

Discovering new covenant ethics<sup>13</sup>

LifeAssuranceMinistries.org

# Proclamation!

FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS • INQUIRING ADVENTISTS • SABBATARIANS • CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

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## The Law written on the heart

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## Knowing what is **true** COLLEEN TINKER

**As I ate the bread and drank the grape juice during communion later, the Lord Jesus washed away my lingering shame with my tears.**

I'm embarrassed to admit it—this sort of episode is so “not me.” Perhaps the surprising intensity of the emotional assault caught me off guard. Whatever the case, it seemed that all the criticism, all the demands and deadlines, and all the misunderstanding that are part of this ministry overtook me in an avalanche of helplessness. In fact, I felt so overwhelmed I went to

bed in the middle of the day. Richard was worried.

After dozing with the pillow over my head for a couple of hours, however, a persistent thought pinged my oblivion: “pray to know what is

true.” Conviction struggled with self-pity, but finally, as a rote act of obedience, I began to say the words: “Please help me know what is true.”

A couple more hours passed. Still feeling helpless, I simultaneously realized that the immediate truth was that I had work to do, and people were depending on me to get it done. I got up and began to do the waiting tasks. By now I was able to pray more purposefully: “Please hold me in truth and root me in reality. Please be all I need.” Even though I felt emotionally spent, I was aware that reality was not as overwhelming as I felt it was. I knew deep down that I had succumbed to the temptation to indulge my feelings instead of submitting them to the Lord Jesus.

Emotionally recovered but still processing why I had been blind-sided by such paralyzing helplessness, I sat in church last Sunday listening to our pastor, Gary Inrig, preach on Mark 10:32-45. The mission of Jesus, he said, centers on the cross. Jesus was not a victim; he knew in advance and was willing to lay down His own life. As Gary spoke, I heard the words of his wife Elizabeth in my memory as she had taught our Monday night Bible study about how Daniel had feared the Lord in Babylon: Daniel was able to resist the demands of the pagan king because he pre-decided to obey God in spite of the consequences.

I began to feel emotional. As God's servant, I am not a victim. I have to pre-decide to stand in truth and in His strength when I feel misunderstood or overwhelmed.

As I ate the bread and drank the grape juice during communion later, the Lord Jesus washed away my lingering shame with my tears. His own body is my strength, and His blood is the guarantee that no misunderstanding, demand, or emotion will be able to destroy me. I am secure in Him. Jesus Himself is the reality in which I can stand when I am tempted to give way to fear or failure.

As God taught me through Gary's sermon and the memory of Elizabeth's words, as Jesus reminded me during communion that He has washed me and is keeping me, I was experiencing the miracle of the new covenant. No longer is God's command to me written in stone and kept in an ark. Jesus Himself lives in me in the person of the Holy Spirit. From the time He began to remind me to pray to know what is true as I wallowed in my misery until the moment He washed away my shame during communion, the Holy Spirit convicted me of my sin of succumbing to helplessness instead of to Him, brought me to repentance, taught me how to live, and reminded me that I am His.

God has written His law on my heart by literally living in me. His correction and discipline are swift and immediate, and His commands to me are far more personalized than were the Ten Commandments. The law written on my heart is none other than the sovereign God of the universe—and He doesn't leave me in my sin without immediate and personal correction and instruction. He reveals Himself to me through His Word; He teaches me His will, and He convicts me of subtle sins the law doesn't name.

In this issue Dale Ratzlaff discusses what it means to have the law written on our hearts. Chris Badenhorst explores the basis of new covenant ethics, and Geoffrey Drew explains the one reason anyone should leave Adventism. Jess Dixon shares his story of being saved by God's grace, and Elizabeth Inrig challenges us to honor God with our lips.

My prayer is that as you read, you will experience the peace and security that result from knowing Jesus Himself is instructing you and guarding your heart.

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### **Proclamation!**

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# On Christ the solid Rock I stand

JESS DIXON

**All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 2 Tim 3:12**

I often wonder if I am guilty of talking about myself and about my wife's and my painful departure from the Adventist ministry with more energy than I point to Jesus Christ. It is my personal conviction that our central focus, energy, and attention should not be our experiences or even the doctrines with which we disagreed in the past; rather, our central focus must be Christ and His glorious Gospel. The most important Person in all the universe is Christ. Jesus IS the Gospel!

Colossians 3:11 says, "Christ is ALL and is in all." Jonathan Edwards said, "All that a Christian is, he is in and by Christ." In Colossians 3 Paul admonishes us to set our minds, our focus, our energy upon things that are above, not on this earth. Other things are unimportant in true reality.

I began my ministry as a singing evangelist in the New Jersey Conference. (While the Church insists upon using the term "evangelist," this word is incorrect. Because the primary motive is not to win souls to Jesus Christ through the preaching of the Gospel but to make Adventists out of those who attend the public meetings, the word "proselytizer" would be more nearly accurate.)

I worked with many popular ministers including George Vandeman, Bob Folkenberg, and C.D. Brooks, and I have some great memories of my work with these evangelists. I loved C.D. Brooks! I first worked with him in the first integrated series of meetings in the denomination's history held in Newark, New Jersey. I was the white song leader/singer. One night following my singing of the song "Ten Thousand Angels," Elder Brooks paid me a high compliment in a manner I shall never forget. He walked to the pulpit as I was sitting down and said, "Jess may be white on the outside, but he has a black heart." Over 1200 people applauded. I felt honored, for I understood his compliment to mean that I sang from my heart with emotion and the deep expression of feeling often associated with African-American singers.

I pastored the Salem and Vineland, New Jersey, churches as well as the church in Alexandria, Virginia, and the church-

es in Sheridan and Buffalo, Wyoming. I also served as conference ministerial secretary for the Wyoming Conference under Al McClure. My last pastorate was for the Bozeman, Montana, Conference headquarters church.

## Unique Departure

My departure from Adventist pastoral ministry is, I think, unique because it did not focus upon the controversial doctrines so central in the departure of many Adventist ministers. My only issue during the time leading up to my termination was the authentic gospel of Jesus Christ. It remains my primary issue today!

The Holy Spirit led me to purchase a copy of Martin Luther's commentary on Romans. As I read it, I discovered the authentic gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! After Bonnie and I knew we were saved, I knew the gospel of the Lord Jesus was the primary message my congregation needed to hear so they, too, could smile and believe it when they sang, "Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!"

For the next 18 months I preached on nothing—I repeat, nothing—but the many facets of justification by faith.

I must point out that during part of this 18 month time period, the events of Glacier View were occurring in which Des Ford presented his scholarly findings about the investigative judgment to a panel of church administrators and theologians. I did not preach a single sermon nor make one statement about Des Ford and his position relative to the sanctuary doctrine. I did not mention Ellen White nor question her inspiration or plagiarism nor make any comment about the conflict brewing within the church at that time. The only subject I preached for 18 months was the authentic gospel of Jesus, focusing upon its heart of justification by faith alone.

Only briefly I will mention the traumatic events which took place during those 18 months. They included:

- Long sessions of questionings and stern warnings from the conference president.





**I praise God today and will not cease, for the freedom in Christ into which He eventually led us, for the unspeakable glory of His grace and the preciousness of the authentic gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Compared to the burden Adventism lays upon a person, Christ's yoke is as light as balsam wood!**

- Being told by a conference officer, "Preach anything but the gospel," (a direct quote), because, he said, I was confusing and upsetting my congregation.
- The head deacon standing up in the middle of my sermon and yelling in anger over my preaching justification by faith.
- Harassing telephone calls at 2:00 and 3:00 a.m. night after night.
- Members refusing to speak to us or to shake my hand.
- A cardiologist telling me I was having muscle spasms around the heart caused by the stress I was under. He said they could kill me unless I removed the source of the stress.

### Valley of the Shadow

When things reached a climax in December, 1981, the conference president said I must make a public statement of loyalty covering four specific areas or else I could never serve again in the denomination as a minister. He told us not to worship with our congregation as long as we remained in Bozeman. I was to move my family out of the state within three weeks. In the meantime I was to find work, a place to live, pack and move, and enroll our four children in new schools. He wanted that done in three weeks! The urgency, one conference official told me, originated from the conference president's fear that I would start an independent congregation in the shadow of the Montana Conference Office. Such a move, he no doubt felt, would cast an embarrassing shadow on his role as leader and would be a financial drain on local Adventist membership. The president also feared that, if I started an independent church, young pastors in the conference would be impacted and might, with their congregations, be prompted to make similar moves. I had no intention, however, of beginning a church there.

We did not move for six months. It took us that long to find a place to live and to enroll our children in new schools.

Being totally ostracized and cut off from virtually all association with those we thought to be true friends was a shock. I was not prepared for the dark valley my wife and I

were about to enter, including over ten years of severe, chronic depression.

God laid me in a sepulcher of the deepest despondency. We had no support group. I was not

prepared emotionally for the trauma not only of being called an apostate and a heretic, but of being treated as one.

Charles Spurgeon wrote: "To feel utterly forsaken of the Lord and cast away as though hopelessly corrupt is the very climax of heart desolation. The mind can descend far lower than the body, for there are bottomless pits. The soul can bleed in ten thousand ways and die over and over again each hour."

I praise God today and will not cease, for the freedom in Christ into which He eventually led us, for the unspeakable glory of His grace and the preciousness of the authentic gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Compared to the burden Adventism lays upon a person, Christ's yoke is as light as balsam wood!

### Statement of Loyalty

Romans 9:5 says Christ is God over all. I have to ask, is He God over all things in my life? Am I progressing in holiness?

Romans 13:14: "...make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." How do I follow this command? By putting "on Christ Jesus."

I cannot coast in my walk with Christ. I must actively examine myself and submit my life to God's word. Often I am big on head things, but what about heart things? Am I spending enough time watching and paying attention to the motions of the Spirit in my heart? Am I progressing in holiness?

All these years after my traumatic departure from Adventist ministry I can still say that being obedient to Jesus is worth whatever trouble may come as a result.

Incidentally I did give my public statement of loyalty demanded by the conference president.

On our last Sabbath in our church in Bozeman as I finished my last sermon, I told the congregation I would close with my statement of loyalty. Then I repeated the words of this hymn: "On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand."

After the benediction I walked down the center aisle of the church where the second love of my life next to the Lord Jesus, my wife Bonnie, stood up from her seat and took my hand. Together we walked out to the front doors of the church where we wished God's blessing to the people as they left.

Praise God for the glorious freedom offered in Christ Jesus our Lord!

All other ground is sinking sand.

†



**Jess and Bonnie Dixon** have been sweethearts since they were sophomores in Glendale Union (now Adventist) Academy in Glendale, California, and will celebrate their 48th anniversary in August. Jess achieved the Outstanding Soldier award while serving in the U.S. Army. They have four children and twelve grandchildren. Anticipating retirement, Bonnie heads up the Receiving Dept. in the Library of Cal State University. They have lived in Bakersfield, California since 1982. They currently worship with a small congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America.



## Ministry founders celebrate 50 Years

Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on June 23, 2007, at a party in their home. Over 60 people attended including their two sons, Bruce and Mike and their families, and Carolyn's four sisters. Guests ranged from former colleagues at Monterey Bay Academy to members of their Bible study group at their local church. After a lasagna lunch, Dale and Carolyn exchanged vows and tributes which we share below, and Carolyn showed a slide show she created beginning with pictures of the Valentine she gave Dale when she was in the third grade and he was in fourth.

They exchanged vows in which they committed to fulfill the last half of their verbal contracts with each other to live together for the first 100 years. They promised to continue to love each other as well as their sons, daughters-in law and grand children—Bruce, Denise, Melissa, and Leonard; Mike, Sandy, Ericka, and Kenny—for the rest of their lives with the grace and blessing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

### Carolyn's Tribute

My Dearest Dale,

Thank you for 50 wonderful years of marriage. Never did I dream when meeting that cute boy in the fourth grade when I was in the 3rd grade that we would be here today celebrating our love, especially since you moved away during the school year.

Your caring, thoughtfulness, patience, honesty, courage to stand for the right, commitment to seeking truth, and sense of humor all are an inspiration to me and cause me to love you more each day.

I thank God He led our family to move to the same town as your family when we were in high school and that we shared so many fun times in our teenage years.

Today as I think of our love for each other, my heart overflows with thankfulness to you and to God.

I Love You.

### Dale's Tribute

Carolyn,

Since I first met you, you have been esteemed in my eyes. The childhood attraction I had for you when I was in fourth grade turned into love when we were in high school. Our mutual desire to serve God, my admiration of your trustworthy character,

your high moral values, your compelling smile, our interest in the beauty of nature and the many fun times we had together led me to want you for my life partner. Yes, we followed the counsel of our teachers when they told us

we were getting too serious and did not date for many months. However, after I had a chance to evaluate a few other girls, I decided that no one else would do but you alone.

After my first year in college we got married. That was 50 years ago, but I can still smell the limburger cheese my "best man" smeared on the manifold, the door handles, the hood release, and the trunk latch of that 1950 Studebaker. We were young and broke, but we had each other, and we were incredibly happy.

Some years later, our family expanded, and Bruce and Mike enlarged the circumference of our love and the scope of our happiness. And now, having added two daughters and four grand children—what a wonderful family we have.

Carolyn, our journey over the past 50 years has taken us down many winding roads, over hills and through valleys, but we happily traveled the road together. Even when we made a few wrong turns, we can now see that God was working all things together for good.

Now, Carolyn, after 50 years of marriage you are more dearly esteemed than ever. I love you more than the spoken word can tell. I don't know what lies ahead, but I do know that I am committed to love you, provide for you and care for you to the best of my ability, and yes, I really do love you, I really do, and I always will. †





COVER feature

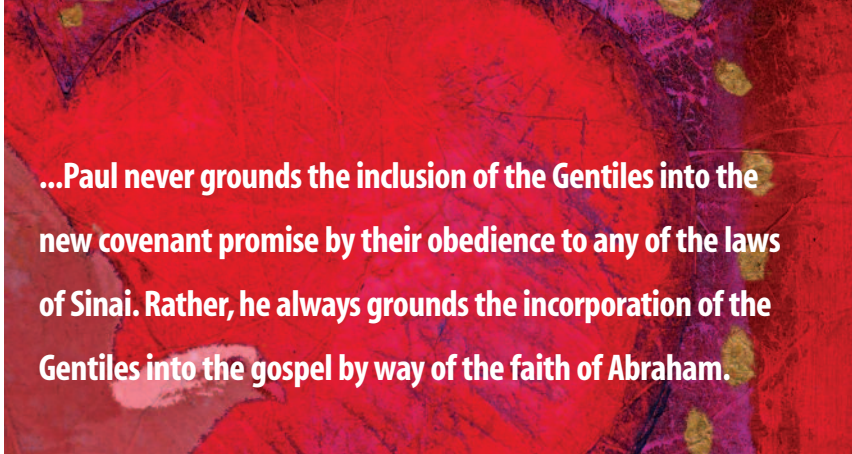
# The Law



written on the  
heart

DALE RATZLAFF





**...Paul never grounds the inclusion of the Gentiles into the new covenant promise by their obedience to any of the laws of Sinai. Rather, he always grounds the incorporation of the Gentiles into the gospel by way of the faith of Abraham.**

### Introduction:

A number of people have written asking questions regarding the law that is written on the heart. "Isn't the law written on the heart the Ten Commandments? If it is, then isn't the Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment included in this law?" This is such an important topic that we can only begin to address it in this article. Our goal, as always, is to let Scripture lead us to the correct answer.

The promise of a new covenant is clearly stated in Jeremiah 31:31–34:

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

The writer of Hebrews states emphatically that this promise has been fulfilled in the new covenant inaugurated by Christ. He quotes Jeremiah with a few subtle changes and adds additional information that will be vitally important in reaching a correct conclusion about the nature of the law written on our hearts.

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He says, "Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, When I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand To lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not care for them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. And I will be their God, And they shall be My people. And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, And everyone his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' For all will know Me, From the least to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more" (Hebrews 8:6-13).

When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear. Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a gold-

en altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant (Hebrews 9:1-4).

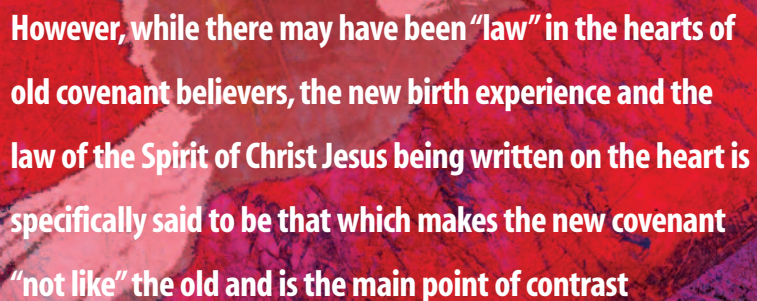
Reading the context of both passages gives us specific insight and also raises several questions that deserve answers.

### First the insights:

- The old covenant in view is the Mosaic or Sinaitic covenant, not the Abrahamic Covenant.
- The new covenant has a better ministry, is a better covenant, and is enacted on better promises.
- The new covenant is not like (is different from) the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai.
- In the new covenant God's laws will be written in our minds and on our hearts.
- In the new covenant God will be our God and we will be God's people.
- In the new covenant we will not teach our fellow citizen and brother saying, "know the Lord," for all will know Him.
- In the new covenant there will be no preferential understanding of God. All will be able to know the Lord.
- In the new covenant God will be merciful to our iniquities and remember our sins no more.
- The new covenant makes the first covenant obsolete. The old is terminated with the coming of the new.
- Included in the first (called old in other places in the NT) covenant were the tabernacle furniture and services.
- Included in the first covenant were the tables of the covenant (the Ten Commandments).

### Now for the questions:

- Who is to be included in the new covenant? Is the new covenant only for "the house of Israel" and "the house of Judah"? Is this promise also for the Gentiles who accept Christ?
- To what do "mind" and "heart" refer?
- What exactly is the "law" that will be written on the minds and hearts of the people included in the new covenant?
- Does the law written on the heart of new covenant Christians differ from the law that was written on stone? If so, in what way is it different?
- How does the law written on the heart relate to "natural



However, while there may have been “law” in the hearts of old covenant believers, the new birth experience and the law of the Spirit of Christ Jesus being written on the heart is specifically said to be that which makes the new covenant “not like” the old and is the main point of contrast

law” that is written on the heart of everyone, including those who are unbelievers and are “without law”?

- Under the arrangement of the new covenant, how is the new covenant Christian to use and apply the letter of old covenant law?
- How are we to understand that there will be no need to teach a brother to “know the Lord”?
- Last, and probably most important for the readers of *Proclamation!*, Does the law written on the heart include the keeping of the Sabbath? If so, what Sabbath laws apply to the new covenant Christian? How is one to demonstrate that he is keeping the Sabbath, if indeed the Sabbath is included in the law written on the heart?

We now turn our attention to analyzing the above insights and finding biblical answers to these questions.

### **The new covenant promise applies to all Christians.**

The New Testament makes it clear that this promised new covenant is for both Jewish and Gentile Christians. While Hebrews was written specifically to Jewish Christians who were in danger of giving up Christianity and returning to Judaism, a careful read through this book makes it evident that it does not exclude any Christian.<sup>1</sup> It is evident that this new covenant is the same new covenant that Jesus inaugurated at the last supper.

And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood” (Lk. 22:20).

Then in his epistles Apostle Paul applies the teachings of the new covenant and its associated blessings to both Jews and Gentiles. He goes to great lengths to prove the Gentiles have been incorporated into the promises made to Israel.

For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (Ro. 4:16).

That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants (Ro. 9:8).

Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham (Gal. 3:7).

Note well that Paul never grounds the inclusion of the Gentiles into the new covenant promise by their obedience to any of the laws of Sinai. Rather, he always grounds the incorporation of the Gentiles into the gospel by way of the faith of Abraham.

The promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 mentions both the “house of Israel” and “the house of Judah.” However, Israel, the northern Kingdom, was taken captive and interspersed with the other nations to such an extent that it is no longer identifiable by race. Some have taught the “British Israel” theory, but it is without foundation in fact. No reputable historian supports this theory.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, one could say that the “house of Israel” is now blended into what the Bible calls “the Gentiles” or other nations while “the house of Judah” would refer to the Jews of the southern kingdom.

Paul also states that the inclusion of the Gentiles into the promised salvation of God was not clearly made known in other generations. Therefore, we should not expect Jeremiah in his mention of the new covenant to clearly articulate the inclusion of the Gentiles.

By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel (Eph. 3:4-6).

Paul makes it patently clear that within the arrangement of the new covenant there is now only one body, the church, comprised of both Jewish and Gentile Christians. Considering all of the above evidence—and we have only scratched the surface on this topic—we conclude that the new covenant promise given in Jeremiah 31 and applied in Hebrews as well as the epistles of Paul is for all Christians.

### **The “mind” or “heart” is the memory coupled with the conscience.**

Few would disagree that “heart” or “mind” refers to the memory and conscience which is the moral judging component of the mind. Therefore, I will not here list the supporting biblical evidence for this conclusion. I have written two articles on conscience that may be found at: [http://lifeassuranceministries.org/Proclamation2002\\_JanFeb.pdf](http://lifeassuranceministries.org/Proclamation2002_JanFeb.pdf) and [http://lifeassuranceministries.org/Proclamation2002\\_MarApr.pdf](http://lifeassuranceministries.org/Proclamation2002_MarApr.pdf). However, as the conscience is a vitally important topic especially for those in transition, I will list here the summary conclusions referenced in the above mentioned articles.

- We should all recognize that our own conscience database may be deficient.
- We should always follow our conscience.
- When we follow our conscience, wanting to do right and thinking we are doing right, but end up doing wrong, God treats us with grace and mercy and (usually) gives opportunity for enlightenment.
- Acting contrary to our conscience causes spiritual disaster.
- Refusing to study and look at the facts can be as dangerous as going against our conscience, causing spiritual disaster.



- In solving Christian disagreements, we should use the way of love, not the way of knowledge.
- It takes time to reeducate the conscience.
- We should never urge a person to go against his conscience, even if we are confident that his conscience database is incorrectly educated.
- We sin if we cause a person to go against his conscience.

### **The law written on the heart of an unbeliever who is “without law”**

In the first chapter of Romans Paul declares that all men know something about God.

...that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse (Ro. 1:19-20).

The following references indicate that God works with those who are “without law,” seeking to bring a measure of truth to them and holding them accountable for whatever truth they do have. Paul shows that by not acknowledging God’s divine attributes of eternal power and divine nature as seen in the created world they are without excuse. Then, by rejecting what they did know about God, God gave them over to follow their own corrupt ways. So these people turn from the limited knowledge God has revealed in nature and in so doing continue down the road to destruction. This natural revelation does not appear to be a saving knowledge.

However, in chapter two of Romans Paul seems to open the door slightly for those who followed this natural revelation with a clear conscience.

For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus (Ro. 2:14-16).

Later, in speaking to the Athenians, Paul said this:

Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent (Ac. 17:30).

Whether or not natural law provides a saving knowledge of God is not the purpose of this article. Nevertheless, we can say that natural law exists, should be followed, and when followed will point a person in the direction of God.

All societies and cultures have an innate understanding of right and wrong. In their excellent book, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*, Geisler and Turek write,

When we say that Moral Law exists, we mean that all people are impressed with a fundamental sense of right and wrong. Everyone knows, for example that love is superior to

**In the statements that deal with the law written on the heart, it is emphasized over and over again that it is not of the letter of the law that is written on the heart but rather it is the law of the Spirit of Christ working in love that guides us...**

hate and that courage is better than cowardice. University of Texas at Austin professor J. Budziszewski writes, “Everyone knows certain principles. There is not a land where murder is virtue and gratitude vice.” C.S. Lewis, who has written profoundly on this topic in his classic work, *Mere Christianity*, put it this way: “Think of a country where people were admired for running away from battle, or where a man felt proud to double-cross all the people who had been kindest to him. You might just as well try to imagine a country where two and two made five.” In other words, everyone knows there are absolute moral obligations. An absolute moral obligation is something that is binding on all people, at all times, in all places. And an absolute Moral Law implies an absolute Moral Law Giver.<sup>3</sup>

The scope of natural law that is written on the conscience of those who are “without law” usually includes knowing right from wrong relative to the following moral issues: murder and/or the value of life, stealing (at least from certain groups), lying (at least in some circumstances), some accepted form for correct sexual activity and/or marriage relationship, and some accepted relationship between parent and child. These appear to have a close relationship with the second table of the Ten Commandments.

### **Was the Law written on the hearts of old covenant believers?**

There are a number of places where the Old Testament mentions the law and heart together. For example:

...he said to them, “Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, even all the words of this law (Dt. 32:46).

With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You (Ps. 119:10-11).

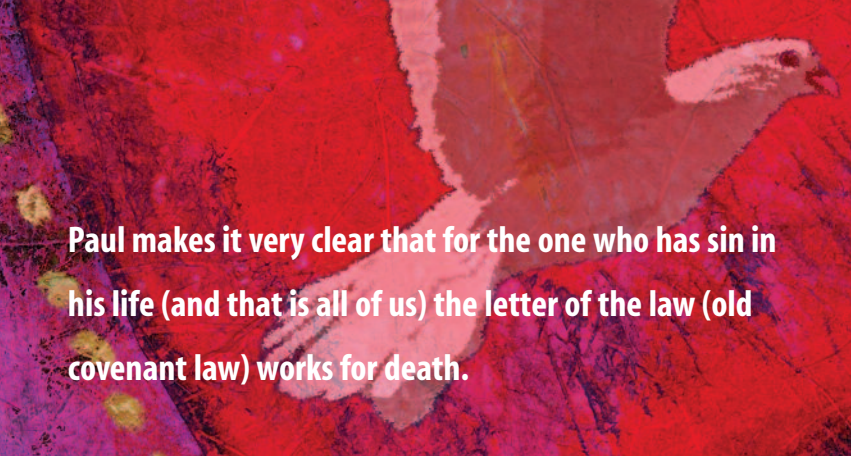
The law of his God is in his heart; His steps do not slip (Ps. 37:31).

I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart (Ps. 40:8).

In the psalms of David the law is often the focus of meditation and insight.<sup>4</sup> Considering these verses—and many others too numerous to list—we conclude that the law in the heart of old covenant believers included natural law, a limited understanding of the ritual of sacrifice, and then at Sinai, the instruction included in the Torah.

However, while there may have been “law” in the hearts of old covenant believers, the new birth experience and the law of the Spirit of Christ Jesus being written on the heart is specifically said to be that which makes the new covenant “not like” the old and is the main point of contrast.





**Paul makes it very clear that for the one who has sin in his life (and that is all of us) the letter of the law (old covenant law) works for death.**

### **What is the Law written on the heart of new covenant Christians?**

We must be careful to answer this question in the light of the insights given us by the Lord as recorded by Jeremiah and interpreted by the writers of the New Testament. The new covenant is not a continuation or reworking of the old.<sup>5</sup> While there are similarities, there are also marked differences.<sup>6,7</sup> The old becomes aged and “near to vanishing away”<sup>8</sup> or “obsolete”<sup>9</sup> with the coming of the new. It is “not like” the first covenant. And one of the different, or new, parts of the new covenant is that God will put His law in our minds and write them on our hearts. This leads us to two important questions. First, is this “law” that is written on our hearts identical with the “law” given to Israel? If not, how and why is it different? If it is different, then how can it still be called “My Law”? Second, how does the process of God writing His law on our hearts differ from what was available to old covenant believers?

We start with the teachings of Jesus who is the new covenant Keeper<sup>10</sup> and who inaugurated the new covenant.

You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery”; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Mt. 5:27-28).

Here Jesus quotes one of the Ten Commandments but moves from the letter of the law<sup>11</sup> to the eternal moral principle behind the letter of the law and then applies that principle which has greater moral depth, wider application, and deals with the attitudes of the heart.

Jesus does the same thing with the commandment against murder.

You have heard that the ancients were told, “You shall not commit murder” and “Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.” But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, “You good-for-nothing,” shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, “You fool,” shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell (Mt. 5:21-22).

Murder involves activity. Again Jesus moves away from the letter of the law to the moral principle behind the law which again has greater moral depth and much wider application. Anger is not an activity; it is an attitude of the heart. Jesus goes on to show that the principle behind this commandment even forbids condemnatory speaking and thinking.

Like Paul, Jesus shows that the law condemns. He ends his discussion of law with these words:

Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Mt. 5:48).

If we take the teachings of Jesus seriously we must conclude that it is utterly impossible to keep the law when the full reach of the law is made clear.

When asked, “What is the greatest commandment in the law?” Jesus did not even go to the Ten Commandments but to other laws within the Torah.

And He said to him, “You shall LOVE THE Lord your God with all your HEART, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, “You shall LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets (Mt. 22:37-40).

Again, who really loves the Lord with all the heart? Who truly loves the neighbor as him/herself? Nevertheless, Jesus teaches that if one truly loves, he will be in harmony with the whole Law and Prophets. In other words, the new covenant law that is written on the heart is the law of love.

Paul agrees with and expands on the teachings of Jesus.

For this, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law (Ro. 13:9-10).

For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Gal. 5:14).

James says the same.

If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,” you are doing well (James 2:8).

Here we should note well that in every instance where love is said to be the fulfillment of the law, it refers to the “whole law,” but never is the Sabbath mentioned. The words of Jesus as represented in the four Gospels, the theology of Paul, and the writings of John and James are all in agreement that love is the foundational principle of life in the new covenant; it is the law that is written on the heart. In the gospel of John, Jesus calls love “a new commandment” and says that love is the sign by which all men will know that they are Christ’s disciples.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (Jn. 13:34-35).

This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you (Jn. 15:12).

This I command you, that you love one another (Jn. 15:17).

For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another (1 Jn. 3:11).

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God (1 Jn. 4:7).



In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 Jn. 4:10).

In our discovery of the law written on the heart of the new covenant Christian we must also take into consideration the many biblical statements that confirm the law is not the focus of the new covenant Christian. Following are only samplings:

For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them. Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith" (Gal. 3:10-11).


...in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (Gal. 3:14).

What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise. Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one. Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe (Gal. 3:17-22).

In the statements that deal with the law written on the heart, it is emphasized over and over again that it is not the letter of the law that is written on the heart, but rather it is the law of the Spirit of Christ working in love that guides us in our application of the moral principle behind the letter of the law.

...who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it. For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory. Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech, and are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away (2 Co. 3:6-13).

Paul makes it very clear that for the one who has sin in his life (and that is all of us) the letter of the law (old covenant law) works for death.



**Now, in Christ we are released from the law in that the law can only condemn to death once. Once the law has carried out its execution, it no longer has jurisdiction over us!**

For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter (Ro. 7:5-6).

Now, in Christ we are released from the law in that the law can only condemn to death once. Once the law has carried out its execution, it no longer has jurisdiction over us! If we have been baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit, Christ not only died for us, but we died in Him; thus we are released from the law and sin, and we should from that point on consider ourselves to be dead to sin. We should never see ourselves as sinners again! God sees us as righteous as His righteous Son, and we should see ourselves accordingly! Wow!

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death (Ro 6:3)?

For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Ro. 6:10-11).

But, note the next verse:

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts (Ro 6:12).

How do we do this? Not by focusing on law or as some would say, on the "spirit of the law." Why? Because the writer of Hebrews clearly states when he said "new" he made the first covenant "old," and we should now consider it to be "obsolete" <sup>12</sup> Rather,

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death (Ro. 8:2).

It is NOT the letter of old covenant law or even the so called, "spirit of the law" (an unbiblical term) that is to be written on our hearts. Rather it is the indwelling "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" that fully meets "the requirement of the law"—love, which is the law's fulfillment..

For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit (Ro. 8:3-5).

We are now to focus on what God has done for us. It is the glory of the cross, the glory of the resurrection, it is the



It is NOT the so called “spirit of the law” that is written on our hearts and is the focus of our attention, but now it is “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” that fully meets “the requirement of the law”.

glory of forgiveness of all sin, it is the glory of imputed righteousness, it is the glory of now being sons and daughters of God, it is the glory of now being redeemed, it is the glory of now being qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. Yes, it is the assurance that we are now saved, not by anything we do but only and always by and in Christ Jesus alone.

But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Co. 3:15-18).

Realizing who we are in Christ, experiencing the reality of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus written on our hearts in love brings forth true freedom, liberty and worship.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:14-19).

#### Thus far we can conclude the following:

- The promise of the new covenant with its associated blessings of the law written on the heart applies to all Christians.
- Gentiles, who do not have the written law, nevertheless have some knowledge of God through natural law and often know right from wrong.
- Members of the old covenant community had the letter of the written law,



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some of which may have been moved to the heart through meditation and memorization. However, the thrust of both Jeremiah and Hebrews is on the contrast between the letter of old covenant law and that written on the heart by the Spirit in the new covenant Christian.

- The law written on the heart is the law of love, and it is the fulfillment of the whole law and is said to be “a new commandment”.
- Now our focus is not on the external letter of old covenant law and ritual. Rather it is the indwelling “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” that fully meets “the requirement of the law”—love, which is the law’s fulfillment. This moves the focus of our attention from “here is a list of things we must do” to “here is a list of things Christ has done for us.” Our Elder Brother presents us before the Father not in our own righteousness, but we are 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 (Php. 3:8). †

#### Endnotes

1. Heb. 7:22; 8:6, 13; 9:15-18, 20; 10:16, 29; 12:24.
2. Leqell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 175.
3. Geisler, Norman L., and Turek, Frank, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*, p. 171.
4. Psalm 119 is a good example among many.
5. Heb. 8:13; 2 Cor. 3:4-18; Gal. 4:21-30.
6. The book of Hebrews lists many contrasts showing that the new covenant is “better” than the old in every respect. See Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Christ*, p. 279-291 for many examples.
7. “Jeremiah’s prophecy of a new covenant is a prophecy of the ultimate consummation of the kingdom of God, and in Paul and Hebrews the contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant has to do not with relative distinctions between the two dispensations of God’s covenant of grace succeeding one another in time but with the radical antithesis of the two subjective situations: the formalism, legalism, unbelief and death of ancient Israel on the one hand and the genuine experience of salvation by all believers on the other.” R.S. Rayburn, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 278, 279.
8. Lenski, *New Testament Commentary*, Hebrews, p. 272.
9. Heb. 8:13, *Updated New American Standard Bible*.
10. See *Sabbath in Christ*, p. 217-222.
11. Sometimes, but not always, the eternal moral principle behind the letter of the law may encompass what the letter of the law says. In this case, and in the illustration of murder, the letter of the law is congruous with the moral principle behind the law.
12. When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear (Heb. 8:13).
13. “The spirit of the law” is not a Biblical term and should not be confused with the law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus.





# What are new covenant ethics?

## Are they in the Ten Commandments?

CHRIS BADENHORST

### Introduction

In a secular sense ethics can be defined as the science of conduct. It is a systematic attempt to consider the purposeful actions of mankind so as to determine their rightness or wrongness, their tendency to good or evil. Christian ethics can be defined as the Christian's conduct in terms of God's revealed will in a covenantal relationship with Him. It answers the question, "What does God require us to do, and what attitudes does He require us to have?"

One of the most frequent questions every sincere Christian has at some time asked is: "What is God's will for my life... What does God expect of me... How should I live in order to please God?" The earnest desire of every Christian is not only to be counted right (justification) but to also do right (sanctification). In this they are constantly faced with ethical decisions. Is it right to do this? Is it wrong to do that?

Paul exhorts the Ephesian believers to "find out what pleases the Lord" (Eph. 5:10). But how can we find out what is pleasing to God? He also says: "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise... Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is" (Eph. 5:15). But how can we know what the Lord's will

is? Isaiah states: "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'" (Isa. 30:21). But how do we hear this voice? God says through the Psalmist: "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go: I will guide you with my eye" (Ps. 32:8). But how does God do this? What does the Bible present as the Christian's guide to morality under the new covenant?

When we talk about Christian ethics we are talking about God's revealed will for new covenant believers—those moral requirements God expects of Christians (Ro. 12:1, 2; Col. 1:9; 3:20; Eph. 5:10, 17; 6:6; Heb. 10:36; 13:20, 21). Just as God required His people under the old covenant to live in a certain way, He requires his people under the new covenant to live in a certain way. Before we consider the details that constitute God's will for Christians under the new covenant, however, we need to consider the context and basis of God's will as presented in the Scriptures. Otherwise the exhortations given us in the New Testament could become a mere list of moral do's and don'ts similar to those in other world religions. The Bible, however, never presents God's will for His people—under the old covenant or the New—as a list of moral do's and don'ts.



## 1. Its Context

The context in which God's will (ethics) is presented in the Bible is not a religion with its moral code—a list of do's and don'ts—but a relationship established by God with the citizens of His kingdom. This relationship is based on two things: 1) God's redemption of his people and 2) the subsequent covenant he enters into with them. This covenant basically consists of two parts: a) God's goodwill promise to his people—that which he will do for them, and b) God's will for them—that which He wants them to do.

### Under the old covenant

God and His ancient people Israel were joined in a pact known as the old covenant. This covenant also consisted of two basic parts: 1) God's goodwill promises to them—that which he would do for them and 2) God's revealed will—that which he required of them. Before God could enter into a covenantal relationship with His people, however, He had to deliver them from slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt. It is clear from reading Moses and the Prophets that wherever they instruct God's people on how to live according to God's revealed will they do so in terms of the Exodus from Egypt and the subsequent covenantal relationship which God entered into with them. So, as far as the Old Testament is concerned, the ethics God prescribed to Israel are always embedded in both the redemption story of the Exodus and of Israel's covenantal relationship with God. God's expectations for Israel are never independent of those two things.

### Under the new covenant

In principle, the new covenant is structured the same way. Before God can bring man into a new covenantal relationship with Himself, He has to deliver him from Satan's kingdom of darkness (the new exodus) and bring him over into His kingdom of light (Col. 1:13, 14). This deliverance is based on the finished work of Christ on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. The believer is then joined to his Creator in a pact referred to as the new covenant. This covenant also consists of two parts:

a) First is God's promise of good-will to His people—that which He will do for them. In this God is committed to the continual welfare of their daily needs—whether physical (Mt. 6:25-33) or spiritual (Mt. 11:25-30). God manifests His love for His people by saving them from sin and supplying all their needs and thus gives the believer eternal security.

b) The second part is God's will for His people—that which He requires them to do for him (Mt. 7:21; Mk. 3:35; Jn 7:17; Ro. 12:2; 1 Co. 7:15). In this God's people are committed to be under his authority at all times and to do his will without question (Mt. 5:16; 11:28-30). God's people manifest their love for Him this way because the most certain proof of their trust and love is always expressed in obedience to God's revealed will (Jn 14:15; c/f Jn 14:24). Their obedience will bring glory to God (Mt. 5:16). In this article we are concerned with this second part of the covenant—God's revealed will.

## 2. Its Basis

Paul states the basis of new covenant ethics in the following statement: "To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law)... To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law)" (1 Co. 9:20-21). In this passage Paul states that he no longer lives according to God's law (His revealed will) as given to ancient Israel through Moses. But being not exempted from doing God's will he now lives under "the law of Christ." In other words, under the old covenant, God made His will known to Israel through Moses, whereas under the new covenant, God makes His will known to Christians through Christ. The first revelation is generally known as "the law of Moses" (Ezr. 7:6; Lk. 24:44; Ac. 13:39; 1 Co. 9:9) or just "Moses" (Mk 7:10), and the second as "Christ's law" (1 Co. 9:21) or "the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

Under the old covenant the 613 commandments of the Torah (or the Law of Moses), which included the Decalogue, constituted God's will for Israel. Those commands and instructions applied exclusively to Israel with whom that covenant was made (Ex. 34:27, 28; Dt. 4:13). That covenant, as administered by Moses, governed the life of the Jewish community until the time when it would be superseded by the more glorious ministration of the Spirit under the new covenant (2 Co. 3:7-11).

Now, under the new covenant, it is Jesus (not Moses) who is the Instructor of God's people. He teaches them personally and through his chosen apostles what constitutes the will of God under the new covenant. So, Christian ethics has Christ (not Moses) at its center. Thus do we find that in the light of Christ's self-denying life and self-sacrificing death on the cross we receive a much deeper insight and understanding of what it means to do God's revealed will under the new covenant. Here God gives us a new definition of love (1 Jn. 4:7-21), of humility (Php. 2:1-11), of dedication to God (Ro. 12:1-2), and of service (Ro. 15:1-4).

Consider how Jesus redefines the divine command to love. He says, "A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (Jn. 13:34). We know that the command to love already existed under the old covenant (Lev. 19:18). But the command to love one another as Christ loved us could only apply in the light of his self-denying life and self-sacrificing death upon the cross. The love of Christ as revealed in his life and death for mankind was henceforth to be the basis for Christian living.

Jesus' self-sacrificing love is therefore the basis for all the exhortations Christ's apostles gave us. For example, husbands are to love their wives—but how? "Just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25). Wives are to submit to their husbands—but how? "...as to the Lord" (Eph. 5:22). Christians are to forgive one another—but how? "...just as in Christ God forgave you" (Eph. 4:32). Christians are to serve one another—but how? In the same way that Christ "made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant" (Php. 2:7).



Christians are also to give of their means to the poor because they “know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for [their] sakes he became poor, so that [they] through his poverty might become rich” (2 Co. 8:8-9). Christians “who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak... For even Christ did not please himself” (Ro. 15:1-3). By assuming one another’s burdens as Christ assumed ours on the cross, we Christians “fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:1-2).

So, God’s supreme act of love towards us as manifested in Christ’s life and death becomes the basis of all Christian obedience to the will of God under the new covenant. Christ’s sacrifice not only makes us willing to consecrate to Him and our fellow men all that we have and are, it also shows us how, as pointed out above. We saw that under the old covenant Israel’s ethical life was inspired and defined by God’s act of delivering them from Egyptian bondage and by the covenant He entered into with them (Ex. 20:2). But under the new covenant, Christian ethics (doing God’s will) is inspired and defined by Christ’s life, death and resurrection and by the covenant God has entered with those delivered from sin by His grace based on the finished work of Christ.

### Its Details

We now come to the details of God’s will for His new covenant people by posing the question, “What is the Christian’s guide in this matter of ethics?” Some imagine that right and wrong can be determined solely by means of “the inner voice of conscience” or what others call “the inner light of God.” As a result some have done the most bizarre things thinking they were following this “inner voice of God.” We must remember that even the best conscience is sometimes weak, seared and uninformed. So, if the believer depends solely upon what he supposes to be the inner voice of the Spirit for understanding God’s will, he is taking the same risk as a pilot who flies through a storm without a compass and other instruments.

Let us now look at two examples in which God has revealed and enumerated His will for believers under the new covenant:

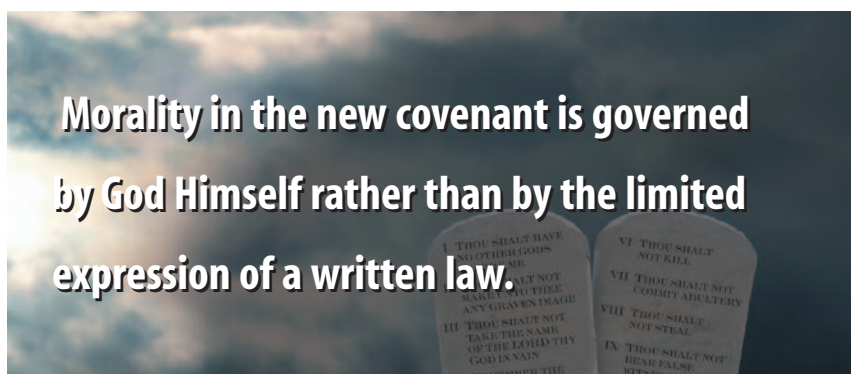
### The First

The first example is Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians. In this letter he firstly reminds them of the Gospel and states, “...we [the apostles] speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel... As apostles of Christ... we were delighted to share with you... the gospel of God” (1 Th. 2:4, 6b, 8). In this Gospel Paul proclaims the grace of God by which they were delivered from Satan’s kingdom of darkness. This deliverance was their new covenant Exodus.

Secondly, and in view of God’s redeeming grace, Paul reminds them concerning the will of God and says: “...we [the Lord’s apostles—not Moses] instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we [the Lord’s apostles] ask you and urge you in [your faith union with] the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know

what instructions we [the Lord’s apostles—not Moses] gave you [in this regard] by the authority of the Lord Jesus: It IS God’s will that you... should avoid sexual immorality... For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life” (1 Th. 4:1-3, 7).

Here then is the reason why Christians do not commit adultery—not because of the 7th commandment in the Decalogue, but because they are told not to do so by the Lord’s chosen apostle who also states—by the authority of Christ—that this IS the will of God under the new covenant! (Because the apostle repeats certain commands found in the



Decalogue is NOT proof that it is still in force under the new covenant).

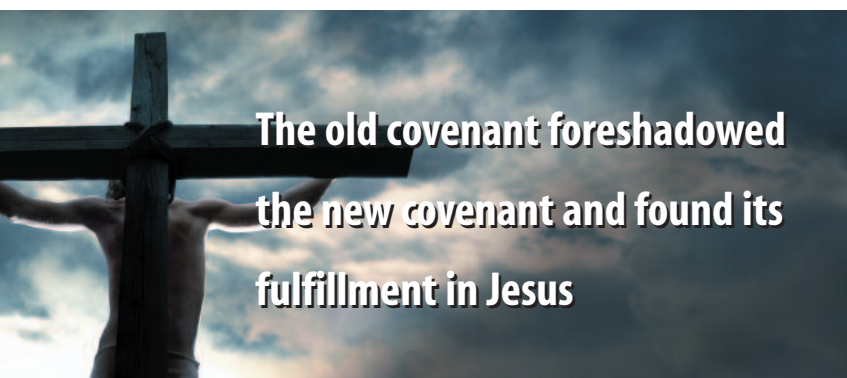
Paul also adds other details NOT found in the Decalogue like, “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your own hands, just as we [the Lord’s apostles—not Moses] told you” (1 Th. 4:11). Also, “Live in peace with each other... warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances...” (1 Th. 5:13b-18a). Here too Paul gives the reason for all these instructions: “...for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus [under the new covenant]” (1 Th. 5:18b).

### The Second

The second example of God’s revelation of His will to new covenant believers is Paul’s letter to the Ephesian believers. He first reminds them of the Gospel concerning Christ and what God had accomplished through Him for Jews and Gentiles alike (Eph. 1-3). Then, in view of the Gospel, he states: “As a prisoner of the Lord then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” But what does such a life consist of? Paul enumerates: “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love... each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor... Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry... He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work... that he may have something to share with those in need.



"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up...Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another...among you there must not even be a hint of sexual immorality or of any kind of impurity, or of greed because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which is out of place, but rather thanksgiving" (Eph. 4:25-5:1-4). Paul continues by also giving instructions concerning God's will in regards to the relationship between husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, as well as spiritual warfare (see Eph 5:22-6:18).



So, to find out what God's will is under the new covenant, Christians do NOT consult the Decalogue of the old covenant because that covenant in its totality was abolished by being nailed to the cross (Eph. 2:14, 15). Instead, they consult the Lord's chosen apostles because God has revealed to them, not only the Gospel but also His will for those who become His people under the new covenant. Thus could Paul remind the Thessalonian believers: "...we [the Lord's chosen apostles] instructed you how to live in order to please God" (1 Th. 4:1). This not only applied to Christians in the first century, but it applies to us as well in the here and now.

This approach to new covenant ethics and morality is important because it sets Christians free from the old covenant as a basis and reference point for ethics, morality, and God's will as a whole. God's revelation of the Law of Christ through Jesus' finished work and through the apostles' teaching shows that the Christian's moral conduct has nothing to do with the Decalogue or with any other part of the old covenant. The old covenant foreshadowed the new covenant and found its fulfillment in Jesus. Morality in the new covenant is governed by God Himself rather than by the limited expression of a written law.

### Conclusion

In view of the conclusion above, what is the context in which the Bible presents this matter of ethics? Without exception it always poses the question as to how we should live in obedience to God's revealed will in the context of the divine-human relationship based on His redemptive act in Christ's

death on the cross and of the covenant He subsequently enters with those who have been thus redeemed. Obedience to God's will is never independent of the context of our deliverance from sin and of God's bringing us into covenant relationship with Himself.

We see this context clearly in the writings of Paul. He always reminds his readers of the Gospel first and only then exhorts them to holy living, as demonstrated in the two examples above. We see the same pattern in his letter to the Christians in Rome where he says: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy [the Gospel of which he wrote in this letter], to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God..." (Ro. 12:1). He follows with instructions in God's will: how they are to behave towards fellow Christians, non-believers, the government, the weak and the strong in the faith, and so on.

The basis of new covenant ethics is no longer the Law of Moses but the Law of Christ. This law consists of the instructions which the Lord Jesus gave his followers while with them (see Jn. 10:18; 13:34 and repeatedly in chaps. 14 and 15). It also includes the instructions given believers by the Lord's apostles as shown in the two examples above.

As for the details of God's revealed will, we Christians do NOT consult the Decalogue or any other part of the old covenant; we consult the Lord Jesus Christ and His chosen apostles. In their exhortations these apostles instruct us how to live in order to please God. God revealed to them the gospel and also the details of their exhortations and instructions, and these should be our guide in everyday situations.

### The Sabbath

In view of these observations regarding new covenant ethics, the obvious question a Sabbatarian will ask is, "What about Sabbath-keeping?" In answering this question we need to consider the following points:

1. Our first concern is hermeneutics. The New Testament must always be the Christian's final authority. That which is declared to us through Jesus and his apostles is God's final word (Jn. 1:1; Heb. 1:1, 2). This fact means that what was applicable to Israel under the old covenant is not necessarily applicable to Christians under the new covenant unless clearly stated so by Jesus and his apostles.

2. The covenants between God and man mentioned in the Bible have their special seals or signs. The rainbow was the sign of the Noahic covenant (Ge. 9:12, 13). Circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic covenant (Ge. 17:10; Ro. 4:11). The Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic, Sinaitic, or old covenant (Ex. 31:16, 17; Ez. 20:12). The Holy Spirit is the seal of the new covenant (Eph. 1:13; 4:30). Nowhere in the New Testament is it stated (or even implied) that the Sabbath is the sign between God and His new covenant people as taught in Adventism.

3. The Sabbath was given to Israel (Neh. 9:13, 14). Nowhere does the Old Testament state that Gentile nations should observe the Sabbath. In fact, the Bible has no record of any command to observe the Sabbath until the time of Moses and



the covenant God made with Israel through him. There is also no biblical record of people observing the Sabbath until it was given to Israel. Deuteronomy 4:13 and 5:2, 3 state that the Ten Commandment Covenant (with its Sabbath sign) was NOT given to the patriarchs and fathers of the Hebrew nation. This covenant only came 430 years after God had made his covenant with Abraham (Gal. 3:17)—a covenant in which nothing was said about the Sabbath.

4. The Jerusalem Conference was convened about A. D. 49 to consider the issue of whether Gentile Christians should be circumcised and thereby undertake to keep the Law (see Ac. 15). The apostles here recognized the Holy Spirit's *fait accompli* (Ac. 15:28, 29). Hence the conference decided that Gentile Christians need NOT be circumcised and keep the Law. Instead they were to observe only four items from the Law (three ritual and one moral) which would make it easier for Jewish believers to fellowship with them. They were not burdened with anything else from the Law (Ac. 15:28, 29). The four items did NOT include Sabbath observance. Thus did the Jerusalem Conference officially recognize the Law-free Gentile mission.

5. Sabbatarians argue that the silence of the Jerusalem Conference on the Sabbath question proves that all sides must have agreed to keep the Sabbath. Not so. When a Jewish proselyte was circumcised, it was a token that he had undertaken "to obey the whole law" (Gal. 5:3) which included the Sabbath. So the real issue of the Jerusalem conference was whether Gentile believers should be subject to "the whole law." The conference "voted" against this idea, thereby confirming the Law-free status of Gentile believers which included freedom from observing the weekly Sabbath (see Ac. 15).

Paul never wrote to his Gentile converts urging them to observe the Sabbath for the simple reason it did not apply to them. Similarly, he is also silent regarding this matter in his letters. Here too, this silence cannot be regarded as an indication that he and his converts took the obligation to observe the Sabbath for granted because in most of his letters he was not silent concerning the Law-free status of Gentile believers. On the contrary, he states their freedom from Mosaic law very clearly throughout, thereby confirming the Jerusalem Conference's decision regarding this matter.

Furthermore, we cannot base our faith and build our spiritual house on arguments that are founded on "silence." They must be based on a clear "Thus saith the Lord."

6. The Sabbath was not only the sign or seal of the Old Sinaitic Covenant; it was also a festival that commemorated the Exodus event—Israel's divine deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Furthermore, it also celebrated creation because the creation of the Hebrew nation and its deliverance from

Egyptian bondage was seen as a recapitulation of the original creation event. This connection can be seen in the relationship between these two events (Ex. 20:8-11; 31:14-17).

In view of these facts we pose the question, how can the Sabbath institution, given by God to Israel to commemorate the old creation and the old Exodus, be an institution to celebrate the new creation (2 Co. 5:17) and the new exodus (Col. 1:12, 13) that have taken place through the death and resurrection of Christ under the new covenant?

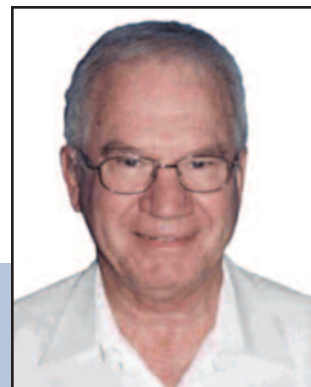
To insist on observing the old covenant sign of the Sabbath would be tantamount to a denial of what God offers us in the New Testament Gospel. New covenant believers should come to terms with the fact that the old covenant Sabbath is NOT adequate to celebrate the new eschatological age of the Gospel and the Spirit that came with the new covenant. The old wineskins of the old covenant are not adequate to contain the new wine of the new covenant.

7. The New Testament is clear that new covenant Christians are NOT under the jurisdiction of the old covenant and its law system (of which the Sabbath was the sign) since the cross of Christ is stated to be its end (Ro. 10:4), its cancellation or taking away (Col. 2:14), and its abolition (Eph. 2:15). It is now superseded (2 Co. 3:9) by the Law of Christ (1 Co. 9:21; Gal. 6:2). Therefore, Christians are said to be dead to the old covenant and its Law system which includes the Decalogue and its Sabbath sign (Ro. 7:4) and no longer under it (Ro. 6:14).

8. In view of the above, there is NO command in the New Testament to observe the seventh day (or the first day) of the week as the Christian Sabbath—not by Jesus or his apostles. Martin Luther was clear on this point. He stated: "Throughout the New Testament we do not find a single place where we Christians are commanded to celebrate the Sabbath" (*What Luther Says: An Anthology*, 3:1329).

Given the context of God's deliverance of His people from sin by Christ's death and resurrection, He has entered a new covenant with them. In this covenant God's people honor and obey the Lord Jesus instead of the shadow of the law which Moses mediated to Israel. The new covenant is the fulfillment and replacement of the old covenant, and the old covenant symbols and requirements no longer apply when a person has been made alive in Christ.

New covenant ethics are grounded in knowing the Lord Jesus, not in the temporary law given to Israel to foreshadow God's divine intervention in the lives of His people. †



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# There is only one

GEOFFREY V. DREW



**“W**hy should I leave the Adventist church?” a friend asks. “I love the Sabbath. I love our Sabbath traditions. The Sabbath has preserved my sanity in a stressful world.”

Let me say immediately that one would not leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church in order to change one’s day of worship. As Adventists, we usually did not understand that Sabbath is not about a day; it’s about a Person. That Person is Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, the One who is Lord of our lives and worthy to be worshipped on any day of the week, but especially by those who love His appearing.

There is a great danger in complacency. The wise proverbian has said, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Pr 14:12). Even though one is a Sabbath-keeping, tithe paying, health reforming Adventist, he may be on the road to destruction. Remember, the people who killed Jesus were that kind of observant Jews. (I remember hearing this comparison between the Pharisees and Adventists from Dr. Graham Maxwell in his Sabbath School classes at Loma Linda University Church in 1974.) Yet Jesus called those Pharisees hypocrites, evil workers, and a wicked generation. They were ones who would die in their sins and be consigned to everlasting punishment in the flames of hell.

If leaving Adventism should not be about changing one’s worship practices, but if there is danger of complacently

sliding into unbelief if one stays, for what reason should one leave?

The best and most profound reason to leave Adventism is Jesus Christ. The reason any of us should leave the Adventist church is to run towards Jesus. Everything inside Adventism confounds and confuses our walk with Christ. This statement is not merely an argument; it is a fact. It was the task of the apostle Paul to the churches at Galatia, Philippi, Colosse, Ephesus, and everywhere in between to lead believers to Jesus and away from old covenant Judaistic things. Like it or not, the Sabbath and food restrictions belonged to the old covenant and were coming to an end.

In the new covenant we have nothing but Jesus Christ. “Jesus” was the cry of the Reformation: *Sola Christus*. We need to run towards Jesus. We need to run the race without hindrances—drop the baggage; run free; run fast. It is the race for your life—not just for here and now but forever. The inspired writer of Hebrews 12:1-2 says, “...lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

We get the same thoughts from the book of Colossians—run toward Jesus Christ. He is our only Savior,



# e reason to leave

**If leaving Adventism should not be about changing one's worship practices, but if there is danger of complacently sliding into unbelief if one stays, for what reason should one leave?**

the only One who can save us from this fallen, cursed, sin-sick world. He is the only One who can save us from our desperately wicked selves and the self-deception to which we are doomed. "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete and He is the only head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ."

The walk with Christ is a radical thing. He is the reason we are here. He made us. He is our Creator. He is our breath and our life, and He has plans for us.

## **How do we learn to follow Jesus?**

But how do we walk, run, eat, and breath Jesus Christ in this world that tugs all of our senses in every direction, erecting many idols of the heart causing us to worship things other than the God we love? The hymn writer has said, "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, Oh take and seal it. Seal it for Thy courts above." Living for Jesus alone requires that we learn to fear God correctly, and as we learn to fear God, we learn how to live for Jesus and to follow Him out of bondage into freedom.

What does it mean to fear God? Scripture explains by revealing God and His will. After all, the Bible is our only

objective source of information about Him. The Bible reveals that fearing God involves what we know, what we believe, and what we do.

Knowing God includes more than knowing biblical facts about Him. To know God also means to experience Him—His goodness, mercy, and love showered on us in Christ Jesus. As a result of experiencing the mercy and love of Christ, we learn to express our admiration and respect in worshipful veneration of Him, knowing that His grace includes His discipline of us as well as our inheritance of His kingdom (Heb 12:28, 29).

As a child of God I know that He disciplines me. I know that if I suffer, He is disciplining me to trust Him. If I disobey the Lord Jesus, he will reprove, discipline, and "scourge" me (Heb 12:3-6). Yet this discipline is part of His grace that transforms me when I am His son. My experience of knowing God and experiencing Jesus includes realizing that He loves me and disciplines me as a true Father, and these two things are both parts of His grace to me. My knowing God and experiencing Him as my Father are part of what it means to fear God.

Believing God involves understanding the Biblical data about God through the work of His grace and of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. He gives us understanding so we know and believe that the fear of God involves justice and fairness (Lev 25:17). It also means walking in His statutes and



# The reason you should leave the Adventist church is to run towards Jesus.

loving and serving Him (Dt 10:12). It involves departing from evil (Job 28:28) and rejoicing with trembling in deference to His high holiness. (Ps 2:11). We rest entirely in His mercy, (Ps 33:18). When I was a Seventh-day Adventist, I did not know how exquisitely I needed to REST entirely in God's mercy. This resting is the fulfillment of the fourth commandment. It can and must happen every day of the week, and it is our only hope. Therefore, paying careful attention to what the Bible actually says about the fourth commandment is important. The fourth commandment is the sign of the Mosaic Covenant which we now know is obsolete in the new covenant (2 Co 3:7-18; Heb 8:13).

The fear of God also involves doing. It is not enough merely to be a moralist and "do" the Ten Commandments. People who speak glibly of doing and keeping usually fall short very quickly. We are not really able to do anything righteously when we try to please God by obedience. Instead, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we faithfully do the commandments of Jesus, including those concerning our loving the saints in fellowship. For example, Hebrews 13:5 says, "let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have." When we allow the Holy Spirit to make our hearts content and share one another's joy and grief without envy or arrogance, He fulfills in us the new commandment to love one another. Fearing God involves actively doing the will of God as He reveals it in every circumstance of our lives.

## What keeps us from fearing God?

I understand the commands to fear God by knowing, believing, and doing, and I am committed to performing them by the power of the Holy Spirit. I always bear in mind, however, Romans 7:18, "for I know that in me (that is in my flesh) nothing good dwells. For to will is present with me but how to perform what is good I do not find." This is the struggle: the daily battle between my flesh and my desire to obey Jesus. Since I was saved seventeen years ago, I found that this battle is much easier because God has broken the power of sin in my life by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross where

He paid sin's price and broke its power. He has given me His freedom—the greatest freedom of all, freedom from the power and bondage of sin.

How strange it is, then, for a system of religion to bring men again into

another bondage, the bondage of rules and regulations, "advocating the abstaining from foods" (1 Timothy 4:3-4), and the diligent application of sunset tables on Friday and Saturday nights. (How in the world do you apply such a thing in Alaska in the summer?) "You have greater freedom than this" (Gal. 5:1).

If we are hesitant to leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it could be because we fear men rather than God. Peer pressure and the influence of our contemporaries are simply other terms for the fear of men. We are not to be taking our cues from our friends but from the Word of God alone.

We may be over-committed, being afraid to say no in order to please others. One of the faces of the fear of man is the feeling of neediness in relation to one's spouse or other people. If we live in a state of constantly desiring what other people can give, these people will become the ones we fear. Only the Lord Jesus can give us the approval we crave.

Another face of the fear of man is the notion of "self-esteem" which hinges upon other people's responses to us. Our natural inclination is to think we need other people to buttress our sense of well-being and identity. We need them to fulfill us, we think. This is patently not true; such notions must be rejected and surrendered to Jesus.

If we ever feel that we might be exposed as imposters, pretenders, hypocrites—people who are not quite what we have trumped ourselves up to be, the antidote is to rest more in Christ. We must fall back on Him and cry, "I am not able! I am helpless, but You are supreme and mighty, Lord; save my soul."

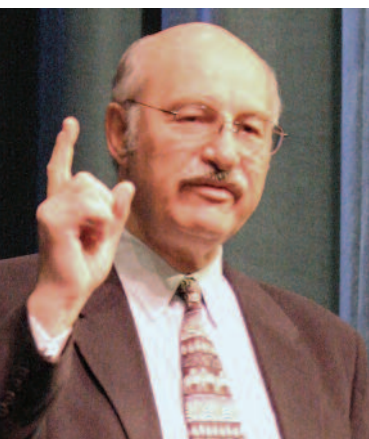
## Choose you this day

Do you second guess decisions because of what other people might think, or are you resolute, firm, and confident in your decision-making?

Many an Adventist has made his decision by walking down the sawdust trail, giving his heart to Jesus—only later to come up defeated and even shipwrecked in his faith. As long as a person remains committed to a religion that puts one into bondage to rules made obsolete by Christ Jesus, he/she is fearing men rather than God. He asks us to run toward Jesus. Only in Christ alone is there freedom and victory.

Choose you today whom you will serve—God or a system contrived by mere men.

†



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## Kudos for Easter Proclamation!

I just finished reading the [March/April 2007 issue] and had a couple of kudos. Although Adventism is not my background, legalism and Mormonism are.

Paul and Terry Mirra's story was so well put together. I'm praying for an opportunity to share it with my [Adventist] neighbors across the street. I think they'll especially identify with the attendance of "unconventional venues" and the ever-safe "internal experimenting." I think that's where they are right now.

Richard Pfeifer's article really fired me up, particularly the "choose life" exhortation, at the end saying, essentially, "Don't worry that you are a (filthy, wretched, loathsome, unsalvageable sinner), or that you are Adventist, Baptist, Methodist, Mormon or \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank)... choose life, and let no one shake your confidence in Christ!" Great evangelist!

Finally, as I am slowly reading through Isaiah... I am amazed over and over again at how consistent God's message is. I saw Dale Ratzlaff's look at prophecy where the Risen Lord appears to his disciples, "and beginning with Moses and ALL the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the scriptures." This text reminded me of Colleen Tinker's editorial that impacted me to tears. I reflected on her second life-changing moment where she "learned that Jesus keeps the requirements of the new covenant with the Father for me." I had never thought of it that way.

Tonight, I read Isaiah 26:12: "O Lord, you will ordain peace for us; You have done for us all our works."

Well, if that doesn't just spell it out!

Thank you for your honesty, your clarity, and your presentation of truth. We love you!

REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA

## More Easter Issue reflections

Like any good Adventist, I have dutifully tossed your magazine into the wastebasket. But I feel a letter is needed this time.

I read with interest and joy the brief [editorial] by Colleen Tinker. I have had a similar experience. As I studied my Bible and the writings of Ellen White, I came to the same conclusions and now rejoice in a more perfect (not perfect—more perfect) understanding of God's love, mercy, and grace, but I did not have to leave the Adventist fellowship to find it. It has been there all along...

I read with pain in my heart your feeble attempt to discard God's 4th commandment. The Sabbath hasn't changed, hasn't been abolished, and it remains the heart of the Ten



March/April 2007 issue

Back issues are available at [LifeAssuranceMinistries.org](http://LifeAssuranceMinistries.org).

Commandments. It is the only authentic Lord's Day.

As I observed pictures of ladies in your journal, wearing jewelry, lipstick, etc., I began to realize what your problem was as Adventists. It was the lifestyle. You felt restricted and you rebelled against these peripheral "restrictions." (Unfortunately many rebel and remain, but that's another issue!)

Someone in this same issue found fault with the issue of diet. Perhaps some ministers put undue emphasis on that subject, but it is very rare! In fact, I feel it is

somewhat neglected! Not as a matter of salvation, mind you, but for health. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and defilement of it is risky business, both from a health standpoint and a spiritual basis. People are dying like flies from diseases that have been shown to originate in the diet. All

recent research indicates that the only safe diet (from a health standpoint) is a plant-based diet in as natural a form as possible. The diet recommended by Ellen White has been vindicated.

Speaking of Ellen White, your feeble attempt to restrict the understanding of Revelation 19:10 was pathetic. Do you realize that you yourself are a living validation of her prophetic gift? She stated that in the last days some of our (Adventists') worst enemies would be those who once walked with us. She also stated that one of the major points of controversy would be the Spirit of Prophecy.

I hope that you will prayerfully consider your course. The Adventist Church is not wrong. The truth, the whole truth, is here. Anyone can find joy in Christ if they stop looking at people, stop criticizing the messengers, search the Scriptures, yield to Christ, and learn to trust Him.

We are a forgiving people, if you give us a chance. I urge you to come home.

Meanwhile, please remove my name from your mailing list. Thank you.

ONWAY, MICHIGAN

## On believing, or not

No Seventh-day Adventist believes all of the doctrines and teachings of Seventh-day Adventism. For example, Ellen White claimed to be a messenger (more than a prophet) for the Adventists, yet she made some very preposterous claims including her vision of the existence of human life on Jupiter or Saturn<sup>1</sup> and her statements that cheese should never be introduced into the stomach,<sup>2</sup> and drug medication should be discarded.<sup>3</sup> We now know from scientific observation that the conditions are impossible for life to exist on Jupiter or Saturn. Further, we know that drug medication is essential for many medical conditions—and ironically, Adventists now run a major health sciences university which includes a medical school and a school of pharmacy. In addition, cheese is considered an important part of the food pyramid—and ironically again, Adventists have tended to eat more cheese than they would have if they had not avoided meat. Ellen White's claims that she saw humans on Jupiter or Saturn, that cheese was unfit for food, and that drug medication must be abandoned cannot be true, but true prophets or "messengers" are people who prophesy truth.

If a person is to believe all of Adventism, he or she must believe the prophetess who defined it. Since no Adventist believes all the prophecies and revelations of the Adventist prophetess, no Adventist believes all the components of Adventism. Thus, it is possible to call oneself an Adventist and to be an Adventist even though he does not believe all the Adventist beliefs. In other words, it is a facet of Adventism not to believe all Adventist beliefs.

It is irrefutable that there is falsehood in Adventism. A little yeast works throughout all the dough, and so there is no truth in something which is partly false. The Bible says that a house divided against itself cannot stand, and a religion whose tenets and participants are divided between truth and error cannot stand. —Nathanael Tinker

1. Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, pp. 39–40; *A Word to the Little Flock*, p. 22

2. Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, p. 302; *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 68

3. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 311; *Counsels on Health*, p. 261



Nathanael Tinker



## Proclamation! changed my life

Please put me on your mailing list. I received your last issue (March/April, 2007), and it has changed my life. I don't even know why; I was not dissatisfied in the church I had grown up in, married and raised my children in. But something has happened to me since I started down this road. This will be one of the most difficult things I have done in my life. In the past three weeks since I read it, it has been hard to think of anything else.

I have so enjoyed the devotionals on your website (LifeAssuranceMinistries.org) and browsed some of the articles and back issues. But so many questions are coming clear, and the third morning after I had first felt this way, I woke up and for the first time in my life, 1 Corinthians 5:17 was coming true in my life—a new creature. Amazing!

Now I don't know what to do or where to go from here, my husband and 2 oldest daughters know of my thoughts...He is sympathetic but not sure where he stands. He grew up with a very different kind of dad who taught him unlegalistically, and my husband doesn't feel the way I do. But God has kept me these past weeks, and I trust Him with all my future. Thanks again, and God bless you all. I will probably be in touch again.

VIA EMAIL

## No more magazines

PLEASE, DO NOT send any more of your magazines to me. I do not know how you got my address, but I'm sure I did not give it to you. I know God will hold you responsible for every soul lost because of you, but I will not be among that num-

ber. I pray that God will keep me faithful to Him and His teachings and not let man blur my eyes to the truth. I will continue to pray for you.

AUBURN, WASHINGTON

## Laughter and praise

Richard's editorial (May/June, 2007) had me laughing and crying for joy! Praise God! How rich we are!

It reminded me of 2 Corinthians 6:1-10. From Phillips' version, the last line of verse 10 reads "...penniless and yet in reality we have everything worth having."

Wow! (Wonder of wonders.) Thank you for your Spirit-filled dedication. God's rich blessings on you!

NAPA, CALIFORNIA

## Trinity Question

I'm confused and hope you can help. I've read your article "Discovering the Adventist Jesus" (May/June, 2007) several times and with interest. What is the traditional Christian view of the Trinity? Am I understanding you correctly when you indicate that there are not three individual figures in the God-head, but only one? And if that is true, then to whom did Jesus pray while on earth? And what about John 3:16?

Wouldn't a more appropriate wording be, ...that He gave Himself...rather than His son? Did God split himself in half in order to come to earth as Jesus? I'm not trying to be funny. I appreciate your article, but I think a little more time should have been spent on the traditional



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view of the Godhead rather than the Adventist view. It would have been more helpful (at least to me since I know what Adventists believe). Thanks for your help.

VIA EMAIL

**Editor's note:** To be sure, the reality of the Trinity is partially hidden in mystery. It is impossible for us three-dimensional, time-bound creations to comprehend the reality of God who is outside of creation and not con-

tained by however many dimensions there are in the universe.

We turn to the Bible for what we can know about the identity of the Trinity, and we can summarize the Bible's teachings in three statements: God is three persons; each person is fully God, and there is one God.

God the Father is clearly God. From the first verse in Genesis throughout the Bible, He is identified as God, sovereign over all. As you mention, Jesus also prayed to Him while He was on earth.

Second, Jesus is fully God. Texts such as John 1:1-4, John 20:28, Colossians 2:9, and Hebrews 1:10 quoting Psalm 102:25 verify His complete deity.

Third, the Holy Spirit is also fully God. Passages such as Acts 5:3-4, Psalm 139:7-8, 1 Corinthians 2:10-11; John 3:5-9, and Matthew 28:19 identify the Holy Spirit as fully God.

These three persons are one not only in purpose but also in essence and essential nature.

## Lips that honor God CONTINUED FROM BACK

"But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." (Mt. 12:36, 37)

This passage from Matthew meshes with the definition in Psalm 34:11-14 of what it means to "fear the Lord." The first description of the person who is learning to fear the Lord is the one "whose tongue doesn't speak deceit and whose lips don't lie." (v. 13) The King James Version says these words are "idle words"—words that are used wastefully.

It really is hypocritical to call carelessly on God in times of trouble when one doesn't know or believe in Him and when one generally distrusts Him. It isn't just a shame to speak of Him in that way; it is lying to use His name vainly when one cares little for Him.

So—fear the Lord by speaking well of God the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Follow Paul's advice to Timothy in Titus 2:7,8 — "...set an example...sound speech that cannot be condemned..."

## What about Kelli?

My goal for Kelli during our week of classes had been to try and help her not to speak God's name in vain. God wasn't opposed to my idea, but He had other plans.

We spent our final class time on the following Friday enjoying "tea" together before we talked about heaven. After I talked about the "many rooms" God was preparing there, I asked the girls to tell me who would be allowed to go. Kelli blurted out, "I'll be there because I've asked Jesus into my heart!"

I felt like crying; God's ways are way bigger than ours. I was busy trying to figure out how to change her language; God changed her heart!

There was a big shout of celebration among the little girls, and we all agreed; getting to go to heaven—to the grand palace Jesus is preparing for all who love Him—is THE BEST!

Today ask God to make your heart soft toward Him—and watch how you use His Name in your everyday speech!



Deuteronomy 6:4-5 identifies God as only one Being: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Texts such as Isaiah 45:5-6, 1 Timothy 2:5, Romans 3:30, and James 2:19 confirm that God is one.

Many of us learned that Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit are all fully God, but we understood them to be fully God as a piece of apple pie is fully pie. What many of us did not learn is that when speaking of the Trinity, to identify Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit as "fully God" is to say that each one comprises the fullness of God. To return to the pie metaphor, the piece of pie is not a slice separate from the rest of the pie, but each piece is comprised of the entire pie.

I will quote from Wayne Grudem's *Bible Doctrine* to help explain what the Trinity is and isn't. "God's being is not divided into three equal parts belonging to the three members of the Trinity. Rather, we must say that the person of the Father possesses the whole being of God in himself. Similarly, the Son possess the whole being of God in himself. When we speak of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit together, we are not speaking of any greater being than when we speak of the Father alone, or the Son alone, or the Holy Spirit alone."

Further, "The personal distinctions in the Trinity are not something added onto God's real being. Rather, each person of the Trinity has all of the attributes of God, and no one person has any attributes that are not possessed by the others."

Moreover, "The persons of the Trinity are not just three different ways of looking at the one being of God. Rather, we need to think of the Trinity in such a way that the reality of the three persons is maintained, and each person is seen as relating to the others as an "I" (a first person) and a "you" (a second person) and a "he" (a third person).

Finally, "There are three distinct persons, and the being of each person is equal to the whole being of God... It is clear that this tri-personal

form of being is far beyond our ability to comprehend. It is a kind of existence far different from anything we have experienced and far different from anything else in the universe."

We are not able to understand exactly what each "person" of the Trinity really means. We refer to them as "persons" to denote their relationship among themselves, but we must also understand that they are not a "group god" or a "god family." God is one, and each person within the Trinity is all of God while also being in relationship with each other.

This understanding is important in order for us to understand that Jesus is not a "lesser rank" than the Father or somehow only part of God. When Jesus came as our Redeemer, God came as a man, died, and defeated death. Yet God is eternal, immortal, invisible, and omnipresent. God was not limited by Jesus' incarnation, and Jesus lived his life on earth in submission to the Father.

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## Giving up Sabbath

Please remove my name from your mailing list. I don't read your publications. If God saw fit to engrave His law in stone, that's permanent enough for me. Besides, I can't imagine giving up my Sabbath. I feel very sorry for you.

ENTERPRISE, OREGON

**Editor's note:** "Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory... will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory" (2 Co. 3:7-10).

## Trinity article

Good article on the Trinity. Our finite minds are not sharp enough nor the language adequate to clearly define the reality of the Trinity. God can maintain His omnipresence and at the same time come among us in the person of Jesus Christ or indwell us by His Spirit. "In the Godhead there is union but not fusion; there is distinction but not separation."

God as Father ordains our redemption, as Son comes among us as our source of redemption, and as indwelling Spirit reveals our redemption and gives us faith to believe. Thus the triune God perfectly meets the needs of the fallen sinner. Enough said.

SHADY COVE, OREGON

## Drop the Former Adventist Fellowship thing

I left the Adventist church thirty years ago and now believe in a personal relationship with my Savior that does not require a go-between religion, church or pastor. I realize that this is a threatening idea to pastors, priests and other members of the religious hierarchy whose livelihood depends on our generosity when the offering plate is passed.

In any event, I have a question for you. Since you obviously left the Seventh-day Adventist church and believe that you have the true message from God for modern man, why do you lean so heavily on constant reference to that church? Is your message not able to stand on its own? I have heard of rebound marriages, but a rebound religion? That is pathetic (sorry, that just slipped out).

My suggestion (bear with me) is to stand on Bible principles, put your faith in Him who died for us, and drop the Former Adventist Fellowship thing!

For the last eighteen months or so I have read *Proclamation!*, even though its arrival on my doorstep was unsolicited. Therefore, guys, please print my letter and answer my question.

RYDERWOOD, WASHINGTON

**Editor's note:** First, the Bible is clear that there is no such thing as an isolated Christian. The book of Ephesians describes how Jesus created in Himself one new man out of the Jews and the Gentiles, and in Him we are being built into a temple in which God dwells. We are further, as stated in Hebrews, not to forget assembling together as some are in the habit of doing.

Second, we focus on Adventism because we are a ministry for questioning and former Adventists as well as for concerned Christians who want to understand the religion. In order to help Adventists understand their freedom in Jesus, we have to explain how Adventists beliefs differ from biblical teachings. Further, when one has been set free, it is impossible for him not to speak of the deliverance.

Third, Life Assurance Ministries and Former Adventist Fellowship are not a "rebound religion." Former Adventists are scattered throughout Christian churches of all types. This ministry is for the support and education of those questioning and leaving Adventism. It is not a church and is not intended to be a final destination.

We pray that we will honor the Lord Jesus in all we say, and we pray that those who have questions and who have left Adventism will follow Him wherever He leads, allowing Him to place them in fellowship with other believers.

MAIL LETTERS AND DONATIONS TO:

**Life Assurance Ministries**  
P.O. Box 905  
Redlands, CA 92373

## Life Assurance Ministries, 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



**E**ach year our church hosts a Day Camp for primary and middle school children. This year I taught a class called “Life in the Palace”—an attempt to instruct young girls on simple manners and table etiquette.

I asked what they would do if they were eating at a friend’s house and were served something they didn’t like. The answers included things they wouldn’t do: make a face like their brother or push it away!

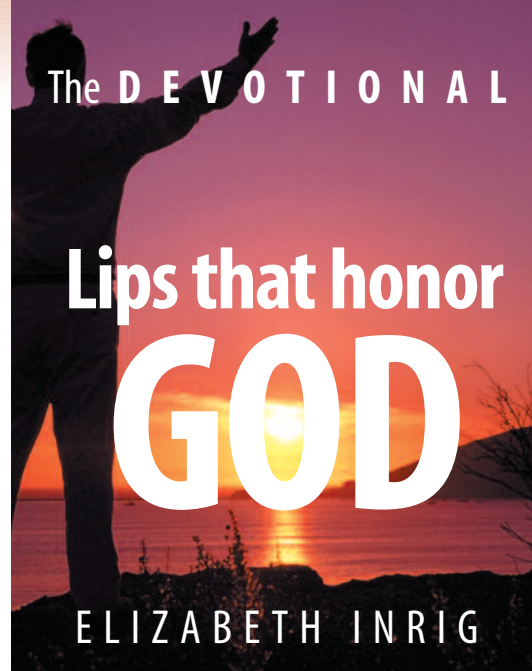
One little girl named Kelli answered the question dramatically saying, “Oh my God, that’s terrible cooking!” She was all of 7 years old, and her words took me by surprise! I felt sad that so young a child could roll those words so easily off her lips. I was angry at the adults in her life or the TV programs she had watched that modeled this hasty phrase. I was irritated that someone had not explained to her how holy the God of the universe is and how wrong it is to speak of Him so carelessly.

### **Calling on God without knowing Him**

Do you hear this phrase as much as I do? Have you noticed how it comes from both spiritual pagans and pro-



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**Does it strike you as incongruent, for a God-maligning culture like ours, to be so willing to talk about God without knowing Him?**

fessing Christians in our day and age? Does it strike you as incongruent, for a God-maligning culture like ours, to be so willing to talk about God without knowing Him? Does it seem odd to you that a person who professes to take a stand for believing in and respecting the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ would speak the Name of his/her God so thoughtlessly?

It’s an interesting fact that the culture in which we live is not too fond of God—at least not the God of the Bible. We repeatedly get that idea from the way people speak of Him! The media works hard to discredit him by saying it is “the height of intolerance” even to believe in one God and “the height of arrogance” to parade Him in public! The ACLU works hard to keep God and

God-words out of schools, public buildings and front yards, yet a healthy slice of our population continuously claims its “freedom of speech” to mention God in conversation without knowing Him as the one true God of heaven and earth who revealed Himself in creation, in the Bible, and through His Son.

In spite of their ignorance—like the little girl in my class—they talk about Him anyway—relentlessly and persistently!

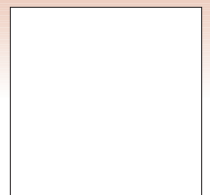
Think about it! In a crisis or accident, people call out, “Oh, my God!” If they hear bad news, good news, are surprised at something, or need a quick expletive, God is the one they bring into the conversation. Recently, I have begun to hear professing Christ-followers breathe those three words as an oath.

Something is very wrong with this picture. My little student’s words reminded me about the seriousness of carelessly crying this phrase out of anger or fear.

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