honduras I said, "Oh no, I want to get some education." I wanted to go to the university. Elder W. A. Spicer said, "You're not going to the university, you're going to the mission field."

"But Elder," I said, "I don't know enough about Adventism to go to the mission field." He says, "You'll learn quickly." He certainly knew the truth. I learned plenty.

As fast as I could I purchased Sister White's books and I read them very carefully and underscored the problems—problems that I could not grasp: using the same Scripture for two different things, or quoting it out of place.

For instance, concerning the matter of character, Ellen White says very strongly in a number of places that we are here in this world preparing a character to admit us into the world of God. Then, in other places, I would find she pointed out that Jesus accepted no make believe or no part in forming a character—that we had to remove the old character and put on His new garment. I could not understand how we could form a character ourselves, which is outlined so clearly in her books, then have her discuss this, stating that He provided everything necessary, as the parable of the king of the supper, to His people.

So the years passed by. I read and studied and later became a teacher in our secondary schools where bright students would ask questions that I was not able to answer. I was taught that Seventh-day Adventists were the remnant church; that we had the last message, and that all others if they did not have it were in danger of receiving the mark of the beast.

Then I met missionaries in the various mission fields. They had general meetings in which all Protestants were invited. I met these fine people and found them cultured and delightful people. It was impossible for me to think that they had, or were in danger of, the mark of the beast. I would meet some who wanted to defend their church, and wondered why I had come into the field where they already were.

They quoted Canright. I had heard the name Canright, but it seemed to me that he was an extremely wicked man, leaving the Adventist church and opposing Mrs. White. It wasn't till years later that I read his book and that book brought me to where I had to make some decision.

These questions that were so difficult to understand, I found them by the scores. Not being able to answer them myself, I would go to the conference president, or the ministers—the older men with whom I was working—and I would ask for an explanation for those things. They would shake their finger at me. "Henry, be careful. Don't ever question Mrs. White."

So I found myself finding difficulties, unable to answer them. My students would ask me, "Why is it that these things are in the *Spirit of Prophecy* when they are contrary to the Bible?" I would bite my tongue and get out of the problems the best I could.

They would ask me, for instance, why the Adventist denomination formed in the United States and all the signs of the coming of Christ were American signs—the darkening of the sun, the falling of the stars, and all those things. And *The Great Controversy*, which later was translated into Spanish (that I was using), all of the words were Sister White and the sources she would quote were all American. These bright young men who were later ministers would say, "Why is it, if this message is for the world, and Mrs. White was a prophet for the world, do we have all these things just from North America?" I had no answer to give.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

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